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NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Committee Room 1

Forum on Family Violence

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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

In Attendance:

Ms. Mora Stevens
Legislative Committee Coordinator

WITNESSES

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Ms. Irene Smith, Executive Director

Men's Prevention Program
Mr. Ron Kelly
Ms. Nancy Gray

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

Ms. Peggy Mahon
Ms. Rhonda Haines-Richards
Ms. Lyn Barrett
Ms. Shirley Oickle
Ms. Tammy Lee Vautour
Ms. Elaine Smith
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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2004

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Marilyn More

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I want to welcome everyone to the all-day Forum on Family Violence. My name is Marilyn More and I am the MLA for Dartmouth South-Portland Valley, and I also chair the Standing Committee on Community Services. So thank you very much for coming. There will be a number of people coming in and out during the day. This morning we are going to hear a couple of presentations, so I think perhaps we should get underway. There will be other members of our committee joining us when their other commitments allow.

Before we start with introductions, I just want to give you a little bit of background or explanation about the forum. When the Transition House Association met with the Standing Committee on Community Services on February 12th, the committee members realized there was still very much that they didn't understand about the issue of family violence, and the suggestion was made that we have an all-day forum so that we can raise awareness and understanding, not only amongst ourselves on the committee but, hopefully, among the sector and also in the general public. This is an attempt to do that, so we thank you very much for your participation.

I also want to, at this time, just quickly give thanks to our committee clerk, Mora Stevens, and also to the Executive Director of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, Pamela Harrison, for all their work in organizing the agenda and activities for today.

We are delighted to have this forum in the Red Chamber, often referred to as the Red Room, and we have made available to you these booklets. They are on the stands there with the agendas in case you want to read a little more about the history of this very important building, Province House. I found it interesting. The author of that publication states that in Canada "more history has been made within these four walls than in all other legislatures

combined." So we have a very long history here and I think it is quite significant that we are hosting this forum in the Red Chamber.

I also found it interesting - just a little tidbit, I love history - apparently, and I am quoting from the publication that "all the window and door surrounds, chimneypieces and panels above the windows are delicately patterned with" - now listen to this - "sea and plant life, pastoral scenes, and architectural fantasies." So if you find your eyes gazing, just see what you can pick out. I can pick out a few shells myself, but it would be interesting to go around and try to identify all these decorative features. Anyhow, it will certainly add the dignity and significance that this issue deserves to be holding this forum in the Red Chamber, but at the same time I just want to tell you that we are fairly informal, so if you have a question, or you want to interrupt, please don't hesitate.

[9:15 a.m.]

So I would like to start now with introductions of the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have two of our presenters joining us here at the table today as well. Irene Smith is going to be speaking first and she is the Executive Director for the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, and we have Ron Kelly here from the Men's Prevention Program. You can introduce yourselves a little more formally when you start your presentation.

Just a reminder that in order to have the sound at a level that is consistent with the quality that our technicians want, we ask everyone to speak fairly closely to the mics. We are going to have some interference, obviously, from street traffic and other things, but we have been asked to speak as closely to the mics as possible. Are there any questions or comments before we start?

No? Okay. Irene, would you like to begin?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Good morning, everyone. I would like to thank members of the standing committee for inviting the Avalon Centre here today, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you about the work that we do at the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the continued challenges that we face in our efforts to maintain essential services for women, their families, and the communities in the Province of Nova Scotia trying to recover from the effects of sexual violence. I provided members of the committee with folders and most of my presentation is contained in those folders in one document or another.

I would like to take the next 10 to 15 minutes to provide you with a brief "herstory" of the Avalon Centre and the work that we do at the centre. In 1980, there were high occurrences of sexual assaults in the South End of Halifax and students from the community psychology course recognized that there were no supports in place for victims of rape. They turned to a professor, Dr. Ed Renner, and with his assistance applied for federal funding to establish the first sexual assault centre in the Province of Nova Scotia; that was in 1983. In 1984, the centre received funding from the Department of Community Services and in May was incorporated under the name of the Service for Sexual Assault Victims. In 1995, the name of the centre was changed to the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre to reflect the true nature of the work that we do. Today, there are only two sexual assault centres in the Province of Nova Scotia. One is, of course, the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, and the other is the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre which has one employee - one employee only.

The Avalon Centre provides services for women dealing with the aftermath of sexual violence, which can be during adulthood or as a result of a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. We also work with non-offending parents whose children have been sexually abused, as well as partners of survivors of sexual violence.

The programs and services at the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre include individual for women 16 years of age and over who are struggling with the effects of sexual violence, whether it is an immediate sexual assault or past sexual assault as a child. We also provide support and therapy groups for survivors, and this is really a stepping stone model of trying to work with women in their various stages of healing from the effects of sexual violence. I should note that Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is the only agency that provides these specific kinds of services that are directed toward survivors of child sexual abuse and individuals who are dealing with immediate sexual violence. Certainly no one is doing support and therapy groups for these women.

We also do information sessions. Those information sessions include information sessions for partners of survivors, as well as non-offending parents, and we partner with the IWK in providing information sessions for non-offending parents who are trying to navigate particularly the legal system when it comes to trying to cope with the effects of sexual violence of their child, as well as their own emotional difficulties that they might be experiencing.

We also provide court support for women 16 years of age and over who are going through the legal system, so that can include providing information about the legal process itself as well as providing emotional support for the trauma that it frequently causes when going through the criminal justice system, and many, many women report that they feel re-victimized and traumatized by that experience.

Advocacy is another area that we work in, and the advocacy work that we do involves both individual advocacy as well as advocating for public policy reform, legislation reform,

and other kinds of activities that can often have an impact on women who are directly affected by public policy and legislation that affect them. One particular piece of advocacy work that we have done was with an individual woman who had been sexually assaulted by a minister, a church minister, who was also providing counselling for her and that case ended up, the initial charge was a charge whereby he could have spent, indeed, 10 years in prison. It was reduced to a summary conviction and it ended up in adult diversion, whereby he ended up doing an 18-page report on professional misconduct. The Avalon Centre was very active in lobbying the Department of Justice around the idea that any crime of sexual violence should be sent to adult diversion and were successful in having their policy changed so that, currently, no sexual assaults are referred to adult diversion.

We also do information referral. We receive anywhere from 500 to 600 calls a year from individuals who are looking for various kinds of services. That can include male survivors of child sexual abuse, looking for counselling services of which, I am sad to say, is very limited in this province. There are private practitioners who do this kind of work, but if you don't have health care coverage, unfortunately, there is really no place to turn, for male survivors.

We also do a great deal of education in the community. This includes both community education, as well as professional development for a wide range of service providers in the province. Indeed, the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is called upon on a regular basis to provide training for a wide range of service providers, and through the funding from the Nova Scotia Law Foundation, we have received funding for four consecutive years and we've been able to provide training in every region of the province, for service providers.

Another very essential service that the centre provides is the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, referred to as SANE. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program provides on-call nurses 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and responds to immediate sexual assaults. Now, basically this service is a partnership with the three health care facilities, the IWK, the Dartmouth General and the QE II. Basically, those are the three facilities that we respond to, however, we have actually had cases that have come from the Northwest Territories to Halifax to receive this service because they're aware of it.

It's interesting to note, as well, that the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is in all provinces in Canada, however, the program here in the Halifax Regional Municipality is very unique. It's the only one in Canada that is based within a sexual assault centre and is community based. So we can take some pride in realizing that we really are showing some leadership in this country, in how to provide services for women who've been affected by sexual violence.

In addition to the core services that we provide, we also do a great deal of work with a number of other women's organizations in the province and frequently take a leadership role in addressing public policy that can affect women. In particular, the Restorative Justice

Program that the Nova Scotia Government introduced, I think it was in 1999 or 2000, had suggested in their public policy that sexual assaults and domestic violence cases would be eligible to be dealt with in a restorative justice forum.

We had some significant concerns about that particular policy and, as a result, other women's organizations in the province, came together, reviewed the document and determined that there was a need to do a great deal more research before introducing such a policy in Nova Scotia. We were successful - and when I say we, I mean a coalition of women's organizations in the province were successful - in receiving funding from Status of Women Canada to conduct some participatory research in the Province of Nova Scotia. That report, with its recommendations, was released in March 2003. Currently, we are working with a joint committee from the Department of Justice, reviewing the recommendations of that report. As a result of that report and the work of women's organizations in this province, the Department of Justice has agreed to put a moratorium on any cases of domestic or sexual assault cases before a restorative justice forum.

In addition to that, the Avalon Centre has participated in a number of other activities that have influenced public policy. In particular, the Avalon Centre conducted a research project on how police and prosecution services respond to investigate and prosecute cases of sexual violence. I don't think it will come to any surprise of anybody around this table or in this room that cases of sexual violence, with respect to charges and prosecution, have been not particularly successful. I think there's a need for us to really review how we are dealing with sexual violence in this province.

As a result of that particular research, there were a number of recommendations that were put forward, including the establishment of a sexual assault squad. I'm pleased to say that very recently, within the last year, Chief Frank Beazley has indeed established such a squad. It's important to note that because of that and the work with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, we have really developed a far more coordinated response to sexual violence in this province and particularly in the municipality, because actually the sexual assault work that's being done has really been more focused in the Halifax region. The rural communities are in desperate need of a similar kind of model to work in this province.

The other thing that's occurred as a result of that particular research is that the Halifax Regional Police and most recently the RCMP have developed sexual assault policies that provide some governance as to how their officers investigate sexual assault cases. The province has established best practices of how to prosecute sexual assault cases.

I probably could go on and on about other kinds of activities that the centre has been involved with that have positively impacted the Province of Nova Scotia with respect to public policy and law reform, but I won't because I realize I only have 10 minutes. I'm sure that the

committee has a lot of questions that they would probably like to ask. But I would like to focus just a little bit on some of the challenges that the centre is involved with on a regular basis.

I guess the one service, before I leave that, is that I did want to talk about our after-hours response line that is available to immediate sexual assaults. We have trained volunteers who respond to immediate sexual assaults and will accompany women to the hospital or to the police station. Another important piece of information that I left out, around the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is that that service is available to individuals 13 years of age and over, and that's both men and women. I know I'm running out of time.

Some of the challenges that we experience in our day-to-day work, I think, first and foremost is the fact that we have not received an increase in core funding in 11 years, other than \$2,390. In 11 years, we have not received an increase in core funding from Community Services, and yet we continue to provide the range of services that I've just outlined for you. Let me tell you, that's done with six full-time staff and three part-time staff. So the \$239,000 that Community Services provides to us is absolutely getting its money's worth from the centre. That's one of the challenges that we experience.

In addition to that, our demand for individual counselling continues to increase. We, on a regular basis, have four- to five-month waiting lists for women looking to come in and do counselling. We also have women who are wanting to do more long-term counselling, but we don't have the resources to be able to provide that to all of the women who require it and need it. As a result, when we do do that, then our wait list grows. So our staff are under a great deal of stress, trying to cope with the demand that is coming forward from the community.

It's important to note, as well, that the staff at the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre are paid \$1,300 less than their counterparts within the province. So, we are not only coping with staff who are stressed by the demand of their work and the vicarious trauma that often results because of the kinds of work that we do, but we also have staff who are significantly underpaid. Our staff are all individuals who have similar credentials to those within the government sector.

We've experienced, most recently, a significant increase in referrals from guidance counsellors within the school system. I can tell you of a story where a guidance counsellor called our organization, saying that he had a young woman who was 17 years old, who had recently disclosed that she had been sexually assaulted by a relative in the family and who needed to talk to somebody right away, needed to see a counsellor right away. Well, we don't have that luxury of being able to say yes, bring her in. These guidance counsellors often feel frustrated with the fact that they have young women sitting there and they don't know what to do with them and there's no place to send them, because our counsellors are doing counselling with women and we don't have the luxury of saying yes, bring her in and we'll see her right away.

[9:30 a.m.]

We've had a guidance counsellor call us and say that he had an exchange student in his office who had been sexually assaulted by four men in her country of origin before coming to Canada and had just disclosed and needed services. She didn't speak the language and needed to see somebody right away. We couldn't do that because we don't have the resources to respond that readily.

We've received an increased demand from schools wanting Avalon staff to come in and talk to classes about dating violence and violence against women because they've recognized that this is a significant issue. We've had issues around date rape drugs and wanting us to come in and address that issue. We simply don't have the resources to respond to the increasing demand from our communities that want to deal with the issue of sexual violence.

It's a societal issue and because of the increased, I think, media awareness, more and more people are coming forward disclosing the sexual violence and the need for counselling services and the need for supports. This province is, quite frankly, very inadequate in dealing with those demands. How's my time?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm not keeping track. Do you want to take another two or three minutes and then we'll perhaps start with questions?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Certainly. I guess I'm going to focus on the lack of resources to respond to the demands to provide outreach services to areas outside the Halifax area. The need for diverse groups, including the Black communities, First Nations and immigrant communities that are looking for outreach services that we don't have the resources to respond or resources to maintain such simple things like office equipment. Currently we just relocated and I'm working out of - my filing cabinet is a box because I don't have a filing cabinet to keep my everyday working files in. We have a phone system that is archaic and we don't have the resources to replace it. We have limited or no resources to purchase educational materials that we're frequently called upon to provide for schools, other service providers, and limited or no resources to develop and revise community educational materials.

I think that it's really important to emphasize that the women that I work with in my organization are completely dedicated to working towards ending violence against women. I think that after my presentation, you will have a better understanding of the scope of the work that we do and so, although I'm sitting here today in a forum that's dealing with family violence, I want to stress that family violence is only a portion of the work that we do. Yes, we deal with women survivors of childhood sexual abuse, but we also deal with a great deal of violence against women, sexual violence against women that is not within the family unit.

I want to stress that because I think it's important for this committee to understand that the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is really not in the same funding envelope as the transition

houses, the women's centres and the men's treatment programs. Community Services recognizes that the scope of our work is far beyond the issue of family violence. I'll stop with that and I'm happy to answer questions.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Irene. You've certainly given us lots of scope for questions. I have Jerry and Mark so far. I should also mention that we've been joined by Russell MacKinnon, who's the MLA for Cape Breton West. I do want to acknowledge that Russell actually came up with the original idea of having this forum and I want to say that we're very grateful for that suggestion. Certainly the committee members supported it 100 per cent. Jerry.

MR. JERRY PYE: Thank you, Irene, for making the presentation before this forum. I just got the opportunity now to leaf through the information that you provided to us. One of the brochures is a very important one of about four pages that states the role of the elected officials. I thought that was very important and certainly enlightened us as to what you think our role should be.

One of the most important issues that you touched on and obviously is the crux of how you operate as the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the kinds of services that you provide across the country is to ensure that there is adequate funding for programs and for prevention and services for persons dealing with sexual assault. I do know that you have those x number of bullets on Page 2 and it says, "Take Action. By ensuring funding for prevention and services, you can help prevent future violence . . ."

I guess what I'm hearing from you is that you are operating on a shoestring when you talk about financial resources. Without having the financial resources, it prevents you also from having the human resources and the technical resources that follow. The question is, you said there's \$239,000 that comes for core funding from the Department of Community Services. I don't know what you mean by core funding and if you can explain what you mean by the core dollars. As well, obviously you rent a facility, you lease a facility or you own a facility - are you expected to pay property taxes to the regional municipality or a business occupancy tax or is that amount forgiven through a grant from the municipality? You can just mark these down.

Also, Page 3 indicates the statistical information, some of which I find extremely shocking. You say there are approximately 4,700 sexual assaults, if you base it on the premise that only 6 per cent are reported, that go unreported in HRM alone. You don't say what that is for the Province of Nova Scotia and that's probably because you lack the facilities in order to get the data. I guess my question is, if that number is significantly high - and thanks to the Halifax police service for bringing in the sexual assault squad - do they in turn provide you with information and how closely do you work with them to reduce those numbers of unreported sexual assaults? I guess, Madam Chairman, I should stop there and give you a

chance to respond to those. I'm sure that at the discussion this afternoon, the round table discussion, a lot more will come up.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Okay, I think the first question was around core funding. The core funding that we receive from Community Services really is focused on the individual counselling, support and therapy groups, court support, advocacy support and referral, the after-hours response line, community education and the activities that we do with regard to - we sit on a lot of government committees. We're often asked to sit on - for example, we were on the Family Violence Prevention Initiative before that program was cut. So we do sit on a lot of different committees. That's the core funding.

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is funded 100 per cent by the Department of Health.

Does that answer your question around the core funding?

MR. PYE: Yes, you said that the core funding was totally funded by Community Services of \$239,000. We didn't say that there were additional monies.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Okay. We do fundraising and when we do special projects, we frequently charge an administrative fee to that particular project. We did receive \$5,000 from the municipality that did support the after-hours response line, it supported part of that activity. I think the cost to operate the after-hours response line is around \$20,000 and we get about \$5,000 of that from the municipality. It's important to note as well that with the amalgamation of the Halifax Regional Municipality, Avalon Centre actually received a significant decrease in funding from the municipalities because when there was Bedford, the county, Dartmouth and Halifax, we received considerably more resources. Of course, as you all know, with the amalgamation, the issue of community service kinds of programs were the responsibility of the province, so the municipality doesn't see it as their mandate to provide that. With respect to the 4,700 unreported sexual assaults in our work with the Halifax Regional Police, Avalon Centre as a result of some of our collaborations with the Halifax Regional Police, has been able to conduct for the first time ever 40-hour training, for the Halifax Regional Police, on sexual assault investigation. So we have worked with the police and they have been working with us in trying to provide a more coordinated response, as well as with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program.

Yes, you're right, we don't have the ability or the resources to report on a provincial level what the statistics might be. The RCMP, I think, has only more recently come on-board in working with the centre with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, and we're working with the Public Prosecution Service as well as Halifax Regional Police, as well as the RCMP, to try to do a better job in data collection and to try to be more coordinated with our data collection. I have frequently asked the Department of Justice, over the years, to provide

information with respect to the number of sexual assault charges, the disposition of those cases, and they've been unable to provide them for me - which is also a very sad statement.

MR. PYE: Just one comment. You did say the Halifax Regional Municipality provided you with an additional \$5,000 to carry on with the after-hours help line service. Again, I asked you earlier, do you receive or have you made application to the Halifax Regional Municipality Grants Committee for property tax exemption or business occupancy exemption?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Sorry, yes you did ask that question. Basically, we rent from a commercial real estate group and there is business occupancy which would be included in that. I have had discussions with Halifax Regional Municipality around that issue and basically that \$5,000 grant is all they've been able to offer. Most recently, I have gone to the municipality and met the mayor to discuss the real possibility of having to reduce or eliminate our after-hours response line because we simply don't have the resources to continue it without additional funding.

I have been talking with the Province of Nova Scotia Department of Community Services for seven years, telling them that we needed additional resources, and if I haven't mentioned already, and I know I have, it has been 11 years since we've received any increase in funding and yet the demand for service continues to escalate.

MR. PYE: I'm sure that will carry further discussion this afternoon. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mark Parent.

MR. MARK PARENT: Thank you very much for your presentation. One question for further information and then too, I assume, Madam Chairman, we're a little freer to ask larger questions, more philosophical ones at an all-day forum, rather than just specific ones? Or is that for this afternoon?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, it's certainly up to you. We want to make sure we understand the particular perspective of this agency this morning, but if you want to talk about something broader, you'll have an opportunity this afternoon in the round table.

MR. PARENT: A more specific one then. We have a wonderful transition home in my constituency in the riding of Kentville, Chrysalis House.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, I'm familiar with their work.

MR. PARENT: I assume you are. I'm still not, in my mind - you claim that you have a wider mandate than the transition homes, and listening to Rhonda Fraser, the new director there, and others at Chrysalis House, their mandate seems to be almost impossibly wide as it

is, so can you sketch that out for me a little more? I'm still not clear of the difference between the Avalon Centre and the transition homes such as Chrysalis.

[9:45 a.m.]

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well obviously the transition house provides shelter; we don't provide shelters.

MR. PARENT: Yes, I realize that, that difference, but in terms of counselling, reaching out to the families?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well, again, we don't deal with domestic violence. Our service is very specifically focused to individuals who've been affected by sexual violence, whether it's through family or whether it's through dating relationships. So there's a clear distinction there. If a woman who has experienced domestic violence contacts our organization, we would refer them to the appropriate place . . .

MR. PARENT: You'd refer them then to the transition home.

MS. IRENE SMITH: . . . and we frequently do that. One of the things that we have noticed in recent years is that there's an increased demand for services for women, including transition houses and women's centres to respond to issues that are outside of our mandate because of the reduced amount of resources that are happening in the community. We try very hard to focus on what it is that we're mandated to do and make referrals to other appropriate organizations for areas that are outside of our mandated area. Does that help you, or do you need some further clarification?

MR. PARENT: Yes, that helps to sketch it out - so that's why you claim the uniqueness of the Avalon Centre in the work that you do in the province, right?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, as I say, certainly, our goal, like all equality-seeking women's organizations is the elimination of violence, period, against women, and I know we're talking about family violence but I need to make sure that the committee understands that this is not simply family violence, this is violence against women - and if you look at the national statistics and the local statistics, it's clear that this is violence against women.

MR. PARENT: Then how do you relate with the Women's Centres CONNECT! because we had a presentation from them and they told us that a lot of their work is in the same area.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Absolutely, because in the rural communities there is no one who is dealing with sexual violence, we are the only show in town.

MR. PARENT: You're the resource for them . . .

MS. IRENE SMITH: Exactly, and we do refer back and forth, so certainly when a woman comes to me, or comes to our organization who's dealing with issues of poverty or employment, all of the important things that the women's centres do, then we would refer them to those appropriate centres. Regrettably, in Halifax, there isn't a women's centre. That's what I'm talking about, frequently we're called upon to deal with issues that are outside our mandated area. I can't refer them to a women's centre here in Halifax because there isn't one. So when we have women calling, dealing with homelessness or dealing with the issue of poverty or dealing with childcare, all of those things that the women's centres deal with, there is no specific place to refer them. That's an example of our agency being asked to do things outside of our mandate.

As you can appreciate, when you have a woman on the phone who is in crises, and who is looking for childcare, is living in poverty, and they've called us because there's no place else to call, it's very difficult to say sorry, that's outside of our mandate. So frequently we're asked to deal with issues that are beyond and that causes an incredible amount of stress and trauma for the staff we work with - to say no is difficult.

MR. PARENT: That helps. I'm just trying to delineate the various responsibilities. In terms of restorative justice, I'll throw my bias on the table here . . .

MS. IRENE SMITH: Your what?

MR. PARENT: My bias, because I've been for years and years very, very active in this issue, particularly as the leadership that the Mennonite community showed in restorative justice, and I guess frankly I find the stance of the national Conservative Party somewhat unsettling in that it seems to be this sort of "just lock them up and forget about them position." I hear in some ways a similar sort of statement from you and from other people in regard to restorative justice shouldn't fit here, and I guess I'd like you to tease it out a bit more because I'm a big fan of restorative justice.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Okay. First of all, I want to state clearly that I am not advocating for a law-and-order kind of agenda. That is not what I'm saying. When I look at the program in Nova Scotia, what I am saying is that in order to implement a Restorative Justice Program in Nova Scotia, you have not taken a careful look at the safety of women or what is going to restore justice to women. I'm not against restorative justice. My agency isn't advocating no restorative justice, what I am saying is that the current program is simply not going to work. We have done research and have talked to women in this province, we have looked at other jurisdictions to see what the success is and what is it that they're advocating that it's going to be - they have not done the research to support what they're suggesting and furthermore, the research that we've done here in Halifax is the only research of its kind that has been done in the country.

MR. PARENT: Have then the justice systems, both provincially and federally, invited you in to help them make this system work better or no?

MS. IRENE SMITH: I would say inviting would be a bit of a stretch. I would say that they have allowed us in as a result of the research that we have conducted. How we found out about the Restorative Justice Program was that we were asked to come to a meeting to talk about doing training for volunteers who were going to be responsible for facilitating restorative justice forums. That was the first I heard about restorative justice and when I looked at the program, I became gravely concerned on a number of different areas, including the fact that this public policy was going to significantly download to the community because what it meant is who's going to prepare these women to engage in restorative justice with a perpetrator who has sexually assaulted them.

We know that there are significant issues around power and balances there and who would be called upon to prepare them for and then deal with the aftermath of going through that process? It would be Avalon Sexual Assault Centre because we are the only people who are doing that kind of work. So there are a number of issues around resourcing with respect to restorative justice and, again, I am not saying that restorative justice is not something that can be very useful in different kinds of crimes. I am saying when it comes to issues of sexual violence and domestic violence, we need to be very careful and we need to ensure that the program is properly resourced and currently it is not.

MR. PARENT: I appreciate that and thank you for that clarification and the final question is probably more for this afternoon, but I'll just throw it on the table because when one looks at the larger society, you talked about in some of your pamphlets sexual innuendoes, jokes, pornography, all that sort of thing is not to be tolerated and I appreciate that, but I guess there's this sort of frustration that you're trying so hard and yet in the larger society, violence is condoned in movies and games, the exploitation of women through pornography. Beyond that there's sort of this, you know, frustrating, trying to change these attitudes at the micro level and yet the larger society as a whole seems to mitigate against it.

I remember thinking, for example, and in no way am I condoning, but what happened in the prisons in Iraq, but I mean you could go into your local video store and you can get degrading, exploitive, violent images that really have kept pushing the envelope all the time and so I appreciate what you're doing. I just wonder whether the larger society is, whether saying one thing on one hand, yes, you know, this is a good program and then on the other saying something different, but that's probably a discussion for later in the panel, but it must be frustrating at times for you people and kudos to the Legislature here and to, was it, Joan, for putting forward her bill on the video games because I really do worry - what is that doing to our youth? What message is that giving and then how can we condone that sort of thing because I'm sure there's a linkage.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, you're right, it is very frustrating and I think, you know, it is important to recognize that sexual violence and violence against women in general is the responsibility of our society to stop perpetuating the myths and stereotypes that are associated with women and, you're absolutely right, it's very difficult to try to penetrate people's mindsets and to do that with the kinds of resources that we have. There's no doubt in my mind that what we need to be doing is dealing with kids at a younger and younger age and we constantly talk about what women should do to prevent sexual violence. What we really need to be doing is talking to men because 98 per cent of sexual violence that occurs is perpetrated by men and what we really need to do is we need to be talking to our sons about this and trying to start at a younger age. You know I really think elementary school is where we need to start about educating around the importance of respectful relationships.

MR. PARENT: I would say even younger. My wife worked for years in the equivalent of a Head Start Program in the South Mountain . . .

MS. IRENE SMITH: Oh, yes, yes, I've very familiar with that.

MR. PARENT: And it was incredible. I mean there was one case and then I'll leave it at this, I now have gone over my time, but one case where this father would beat his son with a belt buckle every Friday, drawing blood, or enough to draw blood, and when they finally got to the root of it, his father did that to him and he in some sort of twisted way thought this was the way you raised a son properly. When they finally said, well, did you like your father? No, I hated his guts, you know. Well, what are you doing to your son? And that was far before elementary school. So I agree with you, but I would say we need to push it even further.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, you know, and I'll just make this one comment. I, too, worked for the Head Start Program, I think I was probably 17, my first Head Start Program, that I think was in Whitney Pier in Sydney. I also worked in Beechville and I also worked in North Preston and, you're right, it is at that age that you need to start discussing with kids what is acceptable and what is a reasonable relationship and what a healthy relationship is all about.

MR. PARENT: Thank you very much. Sorry to take too long.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Next, Russell MacKinnon.

MR. RUSSELL MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, my first question is, is there anyone from the Department of Justice present here today?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Not that we're aware of.

MR. MACKINNON: Is there anybody from the Department of Community Services here today?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. MACKINNON: There is?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Judy Jackson is here.

MR. MACKINNON: You indicated that you have a clientele of approximately 700 a year, is that correct?

MS. IRENE SMITH: No.

MR. MACKINNON: I hate to use the word clientele.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, well, I'm not sure.

MR. MACKINNON: Approximately.

MS. IRENE SMITH: It's difficult to kind of say clientele, but with respect to women who receive individual counselling, clearly that varies, but in the fiscal year 2002-03 there were 1,419 counselling sessions delivered to 244 women. In addition to that, there were almost 600 hours of service that were provided to another 52 women who went through different therapy support groups. I want you to keep in mind that we have two full-time counsellors and one part-time counsellor and keep in mind that we frequently have a waiting list of another four or five months for women to come in to see. So that's just the counselling program.

Then the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, I think, responded to 147 sexual, that would be immediate sexual assault cases. Not all of those would have been reported to the police. In addition to that, we usually have another 500 to 600 calls that come in from individuals who are looking for either service or information referral that we might refer on to another organization or we might provide information to. That doesn't include calls that we received from service providers who are looking for information, resource and professional development.

MR. MACKINNON: Of the total number that come to your service a year, how many would you estimate to be family-related sexual assaults?

MS. IRENE SMITH: I can say, I'm thinking around 64 per cent of the women, around 64 per cent and I would have to clarify that, I'm sure it's in the annual report somewhere, but I'm thinking around 64 per cent of the women who receive individual counselling are survivors of child sexual abuse. What we have seen an increase in is the number of women who are turning to our service for counselling around the area of immediate sexual violence and that would be as a result of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program which is really only into

its fourth year. It was a pilot project that started off, it was a three-year pilot project, and we have just entered in April the fourth year of that project. So we are seeing an increase.

Now, that's individual counselling. When we were talking about individuals calling our office looking for various kinds of service, I don't have the breakdown in front of me, so, I'm sorry, I can't give you that information. I can probably provide that at a later date by looking through some of our previous resources.

[10:00 a.m.]

MR. MACKINNON: Of the total number of women who visit your centre for assistance, how many would you estimate have children that they indicate or you have some guesstimate who have been sexually assaulted as well?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Again, it's unfortunate, we don't have a database that's capturing some of the demographics in that respect. Certainly, I would say that a significant percentage of the women who come to our centre, are single moms.

MR. MACKINNON: And the 60 per cent you referred to are ones you feel have indicated they have been sexually abused as children?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Are survivors of child sexual abuse, yes.

MR. MACKINNON: You haven't been able to - I just want to be clear on this - determine if their children have been sexually abused?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well . . .

MR. MACKINNON: I know it's complicated.

MS. IRENE SMITH: It's a complicated question and, again, I think I need to stress that, the nature of our work, we don't, sometimes, maintain the kinds of statistics that you're looking for. Certainly, if you look at research that's been done, it's not uncommon for sexual abuse to happen within families, to continue to happen within families. I have one situation whereby a woman was coming to our centre, receiving counselling for child sexual abuse, and her partner of, I think it was, 17 years was supporting her through her counselling. Her daughter, her eight-year-old daughter, disclosed to her that her father had been sexually abusing her since the age of five. It's certainly very much, sadly, alive and well.

MR. MACKINNON: Does the Department of Justice or the Department of . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could I just suggest, make sure the mic is fairly close when you're speaking.

MR. MACKINNON: I know I am soft-toned. Thank you, Madam Chairman. (Interruptions) Some coaching from my colleague to the right. Does the Department of Justice or the Department of Community Services, to your knowledge, keep statistics or any data with relation to this particular matter?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Not to my knowledge, no.

MR. MACKINNON: You indicated approximately 1,400-plus individuals receive your service a year. One of the biggest weaknesses of government is that they are always trying to quantify things on a dollar basis. If they can't quantify, particularly when they're in their little pigeon holes, they just kind of shut it out of their minds and move on to the next target. Have you been able to ascertain, from a dollar value, the cost to society on a client-by-client basis or collectively, what the cost to society has been with regard to your 1,400-plus clientele?

MS. IRENE SMITH: No, I have not.

MR. MACKINNON: I know that's a loaded question, but you can see where I'm going with this, particularly if you're dealing with the issue of funding. You've been restricted for the last 10 or 11 years.

MS. IRENE SMITH: No, I haven't sat down to try to do those kinds of equations. It is difficult to look at the cost to society, but I think we need to be mindful of the fact that if women are not receiving the support and counselling that they need to heal from the effects of sexual violence, it is certainly going to impact on their day-to-day activities, including family responsibilities, work and relationships outside of the home.

MR. MACKINNON: One final question, Madam Chairman. Perhaps on that, if you could take that on notice, sometime, for future deliberations, you could reflect on that particular aspect of it. The other issue that I find extremely compelling is the issue of reporting to the appropriate authorities. You have 1,400-plus client individuals, women coming for your service. I'm sure there are cases that you feel should be reported to the Department of Justice or whatever authority to have action taken. I would tend to think that there are cases where women would come in and say, I don't want this reported.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Absolutely.

MR. MACKINNON: What percentage are you dealing with in that category?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well, I think that in the information I provided you around the statistics, nationally only 6 per cent of sexual assaults are reported to police.

MR. MACKINNON: What about in Nova Scotia?

MS. IRENE SMITH: What I'm saying to you is that it would appear, from the statistics the Halifax Regional Police are keeping in HRM, that that would be around the same, around 6 per cent. It's important to realize that, indeed, we are bound by legislation. If there's any suspicion that there's child sexual abuse happening, we have an obligation to report. We do that or would encourage whomever called, if we have any suspicion that a child might be at risk, then we would make that report. When it comes to adult women deciding not to report to police, I think that if you are reading the media, if you're looking at the media at all, you shouldn't be surprised why people don't want to report crimes of sexual violence. If you look at the woman in Kentville, I believe it was, who was subjected to six hours of cross-examination by the perpetrator, who was eventually convicted of sexual assault, you understand why women do so at a very personal cost to themselves, to go through that process.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Leo Glavine.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you, Irene, for a very enlightening presentation. However, I would have to move back to the element which has been very repetitious in terms of presentations to the Standing Committee on Community Services, and that is, of course, the lack of funding. I would just like for you to put it in terms of, if you were to be able to put in place the kind of program that you would like to see here in metro and indeed around the province, what kind of dollar do you think the province would need to be investing? I see you providing a service that requires fundraising, stretching of resources and so forth. If we were to put this into real dollar terms, to deliver the kind of necessary program right now for the province, what kind of ballpark figure?

MS. IRENE SMITH: I believe the last time I met with members from the Department of Community Services, I think the Deputy Minister of Community Services, and Judy Jackson may have been present as well, I'm trying to remember the different people, at that time I think I was asking for about \$52,000. Now I need to stress that that is just dealing with metro. That is not a provincial. We were asking for monies to just maintain what we have. We weren't looking at expanding, we were saying give us what we need to just operate the service that we're currently operating within.

I think if it was a provincial thing, I've never dreamt beyond the immediate because I think we would certainly be looking at significantly more dollars. Certainly there are a lot of communities in Nova Scotia that are interested in the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program. Currently I think we get \$250,000 from Capital Health to operate that program. So to use that as a blueprint for other communities, we would really have to do, I think, some work with other community groups in the province to find out what kinds of resources they currently have in place and whatnot. But just to maintain the basic core that we have now, \$50,000 for Halifax region would do it, which is a pretty small drop in the bucket.

MR. GLAVINE: Is it meetings that you use in order to work on securing the funding? Is there any other means? For example, do you have any correspondence to the department outlining your needs?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, yes.

MR. GLAVINE: You wouldn't mind sharing some of that with the committee here?

MS. IRENE SMITH: I can. I can tell you that when Bill Campbell was the regional director for Community Services - which has got to be in 1998 - I presented to him. The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre has been contacting the Department of Community Services at every level of government, explaining the need for funding.

In 1996, Avalon Centre went through an internal review, looking at how we were spending our money and what was the need of the community. That involved talking to other community service providers as well as doing focus groups with volunteers, staff. It was an independent internal review that was done and the outcome of that review was the reallocation of resources to be able to provide individual counselling and to be able to deal with the demands from the community. At that time we went to the Department of Community Services and said, we have undergone a review, we have reallocated our resources, we've redefined the qualifications needed for staffing to be able to respond to the demand of community and this is what we need.

So, we've been talking to them since 1996 and I certainly do have documentation of letters that we've written, presentations that we've done right back to actually doing a press conference talking about the fact that we're going to have to cut services.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you for that. If you could share with the committee some sampling of that, I think perhaps at a later date, it could be revisited . . .

MS. IRENE SMITH: I'd be happy to do that.

MR. GLAVINE: . . . legislatively and so forth. Just one further question for now. In your opening remarks you were talking about the service and you certainly seemed to indicate that it was pretty well for women.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes.

MR. GLAVINE: And that is the case?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes. Let me clarify that. Certainly the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program responds to any immediate sexual assault - 13 years of age and over - and that includes males. The majority of our cases have been women. We do receive calls from

men who are looking for services and we try to provide what information we can and refer them to where we can, but we don't provide individual counselling for males and we don't deal with children.

The IWK has that child protection team that's mandated to deal with child sexual abuse or children who have been sexually assaulted. I must say, they're in need of taking a look at how they're doing that work because we know that children who have been sexually assaulted are not receiving the immediate service that they need.

MR. GLAVINE: That's a pretty frightening comment.

MS. IRENE SMITH: It is a frightening comment.

[10:15 a.m.]

MR. GLAVINE: Just to go back for one quick moment here. In terms of adults and in particular here you're saying very little services are available for males. How about the adult male who is going through the many mental health issues as a result of child sexual abuse? What is available in the province? These are people who often are out of the workforce, difficulty coping, the whole gamut and I'm just wondering what is available to them?

MS. IRENE SMITH: If they have health coverage, insurance coverage through their workplace - if they're not working, obviously they're not going to have that - there's private practitioners. There is victim services if you report the crime to police, then you may be eligible to receive some funding for counselling. If you don't report it and you don't have any health insurance, then you're limited to trying to access the mental health system. I can tell you that frequently we receive inappropriate referrals from the mental health system to deal with issues of sexual violence, issues of sexual violence as a child and now they're adults, so, yes, we receive all kinds of calls.

If you're a male survivor of child sexual abuse and you are unemployed, then the mental health system is the only thing I know of.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have three speakers left. Perhaps I was a little lenient early on, so I'm just asking the next two speakers, perhaps three or four minutes, if that's possible. Gordie Gosse.

MR. GORDON GOSSE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I always seem to get that verbal warning before I start.

There are no sexual assault centres in Cape Breton, but we do have two very good organizations - the Cape Breton Transition House and Bea LeBlanc and Every Woman's Centre with Louise MacDonald. I'm just wondering, what kind of information do these organizations provide to the Avalon Centre? Do they provide any information to your organization about sexual assaults in Cape Breton?

MS. IRENE SMITH: I guess in a way, they do. Certainly we have done training in Cape Breton with the inner agencies. The issue of sexual violence is all around, in terms of confidentiality and record keeping and record disclosures and all of those kinds of issues. We recognize that they're in a situation that's pretty difficult because again, the transition houses' mandate is shelter and domestic violence. Yet, because there's nothing in Cape Breton, they are often forced to deal with the issue of sexual violence because there's no one else there doing it.

In terms of maintaining any kind of statistical information, we haven't had that kind of coordination, if that's where you're going.

MR. GOSSE: Yes, I was just looking for a little bit of statistical information. I'm very familiar with the services they provide - from before my role as an MLA.

My next question - I guess it's probably already been answered - the same program is not available in Cape Breton?

MS. IRENE SMITH: It is not available in Cape Breton. Again, the same program works in partnership with the three health care facilities and so we have partnership agreements that outline the responsibility of the same program, or Avalon Centre, as well as the three health care facilities. However, we have people from across the province, if they come to one of those three health care facilities, will receive the service. But we can't go to them.

MR. GOSSE: Okay, thank you. Males over the age of 13 years of age you said that there was nothing. What organizations do you refer them to?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Males?

MR. GOSSE: Yes, over the age of 13.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Again, the IWK does have a child protection team and they do have the mandate of providing services for children. Other than that, again, it's fairly limited. Private practitioners is one area that we referred to that we would refer them to. Locally, in Halifax, the Family Service Association might be another area that we would refer them to.

Again, I think that services for children in terms of counselling - short term and long term - are in desperate need of resources.

MR. GOSSE: Just one quick question. The Head Start Program in Whitney Pier that you worked with. I'm just wondering where it was located.

MS. IRENE SMITH: I'm trying to remember - that's a long time ago. We were housed at the mission, but there was a school just up the road in the Pier where we actually did work with the children.

MR. GOSSE: United mission youth centre. Okay. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Stephen McNeil.

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you for coming in today. Just to follow up on a few questions that Gordie had asked about the services being provided in Cape Breton. Who's presently providing services in rural Nova Scotia that you're providing them in HRM?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Sorry?

MR. MCNEIL: Who's providing the services in rural Nova Scotia that you're providing in HRM?

MS. IRENE SMITH: To a limited degree, women's centres, transition houses. I say limited degree because, again, it's not necessarily their mandate. Other than those groups - maybe with the hospitals they may be doing some work with children, but other than those groups, no one.

MR. MCNEIL: The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program - that was extended for the fourth year?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes.

MR. MCNEIL: Has there been multi-year funding put in place for that or is that up for review?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well, we have received funding from Capital Health for the current fiscal year, but there is not any official agreement that it's multi-year funding. Having said that, I think there is a general sort of understanding that it is going to be an ongoing program and we will be having some further discussions with Capital Health regarding the funding structure for the future.

MR. MCNEIL: In one of the booklets that you handed out they show the need for the service in 2001-02. It doesn't have the figures for 2003. There was a substantial increase in many of those numbers from 2001-02.

MS. IRENE SMITH: In the SANE Program?

MR. MCNEIL: Yes, same trend has been continuing?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Yes, it's actually the SANE Program. It's very interesting because what we have found is that, indeed, there has been an increase in the number of women who have reported the sexual assault and we do attribute that to the kind of care that they're getting with the SANE Program. Prior to the SANE Program a woman could go to one of the health care facilities and wait for six hours before receiving service and then have a physician who has never conducted a forensic kit do the work.

So we have now trained nurses who are specialized in the collection of forensic evidence and they're specialized in having an understanding about sexual violence and the aftermath of it. So they do the work around follow-up and they, you know, refer them to the Avalon Centre to do the additional counselling. So what we're finding is that, indeed, you know, if you build it, they will come. So the SANE Program has continued to see an increase in the number of women who are coming forward and reporting, not just for medical attention, but reporting to officials. It's a blueprint for the rest of the province, no doubt about it.

MR. MCNEIL: Yes, it certainly appears that way and not only if you build it, they will come, but I think the fact that they have the confidence in the program itself and the stability that has been provided, of course, from continuing year after year has probably been building to the fact that people are coming forward.

MS. IRENE SMITH: I also want to emphasize that there was a SANE Program within the institution itself a number of years ago and it failed. It was not successful and there was a program evaluation done of the SANE Program that clearly indicates that one of the main reasons why this program has been successful is because it's within the community and it's operating under the philosophy of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre.

MR. MCNEIL: You had also mentioned the Halifax Regional Police Department has created a sexual assault unit specializing in that. There are ongoing talks, I believe you said, with the RCMP. Are they going to be providing a specialized unit or are they doing more investigative, for their overall, like for an officer?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well, the Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP have actually joined together, in Halifax at least, in this sexual assault squad. So they're actually working in tandem with each other with the squad here in Halifax. With the RCMP, in terms of other jurisdictions, I'm really not familiar what their plans are.

MR. MCNEIL: Is there any move afoot to, I guess, talk with the RCMP to develop a program, a sexual assault unit with their force that will deal with rural Nova Scotia?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Sure. Yes, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program has an advisory committee which is comprised of the Halifax Regional Police, RCMP, Public

Prosecution Service, community-based agencies, the three health care facilities, and certainly, you know, there has been discussion about moving the SANE Program on a provincial level and the RCMP have been talking more and more about how they can work with a more coordinated response. So I think that they're in the beginning stages of reviewing some of those kinds of things.

MR. MCNEIL: And just really a final comment. One of the most, I think, disheartening parts of what we're talking about on sexual violence is when you hear somebody who will say I'm going to be really victimized by the system if I come forward and become involved in the justice system. I think that's an alarming comment when you hear that from people and when you really need to sit back and take a look at, of all of the programs which are wonderful, but if we do not deal with the system when people become involved in it, they're becoming a victim again. It's a critical point to the debate that we're talking about that we have to deal with upfront.

MS. IRENE SMITH: And maybe just to sort of provide some hope to that, I mentioned Dr. Ed Renner earlier, I believe. Dr. Ed Renner is a man who was quite responsible for receiving the initial funding to start the first sexual assault centre in Nova Scotia which, of course, is us. Ed has been working very hard in looking at how cases of sexual assault are prosecuted. He has done some long-term research and has really talked about how cases are prosecuted and the stereotypes that continue to be perpetuated within the criminal justice system.

I could really get quite involved with this discussion because I'm very inspired by the work that he has been doing, but let me share this with you and it will give you some hope as well, is that Dr. Renner has partnered with a woman from San Diego, who was the head of the sexual assault squad in San Diego and she has done some training with police officers, in particular, investigating sexual assaults. The two of them have partnered and applied to the Donner Foundation for funding to bring together eight communities in Canada to come and talk about how we can look at investigating and prosecuting sexual assault cases through a different lens.

They were successful in receiving funding for this and, therefore, Avalon Centre took the leadership and talked to the RCMP, the Halifax Regional Police, Public Prosecution Service and the SANE Program, and we have put forward an application that we've submitted to a committee that will be reviewing and selecting eight communities in Canada to come and attend this very forward-thinking conference that's going to assist us in looking at how we're doing our work and how we're coordinating our work in a different way. So his work is very inspirational to me and it gives me hope that, indeed, we can work together in trying to do a better job in prosecuting sexual assault cases. So, hopefully, that will help us and help women have a better experience with the criminal justice system.

MR. MCNEIL: We can only hope. Thanks very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We're almost out of time and I'm reserving the last minute and a half for my own questions if the committee members don't mind. Like others around the table, I'm really concerned that as inadequate as the services and programs that you're able to provide with the resources you have within the Halifax Regional Municipality, at least there is a core minimum of service and I'm really concerned about the lack of access and consistency of service provided in the rest of the province. Obviously, your centre is taking some lead in a province-wide way in terms of healthy public policy and training and a few things like that and, obviously, some of the community groups and agencies are trying to expand their mandate to meet some of the need, but how would you gauge the difference in level of service that a woman in rural Nova Scotia is able to access, to perhaps someone here in the metro area?

MS. IRENE SMITH: It's very difficult. I mean certainly we do see women from across the province who if they can get to the centre, they can. Again, that's that whole issue of demand for outreach work. I mean we have the demand from those communities to come out and do that kind of work within their respective communities and I just have such a great deal of admiration for the women's centres in this province and for the transition houses in this province that are attempting to deal with all of that because where else are they going to go? So the rural communities are significantly disadvantaged financially to try to cope.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So are you getting requests from those areas that you have to turn down?

MS. IRENE SMITH: If they can come to the centre, they can have the service, but certainly we can't go to them.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, so if they can actually travel to Halifax?

MS. IRENE SMITH: If they can travel, we will see them, yes. I mean, again, we frequently have a waiting list so, you know, they may not be able to call and come in to see us the next day, but certainly if they're willing to come to the centre in Halifax, we would never turn anyone away.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just my last question and maybe unfair to ask you, but just who do you liaise with in the Department of Community Services? Is there a particular program branch that is responsible for these issues on delivery of service across the province?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Well, Bernard Anderson was with the province with the regional office and he's the individual whom we generally dealt with in terms of funding. He is gone and so, I don't know, Bernard has maybe been gone for a year and a half, possibly longer. I haven't talked to anybody from Community Services since he has left, but certainly in the past we have talked to the regional directors and we've talked to the deputy ministers, the assistant deputy ministers. We've met with people from the Department of Justice, Department of Health, over the years about the funding issue and about services required. As a matter of fact,

I can recall back in 1997, maybe specifically requesting a meeting with the Department of Justice, particularly Victims' Services and Community Services, to talk about the fact that indeed there was a significant void in services for male survivors. The Stratton Report came out around the same time. That was when the institutional abuse was happening, or being talked about in the province. We specifically asked for a meeting to talk about the need for establishing these services, and that's the last we've heard of it.

[10:30 a.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, so in the last year and a half there hasn't been anyone or any program from the department that has taken on this responsibility or provided leadership to the voluntary sector who are working on these issues, that you're aware of?

MS. IRENE SMITH: No. I mean, anytime that there has been any contact with the Department of Community Services around funding, around program needs, we have always taken the initiative and we've always done the groundwork and provided the information, but quite frankly, since Bernard Anderson has left, there has been no initiative from the department to make any contact with us whatsoever.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. We are running overtime. Did you just want to take a minute or two and sum up, or is there any point that you wanted to make that hasn't come out this morning?

MS. IRENE SMITH: No, I don't think so. I certainly truly appreciate the opportunity to share with you the work that we do.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I know there are some questions, so what I'm going to suggest is that we take a five-minute break, and if individual members want to talk to Irene just quickly during that break, you'll be . . .

MR. RUSSELL MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, if I could put on the record - our witness has made a rather concerning statement about the service being provided by the IWK for child abuse. Is it possible to ask the witness to give some clarification on that, the inadequacy of that program at the IWK? I find that a very concerning comment.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is that something you're comfortable in responding to, Irene?

MS. IRENE SMITH: It's a little bit difficult because we know that through the SANE Program there have been parents who have contacted our office who have not felt that they've had access to the kinds of supports that they've needed. Really, beyond that, our work with them is fairly limited, and so I would feel it would be difficult for me to respond in a way that I think would be as informed as perhaps it should be.

MR. MACKINNON: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The Department of Health is certainly under our jurisdiction, part of our mandate, so if the committee members want to, we could discuss possibly having officials from the IWK come in our next series of committee meetings, but we can discuss that when we set our agenda in the Fall, if that's okay.

MS. IRENE SMITH: I just want to stress again that our experience with that is limited, but from contacts with parents who've tried to access services, it has not been adequate for them.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Was there anything else you wanted to comment on?

MS. IRENE SMITH: No, I just thank you very much for the opportunity.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, not at all, we thank you. You've given us some excellent information that has certainly alerted us to a lot of issues, I think, that we both individually and as a committee might be interested in following up on, so thank you very much for your time, and please extend to your staff and board and volunteers our appreciation for the wonderful work that you are doing in this community, in particular, and across the province. So thank you very much.

MS. IRENE SMITH: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So just a quick five-minute break, and I really mean five minutes, and we'll reconvene.

[The committee recessed at 10:34 a.m.]

[The committee reconvened at 10:44 a.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could I ask everyone to take their seats, please, and, could I ask Ron Kelly and Nancy Gray to come forward, please, with their presentation on the Men's Prevention Program?

Welcome. Are you each going to do a brief presentation, or how do you want to arrange that?

MR. RON KELLY: Actually, I'll be doing the presentation this morning and Nancy will be helping me in terms of fielding questions.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Great, would you like to start, please.

MR. KELLY: First of all, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be here today. It really is a good chance to sort of put democracy in action, and I really appreciate it. I'm going to keep the presentation fairly brief this morning, about 10 or 15 minutes, to leave time for questions. Basically what I'd like to do is give a brief overview of the Association of Men's Intervention Programs, a little bit about context to how we work, and go over some of the challenges and recommendations that we're facing.

I'd like to start by saying that the Association of Men's Intervention Programs started in about 1991 and we represent the six programs in the province that are primarily funded through the Department of Community Services. Each of our programs are autonomous, community based, non-profit organizations with a community board of directors. It's a fairly informal association in the sense that we don't have any paid administration for the association and we just get together from time to time throughout the year.

I'm just going to review the various programs and where they're located. The New Start program is in Halifax; Alternatives is in Bridgewater; the Bridges program is located in Truro; New Directions is in Amherst; New Leaf in New Glasgow; and Second Chance is in Sydney.

A little bit of the history as to why we exist. Back about 25 years ago, women in this province, and in Canada and around the world, were organizing around the issue of violence against women, and it was identified at that point that there was a need for work to be done with men, the perpetrators of the violence against women, so really these programs grew out of a community response to that. I know the New Leaf program - the one that I work with - has been in existence now for about 20 years, and what we do is we provide an opportunity for the men to come to terms with their behaviors, to understand why they're doing that and to have an opportunity to change those behaviors. So we have an issue of accountability in terms of the communities we work in.

The programs that were first up and running were, as I mentioned, the program in Pictou County - New Leaf - and the programs in Amherst and Halifax. We were up and running, all three of us, in about 1991 and then in 1992-93, Truro, Sydney and the Bridgewater programs came onstream.

The package that I handed out in the blue file - and I understand there has been a little politicking here already this morning about this, but this was quite coincidental, the selection of the blue file - I just wanted to alert you to the large pamphlet here and I'll be going through that. This was the presentation that we made to the Department of Community Services, back in May 2003, and I just want to highlight a few of the points in there. The first point is that we work according to standards of practice that we developed several years ago, and I brought a number of documents with me which I'll be handing over to the Chairman at the end of the day. I'm assuming that maybe people are familiar with the standards of practice that we've

developed - you may have already seen them or maybe not. I'll hand those in later and I think this will probably come up in some of the question and answer period.

I wanted to review, on Page 3-7, some of the core services and programs that we deliver. Obviously we have services for men that include things like group counselling, individual counselling and support services; we have interview processes that men go through in determining where they're suitable for the programming; case conferencing from time to time; and then of course we make referrals to other agencies and receive information from other agencies, which I'll describe a little more later on but, as the previous presentation, I think sort of alluded to, there are a lot of interconnections that we have in our communities.

One of the other components that we have is a partner contact component. We feel it's absolutely essential that all the programs that work with men have that in terms of safety. So the main purpose of having contact with the partners or ex-partners of the men we work with is for the safety planning. We help to demystify the men's programming to make it more understandable to the women as to what kind of a program their partners or ex-partners are in. There's group and individual counselling offered, and there are partner contacts and safety checks done from time to time, and also advocacy and support services and information and referrals.

In terms of community programming we all have various components of outreach that we're involved in in terms of community education and awareness, advocacy on the issues responding to current things that are in the media, whatnot, multi-agency coordination and linkages, which I'll describe more later. We also get into a fair bit of supervision of students, either from community colleges or students who are in social work programs, and from time to time we're also involved in training for professional staff, whether it be police or CAS workers, probation people, whatever.

In addition to those core services, there are also a couple of things I want to mention. The New Start program in Halifax has done a lot of work with local minority groups in terms of First Nations, Black and immigrant communities. The New Leaf program in New Glasgow is currently running a school program that we do with the local transition house, Tearmann House, and it has been running for a number of years and, when people were talking earlier this morning about the issues, the term "prevention" really seemed to come forward, and in many senses that's what we see the school work as - and I can describe that a little more during question period. Also, we're running a parenting program up in the Pictou County area which is, again, not a core service but an example of a complementary or additional service that we're providing around the issues, because it's not only women who are affected by the abusive behaviors, of course it's the children as well.

In terms of the community linkages, on Page 3-13, I wanted to talk about some of the organizations that we do work with, and there's quite an extensive list there. What I wanted to

do was - I've highlighted about maybe two-thirds of those - just mention those in terms of, that those are likely the organizations that pretty much all of the men's programs would be interacting with: Mental Health; Addiction Services; Family and Children's Services; Children's Aid; the John Howard Society; RCMP and local policing units; domestic violence coordinators; probation; parole; community-based service clubs; churches; elementary and junior schools; universities and colleges; transition house members; women's centres, family resource centres; Department of Community Services locally; doctors; hospitals; youth agencies; Victim Services; families; and sexual assault centres. Those would be the organizations that all of the six funded programs would characteristically be interacting with on a fairly ongoing basis.

The challenges that we're facing are many of the programs are facing impacts associated with long waiting lists. It was mentioned earlier that the demand for services is up and like many of the organizations that you will be hearing from, we have not received any real budget increases ever since we have been in operation, really, in the sense of being able to extend our services. So what that has meant for us is that in some cases, programs have had to put clients on waiting lists, which in situations where you are dealing with safety for people, it's not the most desirable situation. So we are attempting to deal with that but I just wanted to make the point that the lack of resources does result in that from time to time.

No. 2 on the next page is, of course, Increasing Demands for Service. I often get asked the question whether there is more violence in society today or really what is going on. I'm not sure there really is more, my sense is that as a society we are becoming less tolerant of it, we are starting to deal with it more, and more people are coming forward. With some of the changes that we have seen in the justice system, it means that more situations are coming to people's awareness.

So we are getting an increased demand for services and also, because other services are not being delivered in the way that they could be or formerly were, we are dealing with a lot of clients who have other issues. So they come to us with one presenting issue but they have other issues around homelessness or some of the issues that were mentioned earlier around sexual abuse issues.

Meeting Client Needs. Again, similar in terms of clients dealing with mental health problems. I know one of the difficulties we face in our community is if someone goes to Mental Health and they have been involved in a domestic abuse situation, they are automatically referred to our program and they don't receive the Mental Health services. Unfortunately, that does present somewhat of a problem, in terms of situations. There are also other issues in terms of client needs - especially in the Halifax area - around new immigrants, people whose first language is not English, also accessibility issues for people coming to the program.

One of the main things that we have seen - just to move on to No. 4 - is around Provincial Coverage. There has been a situation that as you, I'm sure, were aware, when I was reading the programs and where they are located, is parts of this province are covered and parts of this province are covered well and other parts are not covered at all, and that is a major issue in terms of fairness to people that they have access to all of these services and it continues to be an ongoing issue. We feel in many ways the discussion should be based around the principle that where there is a transition house, there should be sort of a corresponding men's program to deal. Just on that point I would like to mention that all of the men's intervention programs work quite closely with the local transition houses, just in terms of how they work on the issue.

In terms of Local Coverage, there are difficulties that a number of us face in that regard, too, because of constraints, people getting to programs, that kind of thing. I will speak today more from the experience I have with New Leaf because of course that is what I am familiar with. I know that we work with clients who come all the way from the Tatamagouche area, all the way down into Guysborough, Canso, up into the Port Hawkesbury area through Antigonish and right up into Cape Breton, so it's a huge catchment area. We don't travel that area, we base our program in Pictou County but the clients are basically coming to the program from those kinds of distances.

We also have a number of issues around Resource Limitations. It has been mentioned before being on a shoestring and we feel that we are in that situation as well. Many of the programs are quite underfunded, lacking staff, lacking a lot of resources and we make do in various ways but there are certainly some limitations around the amount that we have to work with, in terms of how it affects our ability to work.

I think we will probably get into a lot more, in terms of the questions and answers and I hope some of my cohorts will be able to jump in and add information. But just in summary, I wanted to mention that we really welcome more interaction with the Department of Community Services and as you are probably aware, we are involved in processes with our regional administrators right now to talk about some of the specifics that we deal with in each area. In many ways we feel that that has been lacking in the past, that we haven't had enough communication with the department, so we really welcome that, encourage that, and look forward to that.

We are working hard and we are working on a shoestring but we feel if we can continue the work and continue to talk about how we can do the work in regard to the government and other organizations, that there are many opportunities out there that we can seize upon to make this province a safer place for those who are most vulnerable from family violence. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Ron and Nancy are now available for questions. I have Mark first.

[11:00 a.m.]

MR. MARK PARENT: I will keep myself short because I took too much time last time. Two very quick questions. I'm glad you highlighted the spottiness of the coverage and I'm cheered to hear that you're working with the transition homes - I saw the director for our home, Chrysalis House, nodding. I do feel somewhat chagrined when I know that she has so much work just to keep Chrysalis House going and yet is willing to work. I guess it needs to be stated that the coverage needs to be fair.

In the Valley area, as you've noted - and I encourage you to keep noting that - we don't have proper coverage and perhaps one of the things that could come out of this session is some sort of statement about equal coverage across the province.

The question I have, I was going to ask the previous presenter, you sort of allude to it in a sense in your report, but are there socio-economic distinctives that characterize the people who use your service, or age distinctives? Is there any way of getting a handle on that or does it cut across all ages and across all socio-economic sectors?

MR. KELLY: It's a good question. Yes and no, in the sense that it does cut across all sectors and abuse is seen in all levels of socio-economic categories. What we do find is that we tend to work with clients who are maybe lower on the scale, just because of the way the system is, in the sense that a lot of the clients have other issues that they're dealing with so they tend to be more involved in the legal system. So yes, generally we find that that is the case.

MR. PARENT: And age, are there any distinctives in terms of age?

MR. KELLY: Age is interesting because what we've noticed - when I first started doing this work about 12 years ago, I think the average age was sort of in the 40s and now it's sort of in the low 30s, and I think that is because of a couple of reasons. The range is actually right from - I think the youngest fellow we are working with in our group right now is about 18, and we have had fellows in the group who are in their late 70s, early 80s, so there is quite a range. Again, the average would be sort of in the low 30s

One of the reasons that that's happening is because of the pro-arrest policy that has come through the Justice Department in the last few years. In other words when the police are called to a domestic dispute, charges are laid now and that gets someone into the system right away which is, in our mind, a very good thing because situations aren't allowed to sort of perpetuate for a number of years, so that has really lowered the age of the clients coming to the program.

MR. PARENT: Causal factors. Are there any causal factors that you know of; is there a high incidence of addiction with the clients you serve?

MR. KELLY: Addiction is a factor. We see violence against women as a social issue and that men are socialized differently from women in our society and because of power imbalances that are inherent in our society and still exist to a large extent, men often choose behaviours which are inappropriate and abusive and so basically, that is what we are trying to come to terms with. Our program is to deal with that reality.

MR. PARENT: My issue that I talked about earlier, yes. Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Nancy, did you want to add anything?

MS. NANCY GRAY: Yes, I was thinking that I agree with the identification of the stereotypes about masculinity in our culture and how they are problematized in the media and normalized, unfortunately. I think that that does exacerbate problems of violence that already exist, that media or glamorizing of masculine heroes who are violent, doesn't necessarily cause men to be violent but it becomes part of a normalizing factor that makes it harder for men to take responsibility for their singular acts in relationships.

Also, we notice in our program in Halifax that we have - we serve the county and of course, in this urban area there is a higher percentage of immigrant and visible minority men who would be accessing our services. We find that although there is not a higher incidence in those communities of violence than in the larger community, there are unique and very specific cultural and historical dilemmas that we need to be aware of and be mindful of in terms of addressing their need to take responsibility when often they feel that the system is not dealing with them fairly, in terms of justice and police response.

I think your question about causes opens up a lot of interesting tangents, and I don't think any of us would disagree, who work in this area, with Ron's comment that it is really - we look at the social context, but there are multiple factors to address, not just one, in terms of the men we serve.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Russell MacKinnon.

MR. RUSSELL MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, I believe the witness has just touched on the issue that I was thinking of, and that's with regard to different cultural barriers. There appears to be a considerable lack of understanding with regard to that, violence against women. What is your experience with these different types of issues? You've highlighted that it is an issue but not necessarily more pronounced than any other sector of society. I'm quite interested in that because I know I have a number of cases that I'm dealing with in helping particular constituents, and non-constituents for that matter.

MR. KELLY: Specifically around cultural issues?

MR. MACKINNON: Well, it's the lack of understanding of the different cultures by government officials, that's the focus. Do you have that experience as well?

MS. GRAY: I think, if I understand the question correctly, there is indeed a need to understand the barriers to service that exist because of cultural differences. If we have that understanding, then we'll be in a better position to be able to augment our services, support other agencies in the communities that may be able to address - for example, in Halifax, MISA does a lot of work with new Canadians and we collaborate with them in an advisory capacity in terms of their education and training and support of new Canadians, around Canadian laws and the transition, as a newcomer. We also have an advisory committee from the African-Nova Scotian community that supports us in our outreach and in our identification of barriers to services.

So we're very interested in partnerships with multiple agencies to address the gaps to services and barriers that we may not recognize but that we need to address to make service more accessible and also more user friendly, so that it doesn't become something that happens after a man has been charged and the family has been separated and the children have been taken away, but that we can do more preventive and educational work. That would be our hope.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, do I have time for one more? That touches on a very important issue, particularly with immigration, because we're, perhaps in my view, one of the best countries in the world to live, if not the best. But when we open up our doors, we open up our doors to a whole range of opportunities and issues that perhaps we wouldn't have contemplated 20, 30 years ago, and therein lies, I believe, some of our problems of our own making by not properly educating new Canadians to the realities of what's acceptable and not acceptable in Canada.

MS. GRAY: I'd like to respond. I agree, and I think that we need to provide services to new Canadians, and we also need to educate ourselves in terms of the experience of newcomers and the fact of the things we take for granted in our culture, when people who come from cultures that often have rich and very different traditions than we would. For example, even around women speaking up in a public way or speaking against something that her husband would have done, that would be a real taboo for many women from other cultures.

I was actually able to attend a national forum on this issue in Ottawa last Spring that was funded and organized by the Canadian Council on Social Development. I could make their publications available to you.

MR. MACKINNON: In closing, with regard to the issue of the number of reported cases, you've indicated that perhaps there's not more today than, let's say, 10 years ago, but the fact is that it's become more public. Could you provide us with some statistics on that?

MR. KELLY: I could, yes. I wanted to mention that in terms of the number of referrals we're getting, they're certainly up. I think I was referring to the fact that violence in general in society, you can read different studies that say, in some cases it's up, in other cases it's down. The number of referrals that are coming to all our programs has increased dramatically over the past number of years. I have stats on our program specifically, and what I can do is I can get those statistics to you for the other programs as well.

MR. MACKINNON: Thank you.

MR. KELLY: I don't have them at my fingertips. Just as an example, I know at the New Leaf program we deal with over 100 new clients per year, in addition we have people who are carry-overs from the previous year, in terms of if they're on probation, say for two years. So we're basically dealing with about 150 clients or so a year. Those are the adult males that we're working with.

MR. MACKINNON: In closing, it may not be up but I would respectfully submit that it's certainly a lot nastier than it was 10 or 20 years ago. I don't know if it's because of drugs, alcohol or what, or more publicized. The severity of the abuse is nastier than I've ever witnessed. Maybe it's all the media exposure to the realities.

MR. KELLY: I would concur that there are other factors, especially around the issues that you raise around drug abuse. That's brought a whole new aspect to what we're dealing with, not that the drug abuse is a new issue but it certainly is new in terms of the variety of drugs that are being consumed.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could I just ask that the information that's been requested of you, if you could make it available to our committee clerk, Mora Stevens, then she'll make sure it's distributed to all members of the committee. So that would be great, thank you.

Next I have Stephen McNeil.

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you for coming in and for your presentation this morning. Page 3-13, the roles in the community and the linkage, you mentioned in there elementary, junior and secondary schools, as well as the adult learning networks. Could you just expand a little bit on that and what's happening there?

MR. KELLY: Yes. A number of our programs around the province are involved in going into the schools and doing presentations, basically starting at about a Grade 6 level and working right up to Grade 12. Those presentations are generally done with both a male and female facilitator, and those presentations are around the issue of dating violence, violence in general, healthy relationships, those kinds of issues. They're interactive presentations so that the students really do participate to a very high degree and what we found was that the students are quite savvy around this stuff. What they really need is an opportunity to bring forth their

views and opinions in a forum to discuss it and so we do use some video resources and discussion. It's a very good program.

[11:15 a.m.]

I know, just in our work we touch base with over 3,000 students a year through the school programs. To me, that's really the preventive aspect of what we're doing. Working with the men is valuable and it's important, but to actually have the opportunity to do some of that preventive work is, I think, really essential.

MR. MCNEIL: I see there the adult learning networks summer program with . . .

MR. KELLY: Yes, a number - it's not so much a formal program and maybe some of the other programs can speak to the specific ways that they work with the adult learning centres, but I know in our community we have a linkage there in the sense that often somebody will be referred specifically to our program if they're having difficulties in the learning setting, maybe directed against other female students or against female teachers - that kind of situation. We have gone in and done general presentations around the issue, just in terms of awareness.

MR. MCNEIL: Also, during your presentation you alluded to the member for Kings West, you had said some changes in the justice system were making people more aware of the program. What kind of changes?

MR. KELLY: I'm thinking mainly of the pro-arrest policy and the fact that there has been more in the media as well around abuse issues so I think in general people have a better understanding. My sense is that people feel that society in many ways is less tolerant of violence, although obviously there are examples where people can pinpoint that isn't the case. I think in general, the message is getting out there and we're starting to deal with issues that we didn't before. So in terms of physical abuse and emotional abuse I think we've sort of made some great strides. I think we still need to make great strides around the sexual abuse area. That's one area that continues to be not recognized, not dealt with enough in our society in general.

MR. MCNEIL: Part of that may be highly defective. There are regions in this province that are not being served at all. I think in both presentations today there were areas that were highlighted that there's insufficient service really being provided.

MR. KELLY: Yes. I think you mentioned rural before - you brought that out in one of your things - I guess one of the critical factors that we see around the issue of violence against women is the issue of isolation, geographical isolation. Many of the provinces find themselves in those situations and it's a very serious problem that has to be dealt with.

MR. MCNEIL: One of the challenges in so many aspects of rural life, but particularly for people who are being abused, it's the cost of getting to services and all those things. The closer to the community we can bring the services that we provide, it's obviously much better for everybody.

In the presentation that you handed out, there are six recommendations that were given to the department in May 2003, I believe?

MR. KELLY: That's correct.

MR. MCNEIL: The second one, obviously is the one that was talking about recommendations that we enter into, discussions with the department regarding opening branch offices or the provision of additional resources or programs that can occur in areas of the province not currently receiving services. We've talked about that a bit this morning, but the other five - could you give a brief report card on where we are on these six recommendations? Have any of them been dealt with?

MR. KELLY: Let me just take a little glance here and I'll ask for some help from my . . .

MS. GRAY: We have entered into regional discussions, and as well, we had a response from the Department of Community Services to the coalition report. The planning stages for change have begun in terms of consultation on a regional basis, but we haven't gotten to the stage of looking at specific pilot projects or what the next steps might be. But we're certainly in discussions that are creating a sense of moving forward together, which is hopeful.

MR. KELLY: Around the pilot projects, that's one example of where maybe some other funding could be sought in terms of federal funding. Often there are start-up funds to do pilot work and I know there are a number of communities that have come to the various programs and requested that there be some involvement to widen the areas that we do cover.

MR. MCNEIL: Thanks very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Nancy, did you want to respond to any of those other questions? Did you have any additional comments before we move on?

MS. GRAY: No, thanks.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Fine. Gordie Gosse.

MR. GORDON GOSSE: Thank you for being here today. I'm looking at this Second Chance program in Cape Breton and on Page 3-15 of the report, it says the Second Chance - has it given up public education? You talked about that with my colleague, in the schools in

Cape Breton because the referrals were so high in Cape Breton? I notice in 1999, referrals went from 5.4 a month to 11.4 a month for 2002-03. I'm just wondering with the referrals being so high that they've had to give up their public education program in Cape Breton?

MR. KELLY: Yes, that's my understanding. The Second Chance program is the least funded program in the province. Unfortunately that's resulted in some real difficulties for them and I know they're pursuing other ways they can deal with this, but it has limited the work they're able to do. Ed was not able to be here today, but he did pass along some notes to me. I concur with what you're saying - it has limited their work. I don't know specifically how that has happened other than I know that a few years ago they were doing education programs; my understanding is that's not happening.

MR. GOSSE: That's what I thought. In the Second Chance program, because of this trend, they're saying that other organizations within the CBRM have been trying to duplicate the service, but I read here in this report, this is a trend that could result in services being offered by well-meaning but untrained individuals that would put women and children at risk. Do you feel that this is a true statement by Second Chance?

MR. KELLY: I think there's certainly the potential. I know sometimes people will try to address the issue of family violence, but it takes a very specific perspective. The thing I mentioned before around the safety to women is that we feel it's essential to have a women's component to address that concern. Sometimes programs do come up that try to deal with the issue of working with men without having that kind of component and it can result in problems. I can't speak specifically to that situation because, I'm sorry, I'm not aware of it, I can't speak on behalf of that organization. Ed Burke would be able to talk to you about that specifically.

MR. GOSSE: Okay. It says in the report here, the Second Chance program is looking at a takeover by the Cape Breton Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia. Would you know if that's a possibility or are negotiations ongoing right now for Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia to take over the Second Chance program in Cape Breton?

MR. KELLY: The last I heard about that was that was on hold. There were some concerns that had been raised and people were addressing those concerns. That's the latest I have on it. Nancy, I'm not sure if . . .

MS. GRAY: I spoke to Ed in May and that was my understanding as well. I just wanted to add that your point about our colleague and that program being underfunded or unable to respond to the needs is very poignant. Many of the programs are in a similar situation but I think it's even more heightened in Cape Breton where the whole island is serviced by one men's counsellor. They don't have funding for a full-time women's counsellor so they have to try to contract it out and monitor that women are getting the contact they need to ensure their safety is being monitored. We're all in a difficult position in terms of wanting to be proactive but

needing to be reactive dealing with the violence that's already being reported, and yet wanting to be proactive in preventing further harm and feeling accountable to the community to let people know that the services are available. But in Cape Breton, Ed has told me that - this was months ago and I don't think it has changed - he's in an unfortunate situation of not wanting to tell people about the services because he can't deal with the wait list. So I think Cape Breton is in the most difficult situation.

MR. GOSSE: Yes, absolutely. I'm just wondering about the abuse of prescription drugs in Cape Breton - would that be a factor also in this program?

MR. KELLY: It's a huge factor. What we talk about is there are root causes to violence against women and abuse in intimate relationships, but also there are a number of other factors, and I know specifically - we talk about addiction issues, unemployment, poverty, those kinds of things - prescription drug abuse is a huge issue. We've been hearing about it up in your community and I know they're really struggling to deal with that.

MR. GOSSE: Just one more thing, if I may. In the footnote on Page 3-17, Second Chance notes that a significant number of these clients are Canada Pension Disability and experience accessibility problems due to their disability in the combination with financial difficulties. These are all factors in this program in Cape Breton as to why it is stalled and why he cannot, in the referrals that he's getting from probation, justice, community organizations, and his list is just - I'm quite familiar with the Second Chance program, I was there when it started when Ian Williker was the director, many years ago. I just want to thank you for being here today and giving us comments on this. I just wish Ed was here.

MR. KELLY: You're welcome. I'd just like to add to your question. In terms of funding, one of the things I mentioned before was that when various programs came onstream, the process to receive funding from the Department of Community Services was to submit a budget to the department. The department took the budget, reviewed it and reduced it actually and then gave us a portion of that. We worked with that and that was the budget that was put in 10, 12, 14 years ago, depending on the program, and that's been the basis of where things have gone from this point. So there has been no overall review process.

To be entering into the regional discussions is a very positive thing and I don't want to diminish it at all, but at some point we do need to look at this in a provincial way too, just in terms of what programs are receiving what, what areas are covered, and what areas need to be covered - there's a lot of potential here to bring these programs to the province and to deliver them in a fair and equitable way. I think it can be done, but it's going to require some work to do it.

MR. GOSSE: Very good. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Leo Glavine.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you very much for the presentation. First of all, one of the areas that you identified as challenging and perhaps an ongoing challenge. I have some degree of familiarity with medical and mental health wait times. I'm wondering if you would outline or highlight what the big impacts are when you don't have those timely referrals addressed. I'm wondering if you could give the committee here a bit of a sense of what is missing and what people are deprived of when you don't have that occur.

MS. GRAY: Well, that again opens up all kinds of concerns about accountability and safety. In all the regions, now we have heightened concern about lethality issues, which we've always had but it's been heightened now by the development of protocols, both with the Department of Justice and the Department of Community Services, protocols to deal with risk indicators for lethality. In order for us to keep up - not just with the protocols, but with the many layers of accountability to let our referring partners know when there have been critical incidents that need to be addressed and people may want to flag in terms of child protection or breach of probation order, that takes more time and more heightened attention of course, and those issues are difficult to juggle when there are so many demanding priorities.

We want to be able to operate without wait lists. We want to be able to deal in particular with the most dangerous - particularly child protection issues - immediately. However it's easy for staff, who are very committed and dedicated and highly trained, to get over-extended and then again that concern about burnout, about being able to retain staff and be able to keep up with accountability. It adds to a sense of - a sense would be parallel with the despair around how can we provide these really essential services to the community and, at the same time, ensure that we're keeping up with all the necessary levels of accountability. It just adds a heightened sense of alarm, I think.

MR. KELLY: I might add that I think often when men come into the program it's because of a domestic assault. What you find when you start working with them is that in many cases there are other issues there - often mental health issues or addiction issues - that need to be dealt with. Sometimes they get referrals through the court system for those services, but there's also a level when we encourage the men to deal with those issues. Just to be clear, the programs are about dealing with the issue of abusive behaviours. It's not really therapy in the sense and so what we have to do is work closely with the other organizations.

One of the dynamics of working with men is often that they don't deal with their personal issues and they put those aside and then that becomes a factor in how things play out for them in other life situations. I would like to see some way of addressing that and reviewing that whole issue in terms of - and we do in various communities have inter-agencies on family violence and to some extent we deal with that, but because of the restraints on various programs like mental health they have policies and procedures whereby they accept or reject clients based

on various parameters. It'd be good to talk about that at some point in relation to this talk about that more from a larger sort of provincial basis, I guess is what I'm saying.

[11:30 a.m.]

MR. GLAVINE: Also, my colleague had asked about a little bit of a report card on the recommendations. I guess perhaps, more fundamentally, did the department reply and respond formally to those recommendations? They've seemed to be pretty considerable work in putting them together.

MS. GRAY: Yes, it was a very collaborative and time-consuming project, and it linked with many other recommendations of the past. We did have a response - do you remember the month? - it was quite recent, our response from the Department of Community Services.

MR. KELLY: Just give me a minute here and I'll work it out.

MS. GRAY: I think it was just January.

MR. GLAVINE: I was wondering if you could provide the standing committee a copy of the response?

MS. GRAY: Yes, I'll put that on the list.

MR. GLAVINE: Okay.

MR. KELLY: In many ways the response wasn't very thorough. This was the response to the three organizations, those being THANS, CONNECT!, and the men's association, just in terms of the amount of information that they responded with. However, having said that, I think it was understood that we were going to be entering into more detailed discussions on a regional basis - which again is good, and we're encouraged by that and we look forward to that process. However, I still think there's a need to deal with this on a provincial basis at some point to bring that back and what we are hearing from our first meeting that involved the deputy minister is that yes, in fact, there will be provincial meetings. So that's encouraging.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: If I could just mention to the members of the committee, we actually did receive a copy of that response from the department. It was sent out after we met with the Transition House Association and it would have been included in the binder that we had before the women's centres met with us, so you might want to check those binders.

MR. MCNEIL: Just for clarification, that wasn't a response to the six recommendations presented here, right?

MR. KELLY: The six recommendations were included in the . . .

MR. MCNEIL: Is part of that overall . . .

MR. KELLY: The document that we gave to the government, in their response they basically didn't respond to those recommendations. They basically just took out some information from our report and talked about their approach to the whole issue - they didn't specifically deal with the recommendations, no.

MR. MACKINNON: If this report gets any thinner, there will be only one side to it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Have you finished your questions?

MR. GLAVINE: I just have one further question. I was wondering about what's the breakdown for the funding for each of the programs? I mean is there some shifting of dollars there? Is there one program that's now getting a bit more emphasis? What kind of developments are going on there? You've talked about sustainable funding and so forth, but as I take a look at these programs, I would see that perhaps, you know, one or two of them would certainly have a higher requirement than perhaps another and I was just wondering if you could give me a little bit of a background as to how each program is being funded and to what extent and if you could provide some figures, if possible?

MR. KELLY: Yes, we can provide some fairly up-to-date figures on that, I will do that. It goes back to that whole funding sort of history and there hasn't really been an updating in terms of how we're funded so that was based on what was happening quite awhile ago. Given the current situation with the caseloads and the areas covered and that kind of thing, that hasn't really come into the equation.

What happens every year is that we receive our funding from the department and we get quarterly cheques and then when the budget comes out, we're included in a budget line there, somewhere down at the bottom, and basically what we do is we submit a budget. Each of the programs submits a budget to the department and I know with our program we keep trying to get funding for the women's component. We submit that every year and the government sends back our budget just with the same amount. I guess what I'm trying to say is there isn't a process for discussion or negotiation around that.

So, in fact, what we do is we receive funding for our women's component from the community, the United Way funds. I think that's an important point. Like the programs, the amount of money we get from the Department of Community Services doesn't represent 100 per cent of what we work with. We get out there and try to get sources of money from other places whether it's grants or different programs. For instance, the school program that I was speaking about before is funded through the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia. The parenting program was funded through the Community Mobilization Program and the other programs do receive funding from other sources whether it's community groups, service groups in their area, that kind of thing.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I would like to ask a couple of questions now. On Page 3-14 of your submission to the Department of Community Services you talk about how your programs work in the community in terms of developing formal and informal relationships. You mention barriers to this, to the linkages, and you talk about the top-down government approach and I'm just wondering if you can give some examples or clarify that a little?

MR. KELLY: I appreciate that's only four words on a line. I think that what it's referring to is that often there are initiatives brought forward by the government that we're not involved in as much as we would like to be. The Domestic Violence Intervention Act, for instance, it has come in and is being instituted around the province and there are some very good things to that Act. We applaud a lot of that. However, we weren't involved specifically in how that was going to happen and we felt there were opportunities there for input not only from our organization, but other related organizations. I think that sometimes just the consultation process could be improved just around things like training, and we are starting to be involved more in the training. So there has been an improvement in that area that if there's something happening in the province where the perspective of a men's intervention program would be beneficial, then we are generally contacted and a representative from one of our groups will attend that and do some of the training around that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm also going to ask you the same question I asked Irene from the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre. Who do you liaise with in the department, who's taking responsibility? Is any program or division providing direction and leadership to the initiatives that you're working within?

MR. KELLY: We deal specifically with Judy Jackson within the department and, to some extent, we also deal with the regional administrator and I think that relationship is being enhanced now because of the process that we're involved in, the talks on a regional basis. So we look forward to that process as well, but our contact provincially is Judy Jackson.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: My last question is sort of around some of the root causes. I mean we've talked a little bit about early intervention and the need for it and I'm just wondering from your day-to-day work and from your knowledge of the larger issues affecting this, if there were two areas, for example, that you would say early intervention here would have helped the clients and the families that you're working with, what could we have done better in the early years? What perhaps needs to be beefed up quickly in order to prevent this from being a continuous cycle of violence?

MR. KELLY: Do you want me to start that? Go ahead.

MS. GRAY: Well, certainly services for youth are vital. I think it was Irene who mentioned lack of services for young victims of sexual assault and that's a grave concern and our program in Halifax has had some links, some collaboration with a child protection team at

the IWK because some of the children, the youth of parents in our program, needed service. So we collaborated and provided a group where young boys between the ages of 12 and 15 who had witnessed and experienced abuse at home by their father could have a safe place to talk about how they wanted to be different and how there are other ways of dealing with conflict. So, of course, that's not directly from our mandate, but it's certainly related and there was certainly a need and we have a waiting list now. Those same boys who were in that group want to continue and to even create a video for other boys. So it's very encouraging.

That's one of the pulls, well, if we devote more time for the need for youth, then we're going to have to take away - where there are only two counsellors working with men and one of them half time, how do we generate more of that support in the community and more of that to happen? So I think working with youth is number one.

I think, number two, more discussion about what some of you had mentioned before, about how this is really a social problem that we need to find language in our everyday life to address this and not wait until an assault has happened to address it, to really address the inequities and the stereotypes that perpetrate abuse.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ron.

MR. KELLY: There's also potential at the family resource level in terms of getting in and presenting; I could see, for instance, a local transition house in a men's program going in and presenting to the parents who are accessing the local family resource centre in terms of abuse issues. Unfortunately, we haven't pursued that because we don't have time. If we had a specific request from them to do that, we would probably find the time, but I guess what I'm saying is that there are ways that things could be worked so that whenever there's a chance for an intervention, that that would be followed through with.

I would like to see, in terms of Child Protection Services, too, ways that we can work together and the department can help facilitate those discussions so that we can actually look at doing things. For instance, the parenting program that we're offering is an excellent program. We had an evaluation done of that program and, to me, there is potential in terms of going to the federal government and seeing if some of the money that's through the Justice Department, is going to be channelled towards working with families involved in the legal court system. There is money federally that's going to be decided upon fairly soon and my understanding is - and this came out of our regional meeting - that there are some people within the department who can help facilitate those kinds of discussions with the federal people because, as a pilot project, this could be replicated across the province.

So we're struggling locally for funding, but if some major funds could be brought in from Ottawa for this kind of program, this could go across the province and it could help address those things in terms of that early intervention that you were speaking about with

families because the whole purpose of the program is to help the men understand the effects of their abuse upon their families and, specifically, their children. Once that's opened up and they can do that, then they can also grow in terms of understanding how they affect their partners, but often the door for that is to understand how they affect their children and it is possible to do so. Again, it gets back to the whole of area of, I think there's huge potential here.

[11:45 a.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I think, Mr. Glavine, you had one quick question?

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Yes, I guess we have a little bit of time left here. I was just wondering about access to schools realizing that, you know, any kind of early intervention programs should measure strongly in terms of results. I'm just wondering about accessibility and just how widespread across the province do you deliver some of the programs?

MR. KELLY: The school programs?

MR. GLAVINE: School programs, yes.

MR. KELLY: I'll have to call upon my cohorts to answer that. I know in our area I've mentioned it already.

MS. GRAY: In Halifax we've been unable to respond to requests from high schools although we get them quite often and also church groups. We try to respond when we can, but our core service is to provide counselling to men and counselling and information for their partners. So although we're interested in youth and we really would want to support more prevention work, we don't have the staff to be able to do that kind of outreach although we're really interested and we like to support that happening. I don't know, I think across the province people respond year to year depending on how well they're being able to deal with their wait lists and the most pressing priorities in the community. So, unfortunately, prevention work often can't be a priority.

MR. KELLY: I was going to mention, in terms of the funding that did come from the Law Foundation, but that's going to be fairly limited if we're looking at some kind of provincial coverage. At some point it would be very interesting to enter into talks with the Department of Education around that because, to me, you've got these resources in the community, being the men's programs and the transition houses, that can deliver these programs and it's just a matter of sort of formalizing that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Parent, I think you had a second question?

MR. PARENT: Yes, I was going to pick up on your suggestion that I think you made twice and I think it's a great suggestion of federal funding that's available for some pilot projects. The question is, how do you then sustain those programs in the long run because the history that I've seen is that the federal government would come in with some seed money. The project, on a five-year basis, three-year basis, whatever, the project gets up and going. The community appreciates it and all of a sudden the funding dries up and it's left to the community to try to struggle to raise the funding itself or the provincial government has to then take it over.

How does one support new projects and yet also guarantee some sort of sustainability for those that are valuable because our communities just don't have the resources lots of time needed to support them. I guess, Victory over Violence, for example, in New Minas, the teen shelter there, you wouldn't be aware of it, but a wonderful program that we managed to get some provincial funding to keep it going awhile longer, but in the absence of a major funding donor, we just weren't able to keep it going. So it's a Catch-22 and I'm just wondering if you have any - you, obviously, must have thought of this issue?

MR. KELLY: It's a huge issue and it's always that thing that comes back that, yes, you can struggle and you can get those pilot funds, but how are you going to keep it going? I guess one of the things, if we can run a program and prove that it's effective and by using evaluations, then it might be easier to fund that on an ongoing basis for the province to pick up that funding at some point in time.

I think there's also potential with foundations. There is foundation money out there. All of the programs in the province, all the men's programs, don't have - we have someone we call the director and executive director, but we don't specifically have any funds for that person to be doing that job really in a sense. So what I'm saying is that we're very limited in terms of the amount of time that we can put towards going to foundations and trying to get money.

MR. PARENT: Is there money there at the foundations? I mean I know there's money for various projects, but is there money there for men's intervention, women's intervention, transition homes?

MR. KELLY: There's money for specific projects within a number of foundations across Canada. There's some significant money. Getting that money is a lot of work, you know, to get from A to B there are a lot of steps in between there and so I guess what I'm saying is if we could either have some help from the government on how to do that, or if we could have some funds freed up to be able to give some time to that kind of thing, but I think there is some potential there and maybe there are different partnerships. I know, for instance, in our area we're very supported by our local community in terms of some of the corporations that are in Pictou County that are very helpful with us. That's not all of them, but the ones that are quite helpful and, you know, I think if you can present something in a way that works and makes sense, I think people can and will support it.

MR. PARENT: You raise a very interesting point and perhaps the province does have a role in helping to do these grant applications, applications to foundations, because what happens is the people who are doing the work are so busy doing the work that to steal from doing the work to make the applications for funding becomes very frustrating and it's a good suggestion that should be explored further.

MR. KELLY: Yes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm actually going to interject here and I hope I'm not out of line, but I just want to caution the members not to see that kind of fundraising as a quick, easy answer to these dilemmas. I come from the voluntary sector and I've spent many, many years and lots of hours preparing these applications and I strongly believe that these basic services should be provided by all levels of government and that if there are supplementary services that community groups want to go to, to foundations and others, you know, certainly I would encourage them to do so, but I think all our citizens deserve a basic level of servicing and programming within this province, especially on some of these basic needs and issues as family violence.

So I certainly wouldn't want anyone here today to think that, you know, we're suggesting you go off and start raising money, you can look after your own communities' needs. I mean part of the problem is that we don't have very many community foundations in Atlantic Canada and so, you know, it's difficult to even get to first base in terms of fundraising with foundations.

Anyhow, that said, I am going to bring the morning session to a close. I want to thank you both, Nancy and Ron, you've made excellent presentations and now we've heard as a standing committee from sort of four of the major partners in providing services to people suffering from family violence. We've heard from representatives from the transition houses, from the women's centres, from the sexual assault centres, and now from the Men's Prevention Program. I think that gives us a good foundation of knowledge in order to go into this afternoon's round-table discussion.

So we're going to take a break for lunch. I certainly thank everyone who has attended this morning's session for coming and hope that you will rejoin us this afternoon at 1:30 p.m. We're going to sit the committee members and two representatives from each organization around the table, but we also have a podium so that those who are not able to sit here directly will be able to take part in the discussion. This afternoon we'll have an opportunity to talk a little more about the broader issues and also your recommendations for what we as a Standing Committee on Community Services can do to help you and possibly some recommendations that we can take forward to the government. So, again, thank you very much. This has been very helpful. We appreciate your time and interest and we hope to see you all back at 1:30 p.m.

[The committee recessed at 11:55 a.m.]

[The committee reconvened at 1:35 p.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Welcome, once again, to our all-day Forum on Family Violence. I think most of you were here at different points this morning, but I just want to remind you that you're meeting with the Standing Committee on Community Services, and we're just delighted that so many of you have chosen to come today. We realize this time of year is an extremely busy time and I'm sure each of you has three or four different things you could be doing at the moment, but we're very pleased that you've decided to help educate us and, hopefully, make some positive impact on some of these very serious issues that we've been discussing.

So as you're aware from the agenda, this afternoon we have a slightly different format in that we're calling this the Round Table Discussion. I just want to explain to you that the agenda for today was worked out in co-operation with the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia - that was the first group to appear before our standing committee and it was at their meeting that the offer to host a forum in the Red Chamber was proposed and accepted and it was certainly agreed that we would invite as many of the groups that are working on these issues as possible.

So the first part of this afternoon, we've invited each of the organizations to perhaps put two sort of official delegates around the table, but that's not to say later in the afternoon we won't have an opportunity for people who are in the audience to also take part in the discussion, and that's why we have the standing mic there.

We're going to start by having a presentation from each of the organizations just outlining their response to a couple of questions. First of all, "How can the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support your organization(s) and ensure that the programs and services you provide can be strengthened and enhanced, without the expenditure of more government funds?" The second question is, "If there was a small increase in government funds for your organization(s), how can the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support you and ensure that the programs and services you provide can be strengthened and enhanced?"

You may think that's a very light question, but someone asked over lunch what can the standing committee actually do, and really in some respects we're like yourselves in that we can influence and advise the Department of Community Services, but we don't have any direct control over what they do. Certainly through the forum today we hope to, first of all, increase awareness among the general public. We have media here and we have a media feed. There will also be a written transcript through Hansard Reporting Services, so that everything that is

said is documented. We certainly will try to act upon your recommendations to the best of the committee's ability.

You may be interested to know that our committee is made up of three members of each of the Parties, and we plan to present a report on our activities as a committee over the past year to the Legislature and we will have some recommendations in that that we will jointly work out, so hopefully some of our recommendations will respond to your needs. There is always that sort of ripple effect. What you tell us certainly makes us better able, within our own critic areas within our own Parties, to be more sensitive to the work that you're doing and also to the people for whom you are advocates. We're hoping through these small but numerous ways of influencing action that we'll be able to have some kind of positive impact on your work. We don't have any particular order, so I'm wondering if anyone would like to volunteer to go first in terms of your presentation. Is anyone anxious to get it over with?

MR. RUSSELL MACKINNON: On a point of order, Madam Chairman. The individuals sitting around the table, if they could introduce themselves?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you. I neglected to do that. Thanks very much, Russell.

[The round table members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Great. Thank you very much. Again, we will give an opportunity to those still seated in the back to take part in the discussion as the afternoon goes on. So now that you've had a chance to think, anyone offering to go first? Peggy, if no one is going to volunteer, I will volunteer you.

MS. PEGGY MAHON: Okay. Two of us are going to do our presentation. So I will just start by saying that we're very pleased to be here today, and we look forward to a good discussion on how we can improve services, the continuum of services to women in Nova Scotia. Rhonda.

MS. RHONDA HAINES-RICHARDS: Women's centres in Nova Scotia are community-based, community-led organizations that provide services and programs to women on a wide range of issues and in a wide range of crisis situations. We work with women and adolescent girls through an open-door policy and multi-issue entry points, using a multi-dimensional approach. Women come to women's centres for issues related to poverty, economic concerns, education and training, workforce re-entry, legal issues, housing, health, relationships, sexuality and sexual violence.

While violence against women is not a primary focus of women's centres it has been, and continues to be, of major concern to women's centres in our role in the provision of a continuum of services to women for the following reasons:

- Women may come to a women's centre in crisis related to an abusive relationship and we make a direct referral to a transition house, or for her partner to a men's intervention program.
- The issues women are facing when they are leaving an abusive relationship, or who have left an abusive relationship in the past, are access to social assistance, the need to re-enter the workforce, legal issues such as custody and access, the need to find housing, health issues related to the emotions and/or physical abuse they have experienced, and relationships with their children. They come to women's centres either through a direct referral from a transition house, second stage housing, as a partner from a man in a men's intervention program, from various government services such as the Department of Community Services, mental health counsellors, or on their own.
- Women who have been sexually assaulted come to a women's centre to seek support related to dealing with the legal system and health issues.
- In these circumstances women rely heavily on our core services of individual support counselling, individual advocacy and accompaniment, information and referral, our programs such as self-esteem and transition to employment.
- Because of our multi-dimensional approach to the provision of services of crisis intervention, prevention and community development, and the multi-issue of entry points mentioned, women's centres work closely and co-operatively with other agencies and are an essential link in the service network in our communities. We work with the community partners in ensuring effective protocols related to sexual assault and community education, and awareness programs related to violence against women.
- As organizations we seek to address women's equality issues. In this respect we have worked provincially with Avalon Centre; men's intervention programs; transition houses; and, nationally, to improve coordinated responses to violence against women and sexual assault in particular. We are partners in the Purple Ribbon Campaign; organize December 6th events in our communities; and are active members of our community inter-agency committees. It is in this context that we have come today to discuss with the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services, and with organizations that we work closely with in our communities, related to a community response to violence against women.

When we reviewed the questions provided by the standing committee, we had some difficulty determining how to respond. In our presentation to the committee in May, we presented the current pressures facing women's centres, in particular the issues facing women in rural communities.

Based on our discussion, the standing committee unanimously agreed to a motion that women's centres required adequate funding for adequate staff, in order to effectively work with women who are using women's centres core services. Your motion read, "That the Government

of Nova Scotia recognize women's centres as a vital service by providing stable, adequate funding and sufficient staffing levels to all centres in their community."

[1:45 p.m.]

Therefore, in direct response to both questions and your question of how to support women's centres, we ask that you advocate for women's centres with the Premier of Nova Scotia, with the Minister of Community Services, with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, and with your own Party caucuses related to the motion. In particular, we ask that you support the recommendations in our planning report to the Minister of Community Services, which we presented over one year ago, and to which we have had limited response.

In accordance with our recommendations and the standing committee's motion made on May 13, 2004:

- We ask you to support women's centres core services, in particular recognition that women's centres core services are distinct, essential, and integral to the community network of services provided for women; recognition for women's centres core services which include direct services of individual support counselling and crisis intervention, information and referral, individual advocacy and accompaniment programs, outreach, community education, community development initiatives and networks.
- We ask you to recognize and support the current demand by women for women's centres core services and service improvements, in particular full support and full funding for women's centres core services that enable the staff complement as defined by each women's centre, in order to effectively deliver women's centres core services; interdepartmental funding for re-entry training programs to be delivered by women's centres.
- We ask for support to find creative ways to effectively account for full benefits of the provincial government's investment in women's centres, full support and full funding for Women's Centres CONNECT!
- We ask for recognition of the strength of women's centres current linkages and co-operation as integral to the delivery of our core services.

There are also other ways that you can support us in our work. As we mentioned, women's centres work on women's equality issues; we therefore wish to raise the issue of social programs and their relationship to women's rights to equality under both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the international treaties that Canada and the provinces have signed onto.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has given a central place to the rights to equality of security of the person. Also, we want to refer to the International Human Rights

Treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW.

Women's centres are very concerned that in Canada we are marching down a path that is adverse to our commitments to the social well-being and the enjoyment of social and economic rights by all Canadians, and also to our commitments to women's equality. We contend that women's equality is not advanced by the current government agenda of downsizing government, cuts to social spending, privatization and deregulating the market - this hits women and hits them the hardest.

Cuts to social programs are a women's equality issue because women are not socially and economically equal to men and because social programs are a key equalizing force in our lives, particularly women living in poverty. Women are still assigned the role of principal caregiver for children, old people and men. Public childcare, schooling, post-secondary education, health care and long-term care all shift some of the burden of caregiving from the shoulders of women to the state. This has provided more opportunities for women to participate in employment and education and public life, increasing their earnings, their choices and their social participation.

Income security programs like unemployment insurance, social assistance, old age security and public pensions, have all provided ways of ameliorating women's inequality and softening women's economic dependence on men. By contrast, when these programs and services are cut, women lose good jobs. Our burden of unpaid caregiving has increased; employment and educational opportunities are narrowed; and women are less able to leave harassing, abusive, or dangerous work or home situations because unemployment insurance and welfare benefits are inadequate and fewer women are eligible. For the poorest women, cuts mean that our ability to feed our children and pay the rent, or to leave a violent relationship is jeopardized; basic security is threatened.

Cuts to social programs are also a women's equality issue because women are poorer than men. Government statistics show that in 1999, 18 per cent of women were living below the poverty line, compared to 13 per cent of men. These cuts are not gender neutral, nor are they race, age or disability neutral, they do not fall into an environment of social and economic equality for women. Furthermore, rural women are hit hard by closures and elimination of services. They have to travel greater distances to receive emergency and non-emergency services, including assault and rape-related care, pregnancy and childbirth-related services, and restraining or maintenance enforcement.

MS. MAHON: The federal Budget Implementation Act of 1995, which repealed the Canada Assistance Plan Act and left the Canada Health Act in place, took all the funds previously designated under the established program financing and CAP for health care, post-

secondary education, social assistance, and social services and rolled them into one instrument, as you know, called the Canada Health and Social Transfer, or CHST.

There were four problems with this Act: it eliminated key rights; it ended the 50/50 cost sharing for social assistance and social services; it rolled funds for health care, post-secondary education, social assistance and key social services into one undifferentiated block transfer; it also cut the total amount of the transfer from the federal government to provincial governments - and I know this isn't news to you as MLAs, but we wanted to put this point back on the table.

The latest step in this fiscal restructuring is a separation in the last budget of the CHST into two block funds, the Canadian Health Transfer and the Canadian Social Transfer. While the Canadian Health Transfer has a certain level of designation, the Canadian Social Transfer, so far, has no conditions or designations attached to it. The problem, of course, now is that the reduced transfer and the complete lack of conditions on the money that has been transferred, had left the provinces free to cut and diminish the programs that are most important to the most vulnerable people, like social assistance, legal aide for family law, child care and housing, and it diminishes social programs in a way that we feel ignores the equality rights of women. These are all issues of concern to the organizations around this table, as we work together in our communities to provide programs and services related to women's equality-rights issues.

Some of Canada's most significant commitments to women are set out in the United Nations UN CEDAW Treaty that we mentioned earlier. In 2002, Canada submitted its fifth report on its compliance with CEDAW for review by the UN CEDAW committee. In response the committee made 23 recommendations to the Canadian Government in January 2003. The reaction of this UN body is telling - they are stunned by the poverty rates of Canadian women. In one of the wealthiest countries in the world, they are shocked by the patterns of economic inequality and deprivation. They have recommended that Canada revise its anti-poverty strategies in order to address the poverty of Canadian women and of particularly vulnerable groups of women, not just the poverty of children. They understand the poverty of women and the poverty of children are intimately connected.

They have also recommended that Canada combat violence against women. In particular, that Canada step up efforts to combat violence against women and girls and increase funding for women's crisis centres in order to address the needs of victims of violence under all governments. In addition, they asked the federal government to reconsider its decision to back away from attaching conditions to the transfer of funds to the provinces because this is an important way of ensuring there are national standards to protect women in all jurisdictions.

Women's centres believe that vibrant social programs are integral to a just society and to an egalitarian one that treats women as equals. In Canada, because of the rights commitments that we have signed onto, we believe they are an entitlement, not a luxury. Therefore, it is

essential that we begin to insist on social programs as entitlements to claim effective social programs as rights and that the central social program infrastructure of our country and of our province is an equality delivering vehicle.

We therefore respectfully request that the Standing Committee on Community Services support women's centres by recommending to the Province of Nova Scotia that when considering spending priorities, the province must take into account the following: the negative impact on women of recent cuts and changes to social programs and services and both the domestic and the International Human Rights Law that guarantees equality to women in Canada. We also encourage you to advocate that Nova Scotia play a leadership role in ensuring women's equality rights are protected and that adequate resources are allocated to encourage observance by Nova Scotia of women's human rights and ensure women in Nova Scotia enjoy equality in real terms.

We strongly urge you to both recognize and support the work of organizations around this table whose work is focused on addressing the very issues that were identified by the UN committee in their recommendations to Canada. In particular, poverty, violence against women, legal and housing issues - all of which are interrelated as we provide the continuum of services to women in our communities. We ask you to advocate for adequate resources to address women's poverty and violence against women and, finally, as signified by your motion on May 13th when we met with you and reiterated earlier in this presentation, we ask you to advocate for the recognition of women's centres as a vital service by providing stable, adequate funding and sufficient staffing levels to all centres in their community. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Peggy and Rhonda. I think we'll have all the presentations and then we'll open it up for discussions. Who would like to go next?

MS. IRENE SMITH: I'll go next. I just want to say that many of the things that Peggy mentioned in her presentation were things that I was going to address as well, so my presentation will not be quite as long.

My first recommendation to the standing committee is to acknowledge the valuable work that the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre does for women in Nova Scotia by passing a motion that the Government of Nova Scotia recognize the vital and essential services that the Avalon Centre provides to women in this province by providing stable, adequate funding to ensure that the centres' programs and services are sustainable.

I would also ask the standing committee to recognize that the Government of Nova Scotia, federally, provincially, territorially has an obligation to actively work together to ensure compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, all forms of violence, and that the standing committee recognize the need to hold the Canadian Government, federally, provincially, territorially accountable to its obligation to take

action on the recommendations by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. In particular, that they pay attention to combatting violence against women, stepping up efforts to combat violence against women and girls, and increase funding for women's crisis centres and shelters in order to address the needs of women victims of violence under all levels of government. This, of course, would include stepping up funding for the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, women's centres, transition houses in Nova Scotia.

[2:00 p.m.]

The standing committee can support my organization and sister organizations from across this province by being political advocates and taking action and strongly supporting the establishment of a parliamentary committee on women's issues, ensuring compliance with the CEDAW. I was also going to talk a little bit about CAP and CHST, but Peggy covered that so I won't take any more time to deal with that issue.

In addition to these recommendations, in the package that we presented this morning, there is a list of important things that elected officials can do to address sexual violence - I won't go over those, but they are in your packages. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Irene. Mora stepped out of the room to copy something and I've just sent her a note asking - I don't know if someone who's been on this committee before would know - are we able to move motions at a forum or should we take those to our first meeting in the Fall? (Interruption)

MR. MARK PARENT: The committee's been duly advertised and I see no problem with it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, let's finish the presentations then, but just keep that motion handy. Who would like to go next? Yes, Ron.

MR. RON KELLY: Thank you. On behalf of the Association of Men's Intervention Programs, I'd like to try to answer these two questions that were put before us. The first question, without the expenditure of more government funds, there are a number of recommendations that I noted this morning in the presentation that I think can be addressed without necessarily any more funds.

They include No. 3, "The Department assist us by facilitating requests for federal funding to support additional programming and research into best practices.", including evaluation. No. 4 is the "Department assist us with the establishment of a communication infrastructure to support a sound information system." No. 5 would be the "Department further assist us to improve our efficiency by allowing us to explore options for free programming space, support staff, research expertise, etc.", and also fundraising. And most importantly, No. 6, we recommend the department work with the association " . . . to develop a framework for

looking at the issues of family violence." From those recommendations, I think those could largely be handled without the expenditure of much more funds.

Also, it would be helpful for us if the committee would help us and support us in terms of us being recognized as essential services. That could be handled by two main things. One would be a recognition within the budget process; we don't feel we're actually involved in any kind of process when it comes to the budgeting. Basically we get the money just sent to us whenever the budget comes down, there's no process to actually involve ourselves in. We would also like the government to sign on to the standards of practice that I talked about this morning; I handed a copy in to the Chairman after the presentation.

The second point I'd like to make is I think there could be some help coming from this committee in terms of ensuring that the talks all involved with the Department of Community Services on a regional basis remain meaningful. There's been some difficulty in the history of this whole process when the cuts were announced in the Spring of 2002 that we felt we were under the gun from those cuts. Now we're trying to enter into meaningful discussions. I think we're going to have to spend some time exploring the potentials that we can look at here and we're also going to have to look at issues on a provincial basis, not only regional.

Another point is we'd like the Department of Community Services to involve us at earlier stages, if there are going to be initiatives or training coming down. So, basically, what that point refers to is that as community organizations, we feel we have a lot to offer. It would help us to feel more respected as community-based organizations to be able to be invited into those processes earlier.

The last point, without more funds, would be that we would like to continue these meetings with the standing committee. I was getting the sense earlier that this committee is in the process of trying to meet with more organizations that fall under the Department of Community Services, and we feel it's a very useful thing. I would like to think that it just doesn't end here today, that we can continue this process of maybe yearly meetings.

The second question was if there was a small increase, and I would like to refer to the recommendations that all programs be maintained and supported with full and sustainable funding from the department and that discussions commence immediately regarding the establishment of branch offices for full provincial coverage. How we're going to arrive at adequate funding is largely unknown at this point. It may come out of the process that we're involved with from the Department of Community Services, but I guess time will tell on that. Something else that would be helpful, we feel, would be if there could be some way that we could talk about these issues on an ongoing basis.

It was unfortunate that the Family Violence Prevention Initiative was cut in this province because, in our mind, it did really significant work. It was a way to turn beliefs and

thoughts and initiatives into action. I think that you might consider reinstating that or some other model that could help move forward the work that needs to be done in this area. I will just leave it at that for now.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Ron. Now, the transition houses.

MS. LYN BARRETT: Madam Chairman, thank you for having us here. Honourable members of the standing committee, any other honourable members of the Legislative Assembly who may be behind me - although I don't think I saw very many - staff of Community Services and our colleagues among service providers who were able to attend today. Speaking last or second to last has benefits, of course, in that a lot of the statistical stuff has already been dealt with, so we don't have to go there. So there is a strategy in being at the end.

The question was, how can the members of the Standing Committee on Community Services support THANS and its constituent member organizations, and ensure that programs and services that we provide are strengthened and enhanced without the expenditure of more government funds? Now, I'm better at visualizing how to spend \$10 million, should it, by luck, come in. So this wasn't, obviously, my first choice, talking about what can be done without money. I think that's fairly obvious on the face of it, because no increase in funding for Transition House Association members means a decrease in funding for us.

We have not had an increase in our operational funding since, I think, 1995. We have expenses soaring. Every day, every month, something goes up. Sometimes it's the things that were once very small parts of our budget that have become huge chunks of our budget, such as insurance and liability insurance. Logistically, each of us already has to find, within our often cash-strapped communities, virtually 25 per cent of our bare-bones budget, just to stay afloat. We are in a never-ending struggle to meet increasing demands with decreasing resources.

However, to answer the question, we would still welcome your assistance in terms of supporting changes that, for instance, would improve Nova Scotia's economic climate, because an improved and strengthened economic climate correspondingly makes life easier for non-profits within that economic culture. However, we do have a few specific things. Could you address, for instance, soaring insurance premiums? They are eating our lifeblood, they are not well subsidized by the department. Can there be gas or oil rebates? Obviously this is the wish list. Could you advocate for our staff to get onto government benefit plans, and maybe share training and development opportunities that already exist within the department? Could you give us back the provincial portion of the HST? Some of those kinds of things.

Personally, from Bryony House, I'll settle for collecting all of these unused pads at the end of this day, because that would subsidize our administrative budget to a huge degree. If there's paper floating around, things like that, it can be very beneficial for community

organizations that don't have the budget to allow for things like Post-it Notes and fax cover sheets and all of the like.

Even without increased direct funds, the members of the standing committee could also provide us with help through information sharing. Perhaps a joint committee to help identify special funding that might be available, cross-departmental funding opportunities, federal funding that we very seldom access because we don't even know what's out there and would probably need support from the province to get into.

We need your support in other non-monetary ways as well. We're concerned about the focus that's being placed on high-risk cases throughout this province. In the flurry of activities around protocol development and the designation in tracking of high-risk cases, we run the associated risk of suggesting that the bulk of cases that we're working on are not high-risk; however, in our own experience, risk can quickly escalate from low to high in a moment of space, especially if services are not provided to those at risk early enough.

It's that experience that leads me to my next point. We need all of you to recognize us for the expertise that we do bring to this table and to our communities at large on the issue of family violence. Over the past three years, we have the constant feeling that we have to virtually justify our very existence. This is disheartening at best, and mental strain and breakdown issues at worst. We would suggest that it is crucial that family violence not get lost in the shuffle of our multi-issue political environment in this province, that this province and all of its departments, not just Community Services, make a substantive commitment to ending family violence, and preferably with some increase in funding, in which case I will pass the mic to my colleague, Shirley Oickle, to talk a bit about what we might do with more money.

MS. SHIRLEY OICKLE: Thank you, Lyn. The question that I'm going to be answering is with regard to a small increase, what the standing committee can do if we were to receive a small one. It has been suggested that the funding allocated to THANS, which is the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia - and when I'm referring to THANS, I'm referring to our member organizations, which include shelters as well as outreach services or outreach programs, as well as our office here in Halifax, the association office.

Collectively, our budget constitutes about three-quarters of 1 per cent of the Department of Community Services budget. We've not verified that number, but we do know it is a very small piece of the DCS pie. One of the things that I wanted to raise is I know that when we look at percentages and whatnot, if we look at even the amount of \$30,000 for a member organization, it may seem like next to nothing when you look at the DCS budget but even a \$30,000 amount for one organization is an amazing amount of money to receive. So I don't want to put that out there as being this is what we see as a small amount, but I just want you to keep in mind that this is all relative, \$30,000 to us is huge, where it might not be so

much for DCS. To us what may be a small increase in government funding may be a lot of money.

If we had a little bit more, it might be enough to help many of our member organizations balance their budgets and to have at least a short break from the constant worry about layoffs or workers fundraising for their paycheques. It might also take some of the load off our board of directors to have to be expected every year to raise tens of thousands of dollars just to keep the doors open. It might also be enough to pay for our part-time bookkeepers. Many of our organizations, by far the majority of them, do not receive any money whatsoever for bookkeeping services or administrative supports, no money whatsoever. So it would help us to pay for perhaps a part-time position.

[2:15 p.m.]

It might be enough to address our constant deficit in benefits. With most of our budget dedicated to staffing, we are constantly in a bind with every salary increase costing us additional benefits that are only partially covered by the province. I don't want to suggest that we get lots of salary increases because we don't, but we have had one within the last year. Maybe we won't have to have our staff choose between a pension plan or group RRSPs or perhaps a benefit plan, perhaps we could actually have both; maybe with a little bit more money we would also have enough to pay for the relief coverage that we actually need for our services.

Many of our organizations have staff who have been with the organizations for a very long time and, of course, if you have staff who are there for a long time they have seniority, so therefore they are going to be getting more vacation time, and what we receive within our budgets for relief coverage does not meet the needs. I certainly know for our budget it does not meet the needs of Harbour House, just the regular relief coverage that we need, and I know that's similar across the province.

A small increase may allow us room for greater proactivity and an opportunity to assess our services and community needs and demands - we have absolutely no time to be able to do that with the resources we have. Maybe we will be able to increase our public education programming and better meet the need for information in the community. Again, we have limited resources so we try to put our resources where the highest priority is, and quite often public education programming is extremely important to us but the crisis work is also very important, so we have to constantly balance them.

Maybe we can start addressing the crucial need for more outreach programming. This is a well-documented need for increased services province-wide, but a need that cannot be met by cutting down on access to shelters or not answering distress or crisis lines. So we've said, when we had our presentation to the standing committee, it wasn't a matter of we'll increase the outreach, but we'll take away something else within the other organizations or within the

shelter - it isn't a matter of picking and choosing, it's a matter of making sure that we have not only the appropriate funding for running our organizations, but to be able to also add for extended or increased outreach.

What we really need is to have the Department of Community Services really look at the recommendations that we have put forward for enhancing and strengthening women's services in Nova Scotia in May 2003. These recommendations are not hugely expensive, which is certainly outlined in our report which was quite extensive. They're not hugely expensive but, over one year later, we still have had no concrete response to those recommendations.

I know that Marilyn has said that the standing committee is able to influence and advise government, and I would suggest the standing committee, one of the things that they could do is work toward having enough funding for us. We're not looking at just having a little bit more funding, we're looking at having enough fully funded, adequate sustainable funding. We're asking for enough; we're not asking for the world. What we want to do is to maintain the services that we have, and we don't have enough money to do that. A windfall would be that we would actually have enough to increase the services, because we know the need is certainly out there. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Lyn and Shirley. Are there any other groups around the table that I've missed?

MR. JERRY PYE: Madam Chairman, I was just going to say the Naomi Centre is represented here as well by Ms. Vautour, right? I'd like to hear from the Naomi Centre as well, and see what you provide to the community.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: They're a member of the organization that just presented.

MR. PYE: Okay.

MS. TAMMY LEE VAUTOUR: The Naomi Society is part of the THANS membership organization, so even though we do not have beds in our facility, we provide a lot of the outreach support services: crisis intervention; advocacy; we do safety planning; we provide transportation for our women to go to either transition house. With us being in Antigonish, the women we serve have the opportunity to go to either Leaside in Port Hawkesbury or to New Glasgow, Tearnann House, so there's a number of things that we do. We do group counselling; individual counselling; also for our youth and our children we have play groups; we have therapy groups. We work within these in our community and the Naomi Society, as of October 2003, we are now providing services not just to Antigonish Town and County, but also to Guysborough County. I have a staff of myself full-time, one full-time counsellor, and a part-time counsellor who is also our outreach worker. So there's only three of us.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Tammy Lee.

MS. VAUTOUR: You're welcome.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, now we're going into the brainstorming session. We don't particularly have a format, so I guess I'd like to suggest we start off by seeing if anybody around the table, or in the audience, wants to clarify any points or highlight anything that has been in the earlier presentations. (Interruption) Yes, do you want to step up to the mic, and for the sake of our Leg TV technicians could I ask everybody from now on to, before you start to speak, give your name and your affiliation. It just makes it easier for us to make sure your remarks are identified with you and your group. Thank you.

MS. ELAINE SMITH: One of the comments that Ron made was that he would like to see full coverage across the province with men's intervention programs. I would like to clarify the fact that all the province has men's intervention programs except the southwest area; we have no men's intervention programs. We have been asking for those for a number of years and we think that the people in Southwest Nova deserve the same services as the people in the rest of the province. This is a real need for us, along with all the ones that THANS has already articulated.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Elaine. Anyone else? Yes, Mark.

MR. PARENT: Clarification from this morning, there were a few gaps; Southwest Nova was one, the Valley was another one for men's programs, or . . .

MR. KELLY: Yes, my understanding is the Bridgewater program is providing some services to other parts of the province and, Shirley, you can maybe speak a little more to that in terms of some of the services.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could I just remind you to identify yourselves and just leave a second or two for that mic to get turned on?

MS. OICKLE: With regard to the men's program in our area, its alternatives, and we provide services primarily to the Lunenburg County area; however, we do a limited amount of provision of services to Queen's County - that within the entire western region is the only men's program.

MS. RHONDA FRASER: What you were saying, Mark, in the Valley region - you're right, there is not a men's intervention program in the Valley region.

MR. PARENT: I'm going to ask one more question. Rhonda, when you're talking about being viewed as a essential service you meant it, I think, just in the general context, but of course in government we start thinking of essential services in terms of being unable to strike.

You had no inference in that regard, you just meant this was an essential service that had to be provided for the citizens of Nova Scotia?

MR. KELLY: Sorry, what was the second part of that question?

MR. PARENT: I automatically heard essential services and the connotation with not being allowed to strike - police, fire workers - but you didn't have any inference in that regard whatsoever?

MR. KELLY: No, it was primarily in terms of just a clear recognition from the government's part that we do provide essential services in the work that we're doing. It wasn't related to a strike situation.

MR. PARENT: That's what I thought. I just wanted to clarify.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions or points of clarification on the presentations?

MS. SERENA ALI: I would just like to point out that family violence is a public problem and not an individual one. Within this province, if you take from one area or if you provide inadequate funding in one area, you're going to pay for it in the other. Inadequate financial support for preventive and community-based social programs in areas of family and women's violence, we have higher costs in other areas of Community Services, including child protection, and as the members of Community Services, members of the government are probably aware, the costs in child protection alone are skyrocketing and it's no coincidence that those costs are skyrocketing at the same time that sexual assault centres, transition houses, domestic abuse programs, men's programs are not receiving adequate funding.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Very good point. Ron.

MR. KELLY: I'd just like to follow up on that comment and on a comment earlier about the amount of budget money that's allocated to the programs that we work with. When I looked through the recent presentation by Community Services about those very skyrocketing costs around child protection, they are quite staggering. At the same time, we're all working to address those issues.

Just to substantiate those figures - I tried to pay attention when I was in math in high school and university, and I hope I did - the budget for the Department of Community Services, the gross budget is \$756 million, but if we take the net budget it's \$666 million. The monies for 2003-04 that went to transition houses, men's programs and women's centres totalled just over \$5 million. That's 0.8 of 1 per cent - four-fifths of 1 per cent of the total budget; in fact, the men's programs it's eight one-hundredths of 1 per cent of the total budget. So we're not talking about a lot of money, and I think one of the suggestions would be with financial people,

if there's opportunities in an area and even a relatively small amount of money is put into those areas, then it can reap huge benefits.

Just to put that in perspective; it's just something to throw out there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Peggy.

MS. MAHON: I guess a little bit of context to this discussion, and to follow up on what Ron was saying. We did make this point in our presentation in May, but I want to remake it in terms of the amounts of money we're talking about here, and in this context, again we're being very clear that our role here is often after the crisis situation and when women come to us for other kinds of services such as support counselling around mental health issues, or access to housing or help with social assistance or, more importantly, transition to employment programs and education and looking for how they can improve their education opportunities.

What we do, the work the women's centres provide here is absolutely critical and essential in the sense of preventing further crisis for these women. As we said in our presentation in May, the women we serve, when we figured it out, for each woman we serve per year it's approximately \$55 per woman per year. What we prevent is possibly women going into hospital, women staying long-term on social assistance - these are the kinds of preventive things that we do in our programming which prevents the kind of long-term costs that Ron was talking about.

Therefore, we think we are - as we said in May - a very sound investment. For women's centres, our total budget is \$800,000 a year. It is very, very minuscule in terms of the total budget of the Province of Nova Scotia and the Department of Community Services. As Lyn said, none of us are asking for exorbitant amounts. We're asking for adequate funding to provide these very, very important vital services.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Jerry.

MR. PYE: Thank you. That's one of the trains that I will follow on, Peggy, because both the Women's Centres CONNECT! and the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia came before the Standing Committee on Community Services. There were two motions put forward for stable and adequate funding to both of those agencies. I do know that there has been a response from the Department of Community Services. My question is, has the response gone to the associations themselves?

MS. PAMELA HARRISON: Yes, it has.

MS. BARRETT: I do want to say, however, the response we received towards the middle of January did not address a single one of their recommendations that were made in May 2003. All it was was a thank you for the report and an indication of appreciation for the

amount of effort that went into it. But realistically, even though we are now meeting regionally around this province, we have yet to actually get to the core services or any response to the list of recommendations that we made.

MS. MAHON: I wasn't sure, just to clarify your question, you weren't asking about the response to the motions that you made?

[2:30 p.m.]

MR. PYE: I was responding about the motion that I made, as well as the motion the MLA for Cape Breton West, Mr. MacKinnon, had made. The two motions were made and I believe there was some correspondence back stating from the department that they acknowledged the motion and they were providing adequate and stable funding. My question is, if you had a response back, what did you think of the response?

MS. MAHON: Okay, just to follow up then, now that I've clarified the point you were making. No, we have not had a response. After the meeting with the standing committee on May 13th, the women's centres did write to the Minister of Community Services and we requested a meeting. Because we knew the motion was going to be going to the minister, we indicated we were aware of the motion and that we would like to meet with the minister to further discuss adequate funding and sufficient staffing for women's centres in Nova Scotia. That was written to the minister on May 31st and, to this date, we have had no response from the minister.

In fact, we have written three letters to the Minister of Community Services requesting a meeting with him since we received the report in January that Lyn referred to. We have not been able to have a meeting with him yet and, furthermore, we have not had a meeting with the department. They have determined that they don't need to meet with us until after they meet with the transition houses and the men's programs, and we're very concerned about this because we're not sure why the government is not meeting with us.

MS. OICKLE: Jerry, in answer to your question, THANS has not received a response either.

MR. PYE: That's what I was seeking, that particular answer from you. Obviously, it continues that there is a deficit within the Department of Community Services with respect to responding to even the Community Services Standing Committee's request on a resolution.

MS. HARRISON: If I can just clarify this for you, Mr. Pye, the letter went under the signatures of the members of the standing committee around the motion you had made for THANS; therefore, the response went to the standing committee and we received a copy of it. My understanding is that there was language in it around there being a raise - in fact it was a

raise around salaries - that was the first one in a number of years - and then the usual language around adequate funding.

If you're asking if the response that you got was satisfactory to THANS, I think it's fair to say it was not.

MR. PYE: Thank you. I think that makes clarity around both the points that I was trying to bring forward.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'm just wondering, several of the members this morning talked about some of the larger societal issues affecting family violence, and I'm just wondering if any of you wanted to take advantage of having all these experts around the table to discuss any of those big-picture items now? I guess not, okay.

MR. PARENT: I raised the issue this morning, I guess more to put it on the table - we all have to do our small part, and whatever we can do and whatever our small part does works towards the greater good, so I'm certainly not going to suggest that we should stop doing that, but I guess I find some of the larger social issues run directly counter to the good that is trying to be done by your organizations. I think of the book by William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, and after this adult comes on the island to stop these boys from butchering each other, he looks over his shoulder towards the war cruiser that's harboured off the waters that he's come on, and so much of it seems to be that way. That was what I was wrestling with - the message that we give in so much of our media runs directly counter to the message that we should respect each other, that violence is not a way to achieve results, that communication and co-operation. In fact, to tell you the truth, much of what goes on in the Nova Scotia Legislature runs directly counter to the message of co-operation. It's built upon a conflict model.

I guess those were the sort of larger issues. Yes, I'd like to hear what do you think are the larger questions. Certainly we all at times feel like we're involved in putting band-aids on a patient that's bleeding to death. So what are the larger things as well as the specific things that you'd like to throw out there and get us thinking about, get me thinking about at least?

MS. FRASER: In terms of the work that we do, and I think about the catchment area for Chrysalis House being West Hants, Kings County and Annapolis County, we've heard the term adequate and stable funding all around the table. We need to have a comfort level so that we can stop being reactive and be proactive, and that's where the community education comes in. Off the top of my head, having one women's outreach worker to cover three counties, in fact, there's nothing adequate about that. In order to address the larger issues, as executive director spending a substantial amount of my time doing administrative work and a substantial amount of time doing fundraising, there's very little time to address those larger issues that you're talking about.

MS. BARRETT: I once read a description of living in England at a time of crisis that sounded on the surface to be today. People's obsession with violence, portrayal of violence in the media, lack of social fabric, the abandoning of social values by the community at large. It was a very extensive article, and the article was written in 1795. What they were trying to say is that even though each of us every day feels that our own society has gone to "hell in a handbasket", that we see things collapsing that we always thought were permanent and strong, then in reality, if you were in 1950 small-town Nova Scotia, maybe things weren't as pretty as they looked on the surface and they are certainly never as pretty in reality as they are maybe in retrospect. I'm not sure that our society is going downhill. It just seems like it when you're embroiled in it, and when you're aware of it, and I think because you're in the Legislature and because we're in the service provision field, we are more aware. That there are a lot of people sitting in our communities today who think life is pretty peachy-keen because they are not actually involved in it and they can choose to close the windows and not listen.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Lyn. Shelagh.

MS. SHELAGH RAYWORTH: A couple of things. I guess the first thing is that I would like to say, the services that are provided are community-based services. That's the way that all of the programs were established. The need arose in the community, it was identified that the community needed a transition house, a men's program, a women's centre and community leaders, or women or men, whomever, came together as organizations and the services came into place. Then they went seeking funding. Community Services were eventually approached because they were the normal funding agency to support those kinds of programs, and eventually became involved at some level at some point in time.

As a community person in my area, I was involved in the establishment of Autumn House in Amherst, and I know the process of what happened there and how it came about. Today I've come back and I'm the executive director in that house, contributing hopefully, at a different time and in a different position. What really upsets me to be here is, that today, I am fighting a worse battle than I fought when I first started in the community to address the needs of the community for this very service. The need is there. It's just as bad or worse today; in fact, we've had the service in place now since 1985. We were providing outreach services from 1985 on. The Department of Community Services finally came on stream in the late 1980s, recognized that our service delivery on an outreach basis was acceptable because we were going to somehow get money for a transition house which we eventually did through the federal government, and we built a transition house because only transition houses were funded, not service delivery. We built a transition house to satisfy you guys, in our community.

Now, I must say it was the right thing to do and our community accepted that it was the right thing to do, because it was necessary. We had safe houses by the way, which are one of the things that the department would like us to look at now in this new design that we're looking at, et cetera. They don't work, certainly not in rural Nova Scotia. They might work in

urban centres, because people are relatively anonymous here, but in rural areas, safe houses? That's scary. Everybody knows where they are. The guy with the gun, ha! Everybody's in danger. Anyway, pardon me. We have a transition house where we are and it's needed, and it's necessary, and it needs to be funded, as do all the others. We don't have a women's centre in our area. It just wasn't identified as a priority need in the community, there were many other things that were, but the transition house has been the centre for women around which those kinds of services, to the best of our ability, we've been able to serve women through.

We also have a men's program, but guess what? It's provided through the transition house. That's the way our community identified that they could do it best, by coordinating the services. So we're unique. It's a community-based service. All of it, and we're doing our best, like everybody else around here, but there's not enough money. So from the point of view of all of us here, we need your help, from the standing committee. We need you to go to your caucuses and we need you all to go to the Legislature, and we need you all to go to your peers and let them know that because of family violence in Nova Scotia, somehow, through the Government of Nova Scotia - and it may not be through Community Services or Community Services only, maybe it's through a combination of Community Services, Justice, Health, Education - that funding is provided to the service providers who are in the communities.

We have organizations that are beating their heads against brick walls sometimes to get enough money to keep our services alive. It's just not the beds that we're filling in those shelters, it's the phone calls. It's the transportation. How does a woman get to Avalon Centre when she's been sexually assaulted? She doesn't have a car. If she gets there, it's because somebody from Autumn House drives her. If she's lucky she has a family person to take her, but that's not often possible. Where does she get childcare? We provide it. It's a day service. There are so many complications. Anyway, those are some of the frustrations we face.

Property taxes. Maybe the province can help by providing grants in lieu to the communities, or making some kind of arrangements for us. Are there provincial phone rates that might be extended to help us with our phone systems, along with the insurance coverages that maybe they could help us with? There may be things that you can do to help coordinate those kinds of things, but surely coordination of departments at a provincial level and helping us to plug into services at different departments would be a big help. Anyway, I've said enough. Thank you for listening.

MS. MAHON: Just getting back to some of the larger issues and talking about some of the issues around - I guess I want to go back a bit to my presentation talking about the larger equality issues, and I'm trying to talk here in a very practical sense. This isn't just an idea about women's equality, it is enshrined in our Charter of Rights. Canada has signed onto an international agreement where there is an obligation to address women's equality, and what I mean by women's equality, as I said in my presentation, is we really have to address both women's economic and social equality.

[2:45 p.m.]

There are some very serious issues in our country, and in Nova Scotia, related to women's poverty. Women who are poor are often invisible. Many people don't know that they're wondering where their next piece of bread is going to come from. I remember working with a group of women in Antigonish at the women's centre. I was helping one of the staff people there do a session and the women were talking about going behind the local grocery store looking in the garbage dump, where the grocery store threw out their garbage, to find bread so they might be able to have some food that day. I think that unless we know these things we don't understand the depth of it, because it's often invisible and it's not often staring us right in the face. I know that more recently we're seeing people on the streets because of the homelessness situation.

So I want to stress that these are real and very deep and fundamental problematic issues that we're facing, particularly in our rural communities, and it's getting worse. As I said in my presentation, we have a real deep concern for the cuts to the social programs, because it is making things worse. We want to talk about these larger issues. I really feel, and in our presentation we asked you to consider these issues, I know education and health are absolutely critical issues facing the province today. We contend that poverty is an equally important issue, and it is particularly critical to many women and their children in this province.

When women have left, or are leaving, abusive relationships and they're living in poverty it is even more desperate. In fact many women have difficulty leaving violent relationships when they're living in poverty because they don't have access necessarily to some of the supports that they can get easily, so if we don't provide adequate funding to transition houses, to sexual assault centres, to men's intervention programs, and to women's centres and their role in our continuum of services, we are going to see more and more problems around this issue, and we are going to see more high-risk cases. I'm very, very concerned about it, and I really believe - and I guess in our presentation we're asking you to recognize our services. I'm hearing around the table that we're asking you to recognize that they're vital, they're important, they're critical to our communities, and we're asking you to advocate for when the government is looking at its spending priorities that the Department of Community Services gets adequate funding to be able to adequately support these programs because they're absolutely essential to women and particularly to women who are living in poverty. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I have Ron, and then Jerry.

MR. KELLY: Just to add to what has already been said. To me, when I hear people talk about this, I'm hearing people who are providing leadership in their own communities. I think the feeling I have now is there needs to be some leadership coming from the government in terms of dealing with the issues. Unfortunately, when there are large social issues, they often get balanced off by trying to meet financial responsibilities and financial constraints.

We can appreciate that; however, I think there are ways that these two things can work together so that they can also be addressed. I think there are huge amounts of money being spent in this province, and a lot of the work that we do addresses those issues and can be preventive. If every child in this province was to be educated around the issue of violence in relationships - and it could be done quite easily with the organizations sitting around this table working in conjunction with the Department of Community Services, the Department of Education - if the government departments would show some leadership in that, we would be there to work with these organizations to provide that, because we're talking about a huge social problem here but it's not insurmountable. We have a responsibility to face this issue and to deal with it.

I guess, from my perspective, we want you to know that we're there to do that, and if we can work together and if the government in power and the bureaucrats who are running the departments are interested in moving ahead with this, we certainly are - I think all these organizations would be interested in working on that level - and there's also the crisis situations that we're all dealing with currently. So, big problems but lots of potential.

MR. PYE: Peggy, I just want to go back on your track once again, and I want you to know that as an elected politician I try to come to grips with this very real and serious issue. I represent a constituency that has a huge number of people who live in poverty, and I rely upon family resources, Women's Centres CONNECT! and a whole host of social programs to assist me in making sure that those individuals at least have a place to stay for one night and then to deal with the issue later on. I can only imagine what it must be like in a rural community, particularly, as I've said earlier, with out-migration, the lack of facilities, and the people who are left behind are usually the most vulnerable, the poorest of the poor, and the people who find themselves in the kinds of environments that we are talking about here today.

As a politician it's extremely difficult when you're in Opposition to bring that kind of an issue to the government - this is not to minimize the difficulty of the government of the day in trying to provide the funding or the resources, or making the resources available to meet the needs. When I sit here today and I listen to you and I hear you, I think there are so many avenues of government whereby there is a connect that can bring about the kind of source funding that you need in order to provide the kind of services that you see the community needs - and I know that this is just the tip of the iceberg, I know that out there you people have done assessments of what's the maximum need out there, the potential that we can't even touch on, that we have to somehow, despite the fact that we're leaving it behind, we don't want to leave it behind, but because of the resources we have to leave those behind.

Madam Chairman, if I could take a couple of minutes. I've heard some very good comments with respect to training programs and they could be funded and provided by the Department of Education. Education programs funded and provided by the Department of

Education, rightly so. Health issues funded by the Department of Health and, in fact, Community Services, with respect to per diems and shelters funded by the Department of Community Services and so on.

So there is a need for a connect within government and its agencies, including the Department of Justice, to sit at a table with you and discuss how best to serve vulnerable Nova Scotians. The other issue is, it goes beyond just simply the provincial government, it goes to the level of municipal government as well. I did mention it earlier this morning - and I had to leave because I had another meeting - with respect to property tax exemption, business occupancy tax exemption, that there needs to be a co-operative venture by the other levels of government to do that, and to see where government can in fact provide you with sensible, sane insurance programs rather than the skyrocketing insurance policies that happen, and with respect to the lifting of the HST.

Madam Chairman, I just want to say that I heard some very good comments come out of a very important meeting. Ron made the comment that this should be a continuous thing, that we should do this more often. I think in my first six years as a Community Services Critic, we did not do that and I think that this is a time in which we can. I want to tell you that it's extremely difficult but the fight is always a fight.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Jerry. I have Russell, Pamela and then Mark.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, there are a number of issues that I would like to touch on, and I will just put them out there for our guests. One is the issue with the deputy minister's response to transition houses and that was an issue a little earlier in the year. One of the notes that caught my attention was the suggestion of regionalizing services. I don't know if people are familiar with that but that, to me, was a code word for reducing funding and the number of transition houses in Nova Scotia - that was my interpretation of it. Every time a deputy minister issues those types of decrees, you know you're going to get hit, so I wanted to put that out there.

The other issue was with regard to - and they all tie in - the issue of violence, I do believe. One is the services provided by legal aid. My understanding from some of the constituents I have been dealing with is that the resources provided, particularly for women who require their service, dealing with social issues, the very limited financial resources that are provided and that creates an imbalance and an inequity in so many ways. I think most people can think individually as to what it relates to.

Another issue is with regard to the latest report that came out from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I have been reading the reports back from the early 1980s and I must say I'm at a bit of a loss as to the real mandate and the function of this committee, vis-à-vis what I'm hearing around the table, there seems to be a disconnect. There is a lot of

connection but there is a lot of disconnect, and they have a rather substantial budget. I was just wondering if I could get the thoughts from some of our panellists as to the function of this committee, does it accurately reflect some of the issues or promote some of the issues that are important to yourselves, individually and collectively?

[3:00 p.m.]

It wouldn't hurt, Madam Chairman, if sometime we have representatives from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women come before our committee and start giving us greater detail than just reading these reports. After awhile it just seems pretty academic; the same issues are put in report after report but never seem to be addressed, particularly on the issue of pay scales, the Labour Standards Code, the inequities there, the fact that women are now working 30 per cent longer today than they did 15 years ago for the same pay. These are the types of issues I put out there and perhaps I could get some feedback.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We still have two more people on the list but then perhaps someone would like to answer your question. Pamela.

MS. HARRISON: I want to preface my remarks by saying that I'm not speaking for the transition house, I'm going to speak for myself and simply say, I feel an overwhelming sadness being here today. Over the last two years, members of the organization which I serve, and myself, have spent an inordinate amount of resources, time and effort, just to be heard. Not only do we feel - certainly I can say I feel - we have not been heard, we have not even had the respect of a reasonable answer to the kinds of requests that have been made to us.

It appears to me - and again I speak for myself only - that we seem to have, for some reason that is lost on me, a rather combative relationship with the Department of Community Services and with the government, and I honestly don't know how that has happened. I work in an environment where we work collectively and collaboratively and through that process, we manage to do a great deal with very little.

I am very disappointed, on a personal level and on a collective level for my organization, that we are not able to do that with the Department of Community Services and for some reason, there seems to be a protocol in place that is different from the way that we work and does not foster that kind of working atmosphere. Again, I'm saying that I am speaking for myself, I do not want my remarks to cause discomfort or, in any way, negative reactions to the organization for which I provide services.

It's unfortunate that what we are trying to do as an organization is provide reasonable care for women and children who really don't have a voice in this province. I dare say that is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to provide services to them, because they simply don't have a voice that is strong enough to be heard at the government level. But they still require those services, they need them more today than they did even 10 years ago or 15 years ago.

Again I say, that it seems to me so unfortunate that the very limited resources that we have at our disposal have to be used in this process. This is the second time we have appeared before you and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to do so, but I have to mention that in the four years previous to this government, this standing committee met only - I could count on one hand the number of times they met. So the fact that we have a minority government in Nova Scotia, I think, speaks to the fact that we are being heard today. I have to say there are many advantages to a minority government because we get to have a voice. We certainly asked to have a voice before - we didn't get it.

I would like to see one of the things that happen with the department is that we work collaboratively with them to look at ways that satisfy the department, but also to satisfy us in terms of deciding what value we have to our community. It has been said that we work for the department. We do not, we provide services for the community that are community-based, community-driven. We are paid by the taxpayers, not by some department that decides where the money goes but that money comes from me, from all the people at this table, from the citizens of Nova Scotia, and our community has said really clearly and said to the Legislature two years ago that they want us to stay, that we have value to them.

I would ask that we find some way, through this committee, or whoever has the power to make these decisions, that we work collaboratively to decide what kinds of outcomes you are looking for and how we can satisfactorily define the value of our services to the people to whom we have to report. Clearly the statistics that the department is gathering do not in any way reflect the volume, degree and comprehensiveness of the kinds of services we provide to the least empowered people of our province.

I'm going to leave it at that, but I guess I've heard you say today that you only have the power to act, to advise. I don't know who has the power to change our situation but I would like to work with them in a very collaborative way, to make sure that the work we do is recognized and that we don't spend a non-proportionate amount of time trying to defend our very existence in this province. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pamela. I have Mark down and then I'm going to suggest we take a 10-minute break and then come back. At that time I will also give people who are sitting in the audience a chance to come up if they want to comment on any of the things that have been discussed and then we will continue to go around the table. Lyn, do you want to be on the list?

MS. BARRETT: Can I just make one comment. Pamela is speaking for all of us on behalf of the two co-chairs, we would like to endorse everything she said.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mark, do you want to finish off this session before we take a break?

MR. PARENT: I was just thinking of the article that you were quoting, Lyn, and the time of it was very interesting. It tweaked something because it was right on the cusp of the industrial revolution, which caused enormous disruption; there were winners, there were losers, but massive social change. In some senses, we're in a similar sort of period as well, with massive social changes, globalization, with the onset of the new technologies, and there will be winners and there will be losers. I guess it's our job to try to mitigate and help those who are on the losing end of things. When you gave the date, I was just sitting here and thinking, what's the significance of that date?

The comment on prevention that you made, Ron, is one that I think is such a plaintive cry heard in the health system all the time. I echo it. There's so much that we could do on the preventive side that's less expensive and yet our energies, we're like rats in a cage, running just to keep the acute care going, but we need to keep pushing that. There are some small changes that are taking place in the health system, where there is some recognition of that. So I would encourage you to keep pushing that, because there's so much that we could do. You're right, it would be far less expensive.

The silos, the different governments working together - different government departments - is another key issue. I'm on a national committee that's looking at that on a federal-provincial level as well. Departments don't work together, and yet on the ground, where you're providing the services, it has to be coordinated. The things relate, you're dealing with the whole person. There is some movement on that, but there's a norm sort of reaction, worry about loss of power, all sorts of issues like that, privacy issues which are legitimate. So there's some work that's being done through this committee I sit on, called Crossing Boundaries.

It's a very important issue as well, and I encourage whoever brought that up - I think it was you, Peggy, who mentioned that - because it's the whole person we have to deal with. The last thing I want to mention is I come from a non-profit background myself - as Gordie does and I think Jerry and a few of the others - there are others around the Legislature who come from a business background, there are others who seem to have been in government since they were born, and we all sort of speak different languages. The business people get frustrated around my caucus table, there's bleeding-heart Mark, and where's the dollars and cents and the business plan and all that sort of stuff. It's important. I need to hear that, just as they need to hear the hurts and wounds and that people aren't just dollars and cents.

I think forums like this, but also forums where government, business and non-profit get together to discuss key issues are helpful because we don't always speak the same language. I think it's very helpful. So I want to thank you, and with that make my apologies because I do have to leave after the break, and I appreciate that I had the opportunity to be here. Maybe we could expand it and bring some business people in from the business world to talk together. It's amazing how we say similar things and hear very different things, depending on what background we come out of. When you're non-profit, trying to relate to business or

government, you've got to learn to speak their language, so to speak. It is important. And they have to learn to hear us - or hear the non-profits; I guess I'm in government now. There are different languages being spoken.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Shirley, do you want to finish off.

MS. OICKLE: May I just say something to what Mark was just saying? One of the things that I know you talked about, there being different viewpoints, business and whatever, I think that one of the things that's really important to do is look at the commonalities. We're all people with families. If you imagine yourself, even if you're a business owner, that you would want the absolute best for your family, you would want to make sure that if your daughter was sexually assaulted that there would be services that she could access; if she was in an abusive relationship, you would want the same thing, and so on. I think we need to look at the commonalities and not to fragment business against non-profit or whatever, because we're all people, we all have needs and we all have families. Thank you.

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, I, too, have to leave at this point. I do apologize. My son is graduating in the Annapolis Valley. My riding is a couple of hours from here. That highlights the problems that I'm sure Rhonda is familiar with when it comes to this issue in my riding, Chrysalis House and The Women's Place centre in Annapolis are providing that. Two presentations were made this morning. Those services are not provided in many ways in my constituency. You asked if my daughter was sexually assaulted, that is a huge issue, and the other issue is she's going to turn around and be assaulted by the system. That's the other issue for her. (Interruptions) Yes, she will be. That is a huge issue that somehow, as politicians, we have to come to grips with.

These children who are coming forward, and the fear of that by itself, alone, is enough for them, yet to turn around and then to be put through that assault again is really unbelievable, and as an elected official it's unconscionable, really, for us to be allowing it to continue to happen. I will just finish off by saying the six recommendations that we spoke about this morning, four of which I noticed, as I looked at them again and you mentioned earlier in your presentation, really don't cost money, out of the six that we talked about, three, four, five and six. So, if nothing else, from the standing committee today, we need to, in a clear voice, as a three-Party system, say that those four recommendations need to be acted on immediately. That's not to be saying - you can talk to us about the cash issues, we know the pressures and the province can always say they don't have enough money.

Well, as we sit here today, we've talked about how this is not taking money, this is taking leadership and direction. We as a committee need to move forward. So I would like to make a motion that we do that, before I leave, so we can have a vote on that. Put it clearly that we not ask but demand that the provincial government move forward on issues three, four, five and six immediately, and begin consultation on one and two - meaningful consultation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Do we have a seconder for that motion? (Interruptions) Is that from the Men's Intervention Programs Report? (Interruptions)

[3:15 p.m.]

MR. KELLY: I just wanted to raise that that was in the recommendations that I presented earlier on behalf of the association. Those are very specific to the association. So there may be issues in terms of the other organizations around the table, in terms of recommendations that they would have. There were some joint recommendations that were presented to the government earlier on, but that breakdown was just related to the association.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm just going to ask the committee members - we have to do a little bit of internal business here. Obviously, if we're losing two of our members, we're going to lose quorum in terms of making motions. I think Ron's point is that these were specific to his program, and we certainly have similar but perhaps slightly different perspectives from the other three organizations. I was going to suggest that for the last hour this afternoon that we try to prioritize some of the recommendations that could then be turned into a motion of the committee. So, Mark, you wanted to speak.

MR. PARENT: If that's what you're going to do, then mine is redundant. I was just going to ask for clarification on the wording of my colleague's motion. If what you're going to do is work through the commonalities of the various requests, so it's not just specific to the men's intervention centres, and come to a motion later, we could either pass at this meeting, or if we don't have a quorum, bring it to our next meeting to pass. My question is really redundant. But if we're going for a motion now . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, we do have a motion on the floor, but it is specific to the men's intervention . . .

MR. MCNEIL: We can amend the motion or I can withdraw the motion. My concern is we're going to leave here today and we're going to meet sometime in the Fall. We've asked many organizations to give up their time to come here today, there's a lot of time between now and when we're going to meet again. We need to put some concrete steps forward from our meetings today. The motion itself can be amended. The reason I highlighted those four is because we're not asking the government to spend money, we're asking them to show leadership.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm just wondering if we put off our break for five minutes and somehow frame a motion that we could pass while we still had quorum that would have direct, immediate impact on all the organizations represented here today, then if we had to put additional motions forward, we could save those for our first meeting in September. Is there anyone interested in crafting a motion that would meet some of the objectives and concerns expressed around the table?

MR. PARENT: What are we doing with this particular motion? Is it withdrawn?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, the mover has suggested he's willing to withdraw it.

MR. PARENT: So is it withdrawn then?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I would like to suggest that we do that.

MR. PARENT: Okay.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, on a point of order as well. I understand the intent of the motion, that's not in question. What is in question and what I'd like to have clarity on, the Standing Committee on Community Services has presented an all-day Forum on Family Violence - I'm just wondering if we have the authority to accept motions in this format or if in fact we are meeting the requirements of our mandate?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I did check with the committee clerk and it's her understanding that we are in session as a Standing Committee on Community Services, therefore we can accept and move motions, as long as we have quorum.

MS. IRENE SMITH: I don't want you to forget the recommendation that I am putting forward to the steering committee which is asking them to pass a motion that the Government of Nova Scotia recognize the vital and essential services that the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre provides women in this province by providing stable, adequate funding to ensure the centre's programs and services are sustainable. I don't want us to forget about that motion either.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No. We do recognize that in our previous two meetings, the standing committee has moved a similar motion for the transition houses and also for the women's centres.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, to embody and encompass all these different issues by the different individuals and organizations, we could perhaps, as you suggested, capture all of this at the end in one general package before the day is over. One of the issues I've raised with you just prior to the start of the meeting is I think we should look at the other side of the equation to get the other point of view to make sure we're giving our presenters today the maximum benefit, and delve into the Department of Community Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, and the IWK which were raised here this morning. We also have the Halifax Regional Police, the Law Reform Commission, the Department of Education - I think they should be required to send representatives before this committee and speak maybe on a similar type forum when we come back in September so this just doesn't fizzle out and these issues that are addressed today are dealt with substantively.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I agree with you. We would discuss next steps before we finish here today. Our problem is, the committee itself is going to lose quorum and so while the forum will continue, we will lose our ability to pass any motions. I'm wondering, in the short term, if you want to pass a motion using the language that Irene has suggested around the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the Men's Prevention Programs to give them at least the same standing as the other two groups - from our point of view - in terms of asking the department (Interruption) I believe we need five.

MR. MACKINNON: We need five? We'll still have five. As long as we have five.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, yes. Thank you, Russell. Then, do you want to wait until we've had more discussion on this? We still have another hour to go. I'm sorry we're going to lose Stephen and Mark (Interruption) No, we understand.

Okay, let's take our 10-minute break. We'll meet back here at 3:35 p.m. and then we'll pursue some of our priorities and talk a bit about what motions the committee can deal with today.

[3:22 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[3:38 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could I invite everyone to take their seats, please. We now have an empty seat at the table if anyone wants to come up and join us. Yes, Russell.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, just to ensure consistency and fairness to all members of the committee, as you noticed my colleague, Ms. Whalen, the member for Halifax Clayton Park has just joined us, but not to usurp the goodwill of the committee. I think there was some general understanding and agreement that members coming and going during the course of a meeting had to receive the approbation of the full committee because of some confusion and concerns that were raised by our caucus, in fairness, to all other members on a previous day. I guess we're asking for permission of the committee that Ms. Whalen sit in for Mr. McNeil.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Right, and the fact that she's actually filling in for him and not just temporarily taking his place, and we did receive notice that she might be doing that. I don't think the committee members have any problem with it, do they?

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Welcome, and Diana is the MLA for Halifax Clayton Park. So we're pleased to have you with us this afternoon, and Elaine has joined us at the table.

Okay, I did suggest before we took our break, that if anybody left in the audience wanted to comment on anything that had been discussed earlier in the afternoon, that they were free now to come up and make their comment or ask their question or whatever. Is there anyone who wants to be heard who hasn't been heard?

MS. SUZANNE WHITE: I would just like to say that our organization is very similar to that of Naomi Society in Antigonish. We're the only two outreach services with the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, and welcome. Okay, so I guess now it's time to try to focus our attention on perhaps some priority action items that might be coming out of today's forum. There are a number of ways that we can approach this. I get a sense from the committee members that there is interest before this afternoon is over, in possibly considering a resolution that would give the same status in terms of our perspective to the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the Men's Intervention Programs, as the other two organizations who met with us individually while we were having our regular meetings. So that's something we can do before this afternoon is over.

Russell MacKinnon has suggested that there are some other voices and players that he thinks the committee should hear from before we make some of our final recommendations. I just want to tell you that the Standing Committee on Community Services has the option, which I'm strongly going to encourage us to take this year, of presenting a report to the Legislature. In that we will summarize our various meetings, who we met with and make some observations and recommendations on those issues that we heard about during our regular sessions. This would also give us an opportunity to bring together some of the information that we've heard from different groups and perhaps make some recommendations on the wider issues, and what perhaps we can do province-wide on them. So we do have that option as well.

I'm just wondering, we have some very knowledgeable people around the table and some of you with strong analytical skills. I'm just wondering if there are some shared common concerns and actions that come out of your various presentations that we might bring together in terms of some recommendations that the committee could consider and possibly these might turn into some action steps, both for us and possibly recommendations to the Department of Community Services. I realize that there are some other departments that may be impacted by this, but that department seems to be somewhat of a focus of our attention this afternoon. Is anyone interested in trying to help us sort of frame some of our concerns that we've heard, in a way that positively impacts on all of your organizations? Lyn.

MS. BARRETT: I guess one thing, not speaking for Irene in Avalon Centre, but for Women's Centres Connect!, the Association of Men's Intervention Programs and the THANS member organizations, is that we put an incredible amount of energy and resources and ourselves into presenting a report to the Department of Community Services last May, and we are still waiting and need a specific response, and if there's anything the standing committee can do to have the department actually respond to the recommendations in the report, that would go a long way in giving us something to work on.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's great. Why don't we just make a short list of some of those action items, that's an excellent start. So getting specific responses to the recommendations that you jointly put forward in the report to Community Services. Peggy.

[3:45 p.m.]

MS. MAHON: I guess just to add to that, because we did get a response. What we've been requesting and I'm assuming the other two groups have been as well is some in-depth discussion around those recommendations and looking at ways to find creative solutions for how we might address those recommendations.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So you want discussion and action on the specific recommendations?

MS. MAHON: Yes, and working to find some creative solutions. I think not all our recommendations are funding recommendations. We listed them in our presentation again today on purpose because we feel very strongly that these recommendations, and I know for the other two as well because we all worked together when we were doing this report. We want to find creative solutions and we're willing to work with the department and with other departments to find creative solutions, to ensure these vital services remain in our communities in Nova Scotia. As Lyn has said, on a number of occasions already today, and I mentioned as well, we don't feel we've had the opportunity to do that. We feel that since this was initiated by the government in the first place, this whole planning process, and the whole restructuring process, we feel that given the time and energy we've put into it, I feel we should be given a due response, which is to work together to find these creative solutions with government and what I mean by that is that each of our organizations has the opportunity to meet with government to follow up on those recommendations.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Individually?

MS. MAHON: I think so, yes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I mean like women's centres, as a group?

MS. MAHON: Yes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. I have Shirley and then Irene.

MS. OICKLE: I wanted to bring forward the fact that the funding cuts that took place was a provincial funding cut. It was not specific to THANS. The issue that resulted in our coalition report was a provincial initiative to cut. What has happened is, the discussions that we are now embarking upon have become regional discussions and what has been lost along the way is the provincial voice that THANS has and, as a collective, I believe are a very strong and committed group of individuals and also a strong group of organizations. What I see happening is that what took place provincially has become regionalized and what I want to see happen is we might have some regional discussions, but it's really important that there be provincial discussions as well, that that not get lost out of the picture.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There's the whole aspect of the province-wide coordinated approach to your services that might be lost if it's all done on a regional basis?

MS. OICKLE: Yes, and if I could just add, it was Mark that had mentioned this morning, when he was specifically referring to the men's programs because it was Ron that was presenting at the time and he had mentioned that coverage needs to be fair and that was a direct quote, and when I hear the word fair, I see that as totally different than what I believe that DCS or the province might see as being fair. Fair, I think, to the province means if there's a program in one region of the province or maybe two in one region and none in another, that fair would be one in each. What I see as being fair is, we need coverage for the entire province. It's not to reduce and cut from one area to make it fair, it's to make sure we have adequate, appropriate services throughout the entire province. That is where I think that having provincial voices being heard, provincial discussions, is key, because otherwise it is divide and conquer, and that is not fair.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Shirley. Irene.

MS. IRENE SMITH: In my presentation this morning, I highlighted the number of times I have gone to the Department of Community Services to talk about the programs and services of Avalon Centre and the lack of adequate funding to maintain the basic core services. Quite frankly, I have never had a sense that Community Services was willing to even work with us to try to address some of these issues, whether it was financially or not. I think just to pick up on some of the things that Pamela was saying earlier this morning, I, too, have spent numerous hours developing reports, developing information, providing briefing notes to ministers, deputy ministers and senior staff at the Department of Community Services, and for what?

I feel as if we have danced the dance so many times that - forgive me for being somewhat cynical - I'm concerned that for ongoing dialogue with this standing committee that is great, but I would really like to see us identify some objectives and some outcomes that we

want to see happen if we're going to have continued dialogue. It is quite time-consuming to develop these reports and try to respond to the numerous questions that the numerous people within Community Services ask, the same questions over and over again, when you are really feeling as if they are not talking to each other about this.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm pulling out of that - I hope I'm not reading too much into it - but a possible role for our committee is to hold the provincial government accountable for improvements on some of these issues. So whether every six months we ask for a status report on how things have improved, just to let them know it's not a one-time interest, that it is a continuing ongoing interest and that we have certain expectations that things will happen. Would anyone else like to comment? Russell.

MR. MACKINNON: A point of interest. I made a number of observations in the earlier session, particularly with regard to, for example, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Could I get some feedback on some of that from some of our panel, to see if that is, in fact, worthy of pursuing further or was I totally off base on that or what?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Do you want to list some of those groups that you felt the committee should meet with? There was the advisory council.

MR. MACKINNON: The Advisory Council on the Status of Women, year in and year out they are consistently making recommendation after recommendation. The only thing that seems to change in time is the date and the faces. I'm just wondering if I'm missing something here. They have a rather substantial budget - well over \$0.5 million a year - and I'm just wondering if we are getting value for dollar. What I'm hearing here from the front-line stakeholders is there is a need for money and there is a need to be heard. The issues that you are addressing here today, have they been heard effectively through this body to the government, things like that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm going to let Dianne speak but the rest of you be thinking, do any of your organizations have a working or a close relationship with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women? Dianne.

MS. DIANNE CROWELL: I was on the advisory council for five years and so I can speak to the change. The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women at one time worked, I think, predominantly at arm's length from government but advised government.

What I mean by that is they took into account the voices of women around the province and the needs that those women had and took issue with that. An example of that would be when Debi Forsyth-Smith was the president of the advisory council, her main concern was child care and she took that issue on and moved it forward and that is one example.

During the time I was on the advisory council, the president that they had at that time was Katherine McDonald, and she went around the province and talked to women's organizations that were actually working with women in their communities from a grassroots level and knew the issues, and were the leaders of concern in their communities for those issues. What she tried to implement at the time, although it was very difficult with the government, that the representatives on the council be chosen from the community and their names put forward. They have always been government appointments - the council members themselves - so several of us who were community leaders, our names were put forward and, in a roundabout way they were accepted. We had a voice then that represented the women in the community and knew what was going on. Right now, I would say that some of the council that is representing us are government appointments and not particularly women who are working at the grassroots level in our communities.

During that particular time, which was 1992 to 1997, in 1996-97 the government of the time saw some redundancy in the Women's Directorate. The Women's Directorate had been around as long, if not longer, than the advisory council. The Women's Directorate was an organization that was run predominantly just for government to advise ministers, MLAs if you will, on the issues of the day that were surrounding women so that they would know of what they speak. They dissolved the Women's Directorate and - I'm trying to say this politely - they moved the staff of the Women's Directorate to the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, they folded them in together.

It was at that time, I think, that the advisory council shifted its direction and then became an organization that speaks to government, and not particularly for the women of the Province of Nova Scotia. However, I will say it is difficult for any of us who work on these issues involving women to want to pit our organization against another organization that is also working, if not directly on behalf of women within the communities of Nova Scotia, at least they are trying to continue with the research facet of their organization and somewhat fulfill their mandate.

Having been on the council at that time I certainly have been very outspoken about the fact that I do not believe that they speak from a community, rural-based focus, if you will, about the real outstanding issues of women in this province, especially when it comes to the lack of services that women need. I often find it rather ironic that women's centres function on \$800,000 - it was \$700,000 and we were included this year, we are the newest centre on the block - and that the advisory council - I'm sorry it is way over \$500,000 - is about \$900,000.

The one thing that they could do is if the council itself were women, such as us around the table - and some of them are, don't get me wrong, and they try to do the work that needs to be done - the structure could be changed. For instance, Newfoundland has a structure where everyone who sits on the council is voted in by the community, it's not government appointed, so therefore they do real just service to the women in their communities, and we are rurally

based so we should be that. That was just a point of clarification on how that has changed over the years.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I have Ron and then Sheila.

MR. KELLY: I have a couple of points I wanted to make. Following on some of the comments about the process that we find ourselves in now in the regions, in terms of what that might mean in terms of cuts, I guess from our perspective if those processes are to actually enter into developing a good relationship, regionally, with the programs and services we provide, and talking to the regional administrator, then that's great, we are all for that. But if it is for the province to sort of sidestep their obligation, and we feel their duty, to talk to us directly and to, in fact, bring in possible cuts, then we're quite concerned about that.

We are getting the feeling that the regional administrators are not really in the position to be able to argue or fight for us in terms of the money, so we are quite concerned about that. It just comes back to the whole issue that yes, there's a regional aspect to what we are doing because we are administered regionally, fine, we all understand that, but at the same time we need to deal with these issues on a provincial basis.

The second point I wanted to make was back in the Spring of 2003, we presented our coalition report to the government and just in terms of moving things forward, in terms of a motion, it might be useful to look at the joint recommendations that THANS,CONNECT! and the men's association made at that meeting. There are just five of them and they are fairly brief. Should I read those, or pass them up to you?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Why don't you give them to Mora to make copies and I will continue with the speakers' list and then we will come back to that. I have Shelagh and then Lyn.

MS. RAYWORTH: I just wanted to mention that we are very fortunate in Cumberland County. We have, it's either the last or the second of two field workers who still exist with the Status of Women. So we do have, actually, a voice through her to the Status of Women organization. She's a worker as opposed to a member of the board. Anyway, that is a connection that we do use, and we're able to have our voice heard. I hope that we don't lose her, because she is the only connection that we do have. There is no other source of information flow. She has been very helpful to us and continues to be.

The second thing is, Ron mentioned about the regional approach that the province has entered into in discussion with us, et cetera, and mentioned the issue of the regional - what are they called? - administrator. The person in our area is brand new to the position, and when she met in Autumn House, obviously she really doesn't know anything about what her position is or anything. So it's a brand new experience for her and brand new for us. We're all singing from the same songbook, and it will be interesting to see how it flows.

[4:00 p.m.]

I really must echo Shirley's concerns about the provincial perspective. I personally cannot see how we can function only at a regional level. The services are provincial and have to be viewed provincially. Regional is one approach, but only part of the picture.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Shelagh. Lyn.

MS. BARRETT: Just two points, again. One is that I think it's safe to say for all the Transition House Association members, we have a definite disconnect with the advisory council, which isn't to say that we don't use materials that they produce or the research findings, that we've not all benefited from Stella Lord sending us all kinds of missives on wonderful things we should know about or more issues, pending her retirement. We've always been able to access some of the information that they have, and that's been beneficial to us, but we have no real connect in the sense of talking to them or dealing with them on the issues that we face. It's very distancing. That wasn't the case when Katherine was the executive director. I know there's all kinds of other history there, but I think prior to the changes we felt a very much closer connection with the council.

The other thing was that on April 5, 2002, the day after the budget, we had a meeting with the Department of Justice. There were people there from Community Services who wanted to allay some of our fears. The concern that I raised at that meeting was that it sounded to me like, as part of this redesign, they were going to take us into our little regional corners, put a table in the middle of the room, put the dollar bills on the table, and then let us fight it out, and that we would degenerate into this scrambling mass of humanity trying to protect the women and children that we're individually serving.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what we are doing, to a large degree, today. My concern is that although we're being very polite about it and it's all very politically correct, I think the essence in going into a regional meeting with other agencies that are struggling to survive and they're talking about reallocation of funds, that sends the message, watch your back and see what you can carve out for yourself. It's hard not to, we're dedicated to the agencies we serve. Our provincial structure allowed us to get past that and to look at all of us as a group and to look at all the services that are provided throughout the province, but these regional meetings are not designed to coalesce us around service provision. We, I think, are very concerned that we have gone back to April 4, 2002 in one fell swoop.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Lyn. Elaine.

MS. ELAINE SMITH: Just in regard to that regionalization of the services, the thing that we wanted least when we started that coalition report was the one thing that we all agreed on and the one thing that we did not want was regional meetings with the provincial government. Not that we can't meet regionally and talk regionally about regional issues, but if

you're going to redesign the whole service, if you're going to redesign the services for transition houses, the one thing that we were adamant about was that wasn't where we wanted to go.

We have that 12-page report, and they haven't even talked to us about that. I'm quoted in the paper as saying it was 12 pages of nothing, and I stick by that. They have ignored everything we've said, and they said, okay, now you'll go to regional meetings and here we go to regional meetings. What did we do all that work for? What was that two years of struggle?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I can't answer that. (Interruptions)

MS. ELAINE SMITH: It was a rhetorical question.

MS. IRENE SMITH: With respect to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, certainly we, at one point, met with the advisory council - what's Brigitte's title? (Interruptions) Acting? She's not still acting - the acting executive director, as well as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women at the time, who would have been Jane Purves, to talk to them about the funding crisis that we were in.

I have to say I was quite disappointed, because I didn't hear - as a matter of fact, when the issue came up in the House, Jane Purves, at the time, really did not provide any input or any support that would indicate to me that she was concerned that the Avalon Centre was in financial crisis and that services may need to be cut. So I was a bit disappointed with that. Like other members around the table have said, certainly when Katherine McDonald was at the advisory council, there was a different kind of relationship that we had with the advisory council.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Peggy.

MS. MAHON: There are so many things I want to respond to. I'm going to try to stick to our idea of trying to put something out that the standing committee can consider. I have a couple of suggestions. One is related to one of our requests in our first presentation, when we first presented, and basically we worded it that the standing committee support - I said women's centres but I think it could apply to all the organizations here - and recommend to the province, or advocate that when considering spending priorities, you must take into account the negative impact on women, the women who we serve, of the recent cuts and changes to social programs and services.

That also impacts on us as organizations, because those cuts have disproportionately, on the communities, into Community Services, also impacted on our ability to access adequate funding. Am I being clear?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You are, and I'm going to interrupt here and suggest that it even be broader, that we could request the government to analyze all government legislation and decisions for their gender impact or have a gender impact lens or something.

MS. MAHON: Yes, it's another way of wording it. Thank you. And added to that, part of that recommendation was that the government also consider both the Charter of Rights and the International Human Rights Law, which we referred to in our presentation, that guarantees equality to women. In that - and I have their report here somewhere in my pile of stuff - there are clear recommendations related to Canada and provinces, because the provinces have also signed onto that agreement that there be adequate resources to address violence against women - in particular, women's crisis centres and women's shelters - and that there be adequate resources to address poverty. We feel that's integral to that recommendation. I guess what we're asking is that when the budget is considered, we want these things to be looked at very seriously.

MS. IRENE SMITH: And if you recall, the Avalon Centre made the same recommendation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Right. Here's our dilemma - we've had so many excellent suggestions today and they impact at different levels. They impact on the organizational level, on the association level, on your relationship with the Department of Community Services, on the provincial government, and they also have national and international implications. I'm wondering, what kind of motion - Ron, I haven't forgotten that we're coming back to you and I believe Jerry also has a motion to put forward. I'm wondering what we could do that would give us some specific next steps, but still allow the committee to continue to study this in terms of the broader impact that it needs to consider.

I'll just throw out as a consideration that I think we want to reassure you that we take the information and your suggestions very seriously and we'd like to give you some proof of that by some commitment today, but also we need to recognize that this is a much larger issue than I think any of us came into this forum understanding. We need to do more study and consultation ourselves. I'll just leave that where it is.

Ron and then Jerry and then Gary. (Interruption) Ron, we do have a practice that if someone is speaking for the first time, we tend to give precedence to them so I'm going to let Gary go ahead and then Ron and then Jerry.

MR. GARY HINES: Thank you, Madam Chairman. One of the things that I'm hearing around the table, in the latter part of the discussion, was that the Status of Women does not seem to be a functional organization. Has there ever been a point in time - this group here seems to be working quite cohesively and if there's funding being spent on another entity that's not doing what they should be doing, are we in a position where somebody would make the

recommendation that they not exist and that this group go on and be able to access that funding and do what should be done? (Interruptions)

MR. MACKINNON: On a point of order, Madam Chairman. That's not the issue that was put on the table. That's totally off base. There was no suggestion that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women was not functional. It was a question of the meeting of the minds in reflecting the needs and the aspirations of the various stakeholders that were here at the table and the measure of value for dollar.

[4:15 p.m.]

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, I wasn't suggesting that. I was just saying that's what I was reading from it, that perhaps they're not functioning the way they should be functioning or they're not providing the support they should be providing to those of you who obviously know your stuff, as indicated here today. So, I wasn't suggesting, nor would I suggest that they be dismissed or be eliminated, but if you're going to work with them, why were they not at the table today as part of the discussion? Were they invited? Why were they not at the table today? I think they could have possibly brought something to the table that would make us better understand - are we wasting our money or is the money not being properly spent to be putting the kind of money into the Status of Women that's being put in there?

MR. MACKINNON: If I could close on that point, Madam Chairman, equally so it could easily be said for all the various government departments, why weren't they here to at least listen to the concerns and the pleas by the various stakeholders here at the table? We had one government official from one government department taking copious notes who exited before the forum was even completed, so perhaps the honourable member, who represents the government, could speak to that issue.

MR. HINES: Well, I'm not the person to speak to that, but I would like my question answered. Were they invited or were they asked to be here?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I don't know. We can ask Mora when she steps back in. We understood that the groups that we wanted to meet with today were representatives from the voluntary sector who are providing community-based programs and services, helping women and children deal with family violence. So, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is considered sort of a government organization. Just as we don't have the Department of Community Services around the table today, we wanted to focus our time and attention on the non-profit organizations.

I think, in terms of the discussion about the advisory council, there are probably different periods in its history - as I understand - where there's been a different priority placed on education and research and advocacy. At present, I think the priority is on education and

research and I don't think any of us around the table are suggesting that isn't a very necessary part of action to create better conditions for women and families.

Mora, do you know if the Advisory Council on the Status of Women was informed about the forum today that they might send an observer?

MS. MORA STEVENS (Legislative Committee Coordinator): I did not inform them personally. Community Services was, as was Justice. But a media serve did go out and that does include all of the government communications officers so they would have known about it through a media serve because all of the public meetings do get that. But they weren't personally informed by my office.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Right. Thank you. Any other questions, Gary? Okay, Ron and then Jerry.

MR. KELLY: I just brought forward the joint recommendations from the May 2003 report to the government with the suggestion that might be a possibility of something to work with for putting forward a motion, realizing that Avalon should be included with that if they so desire.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, just a second now - yes. I have Irene and Peggy and let's hear from everybody first before we actually put a motion on the floor because that tends to close off the discussion and debate. So, Irene, you're next.

MS. IRENE SMITH: I recognize that the joint recommendations that are being put forward here today, the Avalon Centre wasn't involved with this process. As I explained this morning, we weren't in the same envelope of funding as the other three groups were. Certainly, all of these recommendations I can support and include Avalon in that, other than we don't have a provincial organization.

The last comment that I will make is, you indicated this was a far larger issue than local or even provincial, but it is very much a global issue. We're talking about the United Nations recommendations on the discrimination against women. I want to put forward this recommendation again because I think that I'm asking the standing committee to support our organizations by being a political advocate, to take action and strongly support the establishment of a parliamentary committee on women's issues, ensuring compliance with CEDAW.

The reason why I'm bringing this up again is I think if we were to have a permanent parliamentary committee on women's issues, we would have a watchdog at the federal level to be dealing with some of these issues of social program transfer monies, and hopefully looking at trying to establish conditions whereby the provinces would be responsible for being accountable around how those funds are being spent.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Can you just clarify, is it your recommendation that we form a provincial committee or . . .

MS. IRENE SMITH: No, I'm asking the standing committee to pay attention to any kinds of recommendations, that a parliamentary committee be established at the federal level and to support that, politically and in whatever way you can. If we can get that established, then we have a watchdog with regard to the federal government and their transferring of social program funds.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Understood. Thank you. Peggy.

MS. MAHON: I'm trying to remember exactly what it was. I think I'll pass.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, we're just waiting for Jerry to come back to discuss his particular motion, so that we know the intent of all of them. He's on his way. Does anyone else want to make a comment? Russell.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, while we're waiting - well, Jerry's coming back now. I was going to say, could we deal with the motion that I had contemplated about bringing the representatives from the various government departments in on another all-day forum to look at the other side of the equation? Essentially, I think it's good to have the stakeholders from the various government departments and agencies all in one room at one time, so the buck-passing can stop once and for all, and we could get some answers, whether it's from the Department of Justice, who say, oh well, that's not our responsibility, that's over at the Department of Community Services, and so on. Then we can just go to another part of the room and get the answer. (Interruptions)

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, I misunderstood. When you talked about that, I thought you meant you wanted them to come before our regular monthly meetings, but you're suggesting another forum, where the government partners would meet.

MR. MACKINNON: Yes. We could have a similar forum like what we have here now. I don't know if you want to do it before September or when we come back for regular business, the first or second week of September, and have this as one of our issues, that we have an all-day forum to deal specifically with this issue.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, let's just hear Jerry's motion. I don't think, quite frankly, any of the motions - I think they all complement one another, so we should be able to deal with them. I would rather have them all on the floor, so everybody understands what's coming up, and then we'll go back through them, one by one. Jerry, do you want to put - don't move it, just tell us what it's about.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, the reason why I brought this recommendation forward was because I believe that a number of smaller motions would just simply get lost, and I believe that we have a number of recommendations - I should say not motions but recommendations - and we have a huge number of recommendations that came across from the presenters today. I'm just going to tell you what I have stated, and then I won't put it forward as a motion but I'll just put it forward, in the event that some other individuals might want to make some friendly changes to the proposed or potential motion.

That all recommendations presented at the all-day Forum on Family Violence be forwarded to the Department of Community Services for immediate action. Be it further resolved that the Department of Community Services prepare a report to the Standing Committee on Community Services on the status of the recommendations within four months. That comes back to the Fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: As I understand it, we have at least four possible recommendations. One, the joint recommendations that Ron is suggesting, including all four organizations represented around the table. Then we have Jerry's proposal that we send all the recommendations and suggestions that have come out of today's forum to the Department of Community Services, asking them to not only take action but to give us, in four months' time, an update on what's happened with each of them and possibly what they plan to do. Then we have Russell's suggestion that we bring all the government departments and agencies together in the early Fall to discuss this issue and to try to develop a coordinated, at least, government approach to see who's responsible and who's going to take action in what area.

What was the fourth one? I guess perhaps it was Irene's. (Interruptions) Just refresh my memory, what was the one . . .

MS. IRENE SMITH: It was in my presentation, it was the recommendation that when considering government spending priorities - and then there were two parts to it - one, the impact on women of cuts to social programs and services, which you talked about putting a gender lens on it; and then the other was . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The equality of women.

MS. IRENE SMITH: . . . the consideration of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the International Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women is in there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Right. So just let me test the wishes of the committee members. I don't think any of those pre-empt us from taking further action. If there's general agreement, we could just bring them forward one at a time for discussion and decision. How do you want to handle this?

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, if I might. We could bring Russell's recommendation forward separate from the others, because his recommendation is really to do something entirely different that concerns our scheduling for the committee, if it's fine with him.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm talking about four motions, but I just wanted to make sure that none of them conflicted or counteracted each other, but I don't think they do.

MR. MACKINNON: The intent of mine, I've already explained, but in addition what it will do is provide substantive detail for our report that we will be submitting to the Legislature. I think it will be more wholesome to have it complete, all the stakeholders included in this issue, because, as you've suggested, Madam Chairman, and rightfully so, the idea of putting a report to the Legislature, I think, is an excellent idea.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mora, I just want to ask you, what's the timing on that, what is the end of the year?

MS. STEVENS: Usually this forum would be the end of the year to prepare the report, but that is not saying that we - there's no timing to say we have to have it in. It can be completed in September. I can have up to this meeting done, and then it can be added on. It is at the will of the committee. There could be two reports done, if you want to do up until before this forum, and then a specific report on this. It could be done that way. Whatever the committee desires is what I'll do.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That might make sense. Perhaps we'll do one covering all our meetings and those general issues, and then perhaps we'll do one that's entirely focused on family violence. Not hearing any dissent, let's deal with the motions one by one. Ron, I think you were first to suggest yours. Does someone on the committee want to move the joint recommendations from the coalition - what was the official title? The Coalition Response, but adding Avalon Sexual Assault Centre. (Interruptions)

It's been moved by Gordie Gosse, seconded by Russell MacKinnon.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded Nay.

The motion is carried.

Russell, I think yours was the next motion.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, I would move that we invite the Department of Community Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, representatives, perhaps, from the IWK, the Halifax Regional Police, the Law Reform Commission and any other associated stakeholder (Interruption)

MADAM CHAIRMAN: . . . the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

MR. MACKINNON: Yes. That's why I made sure I put that caveat in there. And specifically the Advisory Council on the Status of Women to appear at an all-day forum when we reconvene in September 2004, unless it's the wish of the committee to go before that. I know it's tight scheduling. I so move.

[4:30 p.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there a seconder? Gordie Gosse seconded it. Any discussion?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The third one, I think, was Peggy's. Do you want to just help us frame it, Peggy, and we'll get someone from the standing committee to move it? Go with your own language.

MS. MAHON: The request as I had written it was, we respectfully request the Standing Committee on Community Services to support the organizations around the table by recommending to the Province of Nova Scotia that when considering spending priorities, the province must take into account the negative impact on women of recent cuts and changes to social programs and services, which is related to the CHST and the lack of conditions on social transfer, as well as the domestic and International Human Rights Law that guarantees equality to women in Canada. I was specifically referring to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women - I believe that's right, I just have to get the wording exactly correct. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW.

I guess I would add a third point which is I believe that - particularly related to the first point - the negative impact of recent cuts and changes has also impacted the ability for these services to be able to access adequate and sustainable funding, the organizations around this table. It has also meant there have been cuts in funding or the lack of ability to give adequate and sustainable funding to these organizations because of the change, the erosion, of social programs.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Do you have all that, Mora?

MS. STEVENS: I'll get that from the transcript.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So, does someone on the committee want to move that? Do you have a question? Diana Whalen is moving it. Secunder? Gordie Gosse seconded it. Any discussion?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The fourth one, Jerry, do you want to move that?

MR. PYE: I guess I made some friendly amendments after hearing some of the comments from people. I would just put it forward this way: I move that all motions adopted at the all-day forum on family violence be forwarded to the Department of Community Services for immediate action. Be it further resolved that the Department of Community Services prepare a report to the Standing Committee on Community Services on the status of the motions put forth within a four-month period.

MR. MACKINNON: I second it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Wonderful. We're only five minutes behind schedule. Ron.

MR. KELLY: Am I to assume that for the all-day forum we would all be invited back for that?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: It certainly will be open. I'm not sure, in terms of speaking - I mean, we haven't planned it, but, yes, you're welcome to come and we'll try to accommodate your interests as best we can.

MR. KELLY: Okay, fine. Thanks.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's as much as I can say without having discussed it with anybody at this point. Irene.

MS. IRENE SMITH: I think the motion that I made that the standing committee can support my organization and its sister organizations by being a political advocate and taking action and strongly supporting the establishment of a permanent parliamentary committee on women's issues to ensure compliance with CEDAW, I don't think that was included in your list, was it?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No, it wasn't. It's a little difficult for us as a standing committee of the provincial Legislature to deal with federal matters. I'm just wondering, any advice or suggestions from the rest of the committee? (Interruption) We can write them. Yes, that's possible. Russell.

MR. MACKINNON: Madam Chairman, it's not out of order for us to pass a motion in support of that, making recommendations. However, it would be interesting if we had a little more detail on the dynamics of what Ms. Smith is recommending. It caught me off guard. Initially, my reaction is, yes, it's positive. I'm sure you wouldn't be recommending it unless it was, but the dynamics - probably we could take it on notice, get a little more detail so that members would be a little better informed. We can always adopt the resolution at our next meeting. Is that agreeable?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Irene, perhaps you and your colleagues could help us draft a letter that we could then circulate at our first meeting in September. If it's approved then, we could sign it and send it off. Would that be possible?

MS. IRENE SMITH: Okay. What I do have here though is Canada Needs a Permanent Parliamentary Committee, so it does provide some information for you on what that would entail. I'll give it to you, Mora, for photocopying.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Excellent. Peggy.

MS. MAHON: I just want to add too that in the wording of my motion, it wasn't totally directed at the Department of Community Services. It was directed generally - government spending priorities. I just wanted to be clear about that since all of these were going to be forwarded to the Department of Community Services. This one is a broader motion in terms of the overall government spending priorities. I just wanted to make sure we were clear about that.

The one other thing I want to add, in terms of the interdepartmental funding or interdepartmental discussion, that women's centres were engaged in an interdepartmental planning process in 1999-2000 and there is a report on the books at the Department of Community Services. There were a number of recommendations related to how we might work with interdepartmental funding and nothing has been done with that report. That report was a joint planning committee, there were a number of government departments on that committee - I don't have the list in my head, but I know the Department of Justice was there, the Department of Education, the Department of Community Services, and I think there may have been one or two in Health. That report is already on the books with a number of recommendations.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mora, perhaps you could track that down and make sure we have a copy of it before September.

Thank you so much for coming today. I know it's been a long day, but certainly if I can speak on behalf of the committee members, we've learned an awful lot. I think we feel committed to your cause and we've certainly been sensitized to the complexity of the issues that you're dealing with on a day-to-day basis. We thank you for the incredible work that you're doing and we just want to make sure that you take our appreciation back to your boards and staff and volunteers.

Don't give up. I realize, obviously, some of you have been working for many, many years on these issues and you're finding the progress is very slow, but hopefully we'll be able to kick-start some really good things. You've given us such an excellent foundation today, I just thank you for the time, effort and energy it took for you to get here and thank you for sharing with us.

I have some thank yous. First of all, as I mentioned earlier in the meeting, we want to thank Mora Stevens, our committee clerk, and Pamela Harrison for sort of taking the lead in organizing today. I wanted to thank the representatives from Legislative Television - Jim MacInnes, Paul Read and Roger Bowman who have provided us good technical services. I also want to thank the staff of Hansard Reporting Services - Bob Kinsman and his entire staff, with a special mention to Rhonda Neatt, who is present at all of our committee meetings, and Bob's the senior editor assigned to this committee.

I want to thank the House of Assembly staff for making all the arrangements for the forum - Peter Theriault who is Assistant Coordinator of the House of Assembly Operations, who arranged the set-up and everything, and all the staff of Province House. When we have one of these forums - I say one of these, this is the first one I've ever attended - I understand there's a huge operation that goes into place to make sure it goes as efficiently as it has today so we thank them as well. So, I want to thank the committee members. Some of you travelled a considerable distance just to get here today, so thank you very much.

Upwards and onwards. I think we're going to do some good work together and we just appreciate your patience with us. We're sorry we're not as up to speed on this as we would like to be, but it's an important issue. We do take your concerns very, very seriously and we definitely promise to work closely with you. This isn't a one-off occasion, we plan to stay in close communication with you and let you help direct some of the action that hopefully is going to come out of this.

Thank you again and have a safe trip home.

[The committee adjourned at 4:41 p.m.]