

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Thursday, February 24, 2005**

**Committee Room 1**

**Alternative Transportation Services Societies**

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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

Ms. Rhia Perkins

Provincial Secretary

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

## **WITNESSES**

Mr. Claredon Robicheau

Chairman, Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

Founder and volunteer manager, Le Transport de Clare

Ms. Jen Powley

Provincial Coordinator, Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities



**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2005**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1:00 P.M.**

**CHAIRMAN**  
Ms. Marilyn More

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I will call the meeting to order. This is Part II of the Forum on Family Violence that is being sponsored by the Standing Committee on Community Services. I am Marilyn More, the MLA for Dartmouth South-Portland Valley and I am chairman of the committee. I want to welcome everyone here today. Thank you very much.

I think, perhaps, we will start with introductions from the committee members. Russell, would you like to start?

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I understand we are going to be joined later by Diana Whalen, the member for Halifax Clayton Park. We're not sure if members of the government caucus will be joining us today so we will wait and see if they arrive.

I just want to give a little bit of context to this afternoon's proceedings before I ask the presenters to start. I imagine most of you have read the Hansard report of our previous forum. I think you will realize from that report that there are a lot of concerns about anti-discriminatory and equality issues affecting women in this province. We have heard from some of the individual organizations working with women, we have heard from their provincial associations and we wanted to hear from the various government departments.

Our concern, as a committee, is that we recognize that these women's centres and transition houses, the men's intervention and sexual assault programs, provide critical and front-line services in our communities, and need to be supported. We realize that the issues that they are working with are issues that belong to all levels of government and across sectors. We would like to know what is happening in Nova Scotia, in terms of a more comprehensive, integrated, long-term and sustained approach to these issues.

[1:15 p.m.]

I'm not going to get into the details of some of the concerns raised by the organizations, except to say that we agree that they are legitimate concerns and that action needs to be happening on all fronts. We are trying to be open-minded. We realize that resources are not as plentiful as we would like to see in this province but it seems that, year after year, we are talking about the same issues, the same inadequacy of funding, and we would like to see us moving forward a little more progressively and proactively on these issues.

They range all the way from whether or not, in this province, we are actually compliant with some of the domestic and international legislation, and conventions and charters around equality issues for women, down to some of the structural problems that some of our community-based organizations are trying to deal with because of all the renewals and redesigns that are happening in some of the provincial departments.

There is a broad range of concerns but we are interested to hear what is happening and we would like to be able to bring, perhaps, the voluntary sector organizations into closer contact with the government departments so that we can enhance the respect, the communication and the sharing of resources. I think we all need to be partners in this effort and we're hoping that today's deliberations might clarify some of the operational challenges that everyone is facing. So we thank you very much. We know that, both those people seated around the table and those in the audience, we all are very time squeezed these days. We appreciate the time you have given up and the effort you have made to be here today, either to present or to listen, so thank you.

I understand that the presenters have already decided among themselves what order they're going in. I would like to suggest that, as your turn comes to present, you might introduce yourself and any of your colleagues that you have with you. We have allowed, generally, about 10 minutes per presentation. After that, we will open it up for questions and clarification from the committee members, and then we will just see where we are time-wise after that.

I'm not sure, who's going to present first? Thank you.

MR. DOUGLAS KEEFE: My name is Doug Keefe. I'm the Deputy Minister of Justice. With me is Stephanie MacInnis-Langley who is, in the Department of Justice, our Manager of Special Initiatives for Victims, which translated means that about 70 to 80 per cent of her time is spent on domestic violence. I should mention that, I think unique in our department, the person in that position - currently, Stephanie - has direct access to the deputy minister position on the issue of domestic violence and, in fact, my first instruction to her on the first day she took up the duty was, it is your job to bug me on the subject. So Stephanie and I have gotten to know each other very well because Stephanie is a very enthusiastic person, especially on the subject of domestic violence.

I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to come and speak to your committee. It doesn't always start out that way but as you begin to prepare your remarks, sometimes you feel that it's about time that we got out and talked about what we're doing a little more often. So this turned out to be a good opportunity and I appreciate it.

Seated next to me is Judith Ferguson. She has yielded about five minutes of her time. I asked if I could go a little longer than the allotted 15 minutes because I believe it's certainly the first time I have appeared before this committee. It may be the first time the Department of Justice has appeared before this committee. Certainly, on this subject, it is in my five years as a deputy.

I wanted to spend a little bit of time to talk about the justice system and some of the features that compel us to act in the way we do and why sometimes things may take longer than they should appear. So with your indulgence, I am going to give a little overview of the justice system.

The duty of the justice system is order that is democratic and just. It underpins absolutely everything we value in society. It is a major instrument for social change, but it's a cumbersome and difficult to handle instrument. There are a couple of reasons for that. First of all, it is not like other systems, it is a deliberately non-integrated system. It is, in fact, a system of systems. I'm going to come back to that.

Secondly, the funding for the justice system comes from all three layers of government. If we take the police in Nova Scotia, for example, policing is a municipal responsibility under service exchange. So the municipalities in this province spend \$121.5 million a year on policing, that's municipal. The federal government spends about \$57 million on policing, that's federal policing, it's drug enforcement and things like that. The province spends about \$20.5 million on policing. In terms of operating policing in this province we are small players. Of that, probably 30 to 40 per cent is highway patrol.

The second thing is, the Department of Justice has a net budget - that is money that we control - of about \$100 million. Our gross budget is nearly \$200 million, but most of that is just the municipal money for RCMP policing that we broker and it simply flows through us to the RCMP. So that's why we always talk in terms of net and gross. The money I have in my hands to administer is about \$100 million. We believe that about \$400 million in public money is spent on the justice system in Nova Scotia. It is not like some other systems where there may be federal money but it at least flows through a provincial turnstile and you can count it as it goes by; that's municipal money, it's federal money, but it doesn't count any private money. The \$400 million figure is a rough approximation.

The next thing about the justice system is the culture and nature of the justice system. I said at the outset that it's a very independent-minded system. It is, in fact, a system of systems.

It is made up of independent elements. Nobody in a democracy trusts concentrations of power. Nobody wants a justice system that somebody is in charge of. If the Attorney General or his deputy picked up the phone and talked to a judge about a case, it would cost him or me our job, and properly so, we don't talk about individual cases.

Contrary to popular belief, we don't even direct the police to conduct an investigation, with one exception, if it's a re-investigation we have a protocol that says we can direct a particular police force, but in general, if we believe a crime has been committed, we refer what we know to the police and it is their decision whether to investigate and whether to charge. The Crown, similarly, has the decision whether to proceed or not with the charges. If the Attorney General believes that they are doing the wrong thing or not doing the right thing, he would have to give them a written direction and it would be published.

Of course, the judiciary, as is well understood, is independent as a matter of constitutional law in this country and cannot be directed.

Finally, the private Bar, the defence Bar, the civil Bar, their duty is to represent their clients, within the strictures of the Code of Conduct and the law. We can't direct them and we don't direct them.

The second thing about the culture, need it be said, is that it's an adversarial culture. So if you are the Attorney General or his deputy, you look at the justice system and the minister says, I'm accountable to the public for the administration of justice in this province and yet I have no control, and what I say is, yes, you have no control so you need co-operation. Everything we do that tries to use the justice system as an instrument of social change has to be negotiated with these independent players.

In October 1995, the desire, the pressure, to have the justice system give a better response, a more appropriate response to domestic violence, had risen to the point where it was acknowledged within the system that something had to be done. It was also acknowledged and a lot of credit has to go to people outside government who created that demand and expectation. It was also a recognition that this couldn't happen if people didn't co-operate. I've said on a couple of public occasions that I think the justice system owes a lot to domestic violence because the need to address domestic violence caused the independent elements of the justice system to sit down at a table and the table was downstairs in the old Cabinet Room in October 1995. There were a large number of people there. I was there, you were there, community groups, every element of the justice system, and the first meeting was mostly spent about whether it was appropriate for us to be sitting down together and talking.

Now, I should say, in our defence at the time, that that was only three years after the Marshall Commission and the Marshall Commission was very, very interested in the independence of each of the elements. So what we were all doing after Marshall was building

our forts and what domestic violence required us to do was begin to pay attention to the roads between the forts. We got off to that start earlier in this province than in a lot of other provinces; in fact, some are still at the gate.

Two good things came out of that for domestic violence. The first good thing that came out of it from an administration of justice point of view was people began to realize that it was okay to talk and it was the pressure to do something and the recognition that we had to do it together that made the difference. But the good thing that came out in the fight against domestic violence was the Framework for Action Against Family Violence, and that was and continues to be very important and I think that's the seminal document. The second thing was a massive training initiative, the first of its kind, probably the only of its kind with, I believe, 3,200 justice workers. Everybody except the judges - the judges had their own training - was trained in the framework and the nature of domestic violence and the appropriate response to domestic violence.

We knew even at that time that that effort was unsustainable. Especially with 24/7 operations like police and corrections, to take somebody out of the mix and send them off for training - in that case it was up to the Coast Guard College in North Sydney - is expensive, because they have to be backfilled, you can't be down a shift. It was very, very expensive; municipalities put money in, we put money in, but in the end we had to hope that it would be sustained inside the organizations themselves. We did not have the means to sustain it.

We got the answer in February 2000, with the Maxwell/George murder/suicide in Truro. There are, we think, an average of two or three intimate partner homicides a year, it is a very small number but over a period of time, the average seems to be about three. What was, I think, so poignant about Maxwell/George was that they had so many multiple contacts with so many different helping agencies: 18 with the police, numerous with the courts, Corrections; Victim Services, I believe, was aware of them, even Firearms was aware of them.

So we sent in our team, two people, to find out what had happened there. In fact, Ms. Ferguson was the one I personally selected to go representing the Department of Justice's Legal Services Division. What I asked her to do at the time was don't take a criminal justice approach to this, take a Transportation Safety Board approach to this. It is not a sufficient answer to go in and say, we found out what happened, this person failed to do their duty or that person messed up. The Transportation Safety Board's approach is if the plane crashed because the pilot misread the altimeter, you look and say, what can we do with that altimeter to make it easier to read?

If you're talking about systems and improving systems so that we're not depending on people never making a mistake - because that's a really dumb strategy - then you have to go in and say, fine, a mistake was made, let's find out why, let's find out what we should do. That's the kind of report they did. I also said please go in in a way that allows us to build a strong

relationship, especially with the Truro Town Police. They did that. It may not have felt like that to some people at the time, but they did that and a lot of good things happened.

One of the things that we said after their report was, we need to check on the framework to see if the framework is a problem. So we retained Dean Dawn Russell and Professor Diana Ginn from Dalhousie Law School. Their task was to review the framework in consultation with interested people across the province. I believe they had four public meetings across the province. So they did this consultation - I'm compressing in the interest of time like mad - and I think that they found three key findings for us - they had a lot of findings and had a lot of recommendations but what I can take out of it today, looking back, and as I say, with respect to the Dean, compressing like mad here.

[1:30 p.m.]

First of all, they said the framework was very good. They had some minor amendments but they said it should be continued to be followed. They noted that we hadn't sustained, especially the training, but we hadn't sustained the push that we created in 1996 with the training. They said we needed to strengthen coordination. Exactly, Madam Chairman, what you talked about at the outset, the need to coordinate all the activities; there are a lot of people in the field, it was not well coordinated.

So by this time I was the deputy minister and we had some key strategic decisions to make. We had a very strong endorsement of the report and, in particular, certain of the recommendations in the report from Cabinet, so that wasn't a problem. We had a clear direction to deal with this. The question was how to do it. We made, I think, three key strategic decisions. One is that the response to domestic violence has to be woven into the fabric of the justice system, not an add-on. What we did in 1996 was not a mistake, we knew what we were doing. I shouldn't say we, at that point, I had a lot less to do with this than many other people. It was the idea of administering, if you want, a kind of inoculation or administering of medicine, and so it was something that people sprinted to do. But you can't sprint forever, everybody knows that. So what we said, this time, that was a big and helpful event, let's build this up slowly in a way that we know we can sustain.

We also recognized that by weaving it in, the fact is that the vast bulk of the justice system is not ours to weave in. In this field we have Corrections, Victim Services and Court Services. Those are our front-line people in this field. But the police, transition houses, Community Services, Health, many, many other people also have organizations that are actually in the field much more than we are. So we said we don't hold the lever. We said we have to strengthen our capacity to support partnerships.

One of the most important things we did, for this, arguably, would appear to have nothing to do with it. We created the Justice Partners Forum, which brings the leadership of



the justice system together twice a year to talk about justice system issues. In other words, it created an institution, if you will, it institutionalized the meetings we had in October 1995 and 1996, with the explicit purpose of supporting it and sustaining that type of co-operation.

So we have the Justice Partners Forum, we also created Stephanie - or created Stephanie's position at least, we found Stephanie. (Laughter) She was working in a transition home, I think; in fact, Stephanie is not the first person in the position. Then we said, coordination is definitely needed. That was a no-brainer. Dean Russell told us that. So we did obtain funding from the government to create the case coordinators. We had, originally, 3.5 case coordinators and building on Dean Russell's recommendations, they were actually, although they're not police department employees, they're not sworn members, placed in the police departments. We're now up to nine. We fund nine of them. The feedback that I'm getting from the chiefs of police is that they are invaluable. It's an invaluable resource because they help the police and the community groups and all the other justice players connect. I'll be coming back to them.

We also developed, first of all, the overarching High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework, and that is being rolled out, successfully, in each county or municipality, depending on the size, in this province. It's a pretty important event, groups of people who are involved in this field, and those six or seven key providers have to sit down at the local level and negotiate exactly what it is they do and what they will do to co-operate with each other. I'm told they're tremendous documents but tremendously difficult to negotiate because people are really making a commitment to each other to do that. It's phenomenal. The process alone is of great potential value.

One of the best things I heard was two weeks ago from Chief MacLean from Truro. He carried a very heavy burden after the Maxwell/George murder/suicide and people can say to him as many times as they want, it happened in Truro but it could have happened anywhere and he says, but it did happen in Truro. He was able to stand up at a meeting and say, with tremendous pride, that I think was very touching to everybody in the room, Colchester County is the first place in this province to sign a high-risk coordination - you have to come up with a shorter title, Stephanie - protocol. They were the first to do it. They broke trail for the rest of us. It brought a lump to a lot of people's throats to hear him say that.

We also said we could use training. What we can't control we can - well, I'll use a not very nice word - co-opt, I guess. What we can't control we can lead through training. People love training, people are crying out for training on domestic violence. Again, in order to sustain it, we created the Justice Learning Centre. The Justice Learning Centre is really a very modest physical asset. It's one classroom and an office, but it's done in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College, so we could say, on the glass half full side, that it's got 13 campuses throughout Nova Scotia. It has a powerful on-line presence.

I always say that I think that training can be looked at as a gift horse or a Trojan horse and in the case of dealing with domestic violence I think it's a bit of both. What we created through the learning centre was a network of trainers; originally, I think, 84. I'm trying to think, we started training them in December 2002 and January 2003. Judith and I were both present. Judith developed the material on the Domestic Violence Intervention Act, which I won't have time in my opening remarks but perhaps we'll come back to it. We trained those people in three groups: municipal police, RCMP, military police, EMO, legal aid, PPS and Justice officials in domestic violence in the framework. But the other thing we did with that was we created a cadre of people who then went back to their organizations fired up about domestic violence.

In order to sustain that effort, we bring them back every year. We promised to bring them back, they've been back once in March 2004. This is why it's called the Justice Learning Centre and not the Justice Training Centre. The first time around was training. The second time around a large component was built in for them to feedback to us. One of the things they said was, we feel - and these are people from across these organizations - there is now a very strong commitment on domestic violence from our leadership but we're worried about the middle managers. It is the middle managers who allocate our time. We said, fine, we'll do something.

So the learning centre conducted, in February 2005, what we call the Domestic Violence Leadership Forum. We had Community Services present, chiefs of police, and various other middle and senior managers from organizations to talk about domestic violence. Get them cranked up so they go back. We're bringing the trainers or educators back in June and June is a little late but there is a gentleman by the name of Dr. Jaffe, who I haven't met, but I'm told is an excellent speaker. That's when he's available, so we built it around him. I'm almost finished.

Now, specific to the Justice Department, again, consistent with the idea of weaving things in, we have the case coordinator program, which I've already referred to, which the chiefs that I've spoken with say works really well. We have the Justice Learning Centre and that has built the educators network, the leadership forum and they're also leading the creation of a flip book for police. People who are familiar with the Youth Criminal Justice Act know that Gwen Davis, a contractor in Nova Scotia, created a flip book that ended up being adopted by many other provinces in Canada. It's a tremendous resource. Thanks to the educators, we've hired Gwen to do a flip book on domestic violence. We hope to see that by the end of the fiscal year.

The Regional Victim Services Program, of course, about half of their cases deal with domestic violence, a little less than that. We have criminal injuries counselling and I think that's running around half. The Domestic Violence Intervention Act, which Nova Scotia first proposed in 1992, we would have been the first, at that time I was the pointy end of promoting that. We put out a discussion paper. Groups that were combatting domestic violence were against it. It surprised me. They said it would detract from the efforts to make the criminal

justice system work better. I thought then they were wrong, I think now they were right. Concentrating on the criminal justice system was more work than I thought it would be. Also, we weren't ready to run a domestic violence intervention program. But by this time we had the JP Centre set up and now I think it runs well; they secure about 250 cases of emergency protection orders.

We, of course, have Family Courts and staff training and we've opened up one and we'll soon open up a second, family law clinic - they also deal with that. Even our firearms program, if we get a hit - like a criminal or any form of behaviour - then the person who wants a PAL, which is a permit to have a weapon, will get an interview and an assessment, and we can flag that for the police. We also have Corrections running respectful relationships and we are helping communities develop high-risk offender protocols.

Justice, PPS and now the Department of Community Services have a deputy ministers' leadership committee consisting of us three. We are trying to find a way to revitalize the somewhat moribund interdepartmental committee that existed.

The last thing I'm going to say is that we are in the process and we're gearing up to begin to go back into domestic violence in the justice system and see how all these changes, which are just beginning to roll out, are working. We have an evaluation of the Domestic Violence Intervention Act, about to be started, we will soon go to the street with an RFP to do family violence tracking and revitalize that, and we are examining domestic violence courts. So that's it. I'm sorry I am a bit over time but those are my remarks and I appreciate everyone's patience.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Keefe. Next.

MS. JUDITH FERGUSON: I'm Judith Ferguson, Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Services and I'm pleased that George Savoury, Senior Director of Family and Children's Services and Community Supports for Adults is here with me this afternoon. Additionally, we have Lynn Hartwell and Roxanne Manning from the department, who are also in attendance.

I just have to say at the beginning that when Doug and I used to do our presentation on the Domestic Violence Intervention Act, my job was really to keep time while he talked but I didn't feel today that I could do what I've done in the past. I'm glad to see, though, that some things don't change, because I haven't been around at Justice for a while.

I am personally really pleased to have the opportunity to be here today, particularly with my colleagues, to talk about what we're doing in government around family violence. I know that there are numerous representatives here from the community, I had a very brief chance to talk to some of them before we started this afternoon, and I'm particularly pleased that they are here to hear the discussion.

I believe that the gathering here today speaks to the team and partnership efforts that's required to address this very important issue. As I know you're aware, Community Services has played a key role in family violence services for some time, both from a policy and a funding perspective.

In terms of funding, the province provides funding to nine transition houses, six men's intervention programs and eight women's centres. As I also know you are aware, women's centres provide services and programs to women on a wide range of issues related to women's equality and family violence is a major concern.

The total funding last year to these 23 organizations was approximately \$5.5 million. In addition, last year Avalon Sexual Assault Centre was provided with \$270,000 and \$25,000 will be added to their base grant over each of the next four years. As you heard during the last forum, Avalon provides a vital service and the department was particularly pleased to be able to provide this additional funding.

As Doug highlighted in his comments, dollars to direct services must be backed up with action to address the root causes and impacts of family violence in our communities. I am really pleased to have an opportunity - like Doug did, today - to speak to some of those actions we're undertaking in government.

Protocols, training, information sharing and public education are key in order to have a real impact around this issue. In my previous time at the Department of Justice - I came to the Department of Community Services in April 2003, and prior to that spent several wonderful years at the Department of Justice - I had the good fortune and quite frankly, the privilege, to work on many of the activities that Doug talked about earlier, in particular, the internal report in Justice following Maxwell/George; the response to the Russell report; the development of the Domestic Violence Intervention Act and training around that Act which certainly provided me with insights and opportunities to look and think about this very important issue. I feel that this has been a tremendous benefit for me, as I assumed my new lead role in the Department of Community Services and I specifically requested to be involved in this issue when I came to the department.

We know that examining services and addressing changing needs requires links among government departments and community organizations. Right now, I'd like to speak a little bit about the redesign process that's currently underway with the transition houses and men's intervention programs.

Work to review family violence services at the Department of Community Services began in the Spring of 2002. The initiative was launched with a proposed budget reduction, which was immediately reversed, with funding being maintained and, in fact, increased since that time. If you'll let me digress for a moment, I was mentioning to Doug earlier today that I

specifically remember when that funding announcement was made, because I was at the Department of Justice. The day after that funding announcement, we had a meeting arranged with all of the executive directors of the transition houses, they were coming into Halifax, we were doing consultations on the regulations for the Domestic Violence Intervention Act.

[1:45 p.m.]

I remember going into Doug's office late on the day before the meeting and saying, I think we might have a bit of a problem for tomorrow. Obviously, there are larger issues that this particular group may want to spend their time talking about and I'm concerned that maybe they won't want to go ahead for tomorrow, and we should give some thought to really how we want to approach the day.

As it turned out, the meeting went ahead the next day. A senior staff member from the Department of Community Services came, started the day, spoke to the group and indicated that the funding would not be cut. However, to me, I certainly thought there would still be, for all kinds of reasons, obviously, concerns around that. After the staff person from Community Services left, there was an opportunity for discussion.

We went on with the day and we had an incredibly productive day. We got a tremendous amount of work done and Lynn Hartwell and myself, who were basically chairing the day, I, personally, was incredibly impressed with the commitment around that room at a time when, obviously, they could have had other things on their mind. It spoke to me of the obvious commitment they have for the women who they work for and they advocate on their behalf. So that was kind my first foray into that group and that has always stayed with me and I know it will stay with me.

It was clear, after the proposed budget reduction, that there needed to be more discussion and research to determine community requirements and the evolving needs of people in family violence situations. For example, we know that the national statistics show that 6 per cent to 7 per cent of women involved in family violence situations access transition houses, but 93 per cent to 94 per cent of women require outreach services, and this is something that we need to examine.

Together, with community stakeholders, we need to look at which core services need to be available across the province, where the gaps exist, and how we can anticipate and plan for the future. We need to be able to work together to evaluate services, to make sure we are offering the right services and that we are reaching the people who really and truly need the service. We also know at the department that we had to strengthen and improve our relationships with the people providing services in the community which had become strained early in the process.

In 2003, the coalition of transition houses, men's intervention programs and women's centres delivered a report to the department with a series of recommendations which launched the development of the joint planning activity that began in early 2004. In response to that report, we began a joint planning process that we hope will allow us to work directly at the local level with the community organizations, fostering stronger links where services are provided.

Prior to the development of this regional process, family violence organizations were the only agencies funded by the department that did not have a direct link to Community Services staff at our local, regional level. What we've learned in DCS, certainly in terms of our service delivery, is that one solution doesn't fit everything. Obviously, we need to look at our regional differences and our similarities and have some responses that actually fit the specific regional situations.

Eight senior staff from across the province have been assigned to work with the community organizations to develop a local plan that responds to the needs of victims of abuse and their partners. In addition, and even beyond the redesign, we're also hoping that they will develop relationships so that if there are problems beyond the redesign, that they will be able to access our regional staff and talk about them, hopefully, with a view with our regional staff being able to help them resolve them.

Together we're working on solutions and will involve other community groups and organizations to develop an effective program of services. I'm not saying that there is always going to be agreement around the table or that the discussions are going to be easy, but I am very heartened and encouraged that we're actually having some very good discussions around the regional tables.

We also know that we need to ensure that there's a provincial commitment and a vision with the best place to determine actions to address community needs worked on at the regional level. I am personally pleased to be part of the work of this process. I attended the first inaugural meeting in each region and I continue to be briefed on a regular basis and talk to our senior regional staff involved in the process, so that I, personally, know what's going on in the process - and I am very encouraged by what I'm hearing.

Now I'd like to spend a little bit of time highlighting other areas that the department is focusing on, particularly those in partnership with some of my colleagues here today. Doug has already spoken on the High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework - I'm all for getting a new name, myself - and the department is planning to have our staff trained this Spring and we are currently working on setting up the training session in partnership with the Justice Learning Centre. We're also collaborating with the Department of Justice and we will be preparing a portion of the flip book that Doug talked about earlier, and we also recently collaborated on a poster around the issue of family violence.

We are also working in partnership with the Justice Learning Centre on a training plan for family violence that will be provided to Community Services' staff, not just our child welfare staff who, as I'm sure you are aware, have family violence training as part of their core training that they do in terms of child welfare, but with all of our staff. We have staff who are in and out of people's homes, we have 1,000 staff across 40 offices who have a significant amount of client contact and certainly, it's our hope in terms of this training plan, that as many staff as possible across all four program areas will be trained on the issues of family violence.

It's not just the training that's important but it's also enabling our staff to know the links within the government system and the community system, so that they can be sure when they are meeting with clients, that they can assist them in terms of navigating through the system and making sure that they are getting the services that they require as efficiently as we can. I would just like to say that training of our staff is a huge priority of our deputy minister. We're getting additional resources in terms of having trainers. We're hoping to develop some core training for our other programs beyond child welfare and that it's certainly anticipated that family violence will be involved in that training.

In closing, I'd like to say that I have a tremendous amount of respect for the work of the organizations, the people who work in the area of family violence and the volunteers who work on the boards. I've been lucky, both in my past career at Justice and in this current position that I hold now, that I've had the opportunity to meet with these groups on a regular basis. I am also particularly pleased that in the department we have an opportunity to work together on these regional committees and I'm quite hopeful that we're going to have some interesting recommendations that we're going to be able to consider as a result of this process.

As I believe is demonstrated here today, we're fortunate in this province to have dedicated and caring people in the area of family violence, both in the community and in the departments. I look forward to continuing the work that we're doing, both in the redesign, and the work that we're doing within government. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Ferguson. Who's next?

MS. CHERYL DOIRON: My name is Cheryl Doiron, Deputy Minister of Health and I want to also say - particularly in relation to this subject - also the CEO of the Office of Health Promotion. Accompanying me today is Rob Turnbull, to my right, who is the Coordinator of our Adult Protection Program, and out in the audience is Heather Speedwell, the Director of Communications for the Department of Health.

We, certainly, as well, were appreciative of the manner in which you called this subject forward because it provided us with another opportunity to sit down with our colleagues in these other three areas and become a little bit more focused ourselves in how we think about

this. From my point of view, that was quite worthwhile and I think that it will bear fruit for some of the continuing work that we'll do together in the future. So, thank you for having that vision to see it in that context.

From the Department of Health and the Office of Health Promotion's point of view, family violence is a serious threat to the health of Nova Scotians. We believe that everyone has the right to live free from violence and from the fear of violence. The dollars that are allocated by Health are not a true measure of the actual investment and commitment to family violence protection and I say that because there are initiatives in place across many areas of the Department of Health that have a direct or indirect impact on responding to this issue and similarly through the work of the Office of Health Promotion. They may not be funded in the name of family violence prevention, but they do go a long way toward making a difference. I'll take you through some of the illustration of what we're meaning by that.

First, let me say that health professionals are often in the best position to identify and provide intervention to stop the cycle of violence. It is our job, we believe, in the Department of Health, to equip health professionals with the necessary training and skills, to be able to be effective in dealing with an incident when it happens in a way that is culturally sensitive and that respects privacy, ethical practice and relevant legislation. There are various examples of where this is already happening in our system, and I would also be remiss if I did not mention the huge number of health care workers who are out in our system, who are really third parties - if you like - to the Department of Health; in fact, we fund them. But they carry out their work under their board of directors in their local areas.

Having said that and having been out there in that system for many years of my life, I'm well aware of the extent of focus, education and dialogue that goes on in the district health authorities, in hospitals, regions, or whatever we may have today. Certainly the amount of time, which organizations dedicate to ensuring that professionals are aware and stay up to date with pertinent legislation and regulations, is one form of education.

Organizations also tend to provide periodic dedicated instruction and dialogue to protocols and communication approaches in working with individuals and their families who find themselves in a situation of family and/or sexual violence. Usually these individuals enter the system through the emergency departments. We also collaborate regularly with other organizations that are involved in this work, for example, Community Services and law enforcement.

While it is most important that professionals understand aspects of legislation, collection of evidence and approaches to support individuals, it is also important to ensure that any staff who come in contact with patients are aware of how to deal with subjects of this matter, which individuals may confide in them.



Organizations have people who actually are into contact, into conversations, and interface with patients or clients. For example, if you are in a hospital, maybe the housekeeper in your room, some individuals will confide in, so they need to understand when they're out in that field then what to do with that information in order to serve the best interests of the patient or client. So there's a lot of work that goes on among our third parties, to ensure that their staff are positioned to be able to deal with things effectively. We do, however, have some specific programming areas that I want to review for you today and I'll just quickly run through some of them.

First is an initiative that started up in the Department of Health a couple of years ago and it really was called the Challenging Behaviour Program. This was really initiated through our Continuing Care Branch that provides home care, long-term care services and those kinds of things. The issue here was to increase the capacity and assist professionals and caregivers in managing challenging behaviours.

I think we're all aware today that we have many individuals, often older individuals, who actually get into different forms of confusion - Alzheimer's, other dementia, and often that is accompanied by behaviours which are very challenging and sometimes threatening to either family members, to caregivers, or to other people in institutions. We felt it was time that something be done with that and so a lot of work was done to plan then, how could we help people to more effectively manage behaviours that may be physically aggressive, may be inappropriate sexual behaviour, may be states of agitation, or it may be vocally disruptive behaviour that happens to a number of individuals in our care, and in our care in different places.

The ambition of this is we don't want to simply say if somebody's behaviour becomes challenging that we simply take them away and lock them in some kind of a unit, we don't think that is the total answer. What we have found is that it is better to recognize and assess that challenging behaviour and to follow through with referrals where it's appropriate to maybe other kinds of specialists; it may be a mental health professional, a family physician, it may be simply teaching the skills of how to cope with that behaviour to family members, to a caregiver, and to people in the facilities where these individuals may be housed. So this program actually provides that kind of assistance to families, to long-term care facilities, to home support agencies, to nursing agencies and to continuing care staff.

In 2004, we very aggressively started training programs with targets of where we would kind of engage people throughout the province in an educational process that we will be completing in the year 2005, at least in terms of saying we have taken the first round of this kind of training through the province.

The next step that we would like to take with that Challenging Behaviour Program is to create a challenging behaviour resource team so that we have go-to people and that we have

an adequate supply of them throughout the province that they will be recognized for their expertise, be available for that continuing education and support that needs to go to the various parties I've previously mentioned.

[2:00 p.m.]

So the vision that we have with this is the creation, also, at the end of the day, of a stabilizing unit where people can go, if all else fails, but not to stay there forever. The ambition here would be to provide an assessment and care plan for the person to be able to return home or return to a facility. Our current budget for that program is \$741,000 and, of course, we would need to add to that to take our next step forward.

One of the, I think, most known and, perhaps, visible programs that we do offer through the Department of Health - and I think previous to 2000 was offered through the Department of Community Services - is Adult Protection. That resides within our Continuing Care Branch in the department and it provides services for people who are over the age of 16 who are being abused or neglected, or living in a stage of self-neglect. It may be for people who have a physical disability or mental infirmity, or for those who are not able to care for or fend for themselves, or who are living at a high level of risk to themselves.

This program takes in about 1,200 cases per year around the province. Adult Protection staff, where it's possible, will assist caregivers with dealing with these individuals at providing care plans for them, people, for example, in home care, respite programs. Adult Protection staff also receive and provide training in family violence and they will conduct about 35 to 40 public awareness sessions per year to the general public and sometimes to professional groups.

The Adult Protection provincial budget is \$1.93 million and we have 17 Adult Protection workers in the province.

Currently, we are in the process of revising the Adult Protection Act, which was passed in 1985, but it is now under review and we will be recommending a number of changes to be forthcoming through that Act once we get it to the consultation stage, which should be reasonably soon.

Another program of which you may be aware is a program that takes place in the Capital Health District. It's called the SANE Program, referring to sexual assault nurse examination practitioners. The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre administers this program very successfully and the executive director there is Irene Smith.

This program provides professional nursing service to victims of sexual assault. The nurses in this program receive specialized training in the collection of forensic evidence and the provision of expert testimony in cases before the courts. This is operated on a grant that

comes through the Capital Health budget from the Department of Health and currently has a budget of \$244,000.

We need to take a look at this program to see if it should be extended to other areas now that we have it up and running and have it in place long enough to evaluate. Some of that, of course, would be based on the volume of cases and the appropriateness of putting the program in a number of other areas so that it will be as close to home as possible for women who are in need of this.

Another area that I think we need to put some more specific development behind is child abuse, and particularly the area of children's sexual abuse, a highly-specialized area. That has to be done very carefully with the kind of appropriate people involved and that generally involves physicians, particularly pediatricians, and those who take a high level of interest in it because, where it has been implemented, usually it requires some significant additional level of training. So there are several parties that would be involved in that, including physicians, nurses, psychologists and others.

I would also like to draw attention to the Protection of Persons in Care Act. That, I'm sure you're aware, was passed in the Fall of 2004 in the last sitting of the House. We now have a committee of the Department of Community Services and Department of Health preparing definitions and regulations for this new piece of legislation. There is a requirement of reporting in licensed Department of Health facilities and also in the Department of Community Services facilities, and as well, in hospitals. So to operationalize this new Act once all this work is accomplished, which is coming along well, there will also need to be additional training in family violence and abuse in facilities that we will have to be carrying out as part of that implementation plan.

I would also suggest that very high on the list of what should be happening around this very important issue is a lot of work in regard to prevention. We have started to more highly focus our attention to that, both in the Department of Health and in the Office of Health Promotion.

One example that I think, again, is very hard to equate to dollars is the kind of focus that is being taken through the Office of Health Promotion, not just with the Department of Health but with many departments and others, and that is really the whole initiative that we now see really coming to life much more actively, in terms of healthy lifestyles, and starting that with children and youth. There are implications where people do not have healthy starts for leading to coping skills which can be very difficult and negative, and often result in inappropriate kinds of behaviours.

So if we focus very early in life on making sure that that is moving in appropriate directions and, certainly, during the last couple of years with dollars that came through the

federal government, we were able to start the Healthy Children's Project through Public Health. That has basically been introduced over the last couple of years and also has a relationship, I think, to this particular subject.

We also have, through the Office of Health Promotion, and specifically Public Health, as I'm sure you're all aware, the issue around the Healthy Sexuality Booklet. While there may be a few people in this province that have not been comfortable with it, by far the vast majority of the municipalities, the education system and the school boards have been comfortable with this. This, as you know, is being introduced to all youth between the ages of 12 and 17. Through this, it provides very good material that will, hopefully, allow young people to make healthier choices as they are moving into relationships and understanding their rights, how to deal with it, where to go for help and so on.

Basically, another area that I think is going to do a lot of good in terms of preparing people to understand their behaviours, to choose better coping mechanisms where they need to deal with stress and have outlets, is the growth that we are now seeing in supporting youth health centres.

Youth health centres actually provide a vital role in health promotion and in providing youth with services in a way that they feel safe and comfortable. I had the opportunity and the privilege to visit two of those health centres this week. The minister and I are starting a provincial tour and we went to one of the youth health centres in Guysborough that has been opened now for five years or more, and another centre that was just beginning, opened for about 15 months, I think, in the Pictou area. To hear those young people talk about what they are doing, what they believe they need to address and what they're accomplishing very much includes the concept of behaviours by young people in the school, where they act things out in a violent manner. If they are able to work with their colleagues, their peer group and their age group, with the support of some professionals, they can do tremendous, I think, work in helping, as well, to turn around some of those behaviours.

The statistics that we see of people and young people coming through those health centres, where it seems to be a safe place to go, lots of different kinds of opportunities to get services or, in some cases, a place to hang out, means that people can go through that door and not be judged for what they're there for. They do make use of it. It's amazing, the kind of statistics they have.

In the new centre, I think they have about 1,700 students and last year they had visits in excess of 4,000. I don't know exactly what that meant in terms of the total number of youth that were coming through but, obviously, many of them coming through that porthole.

We have worked in the past couple of years through the CAYAC group, to look at the concept of youth health centres. There have been standards developed for youth health centres

and we are now seeing many parties - not just the Department of Health but, certainly, the Department of Education, Justice and others - that certainly can provide support to this. We have seen community health boards coming up looking for this kind of service and it's a very, sort of, home-grown, roots at the local level kind of experience.

Seemingly, most of the health centres end up in the schools, which seems to be a very successful place to run them but not all of them are in that basis. A lot of good work taking place there but also another area where we need to kind of look at the potential for more resources in helping to grow them.

The other thing that I think was going on in the past and is continuing now that speaks to this subject is the work of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat. They have been working on an elder abuse strategy and have a subcommittee that is looking at the training and education of the public, and with particular emphasis, from their point of view, in helping seniors to understand the issues of seniors' abuse, and how to deal with and how to cope with that.

The Nova Scotia Task Force on Aging, which the Senior Citizens' Secretariat recently ran a number of consultations around - I guess it was 34 public meetings that were held - that work is now coming together and there are 11 stakeholder focus groups with eight to 15 people in each of those groups who are reviewing all the comments that came in through that process, some of which very much apply to this particular topic. The intention there is to get a final report together by September 2005 and to make recommendations to Cabinet for the following business year.

Health owns part of the mandate, as well, to enact and support legislation that protects Nova Scotians from violence no matter where or who they are. We would see this being directly related to Acts such as the Mental Health Act, which we are currently in dialogue around - I'm sure you know that - Protection for Persons in Care Act and the Adult Protection Act.

We recognize that more work needs to be done and we certainly look forward, together with our colleagues in Community Services, Justice and the Status of Women, along with other partners, to identifying further opportunities to create awareness, to educate, to support and to prevent family violence.

Managing and preventing family violence needs to be looked at and women through all of our programs and services need to be looked at across all of our programs. So while we would like to have direct dollars and direct programs that address this, we feel that it is absolutely necessary to integrate this kind of awareness and ability to respond through all aspects of the programming that we provide through Health and the Office of Health Promotion.

Health sector staff must be aware of the indicators of abuse, mandatory reporting legislation and how to provide treatment appropriately, or to make referrals to appropriate

services. This could range from professional services such as social work assistance, psychology, or to recommendations to them to seek out the advice and, perhaps, protection of police, to advising them and recommending that they seek out transition housing and so on.

[2:15 p.m.]

We do believe that family violence is everybody's responsibility. The Department of Health is reviewing our focus on this issue and we look forward to working with other departments to move this issue forward. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Doiron. I guess that leaves the Advisory Council.

MS. DOREEN PARIS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My name is Doreen Paris. I am the Chairman of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I, too, would like to take this opportunity to thank you for having the Advisory Council present to the committee today. I would just like to say, in addition to myself and Brigitte Neumann, that we have two council members with us here, as well, today. Jean d'Entremont, who represents the South Shore area, as well as Janette Peterson who represents the Valley area. We, as well, thank two staff persons for coming today, Denise Moore and Nicole Watkins-Campbell.

The council has worked for 28 years to advance the equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia. Violence against women is directly related to the inequality of women. By building women's equality in all areas, we reduce violence against women.

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is to advise government and to bring forward the concerns of all women in Nova Scotia. We do that through four strategic goals and three kinds of work. Our goals are: full inclusion of women in all their diversity, economic equality, elimination of violence against women and women's health and well-being.

The first goal runs through all of our work. It is a critical element for the council and it guides everything we do. It is: Council works to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or various forms of family status.

Secondly, achievement of economic equality is still elusive; 60 per cent of women work in retail and service sectors where they may face precarious employment with limited benefits.

Personal safety and freedom from violence is an ongoing concern. Women's own reports of spousal or intimate partner violence dropped between 1993 and 1999. That left about

22,000 women in Nova Scotia who faced physical or sexual violence in the previous five years. It doesn't include women who face verbal or emotional abuse, or who face other forms of violence. Demand for service in Nova Scotia remains very high.

The improvement of the health of women is the fourth priority for the Advisory Council. The connection between health and violence is clear. By working to improve women's equality in these four strategic areas, the council works with many partners to reduce violence against women.

I am now going to call on our Executive Director, Brigitte, who will expand on those areas.

MS. BRIGITTE NEUMANN: Thank you very much. We execute the will of council through three main streams of activity: policy and research, community liaison and rural outreach, and information and communication activities. Today, I just want to give you some examples of the work that we do.

One example is participating in interagencies, which are collaboration tools that exist within various communities. The Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence is currently co-chaired by Denise Moore, who is our Coordinator of Regional Services. The purpose of the interagency committees, which also exist in other parts of the province - and I note particularly Cape Breton - is to provide opportunities for collaboration among all the people who are involved in the struggle against family violence, particularly. I would just like to say that family violence, the part of it that is, needless to say, of greatest concern to us, is woman abuse. I think that's the immediate target.

Family violence also includes elder abuse, which one might say because most elders are women, for longevity reasons, is of concern to us and also includes children, where it's notable that particularly in cases of sexual abuse, there is an enormous over-representation of little girls. Whenever I say that I want to be very careful not to diminish pain and suffering on the others. It is not that I don't care about little boys, but I think it is important for us to keep in mind the gender dynamics that run throughout the various kinds of violence and the ways in which, being a girl or a woman, places you at additional disadvantage.

As Doreen said, issues of inclusion and sources of other forms of discrimination are important to us and we do pay attention to the many issues, the many exacerbating issues that are faced, for example, by women in Aboriginal communities, by women of African descent, I'm very concerned about women with disabilities who are extremely vulnerable to all kinds of abuse regardless of age and stage of life. I think those are the kinds of things that are of great concern to the Advisory Council and something that we want to keep bringing to the forefront, because in making our efforts to deal in an across-the-board way there are too many chances

that people will be left out and forgotten. That's where violence and victimization thrive, when we look away.

I'm sorry, I have to haul my papers out here, having digressed for a moment. Anyway, I wanted to tell you about the interagencies and our participation in them. We usually, I would say, participate in many groups like interagencies and bring our experience and contacts with other members in government and communities to those. We very often don't lead them, but in the case of the Metro Interagency we do at this time.

The Metro Interagency just hosted a special half-day event in recognition of Family Violence Prevention Week here in Halifax. We already heard about the Senior Citizens' Secretariat leading the implementation of the elder abuse prevention strategy and we will be participating in that development as well through an education and awareness working group that will focus on issues such as financial abuse, neglect and many other issues that go along with elder abuse.

I want to focus on the policy side. We remain concerned because women are concerned about certain aspects of the Criminal Code. About 18 months ago we had submitted a brief on voyeurism to the Department of Justice Canada and were most distressed, really, to find over the previous year and a half that we received some reports of what I can only call new forms of violence against women. For example, using electronic surveillance and subsequently placing the material on the Internet, there have been a number of instances in our own province and certainly in other provinces as well.

When it did happen in our own province - in this case a guest in someone's home had placed a camera in the bathroom and created videotapes of the women in the house using the bathroom facilities - what was quite distressing was that there was in fact nothing specifically illegal about that. The Crown Prosecutors who were consulted, the police who were consulted, had a hard time charging the person. In the end they were deported, they were visiting from another country. But it pointed to the fact that there is a good deal of this going on and it's hard to know just what - we know there is something wrong, but it's hard to say this is the crime.

Interestingly enough, many of us believe that we have certain rights to privacy, that there are protections in law and to some degree there are but it all gets very confusing when we talk about various forms of electronic surveillance or having images of ourselves made public that we wouldn't like to see made public.

We had a similar situation like that in one part of the province where a defendant in a family violence case, for example, as is his right, got copies of the evidences that was going to be brought to court, among that evidence were photographs of the ex-wife's injuries, which he posted for anyone's view on the Internet. Again, it wasn't a specifically illegal activity. But it puzzles us and I think that's a place where in the Advisory Council we want to bring forward



those concerns and make suggestions on how and when should they be addressed by the laws of our land. There are, I'm sad to say, emerging issues in violence, those are among them.

On another matter that we were very concerned about was trying to get a better balance between the rights of victims and the rights of the people who are accused. I'm sure for anyone working in the justice system this is one of the hard things that they have to confront from time to time. Certainly, our Charter guarantees everyone the right to a full and fair defence in the case of a criminal act and no one, I'm sure, in this room would care to say that we want to back off that. On the other hand, there is a need for protection of victims of crime as well. We were particularly concerned at the alleged perpetrator of a sexual assault who was a self-represented litigant at the time being allowed to cross-examine the woman. In the end, he was convicted, therefore, he was the perpetrator, to cross-examine her in a very injurious manner over a very long period of time.

In that instance, it was not only the cross-examination itself but that through various forms of delay, the victim in the case had to appear in court 14 times over the course of a very long period. There are problems there where we still have to say, we don't know whether it is the administration of justice or the law itself or the balance between victim and alleged offender, there are very difficult issues for us to struggle with. That's what we do, we struggle with them and try to come forward with recommendations that will make sense.

A second area where the council strongly supports reform of the law has been in conditional sentencing. I think we had our first workshop on that about two months after the legislation was passed. We were concerned then as we are now that conditional sentencing, house arrest, is not an appropriate response to woman abuse. It is not okay to send offenders home in cases of wife assault. It's not okay to send people convicted of sexual assault to serve their sentences in their home when their victim lives two doors down the street and doesn't feel safe. I know the province has made certain representations on the issue of conditional sentencing and the council is, in general terms, supportive of those.

In the kits we've provided to the members of the committee, I hope you received them, we gave you some examples of publications that we've done. One of the important ones, and we look forward to having the next edition out within the year, is called Family Violence and Personal Safety. We published that in 1979, it provides statistics on the prevalence of women abuse in Nova Scotia based on the general social survey of Statistics Canada. That data is readily available elsewhere, they are in the public domain. We add value by bringing them together in one place in a format that's readily accessible to anyone in the community. As I say, our follow-up publication will soon be in the works.

We are working on and continue to struggle with the subject of getting good, statistical information on sexual assaults. It's very, very difficult. Many sexual assaults are never reported to the police at all, it's a real tip of the iceberg phenomenon. We feel hesitant about essentially

being misleading by doing police reports, charges cleared, convictions/cases come to court, convictions, there is a huge fall off in that side of things. So we continue to struggle with that. We expect, however, within the year to come up with something that makes sense and fairly presents the situation.

[2:30 p.m.]

On the information and education side, our major effort is through the ongoing publication of *Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships*. It is, sad to say, our best seller. We don't sort of disseminate that by putting it in the grocery stores, if you know what I mean, we send that out on request and we receive requests for about 15,000 copies each year, which amounts to a direct expenditure for us of about \$18,000. You had asked for budgetary and that's a direct expenditure. I think if you look at *Making Changes*, we do pretty well to get it at that price. It's a simple format precisely to keep the price down and it remains very popular.

We also keep in mind violence against women as an issue in other publications that we do. I included again in your kit, one example, our booklet that we did in response to a number of telephone calls we got from women who were in serious difficulty because of the dissolution of a common law relationship in which they found themselves. I am pleased to say our partners in that were the Senior Citizens' Secretariat and the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia. We know from our research that living in a common law relationship is associated with higher risks of family violence than being in a marital relationship and therefore included referral information about abuse in the booklet. So we kind of try, as other departments do, to stream the concern with family violence into things.

One other popular item that we publish is even more pertinent than when we first published it and that is just a simple informational brochure on date rape drugs. With that, you're not really talking about a family violence issue but more violence against women issue that is highly relevant. I think it is something that we have to reproduce and, in fact, get out in larger quantities. What we had done is sort of a pretty straightforward version. That's the one, yes. That's it. I would like to dress that up a little bit and make sure that it gets out. Right now we're putting it out in universities, but they're not the only ones. I think there might very well be some opportunities through the industry to get that kind of publication out more widely in communities across the province.

Finally then, we always take the lead on what I think of as the saddest day of the year, our National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6<sup>th</sup>. We share the day. It is, I think, one of the very sad days in Nova Scotia, given the other event that happened on that date, to mark that loss. This year, we worked with the Transition House Association to bring together in this building a panel to talk about what has been accomplished and what remains to be accomplished in Nova Scotia on violence against women. It is

important to have public events and we have always tried to focus our activity on Province House itself because this is such an important place for making a difference in the lives of women who experience abuse.

So, with that, I will turn it back to Doreen.

MS. PARIS: The women's movement worldwide has brought family violence out of the shadows. On behalf of all Advisory Council members, past and present, I am proud to have played a part in that over the last number of years. As you've heard from Brigitte's presentation, the council supports the reduction of violence against women directly and indirectly through many activities. It has played a leadership role many times and creates opportunities for organizations and individuals to work together to reduce violence as we approach International Women's Day, which will be March 8<sup>th</sup>, and I just want to add to that that there will be an open house at the Advisory Council's offices and we invite any of you to attend.

We celebrate the progress we have made but recognize that much remains to be done. Shame and silence about women abuse still affects many women. Our dedicated service providers in all sectors need our ongoing support. I hope that our presentation today will make a difference for all the women who are building and rebuilding their lives after the experience of violence. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you both and thanks to all of you. That was most informative. I am going to take the unusual step, committee members, of asking the first question and I have lots of other questions and then I will leave the Chair and ask someone to take over, but I think I want to use this opportunity to bring the focus back on what really initiated the whole forum. Most of you have talked about your efforts to provide better information, education, awareness and training, and I commend you for that. I actually come from the voluntary sector and I know the end result of those initiatives; that is earlier identification of people at risk of violence and also more referrals to the community-based agencies that are providing the interventions and the support services to those people. So I would be very interested in knowing what your department or council is doing to help those community-based groups meet these additional increased demands for accessible services in their community?

Anybody can start.

MS. FERGUSON: I'll start, how will that be? I guess in the department, the main vehicle we have going on right now is the redesign with the transition houses and men's intervention programs and certainly it's our hope, through the regional redesign process that those are exactly some of the types of issues that we will be looking at. What are the services that we're providing now in partnership with our community members? What are the services that we should be providing and what is the planning for the future? So we're really hoping that

those are some of the issues that they're going to be looking at through the regional redesign piece and we're very much looking forward to hearing what the recommendations are that are coming forward as a result of that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: This process should provide more resources for these organizations in the end?

MS. FERGUSON: Well, I think it's premature at this stage for me to talk about more resources. Obviously, we'll wait and see what comes forward from the process and any new resources would have to go through our departmental budget process. But we are very much looking forward to seeing what comes forward from the regional processes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Doiron.

MS. DOIRON: One of the groups that we have through the province, as I mentioned earlier are the community health boards. There are 37 community health boards so there is an opportunity through those groups to be able to get very close to communities and to allow them to do things that they see as priority and needs in their community. There has been interest in some of those groups in regard to this topic. So what we have been doing is trying to increase the amount of dollars that can go in grant form to the community health boards. Certainly, this year there were some additional dollars that went in through the budget for that purpose.

The grants to those boards are actually directed through the district health authorities because community health boards are not bodies corporate and they really can't set up and manage their own accounts. So that means that essentially, the proposals for initiatives that they send in are actually sent to their district health authorities so, again, a little bit more focused on the local level, as opposed to somebody in Halifax directing it, although we sometimes do suggest, through the Office of Health Promotion, usually, a theme that they may focus on.

For example, the first time we did this two or three years ago, we asked them to focus on tobacco. There was a point in time where we were putting a great emphasis into that whole arena and many of the community health boards did focus on that, although not necessarily exclusively, because they had other local needs that they felt were of major concern. Some of the things that they have come forward with are things like - sometimes somewhat related - addictions, children and women's addictions in particular, has been a focus coming from some of the communities, so this rather falls in with it.

We also try to do things at a local level that will help people to become aware of services. For example - I'm sorry I didn't send this in advance - this is just one poster that we have sent out that has to do with abuse during pregnancy, trying to bring to people's attention that abuse often starts or gets worse during pregnancy, and trying to help them then to understand what to do about that but, first of all, to identify themselves as being abused. We

have brochures that will help them and support them in knowing what to do, in relation to following up around that.

I'm sure the transition houses present would be interested to know - if they don't already know - that all the locations of transition houses in the province are located on the back of the brochure. So things of that nature are done through the department, through the Office of Health Promotion, in conjunction with the communities.

I would, again, like to point to the other initiative that is something that we are providing more and more emphasis on and that is those youth health centres that very directly deal with kids who are having problems with anger management, provide them with supports, with sort of locally-directed opportunities for assistance over and above simply the interface that they get in the centres. So I guess I'll leave it at that but those are some of the examples of the kinds of things we're trying to promote and do.

[2:45 p.m.]

MR. KEEFE: Justice isn't really a large granting department. I wouldn't have thought of this except Brigitte mentioned the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia, but we provide grants to them of about \$70,000 a year. It's a group that works on a variety of fields but has a special interest in violence against women and domestic violence.

We also provide, I think it's about \$12.2 million to the Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission. Unlike a lot of legal aid programs, Legal Aid attempts, at least, to keep a balance between civil and criminal legal aid. A lot of legal aid programs in this country have gone almost completely over to the criminal side. I was glad that they were able to at least get back into the divorce field, having been out of it for quite a while. There is a pilot to see if they can sustain divorce services. That is, again, not a direct resource to community groups, but it is a direct resource to people in troubled relationships.

Out beyond that, the nine coordinators I mentioned, the practical effect of perhaps providing access to the formal justice system to criminal groups, the formal justice system sometimes is a very difficult field to crack, and the coordinators, of course, are there to draw everybody together. I would hope - and certainly our intention is and my belief is - that they are providing tangible, although not financial assistance, to everybody doing their job, including transition houses and men's treatment centres who - we regard in this binder, which I guess we didn't bring - in the High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework are listed as critical providers.

There was only one other thing - I think this was a nice touch, I wish it had been my idea but I thought it was a great idea - we did at least offer THANS one day at the Justice Learning Centre, because we recognized that it's difficult sometimes for these organizations to have professional development days, to get together and network and I'd like to see us do that

again. That was pretty small; nevertheless, I hope it was worthwhile on some tangible recognition of the value to the justice effort.

There's one other thing I should say, my colleagues did mention people who were in the gallery from the department, and I didn't. We do have Joanne Marriott-Thorne here who is our Director of Programs in the Policing and Victim Services Division at the department. Joanne is a long-time, active person on this issue, she is responsible overall for Victim Services and was, I think, the second person hired in the Victim Services Division back in 1990 or 1991. I just thought I ought to acknowledge her, as well. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Rob.

MR. ROBERT TURNBULL: Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss this very important topic. Before coming here today I spoke with Valerie White who is the Executive Director of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat and said that I, with her blessing, would be mentioning a few things that indeed the secretariat is doing. There is an Elder Abuse Strategy Committee, which my deputy referred to previously, and we have a couple of members from the Department of Health on that committee. It has been looking at areas that might be able to reach out to assist seniors with abuse issues and strategies. Two subcommittees have been formed out of that very recently and one is to look at financial abuse, which is a key area of abuse in the province.

We all know those stories where wills have been changed and monies have gone missing and those sort of things. It has been a difficult area to come to grips with and this committee will have police on it, a Crown Prosecutor, there are a number of people - I think probably some people in this room may be on that committee as well - that will be looking at how to deal with financial abuse.

The second committee is actually a committee on how do we create a public awareness of abuse issues among seniors in the province. Of course, one of those would be the financial or material abuse. I'm quite optimistic that really good things will come out of that that will lead the way to actually getting more out into the public as far as education, training and awareness of what abuse is, in particular, here, it's abuse among seniors with the secretariat and I think there are two initiatives there that are certainly worthy of note.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I've had some indication from the Senior Citizens' Secretariat that they would be interested in presenting directly to our committee so I think we can expect to get more details on that in the future. Thank you for mentioning those. Brigitte, did you want to mention anything from the council's perspective on this question?

MS. NEUMANN: We're not a granting agency but we do try as much as possible to provide in-kind support to community groups, including THANS who had our boardroom for two days, but those are really small contributions. We're not in a position to provide significant

financial support to transition houses, women's centres, or any other group. But we do try with smaller amounts; sometimes, I think, we can do something useful with smaller amounts of money.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, I appreciate those responses. I now have Stephen McNeil, Russell MacKinnon, Gordie Goss and Jerry Pye. Stephen.

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: I first want to begin by thanking all of you for coming. One of the surprises today is when you've been talking about the fact that you've been co-operating among departments, I think that's a great step forward, not only on this issue but on all issues that government is faced with and is the direction we should be moving in. It seems like the silos are operating quite well around here.

To the Deputy Minister of Justice, one of the issues that you're faced with an awful lot when somebody is talking to you about this issue is the fact that they feel victimized by the system. Brigitte has mentioned here that on two separate incidences, electronic devices had been used in washrooms and the fact that pictures had been posted on the Internet and what the offender received from the courts or from the justice system and you had a case of somebody who has beaten their wife into a coma and gets house arrest. What is your department doing to have victims of violence feel secure to come forward and feel that their issue is going to be dealt with in the proper manner?

MR. KEEFE: On those two specific issues, first of all, both voyeurism and conditional sentence, as you well know, are Criminal Code matters. So we, together with other provinces, lobby the federal government to change the Criminal Code. On conditional sentencing our position, at least since 2001, the minister has raised it at every single minister's meeting, which is at a rate of about once a year, although it picked up following September 11, 2001 for a little while. I raised it at every deputy minister's meeting and at the Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials it is a regular agenda item for them, as well. In addition to that, we collaborated with Alberta to prepare a submission to the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights on conditional sentence. The position of the federal government continues to be that the courts are handling that issue well and it should be left with the broad discretion of the courts. We have disagreed with that, I think, quite vehemently.

Voyeurism, I must admit, I have lost track of the Criminal Code amendments that were proposed on voyeurism. That bill was introduced, reintroduced, stalled and maybe Brigitte knows where it is, I've lost it.

MS. NEUMANN: I don't know either. I don't know whether it went to third reading and it was passed or not, it had both the voyeurism provisions in it, as well as additional protection for children or any other vulnerable person against cross-examination by the offender. I'm not sure (Interruptions) Yes, did it pass?

MS. JOANNE MARRIOTT-THORNE: It's before the committee now.

MS. NEUMANN: I thought it was still in process. I would like to be able to say our recommendation on voyeurism is more accepted but unfortunately - or perhaps fortunately - I can say there were many other players in that recommendation to move on that, similarly with the business of protecting victims against undue cross-examination. I believe the bill is going to pass.

MR. KEEFE: And we supported all those bills. The other thing, the Regional Victim Services Program provides information, emotional support, we have the Criminal Injuries Counselling Program. I guess, essentially, the criminal justice system is still inherently about the accused person and the criminal justice system has come a very long way since I was first taught criminal law, in recognizing the rights and dignity that victims are entitled to. There's still a fair distance to go and as you know, the Supreme Court of Canada has opined, on occasion, about the fair trial rights under the Charter that require an opportunity to cross-examine, fully, victims of an alleged crime and that has been a difficult balancing act for us.

We have provided funding for women, who expect to be cross-examined on their previous sexual history, so that they at least have legal representation during that phase. We did attempt to - I don't want to get into the details of any case but we did attempt to play a helpful role there with, I guess, little or no success. I would have to say that we're very much alive to the issue, it is a true dilemma - to be fair to the people who are sort of classic criminal justice types - because nobody wants someone to be unjustly convicted or wrongfully convicted of a crime, that's the worst thing the justice system can do. The issue has been to convince the justice system that very close, perhaps a tie, is to revictimize a victim.

One of the major things that we are concerned about in this province - domestic violence included - is the increasing complexity of cases which is driving up the average number of appearances required to resolve a case. Just in the last four years, the average number of appearances to resolve a case has gone from about three and a half to four and a half and then I say, oh, that's one, but when you have it on over 14,000 cases, that's a lot of extra days.

Whether I have my financial hat on or my human dignity hat on the answer is still the same, it's not a good sign and it appears to be continuing. That is the sort of thing that Brigitte has talked about where a victim - whether they have to testify that day or not - have to come back to court an extra time, or an extra three times, or fourteen times. Just the way we process cases is a major concern.

MR. MCNEIL: Would it be the position of the department that an offender of domestic violence be forced to take an anger management program?

MR. KEEFE: We do pre-sentence reports. I don't know if I would make a general rule on that. We do provide anger management and respectful relationship training to offenders and



I think it depends on the individual and the individual's readiness. But in general, that is quite often a condition and we do provide that.

MR. MCNEIL: To the Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Services, is there enough of a program around to deal with the issue we were just talking about, in terms of if the Justice Department is forcing offenders to go into a program? Does your department provide enough of a program that they can deal with that now?

MR. KEEFE: We provide the anger management program.

MR. MCNEIL: Oh, sorry.

MR. KEEFE: Respectful Relationships we call it. About \$80,000 of the stream we spend on Respectful Relationships is being used for people who have been convicted of some form of domestic violence.

MR. MCNEIL: What percentage then of the people who are convicted, actually are forced into taking it, because nobody is forced into it, are taking an anger management program?

MR. KEEFE: I'm afraid I don't know the answer to that.

MR. MCNEIL: Could you get us that?

MR. KEEFE: I can try.

MR. MCNEIL: Thanks, that would be great. Now I'll move on to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Services. You mentioned transition houses and talked about the day the budget was cut. We're coming into another budget year. Can they be reassured that their budget won't be cut again?

MS. FERGUSON: I'd be happy to respond to that. Although the budget reduction was announced that wasn't implemented in 2002, and it was immediately retracted. Their budgets haven't been cut and there is no plan to reduce the budgets in any way of the transition houses. In fact, the department recently was able to provide to each transition house, men's intervention program and women's centre an additional one-time grant in the amount of \$10,000, during this fiscal year, to assist them with equipment, or roofs, or windows and we were very pleased to be able to do that this fiscal year, so there will be no budget reduction.

MR. MCNEIL: It's a one-time grant. Will there be an increase? Can you give us a peak preview?

MS. FERGUSON: Sneak preview. Well, we're involved in the budget process right now. I guess that's as much as a sneak preview for everybody, in terms of that. But we will

have to assess from year to year. Obviously, this year we were in a position that we were able to do that, we were able to look at the departmental list of priorities and pressures, and that's a year-to-year decision we have to make.

[3:00 p.m.]

MR. MCNEIL: You mentioned there are nine transitional houses.

MS. FERGUSON: That's right.

MR. MCNEIL: Six, I believe, women's centres?

MS. FERGUSON: Eight.

MR. MCNEIL: Eight, sorry, eight women's . . .

MS. FERGUSON: Six men's intervention programs.

MR. MCNEIL: Yes, six. Is that enough, in the department's mind?

MS. FERGUSON: I don't know if that's my decision or government's decision, in terms of whether that's enough. I think the important piece around the redesign and why we're so pleased that the redesign is going on is that we are going to be able to look at services across the province. We know there are gaps and gaps are being identified. We are going to have to look at that and assess that when we get the reports back from all of the regional committees. We are certainly aware that there are gaps and we're looking forward to the recommendations that we'll get from those regional committees.

MR. MCNEIL: Thank you. Just a quick question for the Deputy Minister of Health. If somebody in my constituency arrives at a health care facility and the physician, or whoever is on duty, suspects domestic violence, could you just run through what the procedure would be for a health facility in this province to deal with that?

MS. DOIRON: First of all, we attempt to ensure that there is an understanding of the practices of collecting information and evidence. That is one initiative that we try to make sure is known throughout the system. The same program actually ensures that at a much higher level. So the physician who would be in that position would first and foremost, obviously, do the appropriate things in terms of examination and so on.

Usually, the process will involve - if there is suspicion of abuse, if they have the social work services available, either in the facility, itself, or in the community, they would often call and ask that service to come to the emergency department and to be part of how then the assessment takes shape from there. If there is a requirement under legislation that the particular

abuse is to be reported, then that either happens directly from the physician or through the social work department, often, and making sure that the contacts are made, as appropriate.

In addition to that, there is usually then the assessment of what kind of immediate follow-up is necessary for the individual. That can involve anything from some physical issues that need to be addressed to some pharmacological kind of prescriptions that may be appropriate in certain kind of cases. We do have the availability in this province now to provide the emergency pill for potential rapes, things of that nature, if a person is interested in that. In fact, individuals can get access to that directly from pharmacists.

Then, of course, there's the process then of looking at what kind of a follow-up plan should occur around the individual and, hopefully, have the interest of the individual, in terms of that kind of follow-up. Sometimes - as I am sure you would understand - some individuals don't want to go on to kind of deal with it as effectively as, maybe, the professionals think might be advisable. Certainly, if there is a willingness to do that, then they would be connected to organizations, professionals, transition houses or services that would be effective in helping them to kind of work the thing through from then on.

That generally describes it but there are protocols and so on available in many of the health facilities, and we could certainly get our hands on those and provide them for your information, if you would like to have them.

MR. MCNEIL: That would be great, thank you.

MS. DOIRON: Okay.

MR. MCNEIL: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. KEEFE: I just realized that I may not have understood the member's question on Respectful Relationships. The question you asked, sir, was the percentage of offenders who are forced to take this, or is that offenders who have been found guilty of an offence relating to domestic abuse?

MR. MCNEIL: Yes, I assume that they would have to be found guilty before you could force them to do anything.

MR. KEEFE: No, but guilty of, basically, abuse. A criminal charge wouldn't be abuse, but abuse.

MR. MCNEIL: Family violence, yes.

MR. KEEFE: Okay, I understand that now. I should say that we are doing an evaluation of it so we do have data. The whole program is about abusive relationships and stopping abusive relationships. I think it would be a very high percentage but we will get you the answer. I didn't fully understand your question the first time. Thank you.

MR. MCNEIL: You're welcome.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Russell.

MR. RUSSELL MACKINNON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I, too, would like to echo the compliments to all our presenters here today for coming in and providing us with some very important detail. Also, an opportunity to explore some opportunities and, perhaps, some lost opportunities.

The point was made by a representative from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women with regard to voyeurism. It reminds me of a story that was told just recently about a young gentleman down in the United States in a junior high school, where this young chap was a little overweight, he was in the shower and one of his school mates went and took a picture of him in the shower and had that printed on the Internet. It was so humiliating for this young gentleman, he ended up committing suicide. It led to a lot of questions that begged to be answered.

Presently - I'm not sure if you're aware or not - we have a bill before the House with regard to video cellphones and restricting their use in public places. I wanted to get your thoughts on that particular issue because it's probably not just video cameras, but also on video cellphones. As technology changes, I believe it's becoming more and more evident that the possibility for damage that can be done to one's person is ever so near.

I like the idea of preventive medicine, rather than reacting after the fact, whether it's accessing somebody's medical file in the Department of Health, you know, for some personal mischievous use, or whatever. We all can imagine in our own minds all the different possibilities. I would like to get the thoughts, particularly, from the Deputy Minister of Justice on this and from other stakeholders that may wish to comment.

MR. KEEFE: I would respectfully decline to comment on the bill that is before the House. I think my minister will speak on that . . .

MR. MACKINNON: No . . .

MR. KEEFE: But on voyeurism, generally? Yes.

MR. MACKINNON: Yes. Well, do you feel it's a good idea to have some type of restriction on this type of technology, restriction on the public form? You may not want to comment, specifically, on this particular piece of legislation and I appreciate that.

MR. KEEFE: Well, I think that one of the major jobs of the justice system is to help protect the dignity of human beings and technology has created a whole new way to attack the dignity of human beings. Again, we run into the dilemma of the fair comment and freedom of expression, art and all that, and it becomes a very difficult question with no clear answers except out in the extreme. Some things are clearly reprehensible and the story you just told of that young man is something - that is all too understandable and can become all too common.

I would say, though, that the justice system and our political system have dealt with various assaults over the years on individuals' dignity and privacy. The case law around privacy is finally beginning to evolve towards greater protection of privacy and towards the definition of a private space. I am sure people will be dissatisfied with how slowly the justice system will react but I believe that, just judging from the articles I have read and heard about it, it is a very lively topic in the justice system right now and will continue to be because technology is simply providing opportunities to invade privacy, and to invade the dignity and individual space of the human being. I am not an expert in the field so I'm afraid I can't offer the prescription to solve it.

MR. MACKINNON: I have to say I'm a little disappointed, Mr. Deputy Minister. The United States Congress just passed a law on this issue and it's ready to be signed off by the President, restricting the use of that type of technology in public places. It's a very serious issue and that's one of the things I like about this forum, we can explore all the good things that are being done by the various departments.

My colleagues mentioned about silos and absenteeism on certain issues and this is a very important issue. I would respectfully submit that, perhaps, the Department of Justice should be very proactive on this. We have been very proactive in going to Ottawa to get the feds to do issues on things that are their responsibility. We have been very active on providing videos to tell seniors how to lock themselves in the home, you know, if somebody is trying to break in. I don't mean that facetiously but, I mean, these are very substantive issues and I think the other stakeholders would appreciate that.

MR. KEEFE: Well, I will say this. We did work on the voyeurism bill. I'm sorry I've lost track of it. It has so many false starts. But as to the overall issue, I guess I will just say - and I hope it doesn't sound trite - I am protecting my privacy, my thoughts on that issue at this time because we are working on it and we haven't come to a conclusion.

MR. MACKINNON: What about other stakeholders? No other comments?

MS. NEUMANN: We've held two forums in two communities of Nova Scotia; one in Digby-Annapolis and one in Amherst, to talk about the issue. The title of it was Exploitation of Women and Girls Through Technology. What is very interesting here - and I guess that goes with emerging problems - is that nobody is a real expert at this time. It's sort of new. It's like walking around a problem, still trying to identify the issue, what is it, what does it look like?

We, ourselves, aren't lawyers but it was very interesting to us that in both of the forums that were held for a day, there was very great interest from people who work in the broad justice system: police officers, Crowns. You're almost at the stage of problem definition where you're kicking the tires on it to see what it is. But it is a very new kind of problem and it's going to take some time to come up with good, valid responses to it. It may be one of the things where we have to take, sort of, small steps to address one part of the problem without being able to get at all of it all at once.

MR. MACKINNON: Okay. The next issue, then. We've got 50 per cent of them in. I will try to be quick because I know . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just one more question.

MR. MACKINNON: Okay. I'm going to be local here, then, because Cape Breton Regional Municipality is an issue of representation for myself. The deputy minister, again, through you, Madam Chairman, would readily confirm that the number of crimes perpetrated in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality has proliferated at an alarming rate in the last two years. In fact, speaking to some police officers, they say a number of crimes that they are investigating, everything from robberies to, yes, violence against women, has more than doubled. I noticed in the recent Police Act that was before the House - it went through the House in the Fall session - the provincial government alleviated itself of the responsibility of signing off on the complement of policing services for municipal governments.

I am just wondering, when we come right down to it, it's the issue of money in many cases. I was particularly interested in the one of violence against pregnant women because I thought that was probably one of the most pointed and telling issues of where you can do things without having to invest a lot of money all the time. Money isn't always the answer but in this case, it is. There is a complete lack of financial resources for the policing service in CBRM to deal with these matters. There is a downloading of that pressure on the transition houses in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. It's more so in rural Nova Scotia than urban and I will give you an example.

For example, in Cumberland County - and these are national statistics - women in Cumberland County are twice as likely to receive violence against themselves than they are in metro. They attribute a number of reasons to that. We are getting pretty much in a very serious state in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

[3:15 p.m.]

Two questions. One, do we have stats on breakdown . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Russell, we just have time for one.

MR. MACKINNON: Well, it's a twofold question.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, but we're running out of time and others may not be able to get even one question in, so can you combine the two?

MR. MACKINNON: Well, in all fairness, Madam Chairman, one member of your caucus had 25 minutes this morning in questions and I have five minutes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Different meeting, different topic.

MR. MACKINNON: Yes, but serious issues. Have we got the breakdown on stats on a regional basis of violence against women? I didn't see it in the annual report. And, number two, what is the department doing to address this growing concern in CBRM? Thank you.

MR. KEEFE: One of the problems I alluded to in my opening remarks is that we don't really have - we have soft numbers, let's put it that way, on domestic violence. That's why we're starting up the assessment, the framework again, is to firm up those numbers.

Now, when I say they are soft numbers, I think that the people filling out the reports are filling them out in good faith but they are relatively new at this. This would be the court case coordinators. So we're not absolutely satisfied that they are filling out the same thing. A case can be multiple charges against one person and somebody else might consider each one a separate case, that sort of thing. So we're still working forward on that. We have, for instance, directed that police do self-audits and that the primary goal of the self-audits this year be domestic violence cases, as well. So we're making a concerted effort to firm up our stats on domestic violence.

I offer these numbers with a huge caveat, that these are very much initial numbers. We don't know quite what they mean and they will change. I don't want, in a year's time, somebody to say, you said there were 4,500. You can say I said it but I also said that I expect it to change.

The number of domestic violence cases in CBRM, for the calendar year 2004, 857 of which 172 were judged high-risk. That's 20 per cent. And 77 had children. In Halifax, by way of comparison, domestic violence cases, 2,629, of which 26 were high-risk. Clearly, there are different criteria being established and being applied in determining what high-risk is. That's 1 per cent. That's why I say these numbers are soft, they will change, we need to get on the ground and understand it. So we do have figures. They will change, they will get better.

As to the situation in Cape Breton, one of the major issues in Cape Breton was, of course, oxycontin. The RCMP offered to and we were able to facilitate the establishment of the joint task force which resulted in a number of significant arrests. Also, we have offered, recently, through our community corrections group, to work with CBRM police a little better to supervise people who are under house arrest, in the hopes that that will tighten up some of the leakage that is alleged to occur around there.

Chief MacLeod and I have a warm relationship, sometimes warmer than others, and I will say that the CBRM Police Force is seldom from my thoughts and I am seldom from theirs, judging by the correspondence I get. He is a tireless advocate for his police force and for his community.

I should also say that we do provide their funding for one domestic violence coordinator for CBRM which would be above the allocation by population. In our original allocation, we were able to provide them only a half position. Chief MacLeod was, I suppose, grateful for the half position, but was a tireless campaigner to have one full-time position and that's what we've been able to provide now. One hopes that that's having an effect.

Our Policing and Victim Services Division works very closely with all police forces, including CBRM. All of them face difficulties in dealing with crimes of this sort. The crime, itself, may not be sophisticated but in dealing with the case, it can require very sophisticated skill and we continue to work with our police forces. As to the Police Act, the removal of that provision which required the minister's approval for the reduction of a police force, we felt that the real power - we were never going to use that, that was contained in the old Act - is the authority of the minister and is best exercised in the overarching authority to ensure that there are safe and effective policing levels in a community, and from time to time, we'll go in and do police reviews to determine if that's being done.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think we should move on. We actually only have 10 minutes left in the formal questioning before we lose two key presenters who have other commitments and have told us that they will only be here until 3:30 p.m. Keeping that in mind, I'm going to suggest that we try to keep our questions and answers to the point so we can get as many in in the next 10 minutes as possible.

Next, Gordie Gosse.

MR. GORDON GOSSE: I thank you all for coming this afternoon. It's good to see Community Services, Justice and Health all within the one room, but Education would have been good also to have here to deal with some of the young children who have come in contact with transition houses. So, on the one hand, I'm very happy but I just wish that somebody from Education was here.



My question, Madam Chairman, will be very short. It is to Community Services, Ms. Ferguson. I wanted to know about families when they are in transition houses in the province, is there any affordable housing that's set aside by the Community Services Department in, for example, the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority for women in abusive situations to get affordable housing?

MS. FERGUSON: Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, part of the regional redesign process that we have going on within the department and having the transition house staff meet directly with our regional staff, we're hoping to look into some of those exact issues. I can't say for certain, although I will check and get back to you on that in terms of if there is specific public housing put aside for victims of family violence in transition houses. I don't have that exact answer, but I know that as part of the redesign process we're looking at involving our housing staff and looking for opportunities that we can work together to provide even greater services for those victims. So I'm sorry that I don't have that exact answer, but I will provide that for you.

MR. GOSSE: As an MLA that's a question that would come through my office and that's the reason I asked that question because it seems like when they're ready to leave a transition house there is no affordable housing for them and that's a very strong issue in Cape Breton because there are like 340 people on the waiting list for low-income housing in Cape Breton. So it's a very difficult problem there.

One more quick one, just to the Department of Health. As the CEO of the Office of Health Promotion, I was wondering how much money was given out in grants to the district health authorities in the Province of Nova Scotia for prevention programs?

MS. DOIRON: I believe that during this fiscal year we started with something like \$348,000. We are working to increase that and I believe we will be able to add to that hopefully in the coming year.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Jerry.

MR. JERRY PYE: Madam Chairman, I also am delighted to see that there is collaboration between government departments. Often one hears that one government department doesn't know what the other is doing. There is a lot of talk out there with respect to how they ever work together if they don't know what each other is doing.

The questions that I have, Madam Chairman, it's most unfortunate that time is a factor here because there are a number of questions, much like this morning, that I would have liked to have asked, particularly in relation to each department. However, having said that, I want to zero in on Assistant Deputy Minister Judith Ferguson with respect to this particular question. The question is around, of course, the redesign program with respect to transition homes, women's centres and, of course, men's intervention programs. I do know that you talked about

consulting with staff, getting staff involved and a training process, particularly Community Services staff. I'm just wondering how much of your communiqué has been, in fact, with those front-line people who offer those services at women's centres, transition homes and men's intervention programs?

Also, I do know that last year, in June 2004, we had before us the Forum on Family Violence, Part I. In that there were a number of recommendations that were sent off to the Department of Community Services. None of those recommendations, I do believe, have been responded to, or I have not received a response to them. So I'm wondering if you can enlighten us and inform us as to when you're going to respond to these particular issues that have been brought forward?

MS. FERGUSON: In terms of your first question, if I understand it, it's how much communication has there been around the redesign to the front-line staff of the transition houses, the men's intervention programs and the women's centres. I can tell you that there has been a lot of communication between our senior staff and the executive directors of the transition houses, the men's intervention programs and also the two programs in the province that provide counselling, who are also involved in this process, and that's CASA in our western region and Naomi in our northern region. I would expect that the executive directors of those various programs would be communicating directly with their own staff around the redesign and I certainly know from the meetings that I've attended that they're quite interested and extremely keen on participating, so I would expect that they are talking to their own front-line staff.

I don't believe, in terms of the department's staff who have been involved that they have communicated directly with the front-line staff from those organizations or that they have been requested to do so. But certainly I think communication is key in all of this. Obviously, developing the relationship is a key component of that and I would certainly be supportive if there was a request or need to do that.

MR. PYE: Communication and consultation and the second part of my question with respect to the response to the June forum?

MS. FERGUSON: I just want to clarify that recommendations from the standing committee went forward to the department. When I was reading Hansard to prepare for today, that was the first I was aware that there were recommendations. I have had staff in the department try to access those recommendations. I haven't personally seen them to date and I wasn't aware of them prior to reading Hansard to prepare. But I know that staff in the department are currently tracking those down and as soon as we get them we will be able to provide responses and get back to you.

MR. PYE: Can we have a timeline on that or is that unfair?

MS. FERGUSON: I would like to have a chance to read them first to see how detailed they are and what kind of responses are needed and then I would be happy to provide a timeline once I have had a chance to review them.

MR. PYE: Thank you. Finally, Madam Chairman, in the essence of time, my other question is to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. That's with respect to your mandate. You had indicated to us what your mandate is and I do see your mandate as somewhat an advisory and educational mandate, primarily, and I'm wondering if you can tell me if, in fact, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women has an advocacy role to play and what that advocacy role would be, or if you have even considered an advocacy role to be played by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women?

[3:28 p.m. Mr. Russell MacKinnon took the Chair.]

MS. PARIS: We also in a way play an advocacy role in the participation that each council member has in their respective regions. Each council member attends these council meetings, brings the issues that are of concern from their community. I know in my community different groups that I belong to that any issues that come up we bring them to the council meeting. So in a way that direct advocacy role is done. We do have our field workers in Cumberland County and in the Valley region who also work with various women and play that advocacy part. The toll-free line that we have within the province, women have access to the toll-free line and we do research. So in a way it is not just an advisory to the government, but we also work with women in those respects as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As acting chairman, I would like to recognize Marilyn More for a number of questions on this important matter.

MS. MARILYN MORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I, too, feel somewhat pressured because of the short time period, but I want to concentrate on three issues. One is the downloading to community organizations without adequate resources and consultation. The second is the whole area of public legislation and policy, and the third area is about provincial coordination and strategy. So I'm going to start with the downloading.

I think we all recognize that the community groups that have been talking to our committee, the transition houses, the women's centres, the men's programs and the sexual assault programs all need adequate, stable funding. That is the essence of everything that we have heard in all the evidence that we have seen to date. I think our committee recognizes that early intervention and support programs and services provide considerable cost-savings over the lifespan of those who will need help along the way. Yet access to those programs is a concern, both in timeliness and availability across the province. Many areas of Nova Scotia do not have the same coverage by community-based groups and if the services are also lacking adequate financial support from government, it's an unfair burden on the people.

[3:30 p.m.]

We all refer people to these organizations. We do through our constituency offices as MLAs, we do through the provincial departments, we do through the regional staff and through other community organizations and agencies, churches, whatever. We're all referring women and families and children to these agencies. Their costs have increased. I mean we just have to look at insurance, heating fuel and staffing, and yet we're throwing out - I have to say - tidbits of money. I mean \$10,000, a one-time grant, that perhaps brings some of their costs up to what they were five or six years ago.

I think this is a shameful situation in Nova Scotia and I'm very, very concerned that this sort of dumping of provincial and municipal responsibilities for their citizens onto these community organizations is not fair to anyone. The level of service you get depends on where you live. I mean a lot of areas of our province are not served by transition houses, are not served by any women's centres despite their best efforts to have outreach services. In a country like Canada and in a province like Nova Scotia, this is not good enough.

So I am going to jump forward to my third point about provincial coordination and strategy. I've heard some very interesting things from each of you about what your departments and the council are doing and I commend you for what you're doing to date. But, again, it is not enough.

I don't see evidence that there is any plan there to improve the situation to five or 10 years down the road. You are each working in your silo. Some of you are crossing over and helping one another but there is not a comprehensive, coordinated approach to what needs to be done to serve this sector of our citizens. I think we have to do better. So I'm curious, I would like to know what has replaced - I understand that the Family Violence Prevention Initiative was disbanded a number of years ago. I actually had the good fortune of sitting in on a couple of their meetings, just as an observer. I felt there was the beginnings of that kind of coordinated approach to these issues. I'm just wondering, what has replaced that initiative and is that the reason we seem to be going off in different directions at this point?

I think I will stop there. I have a lot of concern about the impact of our legislation and our policy, the fact that we don't have a gender lens on it and that disproportionately I think women are being negatively affected by a lack of resources in certain programs or program cuts than men and I think it's just adding to this whole troubled area of concern. So I invite anyone to respond to any part of my preamble.

Can I ask about the coordinated approach? What's replaced the initiative that was disbanded?

MS. FERGUSON: Maybe I could just speak to what my understanding in terms of the Family Violence Prevention Initiative was. At the time that the Family Violence Prevention

Initiative was disbanded the work of the initiative had evolved to the point that it was clear what each department was going to do in terms of the program on family violence. Now, we have come a long way since that time and now, I think, we're back to the point, fortunately, and should be at the point where we are all again, in terms of Justice, Health and Community Services, working together. But at the point that that initiative was disbanded, that's my understanding of the rationale behind that.

Having said that, I do think we have recognized that there is a need to work together and I think you've heard some evidence of that today. Although we hear oftentimes that government departments do work in silos, I hope that some of what you have heard today is evidence that we try very hard not to work in silos and we certainly on this piece and some other pieces - and I can think of the mental health issues and all the work that we're doing with Health along those lines - really do try to make the links as much as we can and work and actually leverage what each department is doing so that we can provide a better, more effective service.

In terms of the funding, I take your point, certainly, on the stabilized funding and certainly people need to be aware of their funding in terms of increased costs. In 2003-04, the department provided a 9.3 per cent increase to the transition houses, men's intervention programs and that was a total of approximately \$393,000 in addition to their funding. Certainly one of the things that we're hoping will be looked at through the redesign, because a big part of this goes back - and you spoke to this - to the core services that are being provided, what services are needed today, how we are providing them, how we can best provide them and how we fund those.

So I am hopeful that those are some of the very answers that we're going to get out of the redesign in a way that we're able to work together and look at the resources within the communities. So that's one piece that I hope we're going to be able to have the discussion and far better to have that discussion with those partners at the regional table where the input should be. So I'm quite hopeful that there is going to be very positive information and recommendations coming forward on that piece, but I do think for us in the beginning, to answer that core services piece is a key part of it and they do go hand in hand but we have to get a handle on that first.

I'm looking at my list here, I think that's kind of my part; I don't know, Doug, if you have anything.

MR. KEEFE: I'm not going to deal with the funding issue, we're not primarily a funding department. As far as the overall strategy, I did touch on that in my opening remarks and it may be that I'm obsessed with one of the findings of the Russell report, which is the sustainability, but the political direction was very clear: do this. The how do you do it falls to officials. My approach as the administrative head of the Department of Justice was to say, let's

get the department geared up to sustain this effort that we're about to start and that began; immediately following the Russell report, let's extend out into the justice system, let's build the capacity to sustain coordination and training, which we've done. In a sense, you could call it slow but I would call it deliberate.

Then, I guess over the Summer of 2003, if I'm not losing track of the years, we said we are coming to the point where our justice house, the pieces we need in place are in place, not that we're done our work, but we have the capacity now to sustain work, we have a network of trainers, now it's time to reach out to the first of our partners inside government and, well, Judith and I and officials got together and began working on what we can do together. We have the formal justice side and part of our role is to introduce and connect the community side and the social services side with the formal justice side. That's the piece we're working on. Now, we're ready, having had a fairly successful year and a bit working on this together, we were ready the other day to cement a relationship with the Department of Health, which we see as crucial and always did.

I have had a fear, perhaps groundless and people can say it's groundless, all along of inflating that balloon once again. Thinking we were doing something and telling people we were doing something that we did but couldn't carry out, and having another Maxwell/George because we had started out big, done things very, very well and then it tapered off because we didn't have the legs under it. So I could be accused of being slow on this and I will take accountability for that. I would say that I have been deliberate. I would say that we do have a strategy. I did outline the strategy but when Stephanie and I were talking this morning about this - or maybe it was yesterday afternoon we talked about it because we talked about it a bit - we said we should really get a strategic document out, it is not enough that it is in our head.

In the end, although I have responded to your question, I would agree with your statement and your overall point, we need to develop a strategic document that people can look at and say, I see the path you're on, I do believe in the path, I believe in the deliberate approach down the path, I think it's working, all of the pieces are falling into place. But if you don't know the path - and how would you, we didn't tell you - then it probably just seems like nothing is changing and I do believe things are changing quite a bit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Doiron.

MS. DOIRON: We've mentioned the community health boards. I'm not going to dwell on that but I think it is another vehicle that is now in the system in the way that's appropriate for us to expand the use of that opportunity, and that is part of our plan, to do that. We do believe there will be opportunity for us to be able to direct more funding to them in the future, so I think themes such as this are part of what they can support.

One of the issues we've had in the Department of Health, is that whole concept about community groups that form because they see a need. You certainly can agree that it appears to be very good work. Then there's the question of what do you do with that when they kind of grow to a particular point and then come looking for resources. This happens - I know for our department - on many fronts, not just on this topic. I have felt that we need to be a little bit more direct in terms of talking about what is the criteria we use for that kind of thing.

We have some limited dollars that have kind of, I think, grown on an ad hoc basis, over decisions that were made by ministers or others over time that said we give a grant to this group or that group. In my review of that over the time I've been in the department, there's quite a number of those groups and some of them have been receiving a grant, it could be \$20,000, it could be \$100,000, but they've been receiving grants for some of them up to 20 years, but they have to keep coming back and looking for the grant every year.

We've been trying to approach that on a basis to say, what is the basis on which we make that call to say is this going to become a permanently funded type of support in our system or isn't it? That's one of the challenges that we've been trying to go through to say, how do you do that and do that in a manner that's fair for groups that are currently out there and also for groups that may be coming up? So, that's work that is underway that I think we have to become more realistic about.

Secondly and thirdly, I guess, we do, on an increasing basis, work with other departments. I think we have come to the point when we all realize that there's very little that we can do alone. Almost everything that we do crosses jurisdictions. It's the same way as the way we have learned to work differently in the Department of Health. Initially, I think, what I found was people working in silos - if they were in acute care they were doing just that, if they were in long-term care that's what they did.

We've now come to the point where one group cannot meet, one group cannot plan or do very much of their work without consultation and sort of cross teams all through the department. That is happening and it's happening between the department and the delivery system as well and it's happening between the department and other departments. We probably aren't being as effective as we could be with it and part of that is the demand for that to take place in that manner, the number of people you have to be able to assign to the multiple initiatives that we certainly have underway, multiple ones, in any of our camps at one time.

I think the philosophy is there and as time permits and we have resources to do it, we're trying to explore those kind of models much, much more than we did in the past, particularly for Health, although we do work with many other departments. The Department of Community Services is just like a continuum, there is no way for us to get our work done without very high levels of consultation and exchange with the Department of Community Services.

[3:45 p.m.]

That leads me to the fact that I'm very happy to be joining the group with relation to family violence in particular. One of the things that we may want to explore is work that kind of fell off the table when the previous group was disbanded. While I recognize that they did very good work and that the work that they did and the information that they prepared was disseminated to departments that would probably have the highest use for it - and we still use that in the Department of Health - all was not lost with their being disbanded. But it may well be that the model that is used for CAYAC, where you have a number of other significant departments working together, creating a strategy around particular topics like maybe family violence, could be something that for a small investment of a secretariat, is something that could dramatically move this ahead. I think there's great opportunity for all of us to kind of work in different directions in the future and we're well on our way to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We're about 15 minutes overtime now, I guess I'm really a softie up here. Marilyn, perhaps if you could ask one more question and then, Diana, instead of you having three questions, just one with a supplemental and we will try to keep it as tight as possible. We will still be under four o'clock if nothing else.

MS. MORE: Instead of a question I'm going to make two quick comments. I want to congratulate the Department of Health for that population health approach they're taking. That cross-sector and multidimensional approach that you're using in the injury and falls prevention strategies, I think, is a perfect example of what can happen when you share your resources and work across sectors. I think there is some really good work going on there, so that model, I think, could be used to good effect by other departments.

I just want to say that I can't think of one provincial department that doesn't rely on volunteers and community-based organizations to provide some basic services for them. So if a department doesn't have a grants program for community-based groups, I think they should seriously look at that, I think it is very necessary. If you don't support that infrastructure in the community and it collapses, those people and those responsibilities are going to end up directly on the plate of the department, and it would cost many more dollars to provide those services that are done through the community-based organizations. So I think we have here a wake-up call that there are some serious concerns about that voluntary sector infrastructure and that we have to listen to them. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I'll turn it over to Diana Whalen.

MS. DIANA WHALEN: I'll try to be quick about what I have to say. I've certainly learned a lot this afternoon and I really appreciate hearing from all the sectors and the departments that are represented. I see the coordination that's coming, but I do think there is more that can be done.



Just in answer to Mr. Keefe saying that maybe things peter out, I think if there is commitment from the top, things don't peter out. I used to be a management consultant - and maybe I will be again someday - certainly we would always say, when you're introducing change or anything in an organization, if the leadership from the top is there, these things carry forward.

I hear that all of you are speaking the same language, you're all saying there's a big need here, one of the figures that struck me today was 22,000 women - I believe that's what we hear from the Status of Women - really affected by family violence, not including verbal and emotional abuse, which would encompass many more, and that's a shocking number in our small province. I think that it really does require a special effort and I think the commitment could be there to do that if, in your own leadership roles, that was something that could be pushed. So we urge you to do that. I like the idea of a secretariat, which I just heard coming from the Department of Health, and maybe there is something for that in the future.

Just a couple of issues - I've written many down but I'm not allowed to go to them all, so a couple of them I'd like to touch on. One is addiction. In one of the booklets I was reading here today it talks about alcohol and drug addiction in relation to family violence. What I'm wondering and what I think should be done, is a closer look at what we do with Addiction Services and how that ties in with violence. I'm thinking it crosses all these lines, it comes out in people needing Community Services, people who are accessing Health and certainly, the Office of Health Promotion, and perhaps they run into problems with Justice and definitely with family violence. I think that is an indicator that we need to do more work on. I wonder if I might just direct it only to Ms. Doiron, so that you can speak from Health Promotion, particularly, since that is your responsibility there.

[3:50 p.m. Ms. Marilyn More resumed the Chair.]

MS. DOIRON: Yes, a very important area. As we know, the addictions that we have been looking at most specifically have to do with tobacco, alcohol and gambling. We have been making good progress - I think everybody would agree - with the tobacco. We have seen results ever since that strategy started, just within the last few years, a significant drop in tobacco usage, but still lots more to do there. But we do have it reasonably resourced, both from the department's point of view and right out into the district levels.

In terms of alcohol, also, I think, there is a little bit more work to do there but at least we get quite a lot of attention and with the involvement of the Liquor Corporation and others, I think there's a fair bit of social awareness and that's helpful. That's one of the approaches that the Office of Health Promotion has been taking as well. We have lines, of course, that people can get easily if they are looking for assistance, that are available.

We also do have a gambling line but this is the area that, in particular, we feel we are not adequately addressing. Of course, with the work that is currently going on with the gaming strategy that we're heavily involved in - as are several other government departments - we're making recommendations. We're hopeful that arising from that recommendations will lead to resources to do a more appropriate kind of job in response to that kind of an addiction.

We've made some progress, I know, during the last few years. There was a substantial amount of money that was put in about three years ago, particularly for youth and women's addictions. There were, certainly, particular areas of the province where that was showing up as a significant issue. For example, New Glasgow was one of the areas where the alcohol and drug addictions kind of work was quite significant.

The other area that we have been making some progress with is the extension of methadone treatment to the rest of the province. It has been available for some time in the central area but we started it recently in Cape Breton and there should be further advancement in other areas as well.

MS. WHALEN: I won't go into it, because we could talk all day about addictions, I know, but it's the link between those addictions and violence. It does change behaviour and so on and I think that that link needs to be made and somehow advanced. The treatment programs are inadequate in the province right now, without a doubt. Even though you can call in, we don't have places you can go to go through any kind of an abstention program, so I think that, in itself, is bad.

I understand, in Cape Breton, the addictions program, the residential one where you could go into a 21-day program, was cut. You can now go for, I think, a day program, not even a 24-hour program. So we don't have enough programs to help the people who even want to change their behaviour. I think it's a really critical area in the sense of family stability. How can you have a stable family when you have these addictions that are really tearing them asunder?

The other issue I wanted to raise is the issue of women's centres. The reason I want to go there is that the 22,000 women we're talking about that are abused crosses all lines of our society. There is no single group that is vulnerable, we are all vulnerable. I find that what I've seen of the women's centres, they are a place or a sort of sanctuary that women from all walks of life will go because they provide so many interesting programs, facilities and support. I think it's essential that we make sure that network remains in place and that women's centres are supported.

My concern is, as a metro MLA, we don't have a women's centre in metro, here in HRM. I guess this question would go to Community Services, if we could. You mentioned gaps in services and you are doing an analysis of gaps and services. I would really like to make

an appeal to you to look carefully at HRM because, although I have been told that services are available here, I can tell you they are scattered throughout the city, on both sides of the harbour. It doesn't make it easy for women in Fairview or Clayton Park to have a place where they can go and get services, it becomes very bureaucratic. To go in and look for a service in a particular government office is not the same as dropping into a women's centre, talking to people over a cup of coffee and maybe getting the help you need, and perhaps finding support in services and booklets for what to do in the case of being abused.

I can tell you, there are a lot of abused women that come from homes that you wouldn't maybe even think of that because they appear to have enough money or to live in a nice home. That doesn't mean that they don't need those kind of booklets and that kind of help. I think a women's centre is a place that they can get that help. Maybe you could comment on the gap in HRM.

MS. FERGUSON: I guess, in terms of women's centres, I couldn't agree with you more, in terms of the types of services that they provide. Certainly, in terms of the redesign process and what will come out of the redesign process in the metro area, I don't want to prejudge what's going to happen, but part of that process is to identify the gaps and to look at how best to address those gaps.

Secondly, although the redesign process right now is with the men's intervention programs, the transition houses and the two counselling programs I mentioned earlier, there is going to be a redesign process on a regional basis with the women's centres and we're hoping to get that started in the Summer. Obviously, those are issues that will be looked at, in relation to the services that are provided by the women's centres across the province.

MS. WHALEN: Okay.

MR. KEEFE: Can I jump in on that?

MS. WHALEN: Yes.

MR. KEEFE: Two things. One is we have opened one family law centre in Sydney, in CBRM, and we are opening a second one in April at the Devonshire Family Division courthouse. At the Family Law Centre there will be the brochures that you talked about, they don't provide legal, lawyer services, per se, but they do what I call the Sherpa guide routine through the family law system, but also pointers to the criminal law system and community support, so they would have a wealth of information. It's there precisely to help people, not only navigate the courts, but also navigate the supports in the community. I don't suggest that that's a substitution for a women's centre, I'm simply saying that that will pick up some of the exact same sort of informational services that you were talking about.

The second thing is I just wanted to come back to the bit about leadership and commitment from the top. I say this and it may sound defensive, but I offer it as a comfort, I have only missed one session of the train the trainers sessions. I opened the first two, I missed the third one because I was out of the province. Judith prepared the training on the Domestic Violence Intervention Act for them and I said, can I come along with you. It threw her timing off, no doubt - I haven't heard the end of that - and we conducted the leadership forum.

Community Services had, I think, seven senior people at that, Justice had a number of people. I don't think anybody who is watching us in our respective departments is in any doubt about the commitment from the top and you'll recall - I said earlier today - the concern expressed by the educators in their organizations, they said, we have no doubt about the commitment at the top of our organization - not just our organization but as I said, all the organizations - we need to get into the mushy middle.

I completely agree with you and I simply wanted you to know that we're alive to that and I know from our new discussions with Cheryl Doiron, she as well is alive to the need. Sometimes it's just a symbolic gesture of being there and listening to people, and we've put a lot of time in just to do that.

MS. WHALEN: I'm very happy to hear that. The other thing I would say though is it required government commitment as well. As you say, in your individual departments you can do well and you can work collectively. I think that it's very good you've been attending those meetings and leading them as well and that is very important. I wasn't meaning to be offensive either to suggest you weren't doing it.

MR. KEEFE: Actually, I was glad to have it because it was an opening.

MS. WHALEN: Exactly. I just think it's something we need to push and continue, that's really it. Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm going to suggest to the members of the committee that since we've actually lost our quorum - some people had to get on the road before the blizzard hits - that possibly we might even set up a separate meeting, an additional meeting in March, to continue our committee discussion on this issue and to see where our next steps are. Hopefully, we'll have the updated information back from the Department of Community Services by then. So what I'd like to do is to go straight into some thank yous, before we adjourn.

MR. MCNEIL: Could I make a suggestion?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

MR. MCNEIL: There are a lot of people in the audience who have not had an opportunity to speak here today. I would just say to them, after hearing the proceedings, if they have comments, before we meet in March, certainly we'd like the opportunity to hear them. I know you're busy and I know this is another burden to put on you but if you could forward those to us, we certainly would appreciate hearing them. Thank you.

[4:00 p.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I must say, I've been reading some of the body language of these observers in the audience this afternoon and I think - to put it lightly - there is some frustration and disillusionment with the ongoing dialogue, and dialogue, and dialogue and the lack of concrete action on many of these issues. I think some of them are suggesting that we've heard some of the responses and some of our questions, year after year, and it's time to turn the corner. I'm hoping that perhaps bringing in everyone today might serve as a bit of a catalyst in creating a more co-operative, comprehensive approach to this issue and to the support of the community-based organizations that we're trying to work with.

First of all, I want to thank the presenters. I realize how busy you are and we appreciate you giving us so much of your time this afternoon. The information has been very helpful and we'll certainly use it as a foundation piece for our ongoing work on these issues. Also, thank your other department staff who have accompanied you here today, and the council's staff.

I want to thank the many observers, you've been very patient and, unfortunately, we did set up the podium and if things had gone a little quicker we might have had an opportunity to hear from a few of you directly and we apologize for that, but we do have to adjourn the meeting.

I want to thank many of the people who provided the services this afternoon. It's no easy matter to set up a meeting like this. I want to thank our committee clerk, Mora Stevens; Hansard, Rhonda Neatt; Legislative Television, Jim MacInnes, Roger Bowman and Will Hirtle, thank you very much; and to Peter Theriault who is not here but is the Assistant Co-ordinator of Operations for the House of Assembly, who made the other arrangements.

So thank you very much. We do take this seriously, we are committed to your cause and we're willing to work with all of you to help make Nova Scotia a better and safer place for all of us. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 4:02 p.m.]