

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, March 30, 2006

Committee Room 1

**Agenda Setting &
Forum on Poverty - Deliberations and Recommendations**

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COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Ms. Marilyn More (Chairman)

Dr. John Hamm

Mr. Ernest Fage

Mr. Peter Christie

Mr. Jerry Pye

Mr. Gordon Gosse

Mr. Stephen McNeil

Mr. Leo Glavine

Ms. Diana Whalen

[Mr. Peter Christie was replaced by Mr. Gary Hines.]

[Mr. Stephen McNeil was replaced by Mr. Wayne Gaudet.]

[Mr. Leo Glavine was replaced by Mr. David Wilson (Glance Bay).]

In Attendance:
Ms. Mora Stevens
Legislative Committee Clerk

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2006

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

10:30 A.M.

CHAIRMAN

Ms. Marilyn More

MADAM CHAIRMAN: If I could call the committee back to order, we're going to reconvene. We have a number of business items to do, and some of them actually overlap. I'm not going to be too strict about just staying focused on one at a time, because they do impact each other. Just to remind everyone, we decided earlier in the meeting that we're going to do the election of the vice-chairman at the next regular meeting of the standing committee.

I just want to mention that we're joined by two members of the Face of Poverty Coalition, Carolyn Earle and Corrie Douma are here to observe our proceedings today. I just want to issue a welcome to you.

Now, the next item is regarding our future agenda items. I think we have two pieces of paper. One is the previously approved witnesses, that's the shorter list. That includes the balance of the topics that we had agreed, as a standing committee, to have before us to make presentations. Are there any questions on those lists? The only one that has actually been scheduled is the Crosbie House Society, and that's for April 27th. The rest have not been scheduled as such.

The larger list is the recommendations that came in from each of our three caucuses in terms of potential topics and witnesses. I know, quite frankly, that there are some additions that the NDP caucus would like to make to its own list that relate to our further action as a standing committee as follow-up from the Forum on Poverty. I'm just wondering, do either of the members want to speak to those additions and at least get them on the list for consideration at this point?

MR. GOSSE: I think the one we were looking for was to invite the minister to the standing committee to give more of a detailed response to the seven recommendations that we sent to his office earlier. I'd like to see that one on there, that's the one I'm most interested in. Possibly bringing some of the groups - well, I see on the list there we have transition houses, women's centres. Avalon Centre, I think we've heard from them in the past, and transition houses. That's pretty well what I'm interested in and would like to see on that list.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just to remind people, two years ago our main topic was family violence. So the standing committee hosted a two-day forum - well, actually two forums, one with departments and agencies, and one with community stakeholders, on that whole issue of family violence. We really didn't tidy up the process, and there are a lot of outstanding issues. So I think your reference, Gordie, to the four main groups, the transition houses, women's centres, men's intervention programs, and the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, were to follow through on that particular issue from a year ago.

The first recommendation was to ask Minister Morse to come before the committee to give more details and a better or more full explanation of his responses to the seven immediate recommendations that we sent in from the standing committee a month ago, resulting from the Forum on Poverty. So those are two additions.

Diana, did I see your hand?

MS. WHALEN: I'd like to go back to the issue of daycare, as well. I think it's very topical right now. There are a lot of changes and questions around the delivery and availability of daycare spaces. I see it was originally on our previous list, and it's also on the NDP priority list, and we had two items on the Liberal list as well. I would like to see that one continue, bring it forward as a priority item. I think perhaps it is two days, I see the original list said possibly two different approaches for that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you're suggesting consolidating all the different references to daycare, I think the broader name for that whole issue is early childhood learning and care, and that would cover everything.

MS. WHALEN: Yes, that is the title you've given it. I just know we have the non-profit daycare centres, we have the for-profit, which are 50 per cent of our spaces, as well, and perhaps we'll want to speak to the department. I think it might be at least two days or two sessions.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, if you don't mind, my concern is that sometimes we tend to shift direction here and spin the wheels. There was an anticipation of some of the organizations coming forward, and some of the priorities. I don't know if after the end of all of this we're going to provide a list of priorities as to who is going to be before the

Standing Committee on Community Services or not, as presenters. I would certainly hope so because some of these are time sensitive. As MLA Whalen has said, the early childhood component of this is extremely time sensitive, the federal government brings its budget forward, as well as the budget of the Department of Community Services coming forward, and the minister's presentation here before that so that we get some sense of direction of where the minister might be going. They're very time sensitive, and I would hope that when we're doing this that we're doing it in a time sensitive way.

All these on our list are significantly important to me. There's one here, Community Supports for Adults, that has been on the list for a long time. I don't know if we've ever gotten to that part of it, and particularly the future of small options homes and unlicensed senior facilities and so on. That has never, in the last couple of years, come before this committee, yet there have been reports, there have been recommendations and so on, and we don't know where government stands on this. This is one of the things that we need to bring forward.

So we can sit here and we can talk about what we would like to see, but if we don't have an agenda at the end of the day, of priorities, then we're going to go through the same thing and something is going to get bumped off again.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I could make . . .

MR. HINES: In relation to what Jerry just said, that is on this list but it's also on two of the other lists. So there's some consistency there, too, Jerry, and I think that's what we should be looking at.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, might I suggest then, why doesn't each of the caucuses move forward one of their priorities from their new list over to the approved list, and then we can spend a few minutes and prioritize the ones on the approved list so we get to the more weighty and time-sensitive issues first. Would that be acceptable?

MR. PYE: I think that's an appropriate direction to go, Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Do you want to caucus for a minute or two among yourselves and decide which one you want to bring forward?

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, from our caucus, I would like to move No. 4 forward to that list.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So that's School Food and Nutrition Policy. What we could do is, if there's agreement, could we broaden the one that's approved, the Breakfast for Learning Program, and put it under the School Food and Nutrition Policy.

It is agreed.

Is anyone else ready to move forward one?

MS. WHALEN: I'd like to stay with the daycare issue and make sure that has a high priority on our new list. Again, it is already on there, it's the second in the bottom section.

MR. PYE: That would be consistent with us anyway, so we would like to . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Don't forget there are two more - well, actually they were added under the NDP, Minister Morse coming, and we had talked about the family violence follow-up, too.

MR. PYE: Minister Morse first.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So Minister Morse, we would add that to continue the discussion on poverty.

MR. PYE: Also, Madam Chairman, I don't know if Community Services - update on programming for disabled adults (CSA review, group home beds, direct support) could come under Community Supports for Adults or not, but I would recommend that be broadened or expanded.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think it's already there. So if you look at the approved list, and then we'll talk about prioritizing. We already have Crosbie House Society booked for April 27th. So we're talking about expanding the Breakfast for Learning Program into that broader School Food and Nutrition Policy. We're talking about expanding the daycare centres to include some of the other issues, like funding, et cetera. We're expanding Community Supports for Adults to include some of the issues that other caucuses have put on their new list. And we still have the topic of Small Options Homes, and bringing Mr. Morse forward to discuss the poverty issues and what the department is and can do.

Are we agreed that those are the items that we're going to prioritize now?

It is agreed.

Is there any discussion on what we should do next?

MR. GOSSE: Is it possible that maybe the committee can try to meet maybe while the Legislature is sitting, say twice in that period, to try to clear up some of the backlog?

MR. GAUDET: Not when the House is sitting.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could we put an extra meeting in? Do we know when the House is scheduled?

MR. PYE: Not yet.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): I'd say probably around May 4th.

MR. GOSSE: I'm just trying to say we have such a backlog of important subjects that I think maybe we should try to clear them.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could we possibly add one meeting to the month of April? There are two here that are particularly time sensitive, the child care issue and the poverty issue. It's not too late to have some impact on the provincial budget. I'm just wondering if we could have a three-hour meeting and spend an hour and a half on each of those two.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): An excellent idea, Madam Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Says the one member who probably won't be here for that meeting. (Laughter) They are two really critical issues, and I think people in Nova Scotia are expecting some leadership from this committee because of our known interest in the issue. I really would recommend that we try to do that.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, what are you suggesting, that the Crosbie House Society and the School Food and Nutrition policy be together in one meeting?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No, I guess what I'm suggesting is that we've already committed to Crosbie House Society, we'll go with that, but we could add an extra meeting in the month of April, make it three hours and spend an hour and a half with Minister Morse and an hour and a half to start the discussion on child care.

MR. PYE: So moved.

MS. WHALEN: I'll second that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion?

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, just out of curiosity or interest, what is the precedent regarding having the minister appear before committees? Is there any precedent that has been set in the past?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I would have to ask Mora.

MS. MORA STEVENS (Legislative Committee Clerk): Ministers have appeared before committees in the past. I know Minister Morse has been asked to appear before this committee in the past, and he has declined. Standard procedure is the committee certainly has the deputy there and the senior officials, but at any time the minister is always aware that these meetings are going on and can attend. It wouldn't be out of the ordinary to ask a minister.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion?

MR. PYE: I'm just wondering aloud, has Mr. Christie, when he was Minister of Community Services, not been before this committee?

[10:45 a.m.]

MS. STEVENS: No.

MR. GAUDET: Madam Chairman, I think the standard procedure to question a minister, there's certainly an appropriate format right now available, through Question Period when the House is sitting, through the budget estimates to question the minister on the department's priorities and spending. At the same time, if the committee decides they want to pursue any questions, we can certainly direct a letter to any minister, seeking information. From my 13 years of recollection, it has not been something that I can go back and tell you that ministers have been appearing at standing committees of the House.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: What we're looking for is clarification of his response to our letter last month, when we sent him the seven recommendations coming from the Forum on Poverty. If he chooses to send his senior officials to give us further explanation of that response, that is his option, that's his choice. We're not talking about budget as such, we want clarification, its just two or three, sometimes one, sentence responding to a huge issue. We just need more information.

MR. GAUDET: I guess I would sum up, there's absolutely nothing that would prevent this committee from inviting the minister to appear. Therefore I would suggest we attempt to do that, and depending on what the reaction from the other end is, then you act according to it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Exactly. We've shown considerable flexibility on this committee.

DR. HAMM: Madam Chairman, I've been reflecting on this as we've been chatting about it. First of all, the minister may well choose, since it was an inquiry by letter, to reply by letter. I think that would serve the committee well. I have reflected on what Mr. Gaudet has said. There are ample opportunities available to question ministers. The advantage of inviting senior officials, including deputies, is that it tends to be a better content kind of meeting in that we get the background, rather than getting into a political discussion at committee.

I don't think committees were designed to get overly involved in political discussions. I think committees put together information, assess the information, and make those assessments available to ministers. I hope that's the direction in which we're going to go. We get groups in here, we asked good questions this morning. There will be ample opportunity for the committee to put together comments for the minister, recommendations

for the minister. What I can say to you, the other comment I'll make, and it's a little bit tongue-in-cheek is the current minister is not prone to one-sentence answers. (Laughter) I think it would be better if he responds by letter, it will be a lengthy one.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, he has already responded by letter, and it wasn't a lengthy one. It left us with more questions than answers. That's why we wanted to follow through on it.

DR. HAMM: I agree with follow-through.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We'll leave it up to his judgment as to how that additional information comes forward to us, but I think the motion on the floor is suggesting that we at least ask. Is there any further discussion of the motion?

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, I guess I'm going to be somewhat redundant. I concur that we at least ask the minister to appear before the Standing Committee on Community Services. It's his prerogative whether he chooses to or not. Also, he may appoint a designate, someone in his stead, to appear before the committee. Then we would await his response to further activate any concerns that we have in the letter that he sent forward.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion?

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, in the letter to the minister asking him to appear, could we indicate what areas we need him to expound on?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The content of his response. (Interruptions) The letter that we sent to him and his response on those items.

MR. HINES: So none of the responses were adequate. What I'm suggesting is that we should indicate to him what areas we need further response on, and that may determine how he chooses to respond as well, if we specifically state what our requests are, rather than just say we're not satisfied with your response regarding the whole piece. Is there anything we are satisfied with? Narrow it down, so he can determine how he responds.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, I suppose we could do that, but, quite frankly, I suspect the content of his response would be the topic that we would be discussing at the meeting, so even though we may highlight one or two things in our invitation to him, I suspect we'll have questions on all those seven recommendations when he's here. So I'm not sure of the value of suggesting to him it would be a more limited discussion, when it probably won't be.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, as well, if you read the contents of the letter you will see that some of them are overlapping and they're all, in essence, pertaining to the Act, the

ESIA Act. In that perspective, it's not possible to separate any particular entity that you want him to expound upon.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion?

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): Just on a point of information, Madam Chairman. I don't know, maybe the clerk can check this out, but standing committees now have the power to subpoena, do they not?

MS. STEVENS: Yes, they do.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): All standing committees?

MS. STEVENS: Yes.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): I'm not saying that would be necessary, but in the event that a witness doesn't appear we do have the power . . .

MS. STEVENS: No. They cannot subpoena a member . . .

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): We can't subpoena Ministers of the Crown.

MS. STEVENS: No, no member of the House.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): So that's not an option that's available.

MS. STEVENS: No. They have to voluntarily appear.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Glace Bay): Any member of the Executive Council, or a member of the House of Assembly cannot be subpoenaed.

MS. STEVENS: No, it would only be voluntarily. (Interruptions)

MS. WHALEN: Just as a follow-up to what might go in the letter, I think your first letter indicated we had the Forum on Poverty and here are the seven recommendations. I think it would be worthwhile going back. The answer that the minister gave was the policies that currently exist. We know the policies, we were told about them during the Forum on Poverty, so we want to explore how changes can be made.

If we can maybe, perhaps, emphasize in the preamble that we feel an obligation to pursue these after calling people forward for a two-day forum to explore poverty, that this committee feels that there's an obligation to continue to look for solutions. Something in that way, I'll leave it to the clerk to write it, maybe to frame it so that it's clear that we spent two days speaking to Nova Scotians and having essentially a public hearing so people

could come and speak, and that it is important that we look at these items. Just the idea of the importance of it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Getting back to the agenda, we know what the next three topics will be. Did you want to prioritize the remaining three, the School Food and Nutrition Policy, and Community Supports for Adults.

MR. GOSSE: I thought the food and nutrition policy was going to go with the Breakfast for Learning Program.

MR. PYE: It is. That would be next. If you want me to prioritize, Madam Chairman, I wouldn't mind saying that is the next, and then the Community Supports for Adults to follow. Then I guess the remaining items that we have on our lists we would have to come back at a later date.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We can bring those forward at another agenda-setting meeting.

MR. PYE: There is also one other, Madam Chairman, with respect to the Cape Breton/Victoria Foster Parent Association that wants representation before this committee. (Interruptions)

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No, they don't now. The latest e-mail suggests that they're withdrawing their request.

MS. WHALEN: Madam Chairman, I think if we're making a special meeting during the month of April to deal with things that are more time sensitive than the daycare issue is probably the most time sensitive. So if we're prioritizing for how these are going to be scheduled, if we're inviting Minister Morse, I would like to see that in that special meeting and that we would include daycare.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's why we're extending it to three hours . . .

MS. WHALEN: So that one is definite, and these are the next priorities.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: . . . half on daycare and half on the poverty issues.

MS. WHALEN: I thought I understood my colleague saying we would start with the small options or start with the breakfast program.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No, this is after.

MS. WHALEN: After that, okay, I just wanted to clarify that we are going to start with daycare.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mora.

MS. STEVENS: If it's not possible to do April, would it be all right to do the first Thursday in May, just for timing issues, because I know how long it takes to get some of these witnesses.

MS. WHALEN: What's the date of the first Thursday in May?

MS. STEVENS: The first Thursday is May 4th.

MS. WHALEN: Which may not work. (Interruptions)

MS. STEVENS: It doesn't mean that the committee has to meet on a Thursday, we could meet on a Tuesday, or another possible day. It's just that it does take a while to line up a witness. I've had the Crosbie House Society for a couple of months now because of timing, and especially if you're trying to get two groups together, to find a date is sometimes difficult.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: A lot of our regular members aren't here, so do the best you can, send the options out, and we'll have to correspond through e-mail. I don't think we need a motion, we have agreement that that's our continuing agenda.

Now, the deliberations from the Forum on Poverty. Just to bring people up to speed, when we left that topic at our last meeting there were only members from the NDP and Liberal caucuses here. There was some concern expressed about the response from the Speaker's Office in terms of the limited options we had as a committee to continue our focus and our attention and action together on the issue of poverty. So we had agreed to go back to our respective caucuses and see if we had some common ground, in terms of where we would go next.

I think there has been some discussion. I think there was agreement between our two caucuses, and I'm sure that the Progressive Conservatives would go along with this, that poverty is a huge issue in Nova Scotia and it's something of importance to all of us, and that we want to continue to work on that issue. Now how best to continue our involvement as a standing committee is the question.

We didn't necessarily want to hear more information about how people are struggling, we wanted to change our focus to a more solution-based approach. So there is some feeling or consensus between our two caucuses, and we would like to get some input from the government caucus, about the possibility of inviting some of the major groups that presented at the Forum on Poverty back, and ask for a few suggestions from them as

to what would need to be done to develop a provincial strategy to deal with this issue, a long-term strategy.

We realize it's a huge issue, and nothing is going to happen in the short term. I guess we want to put that on the table. Is that something that the Progressive Conservative members would agree to support, or do you want to have further discussion on this issue at our next meeting as well?

DR. HAMM: Madam Chairman, this is my first meeting of this committee. The Forum on Poverty, did a paper result from it?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No. We came out of that - we've had, gosh, three or four meetings now since that forum. We realized that a number of the recommendations that came out were ones that we could forward to the government in the short term, because they were complete. Those were partly the seven that were sent to Minister Morse and yourself as Premier at that time. We realized that some other issues were sort of mid-range in terms of they needed a little more work and investigation on them, a little more study, but there's something that could probably be done within the next year. Then we realized that there were some broader issues that would have to require a longer-term approach.
[11:00 a.m.]

So we were looking at some kind of mechanism where we could take all of those different recommendations into the future. We got in touch with the Speaker's Office, and we asked if it would be possible to set up a stakeholder group, including the organizations that had appeared before us, the relevant departments of the government, as well as perhaps a representative from each of our caucuses from this committee to work together on that collective approach.

We basically got the answer back that that is not an option that we have available to us. There were some other options suggested, a task force of all MLAs that could get approval at the Spring session, passing it on to Voluntary Planning to set up a task force, but there was nothing that ensured the more collaborative approach. That's a long way of answering your question, I realize, but . . .

DR. HAMM: The issues that we're talking about are issues that both federally and provincially have been on the table for a long time with little or no success. I can't recall when the federal commitment to end child poverty was made, but it's at least a decade ago, a decade and a half ago.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And the deadline has passed.

DR. HAMM: Our numbers are no better than they were back when that commitment was made.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Exactly.

DR. HAMM: I don't think anybody has to be convinced about the problem. I think if we're going to use our time effectively it should be moving on to some solutions or recommendations that would be of use to government.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Part of our problem is that issue is so huge it doesn't fit the political cycle that most of us work within, that four- or five-year cycle. So we would like to set up something where everybody who is concerned about this has a voice at the table and can work. It's not just the responsibility of the provincial government. There's community responsibility here, and federal. There are a lot of organizations.

We've had ongoing support from the Face of Poverty Coalition ever since. They've come to every meeting that we've discussed poverty because of their ongoing interest. They've started a provincial petition, an awareness-raising campaign on the issue. They want to work closely with this committee and other interested groups, and we're trying to find some way to allow that to happen.

It's not about placing blame anywhere. It's just we have this crisis in Nova Scotia, and we want to see some leadership in acting upon it.

MR. PYE: In fairness to the term "we", Marilyn, I think it's fair to say that there are stakeholders out there who want to be actively involved in this as well, and that was one of the reasons for bringing a resolution before the provincial Legislature, asking for a committee through Voluntary Planning or a separate committee where stakeholders, those who are actually involved in the delivery of some of these programs and services and who in fact are service providers, would be participants in that as well. They could even share, as members of the committee, to seek out responses and amendments to the ESIA Act, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act, as it presently exists and how to better that, not only for government but for the people who would be affected by such legislation.

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, I believe today there are at least three of us who are substituting on the committee. You might want to let those members who will be sitting on the committee have some continuity to make that decision, when you have a group of sitting members. That might be the best decision.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I wonder if those members of the committee who are here today would consider automatically adding at least 15 minutes on this topic to all of our meetings until we actually have come up with a mechanism or a way of dealing with our concerns and the issues that came out of that Forum on Poverty so that it just doesn't get shuffled away and then we get busy with other issues and topics.

MR. PYE: Excellent point.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Would someone consider moving that?

MS. WHALEN: I'll make that motion that until we have a further game plan or resolution to this, we will continue to have 15 minutes on each meeting.

MR. PYE: I second it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Now just before we run off, I just want to let you know that a copy of the annual report of the standing committee is here and it's going to be tabled immediately after today's meeting. We have two letters from the minister and Human Rights to officially recognize that we've received those responses. We also have a request - do all members have a copy?

MS. STEVENS: They have a copy.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: This request from Marilyn Dey came in this morning to be added to our agenda. I just want to mention that our practice has been to invite groups or organizations or departments or whatever to appear before the committee, not individuals. I'm just wondering, since we received this today, if the committee would mind if we got back to this person and clarified whether it's a group representing parents concerned about child welfare that is asking to appear before us. We can clarify that and report to you at the next meeting. Is there any discussion on that?

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, I just wanted to say that it would not be the first time that an individual appeared before the Standing Committee on Community Services with respect to an issue around child welfare and Community Services. As a matter of fact back in, probably, 1998-99, the MacNeil case was a case that came before the Standing Committee on Community Services. I do want you to know that this is not precedent-setting.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: All right, I wasn't aware of that. That was before my time. Perhaps you're suggesting then that we don't need to take that step. How do you . . .

MR. PYE: I think that we could review this and if in fact she is a representative of a committee or an organization, then that's all the better, and ask for clarification on that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And we'll add this to the next agenda.

DR. HAMM: The committee has important work to do, but if it starts an undertaking of meeting with individuals, the committee will be inundated. We, as MLAs, on a regular basis, deal with individual cases. If it becomes widely known that the committee will entertain individual cases, we will never get through an agenda of any magnitude whatsoever. We will simply be inundated. Precedence is very important here. It's very hard once you start saying yes to one, then saying no to another. I think we should give this some very careful thought.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, if I can, I want to say that I concur, because on the Veterans Affairs Committee we had taken an individual case, and now most recently another case has come before us. You're absolutely right, then you're addressing individual cases. So we had to go back at our last Veterans Affairs Committee meeting, which might be appropriate to this committee, and set policy about how that process will work before an individual gets to be a presenter before the committee.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, I need to find out then if the committee wants to make a decision on this today, or if they want to - by clarifying, it raises expectations from the individual who sent the letter. So there's some danger in going that route, as well.

MR. PYE: I just wanted to say, Madam Chairman, I think we should get clarification first and then make a response. I really do. I concur with the honourable member that it's a cautious and careful step that we ought to take here in this process.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I appreciate those comments. So we'll find out whether she's coming forward as an individual or representing an organization or group. Is there anything else?

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, I just want clarification. Through you to Mora Stevens, Mora, with respect to the correspondence that we are receiving through our letter-writing campaign to government and to government departments and other agencies of government, that those presenters and those requesters before the Standing Committee on Community Services are receiving the same correspondence. Are they? And are they getting the responses that we as committee members get as well?

MS. STEVENS: A new mailing is going to go to them with all of the correspondence that has been received and the answers. I didn't want to do it every time we received an answer, just because of the bulk mailing and the cost. So it goes out in batches. But they will.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You're referring to the correspondence . . .

MR. PYE: The correspondence and the follow-up.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: . . . from the Forum on Poverty.

MS. STEVENS: As well, they'll get the excerpts of the last couple of transcripts that the committee has decided on. You'll see on the Web site that the Forum on Poverty is always separated, so it's a continuation. They'll get that as well.

MR. PYE: I just wanted to make sure because the response back from Mayann Francis with respect to nutrition and housing, a basic human right, I know there was one presenter who in fact requested that, and I wanted that person to receive the responses back from that department.

MS. STEVENS: And that will go.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I'm open for a motion to adjourn.

MR. PYE: So moved.

[The committee adjourned at 11:11 a.m.]