

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Thursday, September 7, 2006**

**Committee Room 1**

**Organizational Meeting**

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Ms. Marilyn More (Chairman)  
Hon. Ronald Chisholm  
Hon. Leonard Goucher  
Mr. Patrick Dunn  
Mr. Gordon Gosse  
Mr. Trevor Zinck  
Mr. Keith Colwell  
Mr. Leo Glavine  
Mr. Stephen McNeil

In Attendance:  
Ms. Mora Stevens  
Legislative Committee Clerk

**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2006**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES**

9:25 A.M.

**CHAIRMAN**  
Ms. Marilyn More

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Thanks very much.

Now, if you want to look at our agenda, we have three main items: the appointment of the committee vice-chairman; just a quick review of the briefing book; and then to decide who our potential witnesses are going to be for the next few months. So let's start with number one, the appointment of a committee vice-chairman. Are there any nominations?

**HON. LEONARD GOUCHER:** I nominate Pat Dunn.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Is there a seconder for that?

**MS. MORA STEVENS (Legislative Committee Clerk):** We don't need a seconder.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Okay. Any other nominations?

**MR. KEITH COLWELL:** Yes, I nominate Stephen McNeil.

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** Any further nominations?

HON. RONALD CHISHOLM: Madam Chairman, on a point of order. I thought the issue of vice-chairman was set by the striking committee, which is the Government House Leader and the Leaders of the Parties. I thought that was all predetermined before we came here.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: If it is, I haven't received that information. Perhaps Mora could comment on that.

MS. STEVENS: When the striking committee actually did meet, they did appoint vice-chairs to all of the committees. Unfortunately, it's not in the Rules of the House that they can appoint vice-chairs, other than to the Public Accounts Committee. The vice-chairman was a courtesy that the Speaker allowed each of the committees to have on a request by, actually, Darlene and myself. We were finding over the years that it was nice to have a vice-chairman to go to, if the chairman was ill or couldn't make a meeting. So when the Speaker determined that, at that time - and this was a number of years ago - it was said that each committee would determine their own vice-chairman by vote, and by majority. That was just what he appointed to us. So that has been followed through.

When we got the original list from the striking committee, I let them know that and they said, that's fine, that unless there was a change in policy that I didn't know about, and they said that was fine, the committees can do that.

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mora, when you received the list, was there a vice-chairman, from the striking committee, on the original list?

MS. STEVENS: Yes, there was. All committees had appointed vice-chairs except the Private and Local Bills Committee and Assembly Matters.

MR. CHISHOLM: If I may, Madam Chairman, it was my understanding there was an agreement among the House Leaders that the vice-chairs were predetermined before we came to these meetings. It was my understanding, as well, that Gordon Hebb, Legislative Counsel, had advised them that that was the proper way to conduct the appointment of vice-chairs. Now Gordon is not with us today, so I don't know.

[9:30 a.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The reason that Mora and I added this to the agenda was because that had been the precedent since my time on the committee, that we chose our own vice-chairman. Could I suggest that perhaps we delay the selection of a vice-chairman until we have the process cleared?

MR. COLWELL: Could I ask a question? Mora, who was on the list as the suggested vice-chairman for this committee?

MS. STEVENS: I do believe it was Patrick Dunn, but I would have to check my records because I just . . .

MR. MCNEIL: Could you do that?

MS. STEVENS: I can.

MR. CHISHOLM: The chairmen of the committees were determined by the Striking Committee.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, if Mora could check, if the House Leaders have agreed upon chairmen and vice-chairmen, I think we're fine with that. If she would check, we could solve that issue.

MR. CHISHOLM: That was my understanding of the process.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So while she's checking that, let's just confirm for the record the results of our earlier discussion. Would someone like to make a motion about a regular day and meeting time?

MR. MCNEIL: I'd like to move that we meet on the third Thursday of every month at 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.

MR. GOUCHER: Seconded.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Keeping in mind that it may have to change, depending on circumstances. Is there any discussion?

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

The motion is carried.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Madam Chairman, that doesn't preclude that if we had sort of an emergency topic to debate when the House is not sitting that we could still call a special meeting, is that true?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Exactly. We'll get into discussion later on, too, that for the last several years we've sponsored our two-day forum on a particular topic. It's my understanding that we can accommodate all those things, but generally, if possible, our regular monthly meeting will be the third Thursday of the month.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think that information, all it's going to clarify is that the striking committee thought that was part of their responsibility.

MS. STEVENS: As I'm looking at the list, this is not one of the committees that a vice-chairman had been chosen for. They had outlined it on a number of committees but this is one that it wasn't outlined on any of the three lists that were provided.

MR. CHISHOLM: If I could, Madam Chairman, it is my understanding from our House Leader that Pat Dunn's name was put forward by the Striking Committee for this committee and that was an agreement between the . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, we have two options: we can either delay it and get the situation clarified and deal with it at our next regular meeting, or we can continue on perhaps with No. 3 and let Mora make a few phone calls. How do you want to handle it?

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, I would suggest that perhaps somebody from your caucus and ours probably should contact your House Leader to find out what has been agreed to.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Shall we try to do that now?

MR. MCNEIL: We can continue on with the rest of the meeting.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there agreement, then, that we will try to get clarification on what our House Leaders have agreed to?

MS. STEVENS: On the list that was provided, this is one of the committees that didn't have it, but also on this list there were a few errors provided, not enough members on one committee and things like that, so it was a working list that had actually been tabled in the House. They didn't have enough members on Assembly Matters and things like that, so there was a little bit of back and forth.

At the time, I had e-mailed Gordon and I remember speaking to Rod at the time because there was the 10th member we were missing from Assembly Matters. I spoke to both Gordon and Rod about the list but then something might have happened since then. I just have an e-mail back and forth about the vice-chairs and asking why they were taken off and it was just explained that the Speaker had made that ruling for us. Of course, the House Leaders can certainly decide what they want.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, let's move on to the review of the briefing book and, Mora, perhaps you could outline quickly what is in the binder and explain the purpose of it.

MS. STEVENS: All members were provided, a week ago, with a copy of a briefing book. This is what I refer to as your committee bible. It has all the information on the Community Services Committee that you need to know. It has your terms of

reference, the functions of the Committees Office, so if there are any questions about setting up an organizational meeting, how meetings are held, also what happens in emergency situations, such as a request for an emergency meeting - this has already happened with the Standing Committee on Economic Development - just what we do when the other committees meet, attendance records.

If members get letters from people who would like to appear, we do urge them to send them to this office because we do keep the records. That way we ensure that it gets distributed to all committee members. I would ask that if you get a request, just have them call here and we can let them know the proper procedure if they want to apply to come before the committee.

I have also included in here items from the Web site. The Community Services Committee, as do all the other standing committees, has a Web site that has been set up by the library for us. It has on it things like the mandate, when the committee meetings are, all the Hansards, the publications such as our annual reports. I put past witness lists in here so new members will get an idea of who we have heard from in the past. There is also a copy of the last committee report, that was 2004-05. Because the writ was dropped, the 2005-06 report will not be done because we will not be able to get a consensus on that because that committee has died.

There are copies of opinions that have been given from Legislative Counsel on various issues. Once they are given for one committee, they apply to all committees. So if the Public Accounts Committee has an issue, the same decision would apply, unless there is a different set of circumstances and then that committee would get an opinion on it.

The committee's lawyer, as on all committees, we go through Legislative Counsel. Gordon Hebb, Chief Legislative Counsel, is the one we would ask for a legal opinion, if the committee had a question on anything.

Also in here are the rules for Nova Scotia from the House of Assembly Act through the Interprovincial Subpoena Act. It just sort of outlines the powers of each committee. Committees such as Community Services, Human Resources, Resources might not use them as much, but they have the same powers as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Every committee is equal.

There are also rules from Nova Scotia through to Canada through to Britain, which are the committee rules from those various Legislatures and the books, just because these are what we refer to. If there's not a Nova Scotia ruling, then we look to Canada, and if there's not a Canada ruling, we look to Britain. So everything is covered, from minority committee reports to disciplining witnesses and all of that. These are what a lot of Gordon Hebb will base his opinions on, in going through the other books.

So we've put them in here for you. If you do have a question, you have the information, we urge you to just call us if there are any questions or if you need to find something quickly, but it should all be there and it's outlined in the table of contents.

Now, what we also do here is one week prior to a scheduled meeting, we send out the notice, the official notice, as well as a briefing book. They are sent to your caucuses. I've tried to, in the last number of years, send an electronic table of contents with that as well, so you can get it electronically if you don't happen to have your briefing book with you. So any information I can get electronically, I try to get. Those will go out and they're specific to each of the witnesses. They'll have their submission, anything about their organization, background information, if we've had them in before, transcripts, what's taking place in the media, any reports.

We work in conjunction with the library, they do research, we do research here. Plus if it's a government department that is coming in, we'll contact them and get information from them on whatever topic the committee is looking for. So if you ever find something that we don't find, please let us know. Or if there's something you know of when you're calling in a witness, that you'd really like to see this report or have that included in the briefing package, just let us know.

That's why we try to book meetings quite a bit in advance, because we'll start the research process now for things that might come in two or three months from now. It's a continuous process. If anybody has any questions, just let us know.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Mora? Thanks, Mora, that's a very comprehensive binder. We certainly appreciate having it.

I just want to add that it's your responsibility, if you know that you can't make a meeting, if you have a conflict or something else happening, we ask or encourage you to find someone else in your caucus to fill in for you for that meeting, so that as many meetings as possible we have our full complement. I would just leave you with that reminder.

MR. GOUCHER: Is there a specific number we should call for notification, or just through caucus? Should we be calling Mora?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Only if it's a last minute change, if it was this morning at 8:30 a.m. that you knew you couldn't come or something. If you know beforehand, then just find someone to replace you, and then have them notify Mora's office. She'll just make sure that the list for that day is as accurate as possible.

Mora, do you want to give the number here, in case people want to jot it down?

MS. STEVENS: If you need to get in touch with me, I'm at 424-4494, or our main line is 424-4432.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Do we have some information regarding the selection of the vice-chairman process?

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, if I could, I would prefer, if everybody is in agreement, that we delay that vote until the next meeting, until we can get some clarification from our caucus and House Leader, if government and Opposition are in agreement.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Gordie, did you want to add anything to that?

MR. GORDON GOSSE: No, we're satisfied to wait until we have the next meeting and get clarification from the House Leaders.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, if we have consensus on that we'll get the additional information and be able to add the item to our next agenda. Thank you.

So let's go on to the third item. Each caucus has submitted a list of potential witnesses. I just want to mention, I notice that child care is a common theme on all of them, so it is quite likely that we should do something around child care. I realize that when each session ends everything starts anew, but in the last three years the Standing Committee on Community Services has invested a lot of time, energy and focus on reducing poverty in the Province of Nova Scotia. I would just like a little bit of discussion about how we might be able to continue with our work on that, rather than have it come to a complete standstill and have to start over again.

The standing committee several months ago had made a commitment to add that topic to each agenda for about 15 minutes, to either get updates on what's happening on recommendations or to get information on what might be happening out in the community where we could piggy-back on those initiatives. I'm wondering, is there any interest among the committee members in continuing our focus on the poverty issues?

[9:45 a.m.]

MR. MCNEIL: Everybody is kind of silent here this morning. Madam Chairman, I would agree that the committee should keep a focus on that. I do have some concern, though, that if we set aside 15 or 20 minutes of each meeting that we aren't giving our guests who are in for that particular meeting the length of time that they deserve on their issue. I think a better way to handle this may be either once every quarter or every five months, we bring that issue as the main issue for that particular meeting.

The forum we had on poverty provided a lot of recommendations. I think it's important, if the committee is in agreement, that we review those recommendations now and find out where the government has gone with the recommendations we put

forward, how many of those have been implemented and at what stages they are. I think on a regular monthly meeting, when we're asking guests to come in, we should provide them with the respect they deserve and give them the full meeting time. I'm open for suggestions from the rest of the committee.

MR. CHISHOLM: Well, Madam Chairman, as you said, we have had this on the agenda quite a while and there have been numerous meetings dealing with this. Maybe it might be an idea to just take the 15 minutes after our regular meeting, and to just roundtable the discussion as to where we are and where we're going. If you want to keep it alive and keep it going, if you have regular meetings or have a meeting set aside for it, when and where and that sort of thing has to come into play, but if we take the 15 minutes after our regular meeting - it is only 15 minutes, and it may not even take the 15 minutes, it may take 10 minutes to do it after our regular meetings. That's all I would say on that. I think that's something you have been doing, isn't it, you were taking 15 minutes at your meetings before?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, I think that perhaps we did it at one or two meetings. It was last January that we had the forum, so we dedicated, I think, at least one and a half if not two full meetings after that forum, including the one immediately after, to the topic and then we just kept pushing forward on those items at each meeting. I have no strong preference one way or the other. I would just hate to see the momentum that we have built up and the relationship with the community organizations lost just because we have changed the composition of the committee a little bit. So either one, I think, would work. Any other comments?

MR. GOUCHER: Madam Chairman, this is just a personal perspective at my first meeting, but I guess I would tend to agree with MLA McNeil. I would much rather see it dealt with at a meeting as a specific topic, a specific issue. I really believe that's probably the most effective way to deal with it, if we want to continue on that particular track, which I think is obviously important to the committee because of the background and history of it.

I think 15 minutes a day, and you're going to have to forgive me but I'm not sure what you're going to accomplish in 15 minutes a day. I think I would much rather have it dealt with as an issue at a meeting and have that meeting as the topic of the day for that particular issue. I think if you want to carry it and if you want to continue the spirit of it, then that would be the best way, in my humble opinion, to be able to deal with it. That's just my comment.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: It may be that we will end up doing both because what has happened is, because of the work of this committee, we have planted a lot of seeds. We have been a catalyst for a lot of continuing action in the community. I think at some point we are going to need to check in with some of those groups, so I don't think we will ever finish up that topic at one meeting. There's going to have to be some ongoing process. So whether it's once every three or four meetings, we set aside one and talk to

everyone at the same time, or we might just send out e-mails, giving people a check-in on what's happening and members have a chance to ask a question. So how do you want to do it? Yes, Leo.

MR. GLAVINE: I guess when I look at the impact of the two-day forum, certainly it would be neglectful for this committee if we didn't make sure that there is a review of some of the recommendations and an update, perhaps, from groups. I would be a proponent of having, again, one of our committee meetings on the anniversary month to have a review and to bring in four or five of the main advocacy groups on that day and to kind of get an update on where they are and where some of the recommendations have gone.

MR. COLWELL: As a new member of the committee as well, I would like to see maybe a full meeting dedicated to this so I can be brought up to date on exactly all the work the committee has done. I understand from what I've read and seen that it has done an excellent job, but I think the process of having a full day on it and bringing the groups in together - plus, it gets the groups talking to each other a little bit afterwards, to see how they have progressed and compare their progress with each other, and I think that's important, and see what each one's presentations are, rather than have them in isolation.

Also, I think a full-day meeting would give them the feeling that we are really interested. If you go along with 15 minutes a day - which is very positive, don't get me wrong, updates, like you say from time to time, may be very appropriate - it also lets them know that we haven't forgotten this and we will continue working with them and we are dedicating again a full meeting to their concern.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Any other suggestions? Let me see if I can pull out a possible scenario that might incorporate all your ideas. What about the possibility of at one of our early meetings this fall bringing in officials from the Department of Community Services to get an update on what has happened with our numerous recommendations from the past year? That would be a refresher for everyone, plus an introduction to the members, as to which priority areas we had pulled out of the two days of meetings, and then possibly looking at doing another forum on poverty in January, on the anniversary date, bringing together some of the key players to see where the movement has been, if there is any way we can co-operate with some of their initiatives.

If necessary, either by e-mail or 10 or 15 minutes at an occasional meeting, just providing an update or checking in with the committee to see what we should do next on the issue. Might that kind of combination work?

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, I would agree with that approach, bringing in the department to give us an update on where those recommendations have gone, where they are, whether they are being implemented, whether the department is even

considering implementing them, and then doing the follow-up, as my colleague, the member for Kings West suggested, to bring in groups on the anniversary date so that we can all have an idea, from their perspective, where the government is going.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. So do we have agreement that that will be our initial plan of action?

MR. COLWELL: Can I ask one question on that?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. COLWELL: You said a forum, is that going to be just a regular two-hour meeting here or is that going to be another two-day meeting?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: It could be a one-day meeting or it could be an extended regular meeting.

MR. COLWELL: I would be a little bit concerned about that because we have many issues we have to cover and we have already had a two-day forum. Now if you followed up with the department and had a full meeting follow-up and if we needed to do that again we could maybe overflow that a little bit to another meeting but there are so many issues on this list here that I don't think we want to be a one-issue committee, although that's an extremely important issue in all our constituencies.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Well, if time is a concern, perhaps that January meeting might just be an extension of a regular meeting for an hour, make it like from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The problem with trying to deal with it in two hours is that I think overall, between written and oral presentations, there were something like 50 or more groups that provided information at that forum. Even if we pared the list down to some of the key players, I'm sure we're talking 20 or 25 groups, so to have a representative from each of those groups at a two-hour meeting might be frustrating for them and us. That's a very good point.

We haven't necessarily chosen our theme for action, our new theme for action in the coming year, and there may be something else that we want to have a forum on. Can we perhaps suggest that that January meeting, we'll see if we can work it into a three-hour? Might that work, Keith, rather than having a one- or two-day?

MR. COLWELL: I think three hours would be okay.

MR. GOUCHER: As long as we're focused. I guess the thing that worries me, and I come back to, yet again, and I only had a brief look at this last night - and I apologize, because for one reason or another it ended up on my desk last night at 5:00 p.m. - but as MLA Colwell was saying, there are a lot of issues on the table. I'm rather concerned that if we get on this topic, and if it's a recurring topic, it's going to take

away from other issues that are probably in many ways just as important and deserve just as much time. I would much rather see this thing, if we're going to do it, then stay focused on it at a meeting as opposed to having it come up, recurring. So if we're talking about a single meeting on this, and if we're talking an extra hour, I guess to try to co-operate with the committee I think that's fine, but if we're talking about this recurring on a constant basis, taking up time at this meeting, I would probably have some problem with that. Maybe some clarification.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think what we found in our three years, in the last session, was that inadequate income is the root cause for almost every other symptom that was presented to our committee, and that's why in the third year of our mandate we sort of delved into the income, because it impacts on absolutely everything that happens. It turned out to be part of the necessity for almost every community-based organization that came before us. I think that's why it has sort of built in terms of importance. While it seems a single issue, it's not, it permeates absolutely everything that our committee was doing.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, if it's the wish of the committee, I think we could bring in the department to give an update on the recommendations that were there. Instead of worrying about a January or February meeting, we will just make a suggestion that in January, February, around the anniversary date, we will call those groups in. We can then, over the next few months, determine what that meeting will look like, whether it's a regular meeting. We may find that everything has been settled. So I think we leave some flexibility around that meeting, and as a committee as we continue to meet we'll shape how that meeting looks. The time frame, as they were suggesting, I'm okay with, but I think we can determine that. Maybe a two-hour meeting will be perfect, who knows. As we move forward, we can decide that.

MR. COLWELL: One other thing along those lines is you had 50 groups make a presentation here, and I think this is a very important topic, don't get me wrong, and I want to be brought up to speed on it and understand what it is, and I see a lot of the problems in my own area. But that would mean that if we really concentrate on this, we're concentrating on 50 groups in the Province of Nova Scotia, and there are a whole lot more than 50 groups in the Province of Nova Scotia that should really appear before this committee to see exactly what their feelings are and what their concerns are that may tie into what you're talking about.

We don't want to limit ourselves to just a small lobby group, and I say "small" - 50 is not a small lobby group with all the people they represent, but we don't want to limit ourselves just to that group and their views on what is going on because we are a provincial organization here, we represent the province. So I think we're going to have to not limit ourselves to that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Those are great concerns and I think you may have to keep reminding us as we move on. I think we have agreement, though, that within the

next two meetings we will meet with officials from the Department of Community Services, get an update and a review of where our recommendations are and, as I said, that would sort of give us an overview of what was discussed and which priorities have been chosen by the previous committee. We will plan to do something in January and we will refine that as the Fall goes on.

Do we have agreement on that? Is everyone comfortable with that suggestion?

Okay, let's go on to our other topics for the regular meetings. As I mentioned, each caucus has suggested early learning and child care, so I'm assuming that's a priority of the committee. How do you want to deal with that topic?

MR. PATRICK DUNN: Madam Chairman, we're looking for a topic for our next meeting, is that what we're doing right now?

[10:00 a.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: What we do is we usually - because each caucus has suggested child care, I think we can assume that's going to be one of them for this Fall, so we have to decide how we're going to approach it. Quite frankly, there is information we can get from the Early Learning and Child Care Division of the Department of Community Services and there are 15 different organizations across the province dealing with various aspects of the sector. I see some are listed on some of the lists, but there are actually 15 organizations so we have to decide how we're going to choose which groups we want to hear from.

MR. CHISHOLM: Madam Chairman, is there a provincial group that sort of oversees the other 16, or is there a . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There doesn't seem to be, although there are a couple that are close to that. Certainly Child Care Connection is one of them. It might not include everybody, but certainly on its board it has representations from the non-profit and the private sector child cares.

The Child Care Advocacy Association is affiliated with the national organization. I would suggest that those two are probably the main ones, but there are a number of other organizations. Because of the complexity of this issue, we may want to actually split it into two meetings. We may want to hear from the department officials at one meeting and the operators and the advocates at another meeting, but we can do it whatever way you want.

MR. GOUCHER: Could I ask a question on process? Every time we bring in the department, are we taking away time from presenters, from people who we actually want to hear from? I'm just asking the question on process.

MR. MCNEIL: We may be, but we, as a committee, need some clarification from the department. It's critical that you have their perspective as well. Sometimes in order for us to give those organizations proper service, we need to get clarification from the department on issues and where they are headed.

MR. GOUCHER: There has got to be a balance.

MR. MCNEIL: Yes. Madam Chairman, around selecting these committees, I think another one that has been a common one for everybody is around the affordable housing programs and the housing issues. I would suggest, and as I'm looking I don't know if there is another one that has been common among the three of us. There has been the child care issue and there has been the housing issue. Maybe we should just have a look and see if all three of us . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We might have a consensus on those two topics and then each caucus could pick one from their list and that would give us five topics.

MR. MCNEIL: That was going to be my suggestion. In terms of the next meeting, I think we should leave the flexibility to Mora as she starts contacting some of these groups. Quite frankly, someone may not be able to come in at our next meeting, so we'll just bump down to a group that we agree on. If the committee was in agreement, I think child care and the issue around housing, we should all agree on, affordable housing programs, and allow Mora to set up which meeting is going to come first, because she'll have to contact the presenters, and she can give us notification in plenty of time to do that. Then each caucus could pick another topic that is important to us.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We actually have child care, affordable housing, the poverty reduction from the Department of Community Services. Does each caucus know which would be their top priority?

MR. DUNN: Madam Chairman, just a suggestion, if we have topics for the next two meetings, perhaps we can return to our caucus, prioritize our list, and come back to the next committee meeting with one, maybe two, each group having one or two priorities, and look at, perhaps, where we could fit those in in the ensuing meetings. Now that we have time, we have topics for the next meeting or two, we could just return to our caucus, look at our lists, prioritize them, each group return with one or two topics, and perhaps put those on the agenda.

MR. GOSSE: I see an agreement here for child care, which is fine, and an agreement for housing, but I know the priorities of our caucus, and I know what I want to put forward today for an upcoming meeting, on behalf of my caucus.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, as well, we would like to put forward a recommendation today. We would like to give Mora an opportunity to contact those

groups, to say whether they would be able to come in or not. The government members, if they wish, could bring a recommendation to the next committee meeting.

MR. GOSSE: I don't have a problem with that. They can get together, have a meeting and bring their own in, they've got time.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Gordie, do you want to give the one from our caucus?

MR. GOSSE: Continuing care strategy, continuing care in the Province of Nova Scotia.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And the Liberal caucus?

MR. MCNEIL: We would like Mora to contact John Murphy, Chairman for the National Council on Welfare, and Gail MacDougall. They're both from Nova Scotia. We would like them to come in to talk about the 2005 Welfare Report that came out.

MR. CHISHOLM: Are they from Antigonish?

MR. MCNEIL: Gail may be, John is from the Valley.

MR. GLAVINE: John's from Wolfville, I believe.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And would the Progressive Conservative caucus like to take it back to their caucus and then bring in a suggestion?

MR. CHISHOLM: Madam Chairman, I think, since we're doing this, the Persons with Disabilities would be the one from our caucus.

MS. STEVENS: They're on another list as well.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That gives us the poverty reduction recommendations, child care, affordable housing, continuing care, the National Council on Welfare, and Persons with Disabilities. Could we have a motion just to confirm those?

MR. COLWELL: So moved.

MR. GLAVINE: Seconded.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion?

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

The motion is carried.

Just to give some guidance to Mora, how do you want to handle the child care one? Do you want to split it into two meetings?

MR. CHISHOLM: Are you suggesting that for one meeting we bring department people in, and then at another meeting bring . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Bring in representatives from the sector. Or we could try to group them together, whatever you want to do.

MR. CHISHOLM: I'm not sure about grouping them together.

MR. GLAVINE: I'd like to deal with the topic in one day, at one good, strong meeting. I would suggest that it's a very timely topic and issue, and I would recommend that we have a three-hour meeting and bring three of the province's major groups in at the same time.

MR. MCNEIL: Madam Chairman, you can structure that meeting as you wish. You may want to give each group an hour: 10 minutes to present and we can ask that group questions or, if there is a concern, to bring them all in at the same time to sit at the table. So you may want to bring each group in for just an hour and they can have an opening part and then we will have the 50 minutes to question them, if that gives you a little bit of flexibility in how you present that meeting.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Any other suggestions?

So is there agreement that because it's a large topic, rather than spreading it over two meetings we will condense it into an extended single meeting? Okay, we have agreement on that.

Any other topics to be raised?

We stand adjourned.

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