

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, April 5, 2011

Committee Room 1

**Department of Community Services and
South Shore Family Resource Association/
Dress for Success, Halifax**

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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Hon. Karen Casey
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Mr. Alfie MacLeod
Mr. Keith Bain

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Mr. George Savoury, Executive Director,
Family and Community Supports

Ms. Marika Lathem, Director,
Family and Youth Services

Ms. Natalie Downey, Coordinator,
Prevention Services

South Shore Family Resource Association

Ms. Debbie Smith, Executive Director

Dress for Success, Halifax

Ms. Brenda Saunders/Todd, President

Ms. Anna Marenick, Vice President

Ms. Wanda Kelbrat, Volunteer & Member,
Professional Women's Group

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2011

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Jim Morton

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning everyone. I'm Jim Morton, and I chair the Committee on Community Services. I will call the meeting to order, we're about a minute past 9:00 a.m.

We have two sets of witnesses today and I think what we will do is try to divide our time roughly in half. The first will be from the South Shore Family Resource Association and the Department of Community Services. The second part of our meeting will be focused on Dress for Success, Halifax. Before we get to that, we have some introductions.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

I know both Community Services and Family Resource have presentations.

MR. GEORGE SAVOURY: Thank you for the opportunity, we appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about family resource centres and the important work they do to help Nova Scotian families across the province.

As you know, it is budget day and so I understand we've had to shorten our time a bit and I'll try to keep it brief so we can have some questions at the end. I'm going to go through a few slides to give you a quick overview of family resource centres and the department's role in funding them then my colleagues and I will be pleased to answer some questions after Debbie does her presentation.

Family resource centres offer programs and services and support for healthy development for the well being of children, youth and families. They're located in various communities and neighbourhoods across Nova Scotia. Many of these centres provide programs and services in outreach locations as well, like community centres, halls, church basements, libraries and food banks. Families who access these programs often have limited resources, face multiple challenges and are in need of support in many areas - parenting, child development, pre-natal care, housing, family relationships, family support, food security, health and wellness, personal and skill development. Sometimes they're dealing with crisis in their lives.

You find in a family resource centre that they offer a variety of programs and many of the ones are listed there, which I will not repeat; we can come back to those. As a way to address some of the barriers to participation families may face, family resource centres also provide child care and transportation for families as a way to facilitate their participation in programs and services.

I guess if there was a word to think about, in terms of family resource centres, it would be partnerships and collaboration. They have become experts in this whole area. Families and community members have opportunities - both formally and informally - to provide input into the planning and program development, to ensure that the work is responding to the people and communities. That is probably why family resource centres are so successful, because they get the grassroots participation of families who participate in their programs.

The next slide shows some of the partnerships and collaborations ranging from schools, public health, children and family services, employment support. They work with various agencies and organizations in the community in their efforts to support families.

We have 25 family resource centres in Nova Scotia and they are funded provincially, federally, or from both levels of government. The Department of Community Services and the Public Health Agency of Canada are the primary funders. There are eight family resource centres that only receive provincial funding, 14 that receive provincial and federal, and three that receive only federal funding.

Now the next slide I put up is a bit tricky because it would be difficult to see all the words there on that slide but I have a handout that shows the family resource centres across the province.

The next slide is on the funding breakdown. The Department of Community Services provides \$2.7 million in funding for family resource centres in Nova Scotia. Really there are only two provinces in Atlantic Canada that provide any funding for family resource centres and that would be Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The Public Health Agency of Canada provides \$3.25 million in funding to 17 Nova Scotia family resource centres.

The next slide shows you the family resource centres that are funded by the Department of Community Services. We have that one printed as well so that you can see the 22 family resource centres that the province funds and the funding does vary from centre to centre.

The next slide shows the 17 family resource centres that are funded by the federal government through the Public Health Agency of Canada and we have a handout of this list as well.

Now regarding some other funding sources, I mentioned the province and the federal government are the primary funders, but some funding comes from other sources - United Way, community health boards, literacy projects, municipalities - and some of them do fundraising as well.

Family resource centres are also an important partner in the delivery of the Department of Health and Wellness Healthy Beginnings program. Some family resource centres receive direct funding to deliver the Enhanced Home Visiting component of the Healthy Beginnings program and there are other family resource centres that partner with the district health authorities to house public health staff and to deliver the Healthy Beginnings program as well.

We have been working on an accountability framework, collaboratively with the representatives of the family resource centre sector over the past year, to develop an accountability framework for funding that includes standards, service agreements and reporting requirements. We planned the implementation of that framework in the 2011-12 fiscal year. I'll turn it over to Debbie for her presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that's a good way to approach it and then, perhaps, we will reserve our questions until we've heard from both parties.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I've given Kim a copy of this presentation that you can have a look at. I'm just going to jump around in it because I'm not going to offer you the same information that George just shared. What I will do is begin by talking about the history of family resource because it's very important in understanding how family resource works in this province. Family resource centre programs - and we refer to them as FRPs - began to appear in Nova Scotia around the mid to late 1980s. These early community-based organizations were established in response to the needs identified by families within the respective communities and evolved with the support of community partners and small grants.

During the early 1990s, the federal government responded to their commitment to end child poverty by the year 2000 by launching the Community Action Program for Children. This initiative carried with it funds to create community-based supports for families experiencing disproportionate challenges. Through an agreement with the

provincial government, this opportunity not only provided funding for some existing family resource programs but also enabled the establishment of many other such projects throughout the province.

During the late 1990s, the Department of Community Services began supporting the development of additional FRPs while also providing expansion opportunities for many existing programs. I will share with you that these programs are providing services in 251 communities across the province. In the past year, family resource programs offered 974 programs and delivered 22,683 sessions to families across Nova Scotia. These programs were accessed by 9,583 different adults and 11,953 different children.

As George has pointed out, the key to success of family resource centres is the development and fostering of partnerships and collaborations at the local, provincial and federal levels. Included in those key partnerships are the Department of Education, Department of Justice, Department of Community Services, Department of Health and Wellness and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the staff within those departments recognize that FRPs are reaching a segment of the population who do not easily engage with other programs and services. Family resource programs have successfully created safe environments in which vulnerable families gain confidence to connect, finally, with the other services.

I'll talk a bit about the work. Family resource programs in Nova Scotia are as diverse as the communities they serve. The changing demographics of our province mean more families are becoming isolated. Immigration, job search, moves and poverty leave many without traditional family supports. Regardless of where they are, how large or small they are, FRPs play a unique and valuable role in Nova Scotia by providing safe, nurturing spaces where families gather to establish supportive relationships, create networks and build positive life skills.

Programs and services are provided in a holistic manner with consideration given to the uniqueness of each situation and the diversity of the community in which it is delivered. The work of FRPs is strengths-based and is focused on personal development, healthy relationships, healthy choices, injury prevention, early childhood development, nutrition, food security and positive parenting practices. These focus areas are often creatively imbedded in the day-to-day programs and services.

Program delivery modes include informal drop-ins; individual one-on-one work; group sessions, whether that is large or small; and home visiting. Depending on the geography of a particular project, programs may be offered from the central location, often called a centre, and a number of more rural settings often referred to as outreach work, or both. It is commonplace for one project to have a large number of outreach sites. Family resource programs offer a broad spectrum of programs and services which span the years from prenatal to mid teen and on the handout, if you would like to know more about those services, I won't go into them all but they're included there. We've broken them down in

prenatal supports, postpartum and early infancy, the toddler years, preschool age and older children and youth.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, everyone, for the presentation. So now is an opportunity to ask some questions and I would like to welcome you, Mr. Gary Ramey, to the committee. You had your finger up - does that mean you are ready to ask a question?

MR. GARY RAMEY: Yes, I do and I am, if I may.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed.

MR. RAMEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You may have already touched on this, George may have and, Debbie, you may have as well, but if I've got this right, in the presentation I think there were eight that received provincial money, eight centres, 14 that get both and three that are federal, and then the next one at \$1.17, I assume that was the 14 plus three. You said that the amounts that they get are not uniform, they vary. I was just trying to figure out that whole thing. First of all, why some have only federal and some have only provincial and some have both, and also why the amounts aren't the same? Can somebody just speak for a few minutes on that?

MR. SAVOURY: I'm going to ask Natalie. (Interruption)

MS. NATALIE DOWNEY: If it looks sort of off kilter, there are many reasons why. Part of it is the funding, as Debbie alluded to, in terms of how family resource centres began, it was really grassroots and community based. So, as an example, it could have been a project in Bridgewater partnering with the Department of Community Services and there may have been a grant or whatnot to start play groups or family resource programming in the Bridgewater community. It wasn't a provincial approach initially, so it was very grassroots.

In Halifax, as an example, the municipality - which had some responsibility for social services programming at some point historically - transferred grants to community agencies. So there were these hodgepodes and little pockets of funding that occurred historically throughout Nova Scotia. From that grew a bit more of a movement and, as Debbie alluded to, the federal funding attached to some of these grassroots movements that were already occurring, so looking at already existing capacities within the province and infusing federal dollars there.

Then the province had the luxury, I guess - as Debbie also alluded to - in the late 1990s, early 2000s, to partner with the federal government to receive some federal early childhood development funds. Some of that funding was also channelled through some of those programs, so a combination of historical factors at more of a community level than a combination of federal funding on top of that and then provincial funding. So the funding never really came all at once, it came through different streams at different times, making

the uniformity of funding, I guess, next to impossible at that point. So it happened historically, and then with current funding, trying to work with the same capacities around the province.

MR. RAMEY: So has there been any attempt to straighten that out? Sorry, it seems like a logical question to me.

MS. DOWNEY: No, there was and I guess part of the challenge with that is you don't want to necessarily take away from programs to spread money out and Marika was part of that process.

MS. MARIKA LATHEN: Well, I can offer a little bit of an additional explanation.

MR. RAMEY: I'll work through the whole group. (Laughter)

MS. LATHEN: Yes, let's go right down the line. I guess, just to follow up on what Natalie said, family resource centres were not developed in the way that most programs would be developed. It wouldn't be like government said we've got \$2 million, let's develop a system of family resource centres in a community. There were organizations that existed already and then there was money coming in from the feds and then some money coming in from the province. That's why there was no funding formula. These projects applied for the dollars that were available through the feds and through the province and got different amounts of money. So rather than it being a planned approach, the organizations existed first and then the money came in, so they got different disbursements.

A number of years ago, I think it was about three or four years ago, we had some money through the feds - the early childhood development money - and they were tied to projects so that is how they were incepted. There were early language projects, child care projects and that type of thing. What we realized after we evaluated those projects was, really, it wasn't the best approach for family resource centres. At the end of the day, family resource centres know the best way to deliver what services were required in their community, so what we did with those projects is we rolled them into core funding - if you had \$55,000 worth of projects, it became \$55,000 worth of core funding.

We had conversations with those family resource centres that had those dollars and said, you know your community the best, let's move away from this whole idea of delivering a specific project - what could you do with \$55,000, for example, in your community that would meet the needs of your community? They stopped being projects and they went into core funding.

Throughout that process we had a tiny bit of money left over, like I would say a couple of hundred thousand dollars, if that. What we decided to do was, we recognized exactly what you said - you have some family resource centres that have \$400,000 worth of funding, \$500,000, and then you've got other little ones that are doing fabulous work for

\$50,000. What we did with that little bit of money is, we tried to allocate it to those little organizations that were getting less than \$50,000 because it's easier to do good things, great things, with \$500,000, as compared to \$50,000.

Some of these tiny little family resource centres programs that got little bits of money were in communities that had great needs. That was the best we could do with the little bit of money that was left over - we distributed it to those family resource centres that had smaller amounts of money.

I take your point because this is a question that comes all the time in our world - there is no funding formula for most NGOs. Again, it wasn't a planned approach that government had, when the money went out the door it was mostly project funding and the same thing with the federal government. So there is tremendous inequality but at a time that there isn't a whole lot of new money, it's pretty hard to develop a funding formula without - you know, if you want to give more to some, you've got to take away from others. We just never have been in a place where we've been able to add additional dollars besides, like I said, that process that we went through a couple of years ago to projects.

MR. MORTON: I think Mr. Ramey had one more question.

MR. RAMEY: Just a really quick one and it's for Debbie, actually. On the South Shore, we get funding from the feds and the province; we're one of the combination ones. How many people do we have on staff there?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: Well, if you're talking about the South Shore Family Resource Association, which I am the Executive Director of, we would have around 21, because under my umbrella I take care of Queens County and Shelburne County as well and Buccaneer Bay Bay/Heritage House Outreach Centre, so four family resource centres.

MR. RAMEY: Okay, right down the coast. Do you have to go each year - do you get the same amount of money each year? I'm sorry, I'm on the money thing; I'm stuck on that. Do you get the same amount each year or do you . . .

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: From the province it's very consistent and each year we do a report and expect that at the end of that report that we'll get the money that we had the prior year. With the federal funding over the years, it has fluctuated in how that works. At some points in time we would be funded for three years, some points in time we would be funded for five years, and in the past round we've been funded for two, so our funding in 2012 is going to be questionable, as far as federal money goes.

MR. RAMEY: Thanks for your indulgence here, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll now go to Ms. Casey on my speakers' list at this point, followed by Moe Smith and Geoff MacLellan. Ms. Casey.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Thank you and thanks for the presentation, for the information. I don't want this to count as my first question. I'm wondering if we could have the handouts that you referred to because if they are available, it is easier for us.

MS. KIM LANGILLE (Legislative Committee Clerk): They were provided by e-mail before the meeting.

MS. CASEY: Okay, so we don't get a hard copy here.

MS. LANGILLE: No. I can make a hard copy . . .

MS. CASEY: No, that's fine. My question actually is to Debbie. Of course I'm interested in the educational component of this and I was pleased to see that education is one of the partners you work with. You talked about 974 programs that were delivered, I think you said. How many of those would have education as a focus?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: It depends on how you approach education. Thinking about education, I would say that all of those programs have education, it's all about educating, educating from a place we refer to as embedded help literacy, so we embed that education piece into the programs that we're doing.

However, there are several pieces in now that would be directly related to education. On the South Shore, for instance, we do a transition to school program that happens every summer in every elementary school in Lunenburg, Queens and Shelburne County where all children who are about to enter the elementary school in September come for a five-day program to their school and become familiar with the surroundings. We do some work with the parents; they learn the routines and take some ownership of the school prior to having to be placed there with older children.

To do that, I work directly with the South Shore Regional School Board and I know that happens in other areas as well. There are a good number of our programs that are related to literacy, so we may look at that as help literacy or family literacy. I would say if we picked apart the components that I ask my staff to pull apart - what is embedded in the program that you're offering - there wouldn't be one of them who wouldn't say there's an education component in this.

MS. CASEY: I guess perhaps I should have been clearer, it would be education directly related to students.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: To students.

MS. CASEY: I think your transition to school would be involving young people directly, but beyond that.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: Some areas have after school programs and we have one in a two unit apartment complex just outside of Bridgewater, which is low income housing. There's an after school program there where the staff are all trained in Reading Recovery. They work with the children and the schools that they come from, to improve their outcomes in reading. It's very difficult for us to take on any more than that because the children also have to let loose after school so we've decided we would spend our time looking at reading levels.

MS. DOWNEY: Could I just add something? I think the other piece too, especially when working with marginalized and vulnerable populations, is the engagement of the families. I think a lot of what family resource centres do is they work towards getting families engaged in the healthy development of their children, actively engaged, so when those kids go on to school, hopefully those parents will remain engaged in a system, which we know is a key predictor of outcomes for kids as well in terms of that family support. I would say that family resource centres work on that piece as well.

MS. CASEY: Okay, my last question. You mentioned Reading Recovery and as you know, we've been fighting to keep Reading Recovery in our schools; we're not sure if we've won that battle or not. My question to you is, if the minister follows through and does not allow Reading Recovery to be delivered in our schools, will you be able to continue using Reading Recovery in your afterschool program?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: Absolutely.

MS. CASEY: Do you see more students requiring that assistance then if they're not getting it in schools?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I don't think I'm qualified to come up with an answer to that. However, I do know that many of the children that we see, even in transition at school, really don't have the building blocks developed that will prepare them for reading and so the Reading Recovery program has been really helpful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Smith.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: I'm interested in how you get these people coming to these centres. First of all is there any kind of a means test or anything or is it open to the whole population?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I think most family resource centres are open to the entire population of the communities that they serve. However, with the federal money from the Community Action Program for Children funding, there is a target of addressing needs of families that have disproportionate challenges in their lives, so we would target within the area.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: I presume a lot of these things are referrals to a centre and some self-referral, but some, like Children's Aid Society saying, you go there and you take this program, parenting skills, that kind of thing - what about confidentiality and that kind of thing, how is that sorted out?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: We do take many referrals. Family resource centres don't typically keep reports on families. We're there to provide that support that many families aren't able to gather up in their own area. We become the extended family so we would do the things that normally your family would do for you and we don't keep records on those individuals. We keep track of their comings and goings, certainly, but we wouldn't keep any records, so we try to keep that confidentiality piece under control although it is very difficult when we're serving across sectors; when we're dealing with individuals across sectors that becomes really difficult.

MS. LATHAM: There are some family resource programs, to your point around confidentiality, that do deliver - it's called a parenting journey or family support kind of programs. There is a different sort of level of confidentiality that comes with that kind of service. Again, depending upon the funding that a family resource centre has and the kind of program that they deliver, they would have the appropriate structures in place to make sure that the confidentiality of the families and the children were honoured.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: I guess the last thing that's kind of a follow-up, are any of these people who use the services charged a fee?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I think I'll clarify where I'm gathering this from. There is no official association of family resource centres in this province, however, they've entrusted me to carry their information forward. When I asked people about how they delivered programs, there are a few that have minimal fees when it is associated with maybe purchasing a book that goes with a program or something, minimal fees to that extent. For the most part, I would say that at least 95 per cent of the programming is free.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacLellan.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, thank you all for the presentation this morning. I only have one question but it's in three parts. (Laughter)

For Section A, basically, for one of your slides about what these centres offer, it was only a quick view but just in the quick glance I can tell you that certainly Glace Bay, my hometown, could use a lot of those things. My question is - Section A of the question - how do we become number 26, how do we become the next centre? Is this a volunteer base in the community that goes to the Department of Community Services or is this something

that DCS identifies? I know there are a few in Cape Breton so how do we become the next one, what is the process for that?

Section B - is there a form of collaboration? I know with some of the other community groups, in various regions in the province, there would be direct collaboration with, say, police or addiction services or counselling or those types of things. In your circumstances, is there a direct connection or is it just sort of an ad hoc in terms of, well, we need the support so call the police or call addiction services?

Third, Section C - how do you measure success? Are there very specific deliverables and reports or numbers at the end of a fiscal year, or at the end of a certain term, and what is it that tells your groups, the 25 organizations, that okay, we've done a good job or we've got to improve these areas? Please identify which section of the question you're in. (Laughter)

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I'm not sure that . . .

MS. DOWNEY: I think I need a calculus degree to figure this out. (Laughter)

MS. LATHM: I can answer Part A. You know Cape Breton is a real anomaly but a real success story, in terms of how they deliver services. They have one family resource centre that has something like 50 sites that they deliver programs out of, so because they've - I mean they've been able to reduce their administration costs. They have one executive director, one kind of home base, but they have all these different satellite sites, so I'm not sure whether they are delivering programs and services in Glace Bay but I can tell you - and I think there was a slide up there that spoke about partnering with churches to do things in church basements, schools deliver programs out of schools, community centres, different kinds of other areas where they can get some space. They can actually take their programs mobile and deliver them in these different locations. I'm sorry I can't answer your question around Glace Bay.

I have to say that again, it's really good efficiency and a really good model because you don't have to have four or five or six or seven different cemented locations. You can take your programs on an outreach component and deliver them across Cape Breton.

MR. MACLELLAN: Are they out of Sydney Mines?

MS. LATHM: No, they're out of Sydney.

MS. DOWNEY: But they do have a location in the housing area in Sydney Mines.

MS. LATHM: So they partner like that and they deliver programs in those different community locations. What was B?

MR. MACLELLAN: Formal collaboration with other social services and the type.

MS. LATHAM: I don't think it's formal because I'd have to say that I think there are examples where you can formalize co-operation and it still doesn't work. I'm going to let Debbie do the second piece of this answer, but family resource centres are masters at relationship building and collaboration so they will develop the right partnerships based on the kind of program that they need to deliver, whether that's a connection with someone in Addiction Services, if they want to do something on adolescents or teens and drugs, or whether it is someone in mental health or whether it is police, in terms of a personal safety program, those relationships are longstanding and lasting.

I think that's why they are so successful, because given the little bit of funding that they get, you couldn't do the kind of programs that they deliver without those partnerships. So formal, I would say no, but relationship-based and successful, I would say yes.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: From my experience, when we would really put something on paper, for instance an IWK grant to do some work in the community, we could bring together Health and Wellness, Addiction Services, Community Services, people who work within those. We would sit together and write a grant for some funding to do something in the community. We would collectively meet on a regular basis to manage that piece.

However, it will be delivered, not by any of us, but by the people who know how to do that and that are staff that works in the family resource centres. Does that help?

MR. MACLELLAN: Yes. What about the success? How do you know how well you're doing in terms of each centre or region, is there a specific goal?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I always feel that we measure success when people come and people return. Our motto is that people should never feel any worse when they leave than when they came and to create environments where people feel safe and can develop trust. Becoming involved with a family resource centre isn't strictly coming in to do one-two-three magic programming, it's about building those relationships and those connections that allow families to meet their own needs in the community, to build their strengths, to improve upon their knowledge of the community and have them gain the skills to move out into the community and meet their own needs at some point.

MS. MACLELLAN: Okay, thank you.

MR. SAVOURY: I'd just add that in terms of measurement, I mention the accountability framework and reporting and we do see that as cementing a more formalized reporting on what is standard information so we can look at that whole area. The Child and Youth Strategy, which I know you've added at the back - sometime you had a presentation on the Child and Youth Strategy - our third annual report is actually just back from the printers. The last part of that is devoted to reporting on the progress on outcome measures

that were established when that initiative was set up, in terms of, you know, a lower dropout rate, a better transition to school, increased physical activity amongst our children and youth, and we'll be getting copies out to you hopefully within the next week or so.

So I just want to put in a plug for a presentation that was made here a little while ago by the early childhood development folks and they made a pitch for us going province-wide with EDI which is an early development instrument which is being implemented in sort of pockets around the province. Manitoba and B.C. have gone fully province-wide and that instrument will provide data on how well our children are ready to transition into school. Things like poverty and other factors do make a difference on how well children are ready to hit the ground running when they reach school age. So it is part of a childhood strategy which I'm executive director of, where we're working on a project plan for how can we to push the EDI - and what would it cost - as a province-wide instrument so we could add data on that for all of Nova Scotia. Then we'd be able to look at, well, why is it some parts of our province, the children just do not seem to be faring as well when they hit school age. So it's sort of where we're working on that and we believe that would be very significant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, and that did seem like three questions, but our purpose is to have as fulsome a discussion as possible, so thank you. Mr. Burrill.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Look, I just think this is the greatest motto: No one should leave feeling worse than when they came. I was wondering if you wouldn't mind releasing the copyright of this so it could be applied to the Nova Scotia Legislature. (Laughter)

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I would be happy to invite them to a session.

MR. BURRILL: I was really appreciating this explanation about the background and why it is that when you're in different parts of the province and you talk to people who are connected with family centre work, they seem to be describing different animals according to different areas that you're in. It has always been a mystery to me, like, well, why is this so, what's the centre from which this is all coming? I was wondering if I could get you to explain a little bit more along these lines.

This is kind of going back to what Gary was asking about. You had those lists here about those centres that are provincially funded and then those that have a mixture of the early learning federal money and the literacy money and so on, the federal-provincial ones. When you're looking at those two lists, are there basic things about those two clumps of centres that are held in common in each of the two groups? In other words, would one be inclined to be in the provincial-only group, say if it was more rural or say if it was older and established earlier - what are the common features? Is it possible to generalize a little bit about how that works?

MS. DOWNEY: It's a great question. I think if you look at those two lists, they're not exclusive lists because the provincial, I think there are 17 of the 25 that would have both.

MR. BURRILL: Yes.

MS. DOWNEY: You do have, for example - Marika mentioned earlier - some of the smaller ones are the more provincially funded because they came more from grants with child welfare agency boards and what we had tried to do at that point was to increase their capacity. So, for example, in the city there was one located in Mulgrave Park which is a small community-based organization there. So that would be a smaller provincial one, it sort of developed more from some grants and the federal ones, I think, Debbie, were pretty well spent right across the province with a collation . . .

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: It was particularly interesting when the money came down from the federal government about developing something in the community that would support families. Only in Atlantic Canada will you find that the entire amount of that money was used for family resource development. In the rest of Canada it's hard to define where the money is. It may have gone into a health unit; it could have gone anywhere, so we're quite unique in the Atlantic and, rightfully so, we normally are.

What happened, the way that funding was distributed, was first of all they were looking at the demographics of an area and the birth rates in areas. From that the amounts of money were given out to the areas. Although there was somewhat of an equal amount given to each region, within the region one coalition may have gotten more money than another based on their birth rate and the other demographics of their area. I guess we could say that some of the discrepancies began there with little ability to make those changes as the years went on. Does that help?

MS. LATHAM: See, in Newfoundland, for example - and this just talks about a different approach. One of the things that they did with the early childhood money is that they said, okay we would like to have - I'm just throwing a number out here - we want to have 10 family resource programs across Newfoundland and this is the amount of money that we're going to allocate to each one of those family resource centres, and then they sought out proposals for that funding. Nova Scotia took a different kind of approach. They developed project funding that a lot of these little NGOs could apply for, so some applied for all three kinds of projects; one might have applied for just one. That's where the other part of the discrepancy comes from.

To go to your question, metro is a really good example. We've got a couple of family resource programs that are federally funded and provincially funded that have substantial investments and then we might have a couple - two or three - that have less than \$50,000. You can't necessarily say it's the rural area or the urban area where those discrepancies exist; they're pervasive right across the board.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. MacLeod.

MR. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you all for your presentation. Debbie, I think I can speak on behalf of everybody here, I want you to take back a big thank you to your staff and to yourself and to all the family resource centres for the work you do. I think it adds a value and a contribution to our communities and we'd be in a bad way if we didn't have such people as dedicated as you are and as your staff are, so I really want to say thank you on that.

My question is, with the budget coming down and potential frontline services having challenges presented to them, what affect would, say, a 10 per cent cut have on a family resource centre such as your own? I wouldn't ask you to comment on anyone else's, but on your own, if you lost 10 per cent of your provincial funding.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I think family resource centres are so accustomed to losing money that we, first of all, try to look internally to see what we can do more efficiently. For instance, in our project, although I'm stretched across three counties, we do all the ordering for supplies and things centrally and then distribute it because we can get a better deal. We have one executive director and co-ordinators in the other centres. We try to cut down on travel. If we had a 10 per cent cut, the one thing that I would feel in our project that would be impacted would be our outreach ability because right now with the gasoline escalating, it's very difficult. We know that we're going to have to increase mileage stipends. In some of those areas, my staff travel half an hour, three-quarters of an hour to get there, three-quarters of an hour back.

For instance, in Queens, the resource centre is in Liverpool and we do outreach to North Queens, which is quite a hike. In Bridgewater, with the central area, we go to Lunenburg, we go to New Germany, and we go out to Chester Basin and sometimes even further beyond that. If we had a 10 per cent cut, for most family resource centres, we're already struggling to hang on with what's coming at us so with a 10 per cent cut that would be difficult.

MR. MACLEOD: So if I understand your answer correctly, the areas that are now more remote or more rural would be the areas that would actually see an impact if such a thing were to take place, and we're hopeful that it won't, but if such a thing were to take place?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: Yes, that is unfortunate because these are the very areas we're not doing enough for already. We are struggling with the increase of gas costs to maintain those. We really want to be doing more there, not less.

MR. MACLEOD: Of the work of your group, what percentage would you say would be affected by outreach? If you had 100 clients as a base, how many of them would be people who would be touched by outreach? Is it 20 per cent, is it 30 per cent?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: For my project alone, I would say that probably 60 per cent of our participants are in outreach.

MR. MACLEOD: That's significant. Through the outreach, and you're working in three different counties, it would be fair to say that in three different counties you would have three different types of programs because the needs are different or would the programs be similar in all three areas? I'm just trying to get a sense of the talents your workers need to have to make this system work.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: For instance, one of the most common programs that are provided in outreach in many family resource centres is parent and tot groups. We may call them all parent and tot groups where families with young children come together and includes some rhyme time, some reading, some physical activity. We look at mental health pieces in that because we get a mom or dad or whoever is bringing the kids some breaks. If you went with my staff across the South Shore to every outreach unit that we do, not one of them would operate in the same manner. They would all have the same components, but they would meet the needs or the requests of the families who live in that community. So, in New Germany, you do things very differently than you do in Lunenburg.

MR. MACLEOD: Thank you. Again, thank you so much for the work that you do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm conscious that we're getting close to the end of our time and we have two sets of witnesses, I just want to remind people this morning so we're going to need to make a transition. I think we have maybe a couple of moments left and I'm particularly interested, maybe my question is for Debbie if I could indulge myself as Chair to ask a question.

In all of those situations that come to the attention of your staff and staffs throughout the province – I'm particularly aware in the Annapolis Valley of the good work family resource centres do in my area. I know you must become aware of many situations where people have troubles related to raising children, separation and divorce, suicidal behaviour, depression-like concerns, a whole range of things that families face. I'm wondering what your experience is in terms of finding resources for those people who seem to be troubled and are not coping well with their circumstances, that they need something more than information and support.

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: You're right to assume that we are seeing that and we see it on a daily basis. A good many of the families who may not be experiencing some mental health issues are experiencing now because of our economy and the things that are happening in their life, so that has risen. However, if we have people come to us, there's a lot more we can do with that population because sometimes they just need someone to talk to and someone to do some reflective listening.

With families who have more severe needs or more challenging needs, family resource tries to build connections with the hospital, with mental health, with addiction services, with women's centres, whoever might be needed. However, all those services are overwhelmed as well. So other than using an emergency approach, which is not always best for the individual, it takes some time, so we are usually holding them up until that piece of support is able to be provided. Does that help?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's helpful, thank you. Mr. Ramey assured me that he had one very short question. Of course questions sometimes have very long answers so, Mr. Ramey for a final question.

MR. RAMEY: Thank you very much. My question relates directly to something that the government did which ostensibly we thought would help people like your clients but I want to know if it did. We took the HST off a number of things, like feminine hygiene products and children's clothing, diapers and that sort of thing - have you ever talked to anybody or have your clients ever said that that helped at all? Or is there no significant difference whatsoever with a move like that?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: Certainly any time that materials that are required by families are costing less it is a benefit. I think what I would say, though, was of most benefit to the families who were involved in asking for that to happen was the day that it did happen and you called the centre. That gave them a voice, they felt listened to. That's the kind of work that we do, the underpinnings of what we do - to provide supports and opportunities for individuals to feel part of the community. To be empowered because without that empowerment we can do all the programming that we want to around positive parenting, it's not going to stick if someone doesn't feel that they are connected and they are likable, lovable and worthy, so that helped.

MR. RAMEY: Well that's great to hear. I would like you, Debbie, to take that back, to take back to the folks that work in the centres that I do pay attention to them and I do care about the work that you are doing. I know Mr. MacLeod has already alluded to it but we very much appreciate the work that is done there and we will try to keep paying attention, so you tell them that, please. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess we're at the point of ending this part of our discussion. Is there any summary that either Debbie, you would like to make, or George, that you would like to make?

MS. DEBBIE SMITH: I would just like to thank you for inviting us. When I say "us", I am fortunate enough to have almost 25 resource centres trailing along behind me here, or shoulder to shoulder. We would like to invite each and every one of you to come and visit a family resource centre and be part of the experience, so thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Skabar.

MR. SKABAR: It's not my place to make a summary, Debbie, but you represent the family resource centres very well to what I've seen. Like in Amherst and Truro, Maggie's Place, is like a jewel. Their strength is their flexibility and nowhere else in government or in private sector, or anywhere else, do we get better value for money spent. Not my place to make a summary on your behalf but I'd just like to throw that in as a comment as well.

MR. SAVOURY: Well thank you very much for the opportunity to present. I think Debbie and Brian summed it up. I was going to say that Wilfrid Laurier University have done some research on programs that are effective and, in many ways, this would be a test case. You know you need some structure but the flexibility, you know they do a phenomenal amount for the amount of resources they get and we have a great partnership with them. I mean just listening to Debbie here today makes us all proud of the work that they do throughout our province so thank you again for the opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for being here and for all the information that you've presented. We will take a very brief break - I don't want anybody to go very far - just to allow our current witnesses to either take other seats or leave and our next witnesses to find their place.

[10:00 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:05 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is about six or seven minutes past 10:00 a.m. and that leaves us, I think, probably about 45 minutes for this segment of our meeting. I think I called us back to order and some people left the room. (Interruption) No, they didn't listen and I'm hoping that will correct itself shortly. (Interruptions) I'll have to deal with it later.

I would like to welcome our guests and I'll allow you to introduce yourselves in a moment but I think because this is a new segment we will introduce ourselves again. My name is Jim Morton and I chair this committee, the Standing Committee on Community Services.

[The committee members reintroduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Brian Skabar will be here in a moment. Perhaps the way we will proceed, I think, is you can introduce yourselves as representatives of Dress for Success Halifax, and then there will be an opportunity for you to make your presentation. Then we will have some time for questions.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead.

MS. ANNA MARENICK: So you have the presentation slides in front of you and because there's a lot of information in here, obviously I'm not going to read it all to you but we'll go through some of the highlights and then have a chance to talk about it a little bit.

The first thing that it shows is our board of directors. We have a relatively new board of directors which is great. It's a very active board. We'll talk about this throughout our presentation but we currently have no paid staff member so the board is very active. When we were recruiting people to the board, we would tell them, if you want a board to roll up your sleeves and do some work, this is the board for you.

I do think it's important to go over the mission of Dress for Success. Part of the challenge that we have to overcome is that people know who we are but they don't know necessarily know all of what we do. They know enough to just have the information and be dangerous which is part of why we're here today, it's to provide some information to you about the scope of services that we provide. So the mission of Dress for Success is to "promote the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive and work and live." I think that's a pretty powerful statement when you think about the impact that that has on the community and to them.

Dress for Success is an international organization headquartered in New York. It was actually founded through a \$5,000 inheritance and started in a church basement and now it has grown to 110 affiliates in several countries and continents. It's a pretty powerful organization, a pretty powerful network. We have been a member of this organization since 2001 here in Halifax. There are Dress for Success affiliates in most regions of Canada. We are the only one in Atlantic Canada but it does stretch pretty much from coast to coast. It does really address that problem that, you know, we're dealing with women who want to become self-sufficient and get back on their feet and provide for their family, but it's really difficult to go out and get a job if you don't have a suit for an interview and you can't get a suit for an interview if you don't have a job to get one. So we at least help remove some of those barriers to the initial employment process.

We are a completely volunteer run organization. As I mentioned earlier, we have 40 active volunteers who help us on a daily basis. It was interesting for us to follow the presentation that went before us because the family resource centre is actually a referral agency of ours. So clients cannot come to our door, they have to get referred in through an agency, so Adsum House, Bryony House, the Food Bank and organizations like that would refer women to us who are already going through their programs. We are a complementary service to what they do already.

Most of the clothing that we have is donated. We do need a fair amount of space because when you walk in it looks like a clothing store, all of our clothing and suits are set up in racks. Women would get referred into our organization as well - the Professional Women's Group was founded in 2003 to help compliment the service. It's more than just a

suit so we try to provide an organization for women to come and support each other and help to have a good open forum for discussions around financial literacy, health and wellness, things like that. We all know how important our networks are, and for these women especially, it's quite critical.

Our main funder - actually, our only funder - is the United Way. The United Way gives us, on a three-year commitment, about \$10,000 per year. This is the last year of our funding commitment, which was cut quite significantly in 2009. It was cut by 50 per cent so we've been operating with \$10,000 worth of funding as the only source of non-fundraised money that we were given.

We have corporate sponsors. The Head Shoppe has been really good to us; Palooka's Gym, Mickey MacDonald and his organization has been quite supportive of us; and ATCAN Self Storage as well. Our main fundraising event, which some of you are probably aware of, is our Tea Party, which is coming up this week. Last year our Tea Party raised \$35,000, which was our most successful Tea Party to date and really without that, we just wouldn't be able to keep going. We always recognize women of spirit who demonstrate the kind of qualities that we all aspire to espouse in the community.

There are really three pillars of our organization. One is making sure that women are attired properly, that they've got a good network, and the other is to help them with ongoing career development tools and support tools.

As you can see, we really try to be a continuum of resources to our women as they go through their employment life. We really want to make sure that they know how to, first of all, get a job. A suit is just a part of that. People often compare the suiting to just an appetizer at a dinner. It's really not just about the suit. We have to be able to make sure that a woman knows how to present herself confidently, that she can deal confidently with the skills that we all need and barriers that we all have to overcome to keep and maintain jobs and be successful in the workplace.

We are best known for our suiting program. It's a pretty neat program. For some of these women, it's a pretty special time. They come into our space with a personal shopper; it's just them. We ask that they leave their kids with a sitter and we pamper them. We will give them a suit, we'll give them shoes, winter coats, make-up, everything that they possibly need and when they leave we have these special bags with tissue paper so they feel like they've had a really special shopping experience.

It's a pretty amazing thing to look at the gratitude on the face of a woman, to come in and be given all of these things with no obligation. They just came in and they got completely suited for an interview. I mean, I didn't even have to think about whether I had a suit this morning, I had to think about which one I wanted to wear, so you think about what that's like for that woman. It's really hard for a lot of us to put ourselves in those

shoes but it's a pretty powerful thing when they leave with nylons, coats and scarves and it's something to see, for sure.

The career centre is an important part of our service offering because finding a job today is not an easy thing. As an HR professional in the community I can tell you, it is a very sophisticated process to find a job. Some of these women don't have email addresses; they don't know how to work a computer; they've never had a resume; they've got gaps in their employment that they need to explain away and we need to be there just to help break it down. This is a sophisticated process today, it's not as simple as it was, and so we really need to help work with them to make sure that they're confident going in to know how to find employment even. The career centre is staffed by HR professionals in the community who would make themselves available to women when that service is warranted.

The Professional Women's Group is an organization for women who have jobs to help keep that network. We have volunteer speakers who come in once a month who talk about things such as financial literacy, health and wellness and professional development. Any clothing that we get that is non-interview appropriate we would just give to the women from the Professional Women's Group because, obviously, one suit isn't going to do it so they can come back and get work-appropriate clothes, even if they're not interview-appropriate.

Just an idea of some of the events that we have coming up. We are an active board and we've really started to become more vocal in the community about what we need. A lot of times, people would say, I want to help Dress for Success; I'm going to give you suits. That's great but it costs us about anywhere from \$150 to \$200 to put one woman through our programs and our costs are not great. Our largest cost is rent. We don't have a staff member to pay for. We'd like to have money to pay a staff member but right now it's really just keeping the lights on. We need space in order to operate our program.

The Tea Party is a really well-celebrated event; I think a lot of women really enjoy it. We sold out last year and we're looking to do that again this year. We'll celebrate women of spirit at that event and we have a long and distinguished list of women that we have honoured at the Tea Party. We'll do some clothing sales as well to try and generate some funds and awareness. Our Kick It Up event in the Fall was actually put on by Palooka's Gym and you might think it's an odd partnership to be working with Palooka's Gym but it actually has worked really well because they are looking to help the children of the women that we support so for them coming onboard, it was great. Our inaugural Kick It Up event last Fall raised \$10,000 which definitely helped and it was a very successful event.

People do donate. We have lots of clothes; people can drop them off at our office. For those of you who aren't familiar with our office, we're on Gottingen Street, almost across from Staples. We have a beautiful new sign that was donated last year and any

presenter that we have is donated free of charge. We really do everything we can to try to compel volunteers to come and help us.

The United Way, as we mentioned, provides financial support for three years so we're getting ready to apply for new funding going into next year. That was a big blow for us in 2009 when our funding was cut in half. We had moved to the Gottingen Street location to better support our clients being on a bus route from a pretty small location on Lady Hammond Road, so our rent cost increased at the same time a recession hit, at the same time United Way cut our funding so 2009 was not my favourite year to be on the board, I won't lie. We're coming out of it now but we still have the same problem where we're just trying to get ahead with fundraising. As I mentioned, United Way is our funding partner and we do get about \$10,000 a year.

What we really aspire to be is self-sufficient. We're not looking to operate on a government grant basis; we want to be able to do this ourselves. We want to be the example to set for our clients that you can do this. We know there's a need; we know there's a need to help women. I coached a career centre client recently who lost her job because she was a single mother with childcare issues and got fired because she couldn't meet the commitment. Coaching her back to work, she's scared. She's got major barriers that a suit can't overcome. She wants to get back to work, she doesn't want a handout, she wants help, she wants to get her kids back, and she wants to get off welfare. The impact of that is just - how can you not be compelled by someone who is that brave? The bravery that the women have to come in and talk to us keeps you humble to a degree that I don't think you realize unless you're actually there in front of them.

Long-term, it's also really important for us - this is really close to me. I think when you work with these women and you realize it could have been any one of us. What we do with the little bit of money that we have, you guys can't see the impact of that, which I think is a shame.

We want to be able to be a legitimate voice to help you get past issues that women have specifically around employment issues. They're out there, they're trying to get on their feet but they have legitimate barriers that they have to face around self confidence, self esteem, gaps in employment, lack of skills, and lack of education that our programs can really help get them past.

How can you help? One way that you can help is just by knowing more about who we are. I've never done a presentation like this where someone said, wow, I had no idea. I knew who you were, I'd heard about you, you give suits to women but I didn't know the impact that you had on a global scale in terms of the whole scope of what we offer. It's really important that we get out there to tell the right story and the whole story about the full impact we have on the 200 women who come into our offices every year. Also, we'd love your thoughts and advice on what we can continue to do to get our name out there, be top of mind with these issues in the community.

Obviously, we want to be in a position where we can afford to have an executive director and staff of any kind to really help sell this message into the community about what we do. And, to continue to keep issues around women's issues and advocacy front and centre when you're thinking about policies that you set. It's great that there's a safety net for these women, but these women who are clients don't want it. They want to work, they want to look in their closet like I did this morning and pick what suit to wear, as opposed to knowing that they have to ask to get one. That's a good thing, you want more women like that, I want more women like that in my community because they are going to take full advantage of those opportunities. They don't want to be on welfare and social assistance and employment insurance, they want to work. I think the best thing for you to understand is that's really what we're all about.

Just to close, it's an interesting coincidence - I don't know if any of you - some of you are probably familiar with Barb Stegemann. Barb is actually the MC of our Tea Party this year; she was last year, too. Barb was the first female entrepreneur to get money from the Dragons; she made them cry too, so I guess if Arlene Dickinson is going to cry, I don't feel so bad for crying this morning. She got money because her business model is all about helping Afghanis legitimately provide her product. She's not giving them a handout, it's all about her giving them a legitimate way to sell their produce, which I think is a story that we want to tell. We want to give these women an avenue to get back on their feet. I just think that there's no better story to tell in the community than to look at - and we're doing all of this in the community with no paid staff, none. So think about the impact that an organization like us can have for you and for the whole province if we just had a little bit of extra help and a little bit more awareness.

Wanda would like to share her story now.

MS. WANDA KELBRAT: I was referred to Dress for Success after going through a community program options. I grew up in a time where girls were expected to get married, have children, settle down and live happily ever after. That didn't happen to me. After two children and a divorce and no skills, I went to Women's Outreach and was directed to a program. In order to complete this program I had to do a work placement, so I was referred to Dress for Success. They suited me and I was successful in my work placement but there was no position to be hired so I went back to Dress for Success and became a member of the Professional Women's Group and got a second suiting, went through another program and got another work placement with the federal government DND. So it was three months, I was just going to work in order to complete this second work placement.

So I was able to get hired and I continued to work with Dress for Success, to coordinate the women who come into the PWG group because without the group that supported me when I was going through my work placement, I may not have made it. They encouraged me, they provided me with skills and confidence and to present myself professionally. I knew that I was on a work placement, but thinking that you're always a

part of it, I was part of it, it was real, it just wasn't three months and it was going to be over, with the intentions of employment at the end of it.

So the Professional Women's Group give you that. You go into meetings, professional speakers come in, they talk to you, you're getting different pieces of work clothes, not just exercise or casual wear, you get actual wear that is going to get you to the next day, or a haircut or new eyeglasses. These professional women don't let you go, you check in with them, you can go back and volunteer and help the other women.

I believe I made it through my work placement - you don't get paid for work placements, you get to graduate with the course that you're in - I was very fortunate to have this confidence with Dress for Success and PWG. I am now a full-time federal clerk and three or four times a week I will go back to the office and do the e-mailing, do the unpacking, meet the women and help the group every way I can. I believe I'm successful because of this group and I didn't resort to staying on welfare. I had two children as well; one has graduated from the Mount and one is just about to. They also take care of their mom, making sure that they're helping me deliver the boxes and setting up tea parties and looking forward to being in the workforce. It was over 10 years for me, from 1995.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think that means we have time for some questions at this point. I'm going to start with Ms. Casey and Mr. Ramey is also on my list to offer reassurance. Ms. Casey.

MS. CASEY: Thank you for the hard copy handout, I'm from the old school. I do want to thank you for the presentation, very informative, a good awareness for me. I can't speak for others, but certainly it tells me more about who you are and what you are. Congratulations, it's great to hear a testimony. It's great to hear how somebody has taken advantage of an opportunity because they wanted to better themselves; they wanted to be one who contributes to the economy of the province, not who takes away from the economy of the province. I congratulate you, I'm sure it was a tough struggle and the fact that your kids are picking up and going on is a credit to you so thank you very much for that.

You talked about how nobody can come through your door unless there is a referral. You talked about people who have gaps in their resume. How many of those gaps have to be filled before the individual gets referred to you? Do they fill the gaps after they get referred? I'm just wondering about the referral because I'm sure there are women out there who could benefit but if they have to have a referral, how does that all unfold?

MS. MARENICK: The referrals are coming from - and I don't have a list in front of me, but we have approximately 30 referral agencies across the province. We do a lot of work with our referral agencies to make sure that they understand why they would refer women to us.

The program is ideally set up so that you would come in to get suited for your interview suit first but we understand that sometimes we have to do some work on career coaching to help them get through that at the same time. Helping them through how to present their resume appropriately and coming in through a referral agency are kind of separate components. We would work with Bryony House to make sure they understood the scope of services that we had, community services that they understood. We don't want to duplicate services. It's really about helping them properly sell themselves to a future employer. We have pretty active referral agencies though, they're very familiar with what we do and they do send us clients pretty frequently.

MS. BRENDA SAUNDERS/TODD: I can speak to that. Actually just yesterday, I was dealing with one of the referral agencies and the client is on a 30-week program so they don't have an interview scheduled right now but they know that's where they're headed so they have already contacted us and we are in the process of setting up that interview and taking them through the process. It's not always clear that they have to have an interview set up. Oftentimes where the career centre comes into play is, let's suppose somebody does get employment and then for whatever reason, they're laid off or there's downsizing and they lose that job - once they're a client of Dress for Success, they're always a client for Dress for Success. So at that point, that's really where the career centre kicks in, from our perspective. We continue to help to give that support and help them move on to the next job.

MS. CASEY: My concern would be, as we often see in a lot of situations, there are people who somehow fall through the cracks and between the referral agency and you, they may get lost. I'm pleased to hear that you are working closely with them so that bridge is there for them. How widespread - how far beyond metro - are your referral agencies?

MS. SAUNDERS/TODD: They're all in the HRM.

MS. MARENICK: We would love to get to a position where we're taking our services further across the province and there's nothing stopping us from doing that other than just not having the staff - I was going to say manpower but that would be entirely inappropriate (Laughter) - to help that. I mean there's nothing saying that we couldn't pack up a bus and take it to Antigonish and take it to Colchester to help women there. I think long term that would be a great goal of ours but right now we're simply doing everything we can just to offer our services within Halifax.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ramey.

MR. RAMEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Anna, Brenda and Wanda for coming in. I think you said, Anna, you were wondering what you could do to foster your cause and what you're doing right now is what you should be doing to foster your cause, okay, because I certainly have heard of - by the way, I've never heard any negative thing, ever, about your organization. All I've ever heard about it, when I have

heard about it, and I've heard a fair amount over the years, has been totally positive. So we know you do great work. I wasn't aware just how much you do in other areas but I am now. I just need to get a couple things straight. The major funding partner is United Way?

MS. MARENICK: They are our only funding.

MR. RAMEY: Only funding partner is United Way and that's not a sure thing, or it is a sure thing? That could be whatever, depending on the year they had, that sort of thing, okay. So I think that's mainly what I needed to know. I do think that you have a wonderful organization that obviously helps people move on. Ms. Casey has already referred to exactly another part of the question I wanted to ask but we want people to not be taking money out of the account but putting money in and it sounds like you give not a hand out but a hand up, which is exactly what you should be doing. If somebody wants to donate to your organization, it's a charitable organization, you get a tax receipt if it's over \$10, I saw that somewhere in there.

MS. MARENICK: Yes.

MR. RAMEY: Who do they make the cheque payable to – Dress for Success?

MS. MARENICK: Dress for Success, Halifax.

MR. RAMEY: And it can be dropped off at the office?

MS. MARENICK: Yes.

MR. RAMEY: Okey-dokey then and, Wanda, a wonderful story.

MS. WANDA KELBRAT: I have one thing to add if I may.

MR. RAMEY: Go ahead.

MS. KELBRAT: I'm a coordinator of the group but I went away on a convention in Chicago and I took a delegate with me. For her to be successful in this convention that we went to, she had to create a community action project, we called it the CAP project. Her project is going to be holding a day of men's wear. So we got all referrals for men. It's going to be in Bayers Road, May 13th. So that's what we're working on besides the Tea Party and this is suiting for men who are ready for interviews. We're going to get them coupons for hair and we have prizes like socks, bonuses that will add to their suiting. So that's her project for the community and it's well underway. It's going to be successful.

MR. RAMEY: I don't doubt that. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacLeod and then Mr. Smith.

MR. MACLEOD: Thank you all for your presentations; Wanda, you just blew me away. (Interruption) And it speaks to one of the values that make me proud to be a Nova Scotian - it's how people just get together and help their neighbours and their friends. It's refreshing to learn so much more because unlike Gary and others who have heard about Dress for Success, I had no idea of the extent that you're going to and I could probably use that male coordination thing you have. (Laughter)

MS. KELBRAT: Well, you're welcome to drop down. It's at Bayers Road. (Laughter)

MR. MACLEOD: When Shirley is in Cape Breton, I just hope that I've got it right when I get dressed in the morning.

MS. SAUNDERS/TODD: You look really nice.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, she actually packed it. (Laughter) I guess one of the challenges for people when they're finding work, and more so for moms, is childcare and I'm just wondering what you do, or have thought about doing, or can you do anything to help people? You know, you find a job and then you have two small children or something at home. Is there any way, are there any supports that you have identified to help people in that area as you move forward?

MS. SAUNDERS/TODD: Unfortunately we're so overwhelmed with the service that we're providing on zero dollars already but you make a very good point. I got a call just yesterday at the office, we were supposed to have a suiting happening this morning and the gal had to call back and say that her babysitting care dropped off so she was unable to make it. A happy end to the story, she ended up calling last night and was able to reschedule and get it back on track so she is able to make her suiting today. We certainly do experience that but, unfortunately, there really isn't anything that we can do.

MS. MARENICK: I think that's part of us getting back on our feet. Once we know that we have enough funding to have our programs be solid we really do think there's a role that we play in helping further the discussion around this. A lot of these women, the jobs that they take are shift work so day care is not an option; even babysitting isn't necessarily an option. A lot of these women, as hard as it is, those are the reasons why they are losing their jobs. The stat on the number of single women that we suit I think is over 80 per cent. So they've got an extra barrier, despite coming out of an abusive relationship situation, then they've got this logistical problem after we get them ready to get the job in the first place.

I think that is long-term for us, we really think that we've got a seat at the table to help further the conversation about other barriers that women specifically face, or single parents would face when it comes to employment.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: I'd like to say I think that's an excellent point, though, because I see that that could be - if we could establish a partnership with another organization that does take care of that, then we would be a great connection for that organization and they for us, a win-win situation, helping the client in the end. So thank you for pointing that out.

MR. MACLEOD: So you have no paid staff, so you have this lady coming today for a suiting, so that means some people in your organization are there to help her out, to help the individual out. That must mean that you have a good relationship in your own careers with your own bosses and people because to take two hours today to go and help somebody is not the easiest thing in the world to do. If you are self-employed it is even more difficult, in my opinion, because when you are not there then the cash register is not ringing.

Do you find that the people, the employers, are supportive? My sense is that both of you are probably self-employed, or pretty close.

MS. MARENICK: I'm not self-employed.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: I am, yes.

MS. KELBRAT: The family resource centre has donated packages to our Tea Party last year from the federal government and Annette is a very close member of Dress for Success now; she does a lot for us. I take a day or a personal day in order to work; it's legitimate time off.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: They're mostly volunteers. A lot of them are, in fact, retired. For instance, the gal who will be taking care of the suiting today is a retired woman. She will be coming in and that's her commitment to the community. A lot of our personal shoppers - that is exactly the situation they are in.

For the PWG situation, it is more because it happens after hours. That's when those meetings take place, once a month for two hours in the evening, so that's not really the challenge. The challenge is around the coordination of those volunteers, it's to have somebody in the office to make sure that's happening. That's our biggest challenge right now.

MS. MARENICK: I'm fortunate that I work for an organization that I think values staff members doing community outreach, so I've been lucky. It's my responsibility to make that work so I'm probably going to be burning the midnight oil tonight, to make sure that I'm able to do both. It is a big, big commitment. This is not a board where you show up for a meeting once a month for an hour, sit around and chat and leave again. We're in it and we have had turnover from the board to just say, I love this cause, but it's too much for me

to give. So yes, I mean we're lucky that we have the kind of board members who work for organizations that are really behind what we do.

MR. MACLEOD: Thank you very much and the best of success in the future and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. MacLeod. Mr. Smith.

MR. MAURICE SMITH: How much did the United Way cut? How much did you lose?

MS. MARENICK: They cut 50 per cent for three years.

MR. SMITH: How much is that?

MS. MARENICK: We get \$10,000 a year.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: We would have received \$20,000, in units of 10.

MR. SMITH: And what is your annual budget?

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: \$60,000.

MR. SMITH: Ok, so you've got \$35,000 last year from your Tea Party and . . .

MS MARENICK: \$10,000 from our Fall event and the rest is through other donations from other sources.

MR. SMITH: And these people that you have listed, they are kind of in kind, the eyeglasses and haircuts and that kind of thing.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: All in kind. And that's the thing about - most time people - you know we really don't have an issue in terms of having donations, clothing donations, daily the phone is ringing. It is the financial, as Anna stated earlier, in terms of keeping the lights on, so for us that's really where we're trying to focus.

MR. SMITH: Do you do any kind of province-wide solicitation? Is there no way of doing it? I just think of the women's resource centres, for instance, around the province, they might be able to network with you along that sort of line, that kind of thing, even if you just had a donation card or something in their offices because sometimes people will give to a particular . . .

MS. MARENICK: We've had more corporate support come on but it really is, to your point, that's where the effort comes as volunteers. We have to get out, we've got to

tell the story; we've got to sell it. This is a real push-strategy on the market right now to get out and have people understand what we do and why they should give us money.

MR. SMITH: If you had more money, would you hire a coordinator?

MS. MARENICK: Yes, tomorrow. We've been looking but with the money that we can afford. We can afford 10 hours a week at \$15 an hour so we can't really get the skill set that we're looking for to take the organization to the next level. That's the dilemma that we're in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. MacLellan.

MR. MACLELLAN: Thank you, ladies. I echo the comments of my colleagues. It's fantastic information, very powerful, for sure. My question just centres around the types of employment that are linked to Dress for Success. Is there a specific sector or sectors and are there go-to employers that you could (Interruption) nothing of any consistency. It's just you go out there and search?

MS. MARENICK: It really depends on the skill set of the women coming to us, what they're qualified for. You're working on - not to generalize but - real entry-level, often there are educational barriers and things like that. I don't even think that our women - they're going to get employment on their own merit so we're not really dealing much with the employers directly.

MR. MACLELLAN: Do you get any feedback from employers though, at all?

MS. MARENICK: No, because I don't think they know that the people they hire are coming through our programs in the first place so they're not even seeing it. We would get feedback from our women about whether or not those are good organizations to work for and they would network that way but most of the employers don't know they're hiring someone who came through our programs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ramey has another question.

MR. RAMEY: You help people get off the system and on with it. Do you have any idea how many? I'm not asking you to pull out statistics and all that, but do you have a rough idea how many? We were just talking about the fact that a lot of people - the employer doesn't know that he just hired someone who came through your program and that's great, that's a good thing but do you know how many, roughly?

MS. MARENICK: About 150 a year. We do have to provide some statistical reporting to the Dress for Success organization in New York to make sure that we can maintain affiliate status, but part of what I find that we're not doing a good enough job of, to be honest, is really that client follow-up. They come in for a suiting and then we want to

keep them, we want them to come back. When they get a job, they come back and get a second suit, they get a haircut from the Head Shoppe; they can get new glasses from Eye World. We want them back but we have to have someone working the phones to be in touch with our clients, but because we've been spending so much time fundraising, we've been sort of depending on volunteers to keep that piece going. We've got the data; we've got the story to tell; we just don't necessarily have the people to put it together.

MR. RAMEY: If you say 150 a year and let's say that these people are on some kind of assistance, governmental assistance, if we assume that they get a job, let's say that on average they make \$20,000 per year - if you multiply 150 by 20 you get a big number, right? That's an important point to make, a really, really important point to make to people who fund things. Most of them can figure that out if they can multiply, right? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't have anyone else on my speaker's list at this point. I think we're close to the end of our time. I was kind of curious about your final comment in the presentation, or close to the end. You talked about your dream of being self-sufficient but do you have a vision about how that would look if you were? If you were self-sufficient, where would your revenue come from?

MS. MARENICK: We'd love it if our revenue came through fundraising, corporate donations, major corporate sponsors and the link is there, the organization is established. We've got a great story to tell. It's just really about changing the story from, we're going to support Dress for Success and do a suit drive to we're going to support Dress for Success and give you \$50,000. We're going to sponsor the career centre; we're going to sponsor the Professional Women's Group.

Now that we're out of fire-fighting mode - we had a board vote to close in December 2009. We couldn't keep the doors open. It was only through United Way fronting us the money that we were able to do that. We've come a long way in a year, so now our focus has been changing the conversation in the community, getting them onboard as partners and sponsors. I think that's what it looks like. Then we can get out and do the advocacy work.

MR. RAMEY: I'm sorry but you keep bringing up things and I keep (Interruption) we did, we had a moment there. The rent on your Gottingen Street spot, how much is it a month?

MS. MARENICK: It's \$1,200. The timing of that was unfortunate because we moved the same month that United Way cut our funding and our rent doubled. We were on Lady Hammond Road in a place that wasn't transit accessible. We moved strategically to a bigger space to better serve our clients, then all of a sudden....

MR. RAMEY: That makes sense.

MS. MARENICK: Our landlord's been great. There have been months where we've said, can't pay you and he certainly understands the position that we're in. I remember once, he cut the cheque up.

MS. SAUNDERS/TODD: It would be nice to get that piece of it even.

MR. RAMEY: Yes, that's a given. That's not ever going to go away as long as you're there. It's \$1,200 every month . . .

MS. MARENICK: When we partnered with Micco - Mickey MacDonald's company - for the Kick It Up event in the Fall, what they did was donate the space. For us, that's cash in pocket because we didn't have to pay for it. It isn't necessarily that we're looking for a cheque, but any time we're not writing one is still cash in pocket.

MR. RAMEY: Sure, of course. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know our ongoing discussion is generating more thoughts and questions, so I am going to allow one more question to Ms. Casey.

MS. CASEY: Thank you for allowing me to ask a question, but something you said did trigger the question. Your funding that was cut from United Way - was that cut because their overall donations had been cut? So a contribution to United Way helps you indirectly?

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: Yes, actually, a lot of the people aren't aware of the fact that when you make contributions to the United Way, you can actually earmark it for a particular organization. When you donate to the United Way you can say please have it go for Dress for Success.

MS. CASEY: How do you make people aware of that?

MS.SAUNDERS-TODD: That's part of our strategy. We're getting out there and trying to promote that as often as we can.

MS. CASEY: I think that's information that needs to get out and I think the whole world out there needs to know that.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: Please, help us spread the word.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that brings us to the end of our opportunity for questions. I understand the time is short and I want to thank you for the work you do and for your very informative presentation this morning. Are there any concluding comments or summary that you'd like to make?

MS. MARENICK: I really want to thank you for this opportunity to present today. I think any chance we get - obviously we're really passionate about what we do or else we wouldn't give it the blood, sweat and tears that we do. I really want you to walk away remembering that we matter. The work that we do that isn't splashy, for the women who are the bravest women in this community, it matters. Any help or suggestions or advice or awareness, if you can help champion our cause in the community and help us do the work that we do, it's really powerful, meaningful work.

MS. SAUNDERS-TODD: I'd like to say thank you very much for having us as well. I know everybody has a card in front of them for the Tea Party so please share that information. We only have a few days left, I know it's going to be a sold out event, but we would still appreciate any sort of support. If there's anybody that you're speaking with who might be interested in donating any silent auction items for the event, that would be greatly appreciated too. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you all. For the rest of the committee members, we do have some other committee business that we need to attend to. We'll take a very brief break to allow our witnesses to leave and then we'll get back to work.

[10:49 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:52 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, members of the committee, can I call your attention to our work at hand. We do have a bit of business that we need to attend to and I know our time is getting short. If you look under committee business, there are several items there as well as a date for the next meeting and our agenda for the next meeting.

I'd just like to make a comment, which came up during this meeting, about hard copies of materials. We did take a decision in this committee several meetings ago not to distribute hard copies because everybody gets an electronic copy and those people who would like a hard copy at the meetings were, on the basis of that decision, expected to bring them here, so that's why we're not providing them.

MS. CASEY: Well I obviously missed that meeting and I will have my own hard copy the next time I arrive.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just wanted to clarify that and maybe there's a need to - I don't know if that means there's a need to revisit this.

MS. CASEY: Not from my perspective. I mean, I can do it; I just didn't do it for this one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, fair enough.

MR. SMITH: I couldn't do it because they wouldn't - not copy, I couldn't see them on the - it wouldn't come up, whatever the right expression is. I couldn't open it. (Interruptions) No, it wasn't on my Blackberry on my . . .

MS. CASEY: So you couldn't print up a hard copy.

MR. SMITH: No, it wouldn't open.

MR. RAMEY: Sometimes that happens to me as well, I can't, and also, in relation to Ms. Casey, I thought we made the decision before you were a member of the committee, so you wouldn't have known about it anyway.

MS. CASEY: It wasn't that I forgot about it.

MR. RAMEY: No, no, you came after we had already done that but there is an issue about opening it sometimes. Maybe it is just too large or something, I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well some documents I find won't open on my Blackberry, for example, but they will on my computer. I don't know if that could be an issue.

MS. CASEY: So, having said that, maybe we do need to revisit it. I would like to be able to print a hard copy. I can do it myself but it's really difficult to refer to it on your Blackberry, in the midst of your meeting, if you can't get a hard copy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I wonder if this would be an acceptable way to maybe proceed, at least until the next meeting - we will continue to follow our policy of providing electronic copies. If anybody is having difficulty opening it, please let Kim know because maybe we can change or improve the format that things are sent in.

MS. LANGILLE: Presumably they could just be put in PDF and then you should be able to open them, I would think.

MR. MACLEOD: I'm just wondering, Mr. Chairman, if it might be possible just to have, along with the members, to also send it to the caucus offices because, quite frankly, more times than not the caucus staff pays more attention to making sure these certain things take place than I do (Interruptions) Than I do, than I do. If I can't push a button and make it happen right away, I'm lost - it's as simple as that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that a possibility?

MS. LANGILLE: Define caucus staff.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, if we gave you the individual who was assigned in each caucus . . .

MS. LANGILLE: And we're just talking about the presentations, are we?

MR. MACLEOD: Yes, we are - or I am.

MS. LANGILLE: If the committee agrees, I mean the researchers I can see perhaps.

MR. MACLEOD: That's what I meant, Kim, yes.

MS. LANGILLE: There's always the concern about information going astray, but you know if the committee would like that to happen.

MR. MACLEOD: Well, I'll make that a motion and then we can let democracy take its course.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think I'm seeing some level of agreement that it would be appropriate for researchers to get that information. I think some are and . . . (Interruption)

MR. MACLEOD: I think again probably because of new lists and sometimes there have been changes within our staff, or there have been changes within our staff functions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So maybe we can try to include researchers on the list of those for each caucus, for those who get material.

MS. LANGILLE: Just on that though, it would be important that if researchers are changing, that I'm aware of that because we don't want information going to people who no longer are doing that job, obviously.

MR. MACLEOD: That's fair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other items under Committee Business - I want to go first to the Gambling Awareness Foundation of Nova Scotia. We had a letter that we looked at at our last meeting, a group with that name was interested in appearing. At that moment we didn't know who the group was and we discovered that the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation was about to change its name. I think none of us in the room at that time were aware of that and, subsequent to that, the Nova Scotia gambling strategy, or gaming strategy, has made some adjustments to the way that that strategy will work, and this group has in essence been dissolved and its functions will be rolled into the responsibility area of the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation. So it would seem to me reasonable to assume that this group will not - it isn't a group that exists to appear at this point.

I know I asked some questions about this in preparation for the meeting and I know that members of the board have been advised that they are no longer board members as a result of that decision. It might be, just if I could add this, there may be, in fact, because this

continues to be an important area of concern, a reason to look into the future at the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation as an opportunity to help us understand what they're doing with that new function.

MS. CASEY: What I was going to suggest is something that you just referred to. If it was in fact to hear about some of the operation's activities and an opportunity to ask questions, if that board now no longer exists but the functions that they were doing is under another umbrella, I would suggest that those are the folks who should come in to answer the questions if they have that new responsibility, if that was the intent of having them in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It does, yes, it may actually make some sense to think about witnesses from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation in general to look at the range of their functions, this being one of them.

MR. SMITH: This was a request from this particular group to come?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. SMITH: And they no longer exist, so there's not much we can do.

MS. CASEY: No, but if I could, Mr. Chairman, I guess what I'm saying is if there was an agreement, if we agree that we should have heard from them there would have been a reason why we wanted to hear from them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think at the point of our last meeting, just to clarify, we didn't know who they were.

MS. CASEY: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we gathered some information for this meeting and there were quite a few developments that occurred between the last meeting and this. Nonetheless, it does seem to me that this may be one area where we could at least entertain the possibility of looking at the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation as a witness.

MR. MACLEOD: I guess I'm on the same lines as Mr. Smith - if they don't exist anymore then we're wasting a whole lot of time talking about something that doesn't exist. If there is another group that can provide similar information so we have a better understanding, we'd certainly entertain that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough, we will move to the next item on the agenda because I'm seeing general agreement with that.

So, on to Community Action on Homelessness, and correspondence. Several meetings ago, during a meeting with that group we asked them if they could provide us

with some additional information, and we didn't hear from them and made some enquires. They determined that what we asked for they couldn't provide - and you have that letter, I think, in front of you. They told us verbally that they couldn't provide it and we asked them to put that in writing so we would have a record of it, and in essence they said they just couldn't gather the information. I don't think there's more to do with that - they say they're willing to do more research, but that seems like an unnecessary pressure to put on them. Is that acceptable to the group? Okay.

Kim is reminding me that we do have a practice of putting information about presentations on-line. Is this something that should go online or not, I guess is the question.

MR. RAMEY: A copy of the letter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. RAMEY: Is there a particular reason why it would be sensitive information that shouldn't be on there? It just seems like we asked for something, they couldn't provide it. They've been kind enough to write us a letter saying they don't have it. I can't imagine why that would be a problem, putting the letter on-line saying that we couldn't get the information even though we tried to get it - unless other people disagree with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess my question is then: Does anyone have any objections to our letter to them and their response going on-line?

Hearing none, we will move in that direction.

Regarding Hansard, I think we have a practice - back to hard copies again - of distributing hard copies of the records of this meeting to members of the committee. A previous member of the committee suggested that maybe it was unnecessary, but I wanted to check to see if you appreciate getting those in hard copy, or we dispense with that?

MR. SMITH: I like getting it in hard copy because I use them as references and that kind of thing.

MR. RAMEY: I would too. I often go back and take a look to see what was said about a particular issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kim.

MS. LANGILLE: You know that they are available online, right?

MR. RAMEY: Yes.

MS. LANGILLE: Yes, okay, I just wanted to make sure everybody knew that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think I'm hearing that the majority of the members of the committee would prefer to continue receiving the Hansard in hard copy for its convenience and ease of reference, so we will continue with that practice for the time being, maybe until those of us around the table become younger, use to gathering information - I'm sorry, that was just an aside.

MS. CASEY: Some of us might be offended by that.

MR. MACLEOD: Maybe what we need to do is, again, have one hard copy sent to the researcher and the researcher can then distribute it to the individual members to curtail the amount of work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My thought about that - because all of us work in such different places and not always in the caucus office - is there is a convenience in having it available closer to home.

MR. MACLELLAN: Why can't we print them? Did I miss something here?

MR. MACLEOD: Because we're old. (Laughter)

MR. MACLELLAN: It says "Print" on top, and you just click the button . . .

MR. RAMEY: It's not an issue of printing it; I just like when somebody else hands it to me. But I certainly . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't want to spend too much time on that; we're now six minutes past our end time. I think we had some agreement we'd like to continue receiving them for now, but I'm always open to entertaining further discussion about this in future meetings if have clear ideas about how to do it better.

MR. MACLEOD: Now we know why his shoulder was in a strap last week - pushing that Print button. (Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, May. 3rd at 9:00 a.m., I'm assuming here. Our witnesses on that occasion will be the Community Homes Action Group. They had requested to meet with us and as our planning worked out and coordination of who was available on that date, it seemed to be the best fit. I think our June meeting is on food security and that will be June 7th, with witnesses from Mount Saint Vincent.

Is there any business I have neglected to attend to or comment on? Hearing none, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 11:06 a.m.]