

HANSARD

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COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

Committee Room 1

Coalition of Restorative Justice Agencies

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COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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[Mr. Brian Skabar was replaced by Ms. Becky Kent.]
[Hon. Karen Casey was replaced by Mr. Leo Glavine.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESS

Coalition of Restorative Justice Agencies

Mr. Kevin Marlin,
Board Member,
South Shore Community Justice Society

Ms. Yvonne Atwell,
Executive Director,
Community Justice Society

Ms. Paula Marshall,
Executive Director,
Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network

Ms. Marge DeBodt,
Executive Director,
Valley Restorative Justice

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2012

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Jim Morton

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning. There are two clocks in this room. I'm looking at one in front of me that says 9:00:31 - 31 seconds after 9:00 a.m. - and that one says it's almost nine o'clock. But I think I'll use my clock at the front. We have a quorum and we have business to attend to.

My name is Jim Morton. I'm the MLA for Kings North and chairman of the committee. I'd like to welcome our guests, and I'll ask you to introduce yourselves in a moment. If we could have introductions of the committee, that would be helpful.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

Just before we go to our next step, because we have visitors in the room, it's my obligation to tell you at the beginning of each meeting that if the fire alarm should go off, do not rush out of the room and use the elevators, but please go in an orderly way to the hallway where there's a stairwell on each side of the elevators and go down to the main floor, out of the building and across the street to the Grand Parade Square in front of City Hall and wait there for further instructions. I hope you don't need to follow this advice, but in the case of an emergency it would be good to know, so that's the process.

Our witnesses this morning are representing the Coalition of Restorative Justice Agencies. We have several people with us this morning. I think to begin with, if you would - our usual approach would be to have you introduce yourselves and I think you are each prepared to make a bit of a presentation, followed by questions. So, if you'll introduce yourselves at this point, that would be very helpful.

MS. PAULA MARSHALL: I'm Paula Marshall with the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network, which is the partner of the Restorative Justice Program for Aboriginal communities across the province.

MR. KEVIN MARLIN: I am Kevin Marlin and I am currently the chairman of the South Shore Community Justice Society. I've been with them now for 21 years on the board - and a spokesperson for CoRJA this morning.

MS. YVONNE ATWELL: I am Yvonne Atwell, the director of the Community Justice Society, HRM.

MS. MARGE DEBODT: I am Marge DeBodt and I'm with Valley Restorative Justice in the Annapolis Valley.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have some others in the back. Are you introducing yourselves as well? You may use the microphone, please.

MS. GRACE CAMPBELL: Grace Campbell, with the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network.

MR. PATRICK WILMOT: I'm Patrick Wilmot, the same MLSN people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you and welcome. I think you are prepared to make a presentation, so I'm assuming you've decided the order you'd like to begin. If you'll begin and work through your presentations, then we'll follow that by questions and comments and a discussion.

MR. KEVIN MARLIN: Great, thank you very much and thank you for the opportunity to present to you this morning and to share our excitement and our passion for the work that we're doing in your community. We're going to spend some time to tell you who we are, what we do, and what restorative justice is.

We did receive a copy of the package that was distributed to all of you. If you've gone through that package, we feel like we should sit here asking you questions, to see how well you absorb the information. If you managed to read through all of those pages, you know as much about this program as we know about it ourselves. And, most importantly, we want to talk about the future - the future of restorative practices in Nova Scotia and the role that we feel we can play.

I believe you have a copy of the one presentation for this group and we're going to follow through that, but I'm not going to be sticking to that presentation - I rarely do. It's an opportunity to give you a written presentation and an oral presentation at the same time.

Restorative justice, as you know through your readings, it's certainly not just a program. It's more of a philosophy, more of principles - it's about restoring balance. Balance to a community, balance to relationships, and restoring those relationships when harm is done by a crime.

Back in 1999, the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program was implemented through service agreements with eight agencies across Nova Scotia, as well as the Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network representing the Aboriginal community. It is a formal program of the Department of Justice, it is delivered in good partnership with the agencies across this province and I would have to say right off the start that we have a wonderful collaborative relationship with the Department of Justice. They've been supportive throughout the process. They've given us good leadership but they've also given us a good equal partnership to be able to influence the direction that we move with this program and to help shape the difference that it can make in our communities.

We've been recognized in Nova Scotia as one of the world leaders in restorative practices and we want to build upon that recognition that we've been receiving. Back in 2009, the community agencies decided to form a coalition - which is why we now have the Coalition of Restorative Justice Agencies for Nova Scotia - to give us a united voice but also, most importantly, to have us work collaboratively together so we can build on each other's successes and best practices to make sure we have this program as strong as we can in the Province of Nova Scotia.

In the package, you've got a definition of restorative justice. There are many definitions to it, but the one thing they all have in common is that the restorative word is the most important word. It is about taking an unfortunate crime - something done against a victim - and trying to restore the relationships that have been harmed by that, restore the community, restore the sense of safety in that community, and also to help with the reintegration of the offender back into the community as well. Crime hurts, and it hurts more than just the individual the crime might have been perpetrated against. We work with all the parties involved in that incident to try to help the healing along the way.

The program itself often expands its role for victims. If you are familiar with the normal justice system, quite often you hear complaints from the victims that they don't get to play an active role within the incident that happened to them. Restorative justice gives them a voice. They have an opportunity to face the offender, an opportunity to share what has happened to them, how that has made them feel as well, the impact it has had on them and on their family. That's one of the most positive statements we get about the program - the victims truly feel they are a part of that and that they are represented and not left out.

It gets the community involved because any offence that takes place harms more than just the direct victim; it harms the community as well. We have wonderful partnerships in our respective communities with the police, schools, organizations, religious committees and such, that help us bring the community to the process as well and the representative there too.

Most importantly, the offender has to take responsibility. Quite often, I know people look at this program as being a soft side of a justice system. If you've taken part in any of the mediation sessions and had a chance to observe those, you'll recognize that this process can be tougher than the ordinary justice system. Quite often, the offender himself doesn't even have to appear in court and still have justice ordained upon him. With this process, they have to face the victim. They have to take responsibility, they take accountability and they have to hear what impact their action had on that victim and on the community.

There are four formal goals to the justice program - reduce recidivism, to try to reduce the amount of repeat crimes. We don't have statistics on this because, unfortunately, the statistics with the Department of Justice have two different systems. They don't talk to each other, but they're working on that. Further on in the presentation you'll see there was a study done by Don Clairmont in doing an evaluation of this program and it certainly does show that this program has a larger success rate as far as people completing what the sentence is, as well as reducing recidivism and the young offenders not get reacquainted with crime as they move forward.

There's increased victim satisfaction, another goal of the formal program, and we certainly do get the impact back from the victims that they do feel they have been a part of the process and the satisfaction levels certainly have been increased.

Strengthening communities - certainly when you pick a newspaper up and read about a crime in a community, you can see the devastation it does. We certainly hear a lot from members of the community around their sense of safety. It is one thing to have statistics that tell us crime may be going down - if you talk to your citizens in your community, you still get the feeling that crime is out of control. They don't feel safe in their communities. Restorative justice does seem to give them that sense of involvement in the justice procedures, also an understanding of what's taking place in their communities around a certain crime and the role they have to play to make sure they're represented, and that the offender understands the crime was more than just the act they perpetrated - it also affects the broader community and their voice is also brought to that table.

We also have a large community involvement and we've been involved in various projects outside of the formal Restorative Justice Program, building those partnerships in our community - and I believe you have a copy of those as well, some of the other programming we offer.

Was that offered, Marge? Okay, so you have a copy of the various programs we've been involved in.

That's representative of the fact that we recognize, and you do as well, we've heard in the media most recently around some of the issues around crime and mental health and young offenders - there has to be a holistic approach that we take in dealing with some of the offenders of crime. There are gaps in the system; there are gaps in the offerings in communities, and we're doing our best to work with partnerships in our community to try to fill some of those gaps. But it's like a patchwork quilt - you're doing the best you can to try to fill a hole but you recognize that the hole isn't being filled as effectively as it could be if there was more of a holistic, collaborative approach being taken.

The fourth goal of the Restorative Justice Program is to increase public confidence in the justice system. Normally, to the regular justice systems, communities feel alienated from the processes, and with restorative justice, as I mentioned, we invite the community in and that is starting to restore some of the confidence we have in the justice system.

For a bit of background about the program and about our agencies as well, the Restorative Justice Program may be relatively new - just over a decade old in Nova Scotia - but our agencies have been involved with young offenders since 1981, and the various programs have been offered since that time. We used to be under the responsibility of Community Services, we switched over to Justice, different parts of the Justice arms, and we're more than happy to have the leadership that we have from the provincial government. We've been involved in this game for quite some time and we've built up quite a bit of expertise as well.

As of November 2011, our agencies have redirected over 17,672 cases away from the formal court system and, by doing that, not only are we doing a wonderful job dealing with those offenders and the victims and communities, we're also freeing up court time for those offences that really do not fit our program and need to be dealt with through the courts.

MS. KELLY REGAN: Since what date?

MR. MARTIN: As of November 2011.

MS. REGAN: And it started a decade ago?

MR. MARTIN: Yes. Not all agencies came on a decade ago. They started as a pilot project and over a few years we all came on side with it.

We're proud of our completion rates - they hover between a high 80 per cent to a low 90 per cent. Offenders who are referred to us, we have good completion rates with those offenders. Dr. Don Clairmont did a 2005 report to take a look at restorative justice

and how it was being implemented here in Nova Scotia, and he found that the 1,941 youth who were directed to restorative justice agencies by that date only 23 per cent returned to the criminal justice system, which compares to 51 per cent who went through the traditional youth court. More importantly, follow-up surveys that they completed indicate that only 9 per cent of the interviewed youth who attended restorative justice processes had committed a further offence. That's quite a success rate that we're very proud to be a part of.

We've garnered world attention, not just ourselves as agencies, but restorative justice in Nova Scotia in partnership with the Department of Justice. We have that wonderful partnership with the Department of Justice and we also have a partnership with the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Community University Research Alliance, which is conducting research on this particular program. We've had a Sudanese delegation travel to Nova Scotia to meet and learn from us, and in October 2010 we sent a delegation to the International Institute for Restorative Practices Conference in Hull, in the U.K.

We've partnered with the Nova Scotia Gambia Association, Mount Saint Vincent, HRM police and other parties and services, on a community policing in the Gambia project. We saw our caseworkers travel there four times over a five-year period to train and work with police and educators in Africa. In June 2011 we co-hosted the International Institute for Restorative Practices Conference and we brought the world to our backyard to be able to see how we're implementing restorative justice in Nova Scotia.

It's quite an exciting time for us. We feel we've worked very hard to garner the deserved reputation that we do have in the delivery of this program. We've recognized as well, and as was certainly pointed out by Minister Landry when he rolled out his 2012 Crime Prevention Strategy, that restorative justice is more than just simply dealing with justice. Restorative practices have far-reaching applications within our society and our experience with restorative justice has shown us that the approach of restorative practices can make a real difference in our communities, in our society, in schools and the workplace and we're seeing it grow beyond where we have been working currently with restorative justice.

Over the past 10 years, we have been developing our leadership in applying restorative practices. We feel the nine agencies across this province are well positioned to be able to offer, share our expertise and the skills to support the growth in restorative practices.

A few examples to provide you as far as the expansion of restorative practices being used now - iNSchool, as part of the SchoolsPlus program. When we have conflict in the schools we use that practice to be able to bring those parties together. It's being used to train some of the educators in the school system to train youth themselves in how to utilize that practice to resolve their differences, and that builds for a stronger community in the school.

This year the Nova Scotia Youth Facility is establishing a restorative cottage utilizing restorative practices in-house, within the youth facility, to deal with some of the challenges that come up there. We're also looking at restorative approach to senior elder abuse, and that's being explored now here in Nova Scotia as well.

We encourage the growth of restorative practices and right now we do see it as being touched on by various agencies whether it be justice, education, community services and health, there is an interest in restorative practices. We want to ensure that we play a key part in that. There is a concern that there may be a dilution in the approach of restorative practices because right now we're seen as being restorative justice agencies and we see situations where our expertise could have been offered, we could have played a valuable role but we weren't called upon because of that justice name. Certainly we look forward to working with anybody who is involved in this field but when you have a nice home-grown, grassroots foundation built within your own province, it's good to be able to tap upon that and allow that to help this province reach the benefits that restorative practices can bring within their communities.

All levels of government right now, as you well know better than all of us, are going through some fiscally challenging times and that certainly reflects as well in the support that we receive as agencies and other not-for-profits receive as well. We recognize that and we want to be able to strengthen our ability to work as not-for-profit agencies, utilizing the investment you make in us but trying to find a better way for that investment to be made. Back again to the fact that restorative practices are being offered in various agencies funded through various departments of government, we think there would be a benefit if there was more of a collaborative approach, a more holistic approach taken in how you fund some of these programs.

It has been said by yourselves and we have seen it in the newspaper, that when we're dealing with victims and communities that have been harmed by crime, it's more than just simply dealing with that crime. There is always usually mental health issues, drug issues, addiction issues, family relationship issues, young people who have learning disabilities, et cetera. Right now we have individual agencies all working, trying to do their part and sometimes we have success, but there would be greater success if there was true collaboration. There would be greater return on your investment if there was the ability to invest the money, you invest in those various individual streams somehow to have it done collectively for the same common good.

Exactly how that could be done, I can't sit here and claim to know. I'll leave that to you just to plant a seed to hopefully talk to some of the deputy ministers, senior bureaucrats to see how they can take their investment and the specific part in dealing with our common clients and how we can have that investment grow by collaborating the funding and the efforts.

We are looking at expanding restorative justice; we have some agencies now piloting the adults. Right now we have been dealing with youth up until this point in time and we're looking now at adult restorative justice. That's an increased workload, that's an increased caseload and that requires increased funding. Right now we know it's a challenge for the Department of Justice to find where that money is coming from so, again, we plant that with you. We're not here today to whine and say we need more money; that's a given for any not-for-profit. We also don't want you to think we are sitting here saying that we don't need any more money because we could use some more money. It's a matter of trying to work out a way that we can use the current investments and have those invested more properly to see a better gain coming from that.

So I'll pause at this moment and pass it over to Paula who is going to share a bit about the uniqueness of their approach to restorative practices in their community.

MS. PAULA MARSHALL: Good morning and thank you everyone for inviting us here. The Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network began in 2002 with the purpose to develop and maintain a sustainable justice support system for Mi'kmaq and Aboriginal people here in the Province of Nova Scotia. Throughout the years, MLSN has been able to carry on a number of activities that have benefited the Mi'kmaq Aboriginal people who have been involved in the criminal justice system in Nova Scotia. Our program was a result of the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall, Jr., Inquiry in the early 90s and though our statistics here in Nova Scotia may not be as dire as in our western provinces, they nonetheless are disproportionate to our population.

In Nova Scotia, we make up about 2 per cent of the population of Nova Scotia, yet we make up 8 per cent of the population in the provincial facilities. To further divide that by demographics, the larger part of our population is in the Cape Breton area, and the Cape Breton Correctional Facility has an Aboriginal population of 25 per cent. So one out of four in the Cape Breton facility is an Aboriginal person.

Our communities also have the highest rate of personal crime. In Indian Brook, we have the highest violent crime rate of any RCMP detachment this side of Montreal. In Eskasoni, we have the highest rate of personal crime or assaults this side of Montreal.

MLSN exists as a justice support system for Aboriginal people who are involved in the criminal justice system and through the past number of years we've provided core services, one of them being the Court Worker program. The court workers follow the Aboriginal accused through the justice system. This is a direct result, again, of the Donald Marshall, Jr., Inquiry.

Though things may seem to be better at the outset, to look at the changes that have happened over the last 25 years - for example, we had one individual last week. The court worker went in, negotiated with the Crown. He had a series of breaches and drunk-in-public-places charges and the Crown and the court worker were able to determine

that three months custody would suffice. Being that he was in remand, his case wasn't heard until the end of the day, so the court worker sat all day listening to other cases of people with similar charges getting 30 days or less - with the exact same charges. This was brought to the attention of the Crown who then changed his mind and gave him 30 days. Things like this still happen in Nova Scotia. If you are an Aboriginal person, you are more likely to be held in remand; you're less likely to be given bail, and you're more likely to have a longer period of incarceration.

Our Customary Law program has been around since 1995 and it began as one of the alternative measures programs here in Nova Scotia. When they switched to the more restorative justice philosophy, this was more of our natural way of dealing with things in our Aboriginal communities, by dealing with the person, dealing with the community and finding better ways to hold the person accountable.

On a monthly basis, our programs typically deal with about 40 to 50 clients per month, living throughout all the First Nations communities in Nova Scotia. One of the unique things about our program is that we have three staff in the Customary Law Program and we cover the entire province. So geographically, it's often time-consuming to deliver services from Acadia near Yarmouth all the way to Whycocomagh or We'koqma'q in Cape Breton.

MLSN also provides other support services for Aboriginal people and that's through working in the justice system, being able to identify gaps, and looking at what some of the needs are for the communities and, as well, needs for the justice system. We have the Building a Bridge program, which works with Aboriginal offenders who are currently serving federal custody, to reintegrate them back into the community because we do have very high recidivism rates in our communities and we're really trying to work at reintegrating those people back in as healthy citizens.

We also have the Court Interpreters program and we partnered with Nova Scotia Community College to train Mi'kmaq interpreters to work in the provincial courts. We also have another program called the Mi'kmaq Venture Program of which Patrick is the coordinator and that's working with Aboriginal youth before they get into trouble. It's a really neat and interesting program in that we work with kids and at no time do we say, crime is bad, don't do drugs. What they do is they teach kids through play to make better decisions so when they are back in the real world, they are more equipped to take on some of the challenges that our youth face today.

We also work with the courts in providing Gladue reports. Gladue reports help bring the attention of the sentencing judge to address what the special circumstances of that Aboriginal offender are, what led that person to the position that they are in before the courts, specifically looking at the systemic factors, such as whether or not they were involved in residential school, the Sixties Scoop, whether they were victims of poverty, education, other issues. For example, we have high rates of suicide in our communities and

we have higher rates of violence. To personally know someone who has been killed or murdered or the person who did it is not abnormal.

We also work with the correctional facilities in Nova Scotia in cultural gatherings, bringing the Aboriginal culture to the facility, having the facility better understand where the Aboriginal inmates are coming from, some of their culture, some of their history.

We also are a partner of the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program, and as such, a member of CoRJA. We provide a variety of justice tools specific to Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia. Our Customary Law program provides culturally-relevant, community-based programs such as justice circles, sentencing circles, and healing circles. These are through cost-share agreements with the provincial and federal governments. This allows Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia to assume a significant role in working with offenders and resolving civil and criminal disputes in their own communities.

As the Nova Scotia RJ program grows in mandate and scope, so do the complexity and the responsibilities of the program. So as we're dealing with more adults, we're dealing with more serious offences. We have received sentencing circle referrals for assault causing bodily harm; we've received one sentencing circle referral for a manslaughter. So as we succeed, we seem to be getting more and more challenges.

The reputation of the organizations as leaders in service delivery and credibility has created a competency in the Nova Scotia justice system. Because of the programs through CoRJA and the RJ agencies, people are more likely to feel satisfied being involved in the justice system. I feel CoRJA and its membership agencies deserve a round of applause for all the work they do in our communities, at the benefit of the province.

On behalf of MLSN, we would like to ask the honourable members present to just be aware of the programs we offer and the services we provide, but also that the impact that we've had on the justice landscape and resourcing, as we had said, the needs of the programs, is something that we'd like to ask to keep in the forefront. Thank you very much.

MR. MARLIN: Just in summary, to hit on the key points: we're doing good work on behalf of the province. We're doing good work in our communities; we're doing good work through our partnership with the Department of Justice; we're doing good work with our coalition, as a group of agencies. We respect the fact that we all have unique communities, whether it's geographic or culturally, and we're able to work together effectively, respecting that fact.

We're cost efficient. We're saving you money, quite simply. The restorative practices - restorative justice is applied by a small group of dedicated staff members, a large group of volunteers throughout the province. You couldn't replicate that kind of efficient delivery with any arm of the government, so an investment in restorative justice is a savings for the government.

As Paula mentioned, as we move forward with this program with adults, it's going to become more complex, more difficult, and it's going to require more investment. We do strongly encourage a look at the collaborative, interdepartmental approach to funding this kind of initiative, recognizing that the value would expand as far as the benefits to the individuals, to the communities, and once again, you see a better return on that investment coming to us as well.

We do appreciate this opportunity to appear before you to raise your awareness. The nine agencies, the contact information, was in the package. It's also on the Department of Justice Web site and we encourage you, as independent MLAs, to touch base with us, find out what we're doing, and see what we can do to work together to help make your communities stronger as well. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. So the rest of you will be available for questions, I guess, as we go forward.

MR. MARLIN: They have the expertise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, thank you, Mr. Marlin and Ms. Marshall. I have been keeping a speakers' list which has begun and the first person on my list is Ms. Regan and I think we'll follow that by Ms. Kent.

MS. KELLY REGAN: Thank you very much for coming in today and for your informative presentation. I liked seeing your four goals - reducing recidivism, et cetera - and I was thinking that's quite a bit different, I think, than our penal system which seems to me that there is another thing added in there - to punish the offender. I was just wondering if you could speak to that a little bit, why you believe your particular model is more successful or more appropriate when dealing with crime.

MS. YVONNE ATWELL: I'll probably start. The Restorative Justice Program offers opportunities that the traditional court system does not offer. I think the power in that program is that victims have an opportunity to sit with the offender, the young person, to be able to look at that person and ask questions such as, why me? Why did you harm me or my child or my home?

To be able to sit with a young person with the supports - the young person's supports, the victim's supports, community people, any expert people we want to have in the room - and to begin to have a dialogue and a discussion about the harm that was caused and what's going to happen to repair that harm. That's a very different kind of conversation than you would have in a courtroom.

Often times young people do not realize or understand the impact of their actions because they are very focused on the here and the now. So when this dialogue and discussions begin to happen, young people often times will begin to shift their perspective

a little bit and figure out, I not only harmed the person that is sitting in front of me, the victim, but my family is involved in this, my community is involved in this, my school. So what happens is people begin to get a different view of the impact of the harm.

Then, of course, the outcome of that is that a young person must sign a contract to show how they are going to repair the harm, how they're going to be accountable, what they're going to do over a period of time to repair some of the harm. That's a legal binding contract, so if they do not follow through on this, their file has the potential to go back to the referring source.

What we have found is that this is why the numbers in terms of young people offending is quite low because they begin to see the ways of their actions and with family supports and other supports. We do have programs that also help a young person look at their actions and to be able to come to some kind of decision about - do I really want to do this again? I think the power in the Restorative Justice Program is to be able to provide - and we have lots of resources, great volunteers who facilitate our programs as well. So I think that's part of the reason why the recidivism rates, which we really cannot track, but we feel that when you have everybody involved, you have a community involved, you have a victim and there are support people involved, that this is really a place to go.

In Halifax we recently did a film for victims because we feel that we can always use more victim involvement. Victims sometimes are afraid because they look at our program somewhat like the justice system, so they don't feel as if they'll get any satisfaction. That's why one of our goals is around victim satisfaction. We do everything we can to support the victims and to get them to that session so that their voices will be heard, so we will hear them. That has been quite successful as well, and some of the others may have some things you want to add.

MS. MARSHALL: Specifically to the Aboriginal communities in Nova Scotia, the impact that we're making has a lot to do with the community accountability. If you're looking statistics-wise, we have a higher percentage of violence in our communities, we have more people in jail and we have more people who are on probation. So going through the traditional justice system doesn't always act as a deterrent when both dad and son have the same probation officers. What we need to do is look at other ways, more meaningful ways, to hold people accountable.

Typically, if a young person gets a probation order per se, it's often a piece of paper that is on top of the fridge. A lot of times the police will not breach a person on probation unless they're committing another crime and, typically, only when it's a more serious crime. So if we're looking at the rates of recidivism and the Aboriginal offenders who are coming out of jail and going straight back into jail in the provincial and the federal system, we need to look at doing things differently.

The natural way of doing justice in our communities has always been going back to the elders and going back to the community members, where they decide what that person needs to do. Though today we cannot do things because of the Charter of Rights - things such as banishment - there are still social controls within our communities that isolate a person if they do commit something terribly wrong.

Our programs work not only with Aboriginal youth; we have also worked with Aboriginal adults for a number of years as well. What we're trying to do is find a way to hold that person accountable in a way that's meaningful to them. They may not see the sentencing judge on any given day, but they will see the elder at the corner store. They will see their community members as they are walking down the road, and the community members know that when they were 12 years old, they broke all the streetlights, which is something that the judge may not know.

We are able to use the whole history of the person, the history of their family, and their experiences in trying to find a way to teach them and using these circles as a teachable moment for these young people and adults who are going through the program, that there are other ways and that they have other options and that they are being watched.

MS. REGAN: Could I just ask about your funding? Your organizations are all funded by the Department of Justice, is that correct? Do you get money from any other governmental sources?

MR. MARLIN: The core funding comes from the Department of Justice - a service agreement, so it's not just a grant funding. It is based on performance and on results. It's an agreement that we negotiate somewhat each year to determine the level of funding that we get, based on the caseload we carry and the work we do.

For the extra program we offer, because we recognize, as we mentioned, that there's much more need in dealing with the clientele we deal with, we do solicit funds from other sources. Municipalities quite often contribute. We're successful in many cases in getting various grants for specific program delivery and purposes, but that's outside of the restorative justice delivery. It's our way of trying to build that quilt, add more patches to it, to find funding for those particular initiatives, but the core restorative justice is funded by the Department of Justice.

MS. REGAN: So how much of your organization's time is taken up with trying to raise more money, chasing dollars? Would you say a lot?

MS. ATWELL: Yes, because we do not have any extra funding to do programs in the African Nova Scotian community, so we have to go find that money to develop programs that are specific to the African Nova Scotian community.

We have a Rites of Passage program in Preston and we also deliver that program in Waterville. Every year you have to go look for the funding. The program in Preston is sort of a basic community development program where we have drop-in services for young people and that sort of thing, but there's nothing extra in the Justice budget for that type of work, nor is there any extra in the Justice budget to train volunteers, particularly in HRM because we're so large. So we have to go and always find money to train volunteers who have a specific skill. It's about 38 hours of training, and Justice does not give us money to do that; yet part of our agreement is that we must use volunteers in some capacity.

MS. REGAN: That's the catch-22. So you have things in your service agreement that you're actually not funded for?

MS. ATWELL: That's right.

MS. REGAN: So if you didn't have to fundraise, if you were actually just given the money, what would you do with the extra time?

MS. MARSHALL: If I may add, our program is funded a little differently. Our program is cost-shared by the federal and provincial government, specifically the overall umbrella organization where it's 60 per cent federal funding and only 40 per cent provincial funding.

We receive funding from Correctional Services Canada. We also have national streamed funding for our Victim Support Services program, and that's federal. Our Mi'kmaq Venture Program is funded through NCPC. So we receive only a small percentage of our funding from the province. The majority is federal funding.

MS. REGAN: What about the other programs? Do you get any federal?

MS. ATWELL: To answer your question, what do you do with the extra time - in HRM, we have a staff of 17; nine of them are caseworkers. We also have a Community Service Order person who goes out to the community to find places where we can send our clients to do things like community service work and that sort of thing. We also work very heavily in communities so our workers go to communities to make those connections to develop that work.

If I, as the director, had more time we could further develop our volunteer program by sending those young people, those caseworkers who go out when they have an opportunity, to work more collectively with volunteers. I think we would also be able to work better with victims. We'd be able to have more time to spend with helping victims come on board. I think our victim participation can be higher than it is right now. There's lots of work to be done.

MS. REGAN: What about in your particular case?

MR. MARLIN: There's no question for the rural agencies, Halifax is the largest and Halifax is a large community in itself. For the rural agencies, obviously, we could do a better job than what we're doing. If we could put more time and effort into the ultimate goals you have as a not-for-profit organization, your results are going to be stronger. There are actually some of the organizations, individually, that have decided not to spend a whole lot of time on fundraising. We feel that what we're delivering is of prime importance to the province and that it should be funded by the province, that we should not have to be looking at filling in some of those gaps through fundraising and we continue each and every year to try to make our case before the Department of Justice and now, fortunately, before this committee as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So Ms. Regan, I think you've had quite a bit of time. We may have another round. I know my speaker's list has been growing as you've been talking. I don't know, Marge, if you wanted to add anything to that just before I go further.

MS. MARGE DEBODT: I just wanted to agree that the director's position in all of our agencies have various numbers of people, some much less than others. We have to be really creative with the things that we do and as Yvonne had mentioned, more time to devote to volunteers, because I personally feel that's a little bit of a drawback on my time because of all the grants and things that I have to do. Again, the victims as well, more victim work, because that's one of the premises behind the things we do, involving the community and the victims in our processes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we'll go to Ms. Kent and then Mr. Bain.

MS. BECKY KENT: First of all, thank you all for coming in. Yvonne, it's lovely to see you again and I want to thank you all of you not only for what you do but being here today and allowing us the opportunity to ask some more questions.

I've had the benefit of actually getting to know Yvonne through - I think that was our first connection - was through Neighbourhood Watch, bringing her in to educate a community that had crime and harm being done to them. Not long after that as well, unfortunately, my son was a victim of crime and then proceeded through some restorative justice action that, I think, has helped significantly and brought it to a whole different perspective again, for me as a mother and a person in my community.

One of the things that I struggle with as a MLA trying to support activities, often crime and crime prevention in our own communities are often associated to a repeat offender kind of scenario, where you might have one or two young people in our community that seem to have a targeted area, particularly around where they are living. It seems to be an ongoing, repetitive, harmful and quite severe impact on not just one or two folks that might have the crime associated to them, but as it has evolved over the course of a few years, there's such a heightened level of frustration, fear, anxiety, action-oriented thoughts like, what can we do as a community? They're disgruntled. They're not

necessarily seeing some benefits that they think should be coming out of justice and the whole process of dealing with a youth.

What ends up happening, and what I've discovered, is they either get tired of battling it and become complacent and stop and put their own blinders on or they become action-oriented in a way that is not helpful. It could end up with them being the aggressor and being the one that has actually committed a crime.

I wanted to know - there are two layers to this question. One, is there a particular program, in an education element or in a meeting with the community, around dealing with how they can be empowered to help adjust the situation and support the efforts of the justice program, the policing service that is attending to the crimes, and the process that these kids are going through?

The second question - just to educate me, it has been awhile since I've had a chance to talk about it - is there a point with restorative justice with, for instance, repeat offending that sometimes that's not the answer and then it moves into another layer of addressing it? So I'm going to start with that because I know those are - and the whole education element is probably part of the question that Ms. Regan asked that what would you do that's more, so specifically I'm wondering what you have right now that can help not just one victim, but a collection of victims in a community.

MS. ATWELL: I can tell you what we have and it's in your package as well. Young people who are involved in drugs or alcohol, we have a program called the PARTY Program, which is alcohol prevention and drug prevention. We have workshops where kids that are referred to us on those particular issues, those particular matters, we do have programs where they come into a workshop. We have a program called Stoplift, that's for shoplifting, and we're developing new programs as well. We have a program we just started on bullying and we have another one to assist young people in developing their ability to be compassionate. We find that some young people coming to us just don't seem to have that awareness.

Of course, there are some young people that you'll never be able to help in terms of this program. There are kids that come to us and sometimes they are 12 and 13 years old and they may reoffend again, and as the years go by - for example, somebody who is 13 is maybe different when they're 15 - so this is why we allow young people to come back into the system again. Oftentimes that's basically what they need, with support from communities and families.

In Halifax we do have a program called the Community Conferencing program, where we can assist neighbourhoods with having a restorative discussion around issues in their neighbourhood. This is something that we're just doing extra. We don't have funding for it; we do it because it's part of what we want to do. We started with the north end of

Halifax in Mulgrave Park doing some of this work. We've been in part of the North End, because the north end of Halifax, I realize, is a couple of north ends.

We work with a group of service providers in the north end of Halifax and we call it Community Conferencing. What we do is we train volunteers to assist with any kind of crisis that may be in the community and we talk to the folks that are involved, and we try to circle them up to have that discussion. But this is informal, this is just things that we do when we can. We meet monthly but we don't have the financial resources to do it in a structured way where we would bring together those community members to have that conversation.

You also have to remember that many of our young people have really serious issues. There are mental health issues, there are drug abuse issues, there is abuse in the families, and kids drop out of school - a number of root causes that we cannot handle in our program. There are kids in group homes that have some serious problems and they keep breaching and they keep coming back. The system doesn't know what to do with them and they keep sending them back to us, and that causes us frustration because we don't have the resources to deal with them as well.

We believe that there are other things, other conversations that need to take place around what that would look like in terms of more community-based restorative practices to help and support neighbours who are having problems or who have fear, because the whole idea is to live in a safer community and we can't do that unless we know what some of the issues are and communities can feel empowered to be able to have those discussions. I think there are huge opportunities to be able to do this work, but presently what we do in Halifax - as I said - is kind of ad hoc. When people know about us, they call us and we do what we can, but we could never support a large program on what we have right now. I don't know about what you do, Marge, or . . .

MS. DEBODT: I would just like to mention that communities are unique and all of our different agencies respond to our communities in a unique way. As Mr. Marlin well knows, I do sit on very many committees in my area, so collaboration is a wonderful thing. Also, to listen to your communities, so what are your communities telling you and what is it that you'd like to see in your community?

One of the things that we just lost funding for, just within the last few weeks, was crime prevention educational programs that were being done in the schools, and so working with the schools, working with probation, working with police - anybody who feels that a young person in a particular area needs more information on anger management or different things.

To answer your question about community, I guess we're all unique and we respond to our communities in whatever way they feel. In our area the police said, can you develop something for alcohol workshops? So these individual workshops or those things

can address young people who have individual problems that way, but, again, if a community came to us and asked us what to do we would certainly try to look at different types of services, but again we respond to the communities coming to us if they have particular issues with particular things, but also working with the police and getting the police to tell us what it is that may be problem areas in their particular area.

MS. MARSHALL: To answer your question as well, in our community there is a difference where recidivism or reducing recidivism isn't the goal of our program. The goal of our program is providing quality service and having accountability. Unfortunately, in our communities, as I said - and I don't want to stand on my soap box - we do have higher rates of suicide, we have higher rates of poverty, and lower education rates. That is a lot to deal with for the people in our community. Volunteerism does not work in many Aboriginal communities because if you're dealing with somebody on the welfare system, to ask them to come in and volunteer when they're struggling at home, it's almost impossible. We do, again, have higher rates of dependence on the social services program.

What we look at for success is whether or not we can provide a qualitative service rather than a quantitative service. Traditionally our programs are our justice; our natural justice was to have communities be more accountable to each other and it was everybody working collectively. When the state came along with the justice system, the responsibility was taken to the state, so when you break a law you are now offending Section 334(b) of the Criminal Code of Canada, not that you hurt your neighbour.

So that is the kind of thing that we look for, trying to empower the community, empower the people who have been involved. And if they feel satisfied that something came out of it, that's more important than just looking at the recidivism rates, because that person, whether it's a young person or an adult who is 50-some years old, has suffered historically through their family and their communities what we can't fix in a 20-minute, one-hour session - impossible. So what we try to do is work with the other people who are involved and reduce the impact of crime on them.

MS. KENT: Mr. Chairman, I'll come back later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think we should move along. Mr. Bain, and then Mr. Prest.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Thank you for your presentation this morning. It's very interesting, and it's even more interesting to hear the different approaches that are being used.

Just a couple of questions to begin. In your initial remarks you talked about your success rate and what I'd like for you to do, if you could, is define "success" for us, because Paula just mentioned success in a different way. Does success mean that the offender is not likely to reoffend? Does it mean that the victim is more comfortable with the situation, or

the impact on the victim has been looked after. So I guess, could you define success for me?

MR. MARLIN: I can try to do it and certainly I know that Yvonne and Marge will have their input as well. As a board member, we would look at success in two different ways. We have to define our success based on the agreement we have with the Department of Justice - that's how we're being measured for success through them, and if we're not being successful as far as program delivery goes, obviously we won't be the ones delivering the program for them. Their definition of success is those four milestones that were mentioned.

From a board perspective, I think we share those same milestones but probably a bit more of a softer humanistic way, that certainly we understand the principles behind restorative justice. We want to make sure, first off, that the victims themselves are playing a more active role and getting greater satisfaction out of this intervention than they would through the traditional justice system. We want to ensure the offender is truly taking responsibility and again, these ladies would know better than I would because they are in it every day, but you have some offenders who certainly can play the part but you don't get that sense that they truly are understanding the harm that has been done.

The success for us is when you know, you know you've reached someone and that they truly understand the harm they have done and it's not just now a matter of they got picked up - bad timing, unfortunate circumstances, they caught me this time - but oh, my gosh, I had no idea that what I was doing, what I had done, was causing such harm to an individual or to a large group.

If you take part in these sessions at all - if you have a chance, you can contact us and we would be happy to have you come and observe if you like. If you're fortunate enough to be in a session where, it may be a simple crime, you know, it might be as simple as somebody who broke some flower pots on the way home one Friday night after having a good time with their friends and for them it was broken flower pots. Somebody called the police, they heard the noise. They got picked up and the next thing you know they're appearing before our group in a mediation session and they're looking at the victim who happens to be an elderly lady in their community whom they never knew, they've seen them before, and she starts to share the impact that had. It was just a flower pot but - was she being targeted? The internal fear that caused her, her own safety - she had now been violated. Her way of living had changed because of that broken flower pot.

To have the offender hear that and see that, you know then - you can tell by their actions, their words - that they truly understood and, have they truly taken full responsibility as a fellow human being? That's the level of success for us as well. The reduced recidivism obviously is a success measure too for myself personally, not because it's going to reduce the amount of crime happening - that's a good thing to have happen - but it also shows the success we've had with that individual, that they have chosen to lead a

life that's going to be a little bit less volatile in their communities. So I think success for us is more on the individual situations. Each time someone comes before us, we have that opportunity to truly make a difference with the offender, with the victim, with the community at large, and you just get that sense of knowing that this time it really has made a difference.

MS. ATWELL: Success just can't be measured in one way because there are many ways to measure what we feel is success. One way is that the young person, after going through the circle process, needs to sign a contract and in that contract are ways in which that young person is going to repair the harm. If that young person completes that contract, then that's a measure of success, especially for when we're tracking information for our justice community because they're going to look at numbers. They will want to know how many young people came through our process. If we get 750 young people in a year, how many completed the contract, how many did you have to send back to court, how many came back to you a second or third time? So that's another way to measure.

We also do surveys for the victim to say, were you satisfied? Let us know what you're thinking or what you're feeling and they will give us feedback about that process that they've been involved in. That's a measure of success as well, so I think there are many ways. Also through our programs, when young people go through the programs and they come out of that and they do a little feedback survey, that's also another measure of success.

I think also if communities are feeling a bit safer. Another measure for us is when we do work in the Prestons, that we were doing in East Preston, young people who come to our drop-ins and some of our programs, we have found that they are not getting involved in criminal activity as early as they usually do and sometimes not at all. We track that as a measure of success. I'm sure in your community it's the same. There are different ways to track that, there's not just one way to measure that.

MS. DEBODT: Yes, I agree with what my colleague mentioned. In my mind I know that you have to do your statistics on reducing recidivism but victim satisfaction - there has to be a lot of weight put on that. We go overboard to ensure we have a victim voice, that they're satisfied with the outcome, that they're satisfied even at the end of the agreement. I don't believe that comes out of a court system but we have very dedicated staff members and volunteers who can approach the victims and the community if necessary to ensure that success.

MS. MARSHALL: Again for our communities there is a subtle difference. Aboriginal victimology is very different. The responsibility of fixing something harmed in our communities is not the responsibility of the victim. In fact, it's inappropriate to ask the victim to be a part of a resolution process when it should be the community's responsibility to help fix that problem and make it better for the Aboriginal victim.

Also, we look at the responsibilities. You may be surprised but not all of our victims are totally innocent. Sometimes victims have a contribution in the escalation of events. For example, in one circle that we did a few years ago, the charge was attempted manslaughter or attempted murder and both the victim and the offender were held accountable by the community elders. They both had to have an agreement such as my colleague spoke about in order to repair the harm to the community, which is very different than in the traditional justice system where the victim is often absolved of their participation in those events.

This is often even more challenging when we're looking at domestic violence cases and the Aboriginal worldview on what the victim's responsibility is. Not to say that we encourage domestic violence in our communities but, for example, there is a responsibility on the mother as the caregiver of her children to protect her children. That responsibility is put on her by the community. Which is very different from the equality-seeking women's groups in dealing with these types of offenses. There are some substantive differences in what satisfaction is or how we are able to determine success.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bain, you have gotten long responses. Do you have another question?

MR. BAIN: Just one more, if I could. I want to go back to something that Paula had mentioned in her presentation - programs to help youth at risk before they enter the criminal justice system. I think that's something everyone strives for. I guess my question would be, what can government do? What can we, as government, do to help make sure those programs are out there and that they work and what help can we provide? That's a wide open one, I know we're going to get a long answer on this one too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you will try to be somewhat succinct, I have a long list of people who would like to . . .

MS. MARSHALL: The Mi'kmaq Venture Program is based on a program that has been the only program that has proven successful in Aboriginal communities in reducing recidivism, criminality and substance abuse. It's a replication of a product from Gallup, New Mexico. We are in our third year and again with the most promising results of the kids that are participating in the program are making better decisions. They are now mentors and teaching other children so the program has shown - we have a researcher, Dr. Jane McMillan, who is in charge of the performance, the evaluation - that program, the pilot sunsetting in November 2012.

What can we ask the province? Well, we'd like to look at additional funding to maintain this program, to show that we can replicate these results. Not only in the four site communities but in all the Aboriginal communities and it can be replicated in the African Nova Scotian communities because it's a program for high risk youth, the Mi'kmaq Venture Program. It's all done through experiential learning and play that the children are

taught to make better decisions and we've had extremely great results. (Interruption) And oh, we're the first in Canada - there's somebody whispering behind me.

MS. ATWELL: I think in terms of government responsibility, first they have to trust communities; we do know what we're doing. There needs to be a little trust that when we're looking at funding for various programs, that it's not just ad hoc. It takes a long time to change a structure and a culture of violence in communities or poverty or lack of education. It's a long-term plan, it's not every four years or just before an election.

I think that governments need maybe to shift their understanding of the work they already support to more of a restorative practice thinking. If we want safer communities, things change, so we need to work better with communities. When we say that resources are lacking, that resources are lacking.

Some of it you can measure really quickly and clearly and others it would take time. Like the Venture program, I'm sure over time that there'll be a whole shift in the community because we're starting with the younger group of people and there's many small programs like this in the African Nova Scotia community, from education throughout churches or whatever, but it needs time. You can't do it in six months or 10 months or one year, to see a change and a shift in how we deal with violence and drug abuse and mental health issues in our community.

I just think government needs to be really aware of the expertise and the creativity in communities. Oftentimes it's not even about how much money we get, but it's having the conversation around what is needed. We're very good at cutting corners but we do need government to be more supportive and to understand that they must trust the communities in which they are funding right now. I think that's really important.

MS. DEBODT: I just wanted to mention what I had mentioned a few minutes ago about our crime prevention educational programs which were really quite successful. We did have a dedicated staff member involved in that and because we lost that funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, we lost her as an employee - a very valuable employee as well.

I know in our particular area we saw that as working really well. She was getting requests from more and more schools. Again, SchoolsPlus has just come onboard in my area and the collaborative relationship with them, it's really helpful to have that as well, to have the crime prevention funding.

Again, in light of Minister Landry's remarks - I wasn't at that particular workshop but I do know a little bit, that he was supporting some crime prevention initiatives as well and all of us can see that. We all have expertise in our particular agencies to bring some of those programs to light and it might help definitely address the issues of crime. You may not see it right away but you might see it eventually, for sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Bain. We'll go next to Mr. Prest and - as I know there are people eager to ask questions - then Mr. Orrell, then Mr. Ramey.

MR. SID PREST: Thank you. With the young offenders, on less serious offences, what would the timeframe and could the timeframe be before they be - when you would become involved?

MS. ATWELL: The timeframe from beginning to end?

MR. PREST: Yes, say a young offender is in the community that has committed some offences. What do you think the timeframe would be before you people could become involved?

MS. ATWELL: Well there's a whole process, there's a checklist. Kids are referred to us through police, the Crown, the courts, and it's a voluntary process so the young person will have to take responsibility for their action and be accountable. Once that process starts, we get a file and the file - for us, and I think it's the same with all of us - it goes to a case manager or supervisor who will then give the file to the caseworker and the caseworker begins to make contacts with the young person, the victims, anybody who is going to be involved in the final circle.

So our timeline technically - based on our contract - is 90 days to complete the work, but oftentimes, it takes longer than that because if we want to involve a victim in the process, sometimes we have to wait until they're ready, but technically that's the kind of timeline. Is that what you're talking about?

MR. PREST: Well I'm just wondering - it could be months or a year before you become . . .

MS. ATWELL: No, it's a matter of weeks before we become involved.

MR. PREST: Oh, ok.

MS. ATWELL: Once the referral happens and we get the file - we have to wait for the file and usually we work with our justice partners to ensure that we get the file fairly quickly - then we just start working on the file to involve everybody who is going to be involved in that particular circle.

MR. PREST: So the process moves along fairly . . .

MS. ATWELL: It moves along and oftentimes, like I said, if it is involving a victim or if it is a co-accused on a file - I mean, you can have a file with six or eight young people or more, which your circle will ending up being 25 or 30 people, so all of that takes time to

prepare. Yes, technically 90 days, but it can go four months, five months, six months, depending.

MS. DEBODT: Yes, very much the same in our area as well. We do look at extenuating circumstances in a young person's life or the victim's life or whatever. But eventually they are held accountable through the agreements and they are followed up on, so it's not as if they're given out to the community to look after. Our office has a responsibility to ensure that it flows through to - and that if they don't complete their agreement, that there is information back to the referral sources for them to decide whether they proceed to court or whatever is necessary.

MR. PREST: So they're not given time to forget what they've done.

MS. DEBODT: No, I think the best case scenario is that you try to do things in a very timely manner, so that doesn't occur.

MS. MARSHALL: Ideally, an offence could happen yesterday and we receive the referral today, ideally. Typically, just because of the case load in many of the RCMP detachments in our First Nations communities, we sometimes don't receive referrals until six months after the fact - that is for pre-charge referrals. If we're looking at post-charge, sometimes they're up to a year. If we're looking at sentencing circles, the offence could have happened - in one case it happened four years prior. Justice isn't always as swift, but ideally it could be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Orrell, then Mr. Ramey.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: We're talking youth mostly. Do they have a choice, most of the time, if they participate or they don't participate? Obviously some young people who have problems wouldn't want to face their victim or their community because of the ill effect or negative look the community would have on it. So do they have a choice if they participate in the process or are they mandated to participate in the process?

MS. DEBODT: Well, in a lot of cases - well, in most cases, in all the cases - they have to be informed that this is an opportunity for them and so if we do receive this referral and this checklist, our case workers find out from them whether they want to participate in a circle. We have to have very good reasons why they will not, but in most cases they do.

We also don't sugar-coat it. We also let them know that this is not an incident that the victim or the community is taking very lightly, that there could be some anger involved in the circle. But definitely, I think, for their best interests, I believe that meeting with people informally in that type of format is really a truly good way to go.

MS. MARSHALL: In the program in Nova Scotia, there are mandatory minimum requirements and discretionary factors. One of the minimum requirements is that the young

person - or the adult if we're dealing with the adult - has to accept responsibility; that's mandatory. So that is a prerequisite for any process going through it all.

MR. ORRELL: Are individuals more likely to participate in the program depending on the type of crime? You were talking about flower pots . . .

MS. MARSHALL: The majority of our referrals - we've never had a flower pot. (Laughter) Our offenses are typically violent offenses, the majority being assaults. Then theft under \$5,000, theft over \$ 5,000 and we've had fraud over \$5,000. Typically very serious offenses, right up to - we've received a referral for a manslaughter case. Just because of the nature of our communities and what's happening right there, we tend to spend more time on the higher harm cases.

MS. DEBODT: Just to mention as well there is a moratorium on a couple of serious charges that would come forward, and they would be domestic and spousal violence issues, and also sexual assault. Currently the Restorative Justice Program, as it exists within the province, is not able to do those. But again, like Paula mentioned, we do have various - and so it's up to our caseworkers to have conversations with the appropriate people to get all the facts and to let them know the power that can be held in this process, that they would be held accountable in the end.

MS. ATWELL: Just to add to that, the cases are getting more violent in HRM as well. When the program first started, it was sort of minor - but there are assaults with weapons that sort of things. We're getting cases like that, so that takes a lot more work and a lot more time as well. I think that it's important to understand that sometimes the young person would prefer to go to court because that is the slap on the wrist as opposed to sitting in front of your victim and having to ask the question, why me, why my kid, why did you beat up my child, or whatever? That's very difficult.

MR. ORRELL: That's why I asked about the choice part.

MS. ATWELL: Yes, so sometimes young people will prefer not to go through the restorative justice process because, like Paula was saying, they have to take responsibility and be accountable; that's the number-one check for us. They may change their mind later and say no, I didn't do that, but it's a very serious thing and it is hard to sit in front of your victim and their families and answer why you did something.

MR. ORRELL: Jim, one more?

MR. CHAIRMAN: One brief one.

MR. ORRELL: Yes. Does this affect their criminal record, post program? I know youth, as they get older, at 18 that record is - does this affect that up until that age or would

it affect it after that age if they go through the program and successfully complete the program?

MS. DEBODT: I think it's important - I know in your package that you received from Kim regarding the entry levels. The police entry level may not have a charge attached to it, but if you are referred from the other entry points, there is a court record that is attached. I think that all of us feel that if probation officers were to come to us within a certain period of time and ask us how the young person did, if we feel that in our notes and things that the young person really took responsibility and doing really well, that message gets back to them. But it doesn't necessarily avoid their record - but it depends on where the referral comes from, which ever sources it comes from.

MS. MARSHALL: And it, again, depends on the program. In our program we have been dealing with adults and youth as well. If the referral comes for a sentencing circle, which is a tool for the judge to have a better understanding of the community and the resources available, that's done at sentencing so that's part of his record. We also do healing circles which may be held without prejudice to sentencing. The traditional court process may be ongoing in a parallel system and the healing circle is ongoing to deal with the issues of the community victim and offender - or it can be done as part of the traditional sentencing for the courts. So it just depends on where the referral comes from.

MR. ORRELL: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Orrell. Mr. Ramey.

MR. GARY RAMEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for coming. I guess I want to go on the record, too, Kevin you're from my area and I'd like to thank you for, lo, these many years of work in this area and all the good things you've done.

Mr. Chairman, I have three sort of just quick questions for clarification and one longer one, is that okay? The first one is directed specifically at you, Ms. Marshall, because I just want to get this straight in my head. The Mi'kmaq Venture program, the funding for that, did you say the funding for that . . .

MS. MARSHALL: Ends on November 12 of this year. It was a three year . . .

MR. RAMEY: How is it funded? Is it a federal-provincial agreement?

MS. MARSHALL: No, that was funded through the National Crime Prevention Council.

MR. RAMEY: Which is?

MS. MARSHALL: NCPC, it's federal.

MR. RAMEY: Any reason given for . . .

MS. MARSHALL: NCPC only funds pilots, not programs.

MR. RAMEY: Okay, but it was a very valuable program.

MS. MARSHALL: And we have measurable results that it has reduced criminality and substance abuse in the youth participants.

MR. RAMEY: Okay, thank you very much for that. See, I'm keeping them short. (Laughter)

Number two, recidivism and I think it was Mr. Marlin who said it's hard to track this because there's two different ways of looking at it or two different systems. Can you just very briefly tell me what the pitch is.

MR. MARLIN: I can tell you what I know about it and I'll rely on Yvonne, and Marge would probably know more about it than I do.

We were advised by the Department of Justice that they have two different systems that they use to capture the data, as computer systems go, and they don't talk to each other, so they don't have an ability to effectively capture the data, as far as recidivism goes. I didn't delve any further into that, as far as why the systems don't talk to each other. I know within my day work we have multiple systems that don't even know each other, much less talk to each other. I just accept it as being a technological glitch that they are trying to overcome because they recognize that as an important feature for their department - to be able to show yourselves and your colleagues the impact that their program is having on recidivism.

MR. RAMEY: We just had before the Public Accounts Committee, the group responsible for the computer network system for government and we talked about how that can be integrated. You are right, we had all kinds of systems all over the place - departments had their own systems, sometimes not on the same platform as some other department. It was a hodgepodge of awfulness and it is being consolidated. They're making good progress and I don't know when that's going to be over but when it is, I think that glitch will be solved anyway.

The third question - the other short snapper and then I've got the slightly longer one coming - somebody mentioned that we're moving out of - we're dealing with youth but we're also moving on toward adults now. I know in Ms. Marshall's system, you do both already but was it you, Mr. Marlin, who mentioned the fact that we're dealing with more adults now? How did we get into that or why did we get into it or who said we should get into it or did we just do it?

MR. MARLIN: We have two pilots right now in Nova Scotia, dealing with adult offenders and the Department of Justice introduced that to us as well, recognizing the success we've had with the young offenders and moving forward to adults. The expectations were, and are, that eventually they will roll out across the province, depending upon the evaluations of the two pilots running right now.

MR. RAMEY: When are they over with? When are they ending?

MR. MARLIN: I don't think they have actual end dates for those pilots. I know right now they've got the evaluation ongoing but there's also the funding issue. Now we've been advised that we had some agencies postured to undertake adult restorative justice, as soon as April 1st gone by, and it was put on hold. Part of that reason was because of the unavailability of funds but also waiting for the evaluation of the pilots.

MS. MARSHALL: If I may add to that as well, in 1999 when they established the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program, it was always one of the goals to roll it out to adults. They gave a timeframe initially of within three to five years that they would be offering this program for adults as well.

Here in Nova Scotia we had the Adult Diversion program, which is facilitated through Correctional Services, in that probation officers had an alternative measures-type program. One of the things is that it wasn't a restorative program but it was a way of holding people accountable. Just with the tide shifting towards a restorative justice movement - not just nationally but internationally - it was decided that the alternative measures program, or the Adult Diversion program would then be tried in a more restorative process. Then it was given to the community experts on restorative justice to try to facilitate that.

MR. RAMEY: Thank you very much. Do I have time for . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, take your . . .

MR. RAMEY: Okay, because I'm scared it won't get back around again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right, you won't, I think.

MR. RAMEY: So my final question - and I want to preface this by saying a couple of things. It's very popular, I know, for different levels of government to beat up on other levels of government and really I'm not interested in doing that but I do want to ask this question. It relates to where we're going - and I don't like beating up on the other Parties either - but it relates to what we're doing federally, or what I think we might be doing federally. It's my understanding that there is a movement afoot to build more facilities and some of that is going to have an impact on the budget of the provincial governments, like ours for instance, when we know money is tight anyway.

I don't know if I saw it on 60 Minutes or if I read it, so I'm not considering anywhere I would have heard this as a super reliable source but pretty good. It was about Texas and all the problems that - Texas used to be, let's just annihilate people who get in jail or let's lock them up forever. They started to run out of cash to do that, to build more jails and incarcerate more people, and so not for the right reason but for a different reason related to money, they had to stop doing that. They moved to a more restorative justice kind of model and, lo and behold, they got these extremely good results out of it and were starting to have a very happy face on because it was costing less and it was having better results.

That was probably the toughest line jurisdiction that we have in all of North America, including all the Canadian provinces. So I guess what I'm trying to figure out is, in terms of the model that we're talking about this morning, which is restorative justice, which I think most of us around the table think is a good idea - I don't want to speak for everybody but I seem to be hearing that. How do you see that rolling out in relation to the way that our federal policies might be shaping? Does anybody want to comment on it or do you just want to leave it alone? If you want to leave it alone, that's fine with me. (Laughter)

MR. MARLIN: I'll share just a few personal thoughts, there's no question there are differences in philosophies and that happens with the change of any government. One of the challenges of doing this kind of work as community agencies is that the philosophies of a government change when a government changes.

MR. RAMEY: Understood.

MR. MARLIN: Sometimes it's recognition of the success taking place and they continue to support that. Sometimes it's just a wrong direction and the government changes direction and they certainly have that right because they are elected by the majority of the people. So there's no question right now there's a bit of a different philosophy among our national Justice colleagues as opposed to what's happening in the province. We've been very fortunate, even with the change in government, that we've had good support and recognition for this approach to justice. Minister Landry, in his most recent comments and certainly in his approach to crime prevention - a good one-third of that is talking about restorative practices and expanding it outside of the justice system.

So we just continue to hope, and I'm sure our colleagues across the country do as well, that there will be that recognition federally too. Now, the federal government certainly hasn't turned a blind eye to the success that we do have but it does have a different philosophy as far as where the investments should go, how much investment should go to this approach to justice, and how much should go into a more traditional approach.

MR. RAMEY: Thank you very much for your candor on that and I'll turn it over to the chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Unless anyone else wants to make a comment, I don't see people jumping to the microphone.

MS. MARSHALL: In the national scope, the current government's policies have had a huge impact on what's happening in First Nations communities, which will literally translate my soapbox to just more Aboriginal people in jail. There is a national movement within different Aboriginal organizations and national Aboriginal organizations to take a better look at this and examine it because the impact will be very detrimental to our First Nations communities. If we're looking at putting more people in jail, our people are already going to jail for little things, so it will have a very detrimental effect. So it's being looked at nationally.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for being brief, Mr. Ramey. Mr. Burrill will be the last speaker on this round and then we may have a brief opportunity for something further.

MR. GARY BURRILL: I just wanted to ask you - whenever this is discussed in a thoughtful, intelligent way, there is always a consensus that this is the way to go, that this is the road of the future. In 20 years we've gone from people saying "what?" about this to a consensus amongst informed, clued-in people. I don't have a sense, and I guess probably a lot of people wouldn't - where in the development of this consensus are we in Nova Scotia, in terms of the programming that's available, the funding support that is given to it, the breadth of offenses that are covered this way? Are we around the middle? Are we dragging?

I'm sure you have a sense of other provincial programs and where they are. Is this a fair thing to ask? In this general movement toward restorative practices, are we doing well relative to the rest of the country or do we need to catch up some?

MS. DEBODT: Well, I do have to mention that each province doles out justice in their own way. I did attend a conference a few years ago in Winnipeg where they were trying to establish a coalition of restorative types of agencies across the nation - very difficult to do when you're so broad. One comment that I heard quite often was, you're very lucky your province has invested in what you're doing. All of us, I think, have spoken to that regarding the financial support that we get and that we really appreciate it, but we all know we could be doing more.

As far as restorative justice, it's done differently in different provinces, from the systems folks in Corrections to volunteer groups. But I think more and more, the sole volunteer groups are finding it harder to do. I think the investment in funded agencies is absolutely wonderful. It could always use more, as you've all heard today.

MS. ATWELL: I think the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program is considered the second best in the country, and I think we have to be very proud of that, partly because this relationship between government and community is pretty strong in terms of how we

roll out the program. I don't think we need to stay at number two. I think we can be number one in the country if we put in a little bit more effort and resources and spread that out a little bit more.

The research that was done at Dalhousie around the Restorative Justice Program, that piece of research over a period of five years, they've come out with reports, and I think there is a booklet. There was a major conference and some of us travelled to Hull in the U.K. to look at a restorative city, which is very exciting. I think that Nova Scotia could be primed for the whole province to be restored, if we wanted to go that way. It does cost less money and it does build better relationships, whether it's in the criminal context or just in the view that we're all speaking the same language and we're on the same page when we're talking about various issues.

I think there is a lot of room for growth, and the very fact that we are considered nationally as striving toward the best in the country - I think this province needs to take advantage of that. I think there needs to be some further discussion around what that could look like.

MS. MARSHALL: To be totally honest, many of our organizations do have high staff turnover rates, and we're training people with very marketable skills to go out and get better-paying jobs. That is an issue that we constantly face - the human resource hours it's taking away from the programs and training the new staff and the constant recruitment, because we're not able to have a very marketable salary range, oftentimes. Just to keep that real as well, that that is an issue for our organizations.

MR. BURRILL: Where's the best? B.C.?

MS. ATWELL: The best restorative? In the province?

MR. BURRILL: No, no, in Canada. If we're number two, where's number one?

MS. ATWELL: Well, number one is Australia - no, New Zealand. So we're way up there.

MR. MARLIN: We're doing extremely well.

MS. DEBODT: We're number one in Canada.

MR. MARLIN: Nova Scotia is number one in North America.

MS. MARSHALL: North America.

MR. MARLIN: In spite of that, I think we all have our personal success stories. I was number one in many cases during my young life. (Laughter) But if you lean back on

that number one success at that time and just hang on to that, you're not going to move forward, and we run the risk of being complacent. I think we've seen that happen over the past few years, and I think we need to recognize that although we're still number one, we have a long way to go. Truly, I love the idea of Hull and having that kind of restorative city, and I think we have the opportunity to have a restorative province. We could be the first.

We could roll this out - not just restorative justice, but restorative practices. We have a virtual centre of excellence within Nova Scotia. Our success is built on the collaboration between the Department of Justice and our agencies. You have nine community agencies that have built that success, that have put Nova Scotia on the world stage in their application of restorative practices. You have that virtual centre of excellence. We're working hard as a coalition to bring that together to try to build on those best practices. We certainly could use stronger support in a collaborative way.

The Department of Justice has been wonderful and they give us all they can within their confines, but I think we need a stronger collaboration, inter-departmentally. We need to have that political collaboration, to recognize that - I don't think we're looking for new dollars. I think we're looking for additional revenue to come into yourselves. It's about investing the revenue you currently have that is going out in the various streams that can be brought together in a much more collaborative way, to have greater success and to continue to move Nova Scotia forward and redefine what "number one" really means.

MS. MARSHALL: Speaking of number one, MLSN is the only provincial umbrella justice organization in Canada that serves an entire province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have a couple of minutes left for questions. Ms. Regan is up at this point. If you'd like to ask your final questions, Ms. Regan, and if your responses at the front can be relatively brief, maybe that will work.

MS. REGAN: I'm hearing that behavioural teams in some schools have been cut. Does that have any effect on your organizations? Do you work with them, and has that had implications for you?

MR. MARLIN: I don't think we're able to draw any straight lines to definite implications. Certainly any support systems that are there to help young people who get caught have an impact on our ability to establish those partnerships and to work together to try to help that young person.

MS. REGAN: What about the Mi'kmaq community?

MS. MARSHALL: Our school system is getting more progressive in that our First Nations schools on reserve are federally funded, designated as private schools. We're actually increasing resources for our students because we have higher learning disabilities,

we have higher social issues within our communities. The school systems are actually progressing in our First Nations communities.

MS. ATWELL: Also with the restorative practices in schools, our staff has a wealth of knowledge in terms of helping to support those programs when we're called on. There again, our staff is limited in terms of how much work we can do with the schools, but we certainly do have that expertise if the schools require it.

MS. DEBODT: And I think in our area, the crime prevention educational programs that I mentioned earlier, I believe we were the one of the only ones that were providing those services. The schools were extremely disappointed that this service is not being offered to their students.

MS. REGAN: That was from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia? Ok.

MS. DEBODT: We received that funding for nine years. It was ongoing funding with them, but . . .

MS. REGAN: Did they tell you why?

MS. DEBODT: Yes, their financial situation and the investments that they get from their money were just quite low. It's unfortunate. They did encourage us to apply again, however, we did . . .

MS. ATWELL: Our funding was cut as well.

MS. REGAN?: Your funding was cut as well?

MS. ATWELL: From the Law Foundation.

MS. MARSHALL: We've lost our Law Foundation grant as well.

MS. ATWELL: They said they just don't have the money any more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, everyone. I think I need to cut, to call questioning and discussion to a halt. The questions have been comprehensive and the responses have been very full and well-developed, and the preparation that you provided us with initially was really helpful.

You may have some closing statement that you wish to make. I don't know if you've organized that but if anyone would like to say something in closing, we would welcome that.

MR. MARLIN: Very quickly, respecting the time, we do appreciate the opportunity but we especially appreciate your enthusiasm and your questions. They're really thought-provoking questions and it shows you are taking us in, you understand it, and hopefully you want to support us in moving this forward.

As I mentioned, we are available. Our contact information is at the back of your package for your individual constituencies. Please feel free to contact us for more information. We're happy to come and provide whatever we can and we look forward to your support as we move forward.

MS. ATWELL: Also, we do have a wonderful 16-minute video. We developed it as a training tool for victims and community. Any time you want to see it, just let me know. It's a partnership between a small, private media group who works with restorative practice and the Community Justice Society.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, everyone. The committee will now take just a brief recess while our guests and witnesses leave the room. We do have some other business to attend to, so it will be a very brief recess.

[10:42 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:46 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome back, I think we will reconvene. As the meeting was progressing, we had two arrivals - Ms. Becky Kent is here today representing Brian Skabar and Mr. Leo Glavine came in when my head was turned, but welcome to Mr. Glavine, here representing Ms. Karen Casey.

We do have some other business to attend to. We have correspondence from Ms. Regan and we also have - my experience in life is that nothing is linear, everything is connected - we had also determined that we might interview a task force or focus on affordable housing for our June meeting but I think both those things are connected. So we will begin with our correspondence from Ms. Regan - does everybody have that in front of them? I didn't check that.

We received a letter from Ms. Regan asking for an emergency meeting. Ms. Regan, I think I will turn the floor over to you for a moment to speak to that.

MS. REGAN: Thank you Mr. Chairman. We have managed to ask a few questions about this issue within the House but my concern is that we haven't really had answers that make me feel like we really know what went on. There are a number of issues that I think are troubling about the handling of the situation at Talbot House. I still do not understand, for example, why Community Services didn't take the complaint directly to the police and

rather force the board of Talbot House to do that. They were forced into it. They were told they had to do it.

I don't understand why you would have a group of people - who have no knowledge of what the complaint is, who the complainant is, or anything like that - actually have to go to police and make the complaint. Despite the minister's 59-minute soliloquy in the House, I still have not heard an adequate explanation of that. I don't understand why the minister continues to say that the report on Talbot House was not personal when there are a number of very subjective conclusions that were reached in it and they weren't evidence-based.

I don't understand why, if the Department of Community Services had concerns about Talbot House since 2010, why the board was not given tools to better meet the DCS standard of board conduct. I don't understand why DCS withheld the information about the complaint about the executive director, why they withheld that from the board, and I think we need to clarify what the government's policy is around releasing public information about third parties. Is there one rule for DCS and one rule for the government? I'd just like to know what the rule is and is it government-wide.

I think that the minister has been subjected to a fair amount of questioning but we haven't really had a lot of answers and I think that people who are connected with Talbot House deserve some answers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the things in putting forward your letter - I guess I interpreted that to mean, at least in part, that it would be helpful to devote a meeting to this discussion. It occurred to me and in putting it on the agenda the way that I did, that one way to move forward with this would be to use our next meeting for that purpose. I guess I'm just wanting to maybe throw that out to the committee as a whole, to see if there are other thoughts both about the request for focusing on this as a theme and whether using the next meeting would be appropriate. Mr. Burrill, to begin with.

MR. BURRILL: Well, I think that the general idea of this proposal is fair and reasonable. I think everybody accepts that this is a very important question and issue, although I find it less compelling to think that we need to do it on an emergency basis or also that we need the minister. It seems from my angle at least that the world is not suffering from lack of the minister having been exposed to diligent public questioning about this issue, or for lack of future opportunities about that. But I think that the matter should come before the committee, that those responsible in the department should be called upon to present their side of the story, as it were, and engage with us. That seems sensible to me.

So I would like to move that we amend our proposed schedule so as to be able to invite the Department of Community Services to address the Talbot House question with us here at our next regular meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we have a motion on the floor. Is there any other - Mr. Bain, I saw your hand up so maybe any other discussion before we call it to a vote?

MR. BAIN: Mr. Chairman, I guess I wasn't expecting Gary to bring a motion forward this quickly but I guess one of the things I think is important is that we've been hearing, in the questioning to the minister about policies and we hear about due process but it seems that the policies and due process change every time to suit the situation. I think at the end of the day we can have department officials in here and they might say, this is what the process is, but indeed the process wasn't followed in a particular case and I'm not just going to refer to Talbot House, but anything.

It seems to me that if there's a policy, there's a policy. At the end of the day, whether it's fair or not, it's the minister who has to answer to it, if there are questions. If everybody is comfortable with department officials coming in and talking about it, I'm fine with that. But I think we have to find out why policies are changed to suit situations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on the motion? Ms. Regan.

MS. REGAN: I think it would probably be a good idea to have the author of the report come in, to be one of the public servants who comes in. There has been diligent public questioning of the minister, it's true - I don't think there has been diligent public answering from the minister. So that's why I would like to see the minister come back because we have not had answers about a lot of these things and why policies change.

For example, if Talbot House has a service agreement, then why was there no attempt made - as near as I can tell, no attempt made, because I did ask this question in the House, why was there no oversight of the board until this past December? Why did nothing happen, if they felt there was a problem? So again that's about policies changing or policies being fluid and not being administered consistently and it's funny because part of what the report went after Talbot House was not having consistent policies. So it's kind of ironic.

So if I could make a friendly amendment that we have department officials and the minister come in to answer these questions because in some cases the questions I think would be appropriately directed to staff and in some cases it would be to the minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the suggestion is made for an amendment to the motion. Maybe we need to clarify that position at this point. (Interruption) Do you have a comment about the motion or the amendment, since you're the mover of the motion?

MR. BURRILL: Well I think the amendment would not be in order, because it's not a friendly amendment. It is, in fact, substantively other than the intention of the original motion. The motion is to have the meeting with staff at a regular time, so an amendment would not be in order that says we would have a meeting with the minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we do have a motion on the floor. We have a comment about an amendment. I think it would be my opinion that it is not a friendly amendment; it's contrary to the intent of the motion.

I'm watching the clock, too. I guess I just want to test the room as to whether you would be ready for a vote on the question.

MS. KENT: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that we have a seconder on that motion. I'd like to second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. So are you ready for me to call the question?

MS. KENT: Is the question on the amendment or is the question on the original motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would say on the original motion; that would be my read of our discussion.

MR. BURRILL: I wouldn't be ready to hear the question unless everybody had spoken, who wished to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there others who wish to speak? Mr. Bain - you've spoken, but you want to . . .

MR. BAIN: Just one thing, Mr. Chairman, and I think Ms. Regan has made an excellent suggestion before, that possibly the author of the report could be part of the process. That way, we get a lot of the information first-hand. If that happens to be one of the witnesses, it would be fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anybody in this room know who the author of the report is?

MR. BAIN: The department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure the department does, but I don't know. Is there somebody here who could name that person?

MR. BURRILL: Yes, we do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anybody else who wishes to have a word about this before we take a vote?

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

The motion is carried.

The other part of our agenda was the next meeting date, which would be June 5th. So that's what we'll aim for in terms of having witnesses from Community Services to help us review the Talbot House situation.

We have had discussion about meeting with a task force on affordable housing and I wonder if we just take a moment, Kim, for you to bring us up to date on your exploration of that set of witnesses.

MS. KIM LANGILLE: Yes, certainly. When this was on our large list that we have, it was a PC witness suggestion at the time and it was kind of unclear what the task force on affordable housing was. I think I assumed at the time that it was something the province was involved in.

As a result of my investigations, it is actually a municipal initiative to deal with affordable housing that the Town of Windsor has taken upon itself to deal with. They created a task force, I guess it was in October 2010, and that task force reported in March 2011. Basically what they were advising council was on options to achieve affordable housing in their community and to create an affordable housing committee, which council in the Town of Windsor has now created an Affordable Housing Committee that looks at these issues. So that's sort of what it is or what it has evolved into.

The two suggested witnesses at the time were an individual from the actual Department of Community Services and an individual who had been involved with the task force. Both of those individuals have since changed - there's a different person with Community Services and there is a different person with the town. So with that, I guess I just need confirmation that that is something you'd like to have - representatives from the Town of Windsor come in and talk about what they are doing for affordable housing in their area, and then perhaps have someone from Community Services give an update on affordable housing generally. Is that sort of the route we want to go there? That's what I'm looking for from you folks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that's the general proposal about going forward for a future meeting? I guess I would be interested in whatever feedback the committee would like to offer. Mr. Bain?

MR. BAIN: I think that was the intent, to hear where the Town of Windsor was going and how that could be part of the provincial model. Just to hear - here's what we have, here's what they're doing and some of this could blend. Just another avenue to explore.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that an acceptable direction for a future meeting? I'm seeing nods. I think the June 5th meeting would be our final meeting for the season. We would take

a break during the summer, based on our previous discussions. We had talked earlier about perhaps in September, using that for an agenda setting meeting, which I guess affordable housing would be one of the things this committee had already agreed was a priority, if we could leave it that way, from my point of view, that seems like a reasonable direction. Is there any other business we should be attending to before I call adjournment?

MS. LANGILLE: One question. If we do our organization in September, that's fine. Am I to understand the task force on affordable housing will start in October and then look at future witnesses or is that just going to be part of the mix?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a very good question. Are there any comments or suggestions for that? Mr. Bain, since that suggestion came from the Progressive Conservative Party, would you prefer that becomes our first . . .

MR. BAIN: That would be fine, where it's already there, it's a leftover.

MR. RAMEY: My only question was - and I have no problem with the way we're doing this, having Talbot House come in in lieu of the housing folks - we hadn't made any kind of commitment for sure to them that we would have them at that particular meeting?

MS. LANGILLE: To whom?

MR. RAMEY: To the affordable housing people.

MS. LANGILLE: No, no.

MR. RAMEY: Good, so they won't be put off or anything.

MS. LANGILLE: Not at all.

MR. RAMEY: We could still go ahead with Talbot House, but I just don't want a bad feeling there like we're trying to send them away.

MS. REGAN: Would it be possible to do agenda setting after we hear from them on that particular date? Does that cause problems?

MS. LANGILLE: I guess what I was thinking was that the September meeting would be just agenda setting. October would be affordable housing and then we would start with what we chose from the agenda setting meeting to move forward to set up meetings from there on.

MS. REGAN: Do we really need a whole meeting to set up an agenda?

MS. LANGILLE: We have done it split before. It usually only takes one-half hour, 45 minutes, we could do it that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe that's a creative, cost-saving use of time - and we have very little time to do our thing. Perhaps then what we are looking at is the affordable housing in September for about an hour and a half, but we will reserve a half hour for agenda setting.

I think maybe the other thing, the question that's begged here, is that each caucus - it would be helpful if in advance of that meeting, we could present a short list of themes that we think should be considered or witnesses that we would recommend.

With that, because of the time I'm going to call the meeting adjourned. Thank you.

[11:03 a.m. The committee adjourned.]