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COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

Legislative Committees Office

March of Dimes Canada

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COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Ms. Patricia Arab (Chair)
Mr. Brendan Maguire (Vice-Chair)
Mr. Stephen Gough
Mr. Allan Rowe
Ms. Joyce Treen
Mr. Eddie Orrell
Mr. Larry Harrison
Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse
Mr. Gordon Gosse

[Mr. Brendan Maguire was replaced by Mr. Iain Rankin.]
[Mr. Allan Rowe was replaced by Mr. Ben Jessome.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

March of Dimes Canada

Ms. Gail Mores,
Director - Community Engagement and Accessibility

Ms. Sue Uteck,
Accessible Biz Coordinator (Atlantic Canada)



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2014

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Patricia Arab

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Community Services. My name is Patricia Arab, I am the MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park and the chairman of this committee. Very shortly we're going to be receiving a presentation from the March of Dimes Canada and I'll ask the witnesses to introduce themselves in just a few moments.

I wanted to bring it to the members' attention that we are being recorded today. I know that an email was sent out indicating that that was going to be the case. The recording is entirely for training purposes, it is only going to be used through the legislative committees, but I just want to make sure that there are no objections to having the cameras turned on today.

Maybe we could start by having the committee members introduce themselves and we'll start with Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We do have Ms. Joyce Treen who will be joining us shortly, she is coming in from the riding. We are very happy to have Mr. Gosse with us here today - it is a pleasant surprise to have him with us today.

I'd like to remind everybody in attendance, including those who are observing the proceedings, to please make sure that they have their cellphones either turned off or switched to vibrate. All of our proceedings are recorded for Hansard so the way that things work in the committee is that you direct all your answers or all your questions through me, through the chairman, by saying Madam Chairman and you'll catch on to that pretty quickly as we go on.

Our agenda today - we are meeting until about 3:00 p.m. We have our witnesses from the March of Dimes Canada and then we have a number of committee business items to discuss, so I'm asking that we stop questioning sometime around 2:45 p.m. so we'll have enough time to get through our committee business. I'd like to welcome you again and perhaps for Hansard you wouldn't mind introducing yourself.

MS. GAIL MORES: Certainly, it's great to be home. My name is Gail Stewart-Mores. I'm Director of Community Engagement and Accessibility Services for March of Dimes Canada. I am a proud Cape Bretoner and educated at Dalhousie and I've worked from one end of this province to the other - the first job in Sydney, mid-point there was a job in Freeport, and also Mahone Bay - so I've been around. I've worked from one end to the other. I love coming home and I want to thank you very much. It's an honour and a privilege to be here.

I have my colleague Sue Uteck with me. Sue is our coordinator for one of our employment services programs, Accessible Biz Connections and she's available to respond to questions when we get to the question period if there are specific things that I don't know about.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms. Stewart-Mores. We'll give Ms. Uteck a few minutes if you could introduce yourself.

MS. SUE UTECK: I'm Sue Uteck. I'm a Regional Program Manager for March of Dimes here in Atlantic Canada. The program that I run is called Accessible Biz Connections. It's a program through a federal Civil Service Canada grant where we work with all the service providers in Atlantic Canada that work with people with disabilities. They have a client that's job ready, job trained. There might be the gap for the small independent business owner; we come in and provide the wage subsidy of \$30,000 or up to one year.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's fantastic. We're happy to have both of you here. We'll let you begin your presentation.

MS. MORES: March of Dimes started in the 1950s, and back then there was a threat of polio across North America. What happened was the mothers became very frustrated because their kids were becoming very ill, oftentimes ending up in hospital,

living in an iron lung. These mothers decided on a fundraising event - knocked on doors. We called them the marching mothers. That raised funds for the Salk vaccine.

In 1957, they found the cure for polio, which was marvellous and we're very thankful for the fact that we were able to eradicate polio in North America, and March of Dimes had a strong role to play in that. Here in Canada, we decided as an organization that it was important to respond to the needs of people who had become disabled as a result of their polio, and that has become the mission for March of Dimes Canada.

Our organization is an organization that serves people from across the country with disabilities, and we do it in a variety of different ways. We like to consider ourselves one-stop solutions for people with disabilities. Our mandate and focus is to help people live their fullest through community participation.

We have a budget of \$92 million a year and approximately 1,600 employees - a majority of whom are working in Ontario. We started our national expansion in 2006 and we've slowly made our way across the country, and we're doing it very strategically and we're doing it in a collaborative method.

One of things we recognize is the fact that for an organization to go across this country, you must truly know and understand the communities which you're serving and you must work with those communities. I can attest to the fact that as a proud Nova Scotian, every time they say, well rush things - no, that's not how we do it in Nova Scotia. I remind people of the importance of coming into a community and doing what we can to support the services that are already there; to partner with other organizations whenever possible; and if there is a unique need or service or something that we can provide that's not readily available, that we do that. That's the approach we've been taking since 2006 here in Nova Scotia.

Our mission is to assist people with physical disabilities; to maximize their independence, personal empowerment and community participation. Our vision is to create a society inclusive of people with disabilities.

Over the past 60 years we've seen evolution in our society's perception of people with disabilities, the translation of this perception into legislation and policy, and a change in the expectations of people to live in the community. March of Dimes tries to be a source of a broad range of services for people with disabilities seeking greater independence.

Our programs and our advocacy work address a broad range of issues and barriers facing people with disabilities. The common theme is to support lifespan community living for people with disabilities, with a particular focus on the key transitions that people face throughout their lives. Oftentimes this is dealing with the impact of acquiring and coping with a disability, deterioration of function as a result of disabling conditions, moving from children's services to adult services, from adult services to senior services. We support the

transition from school to work, from hospital to home and from a family home to independent living.

In the Province of Ontario the provincial government is recognizing that lifespan community living is not only good social and political policy but it's good economic policy. We know that a shift from funding in acute care to communities' support services recognizes the fact that people getting out of hospital early and keeping people in the community saves money. There has been a great deal of evidence in that.

We have a hospital visitation program that we operate in a number of different hospitals and that particular hospital visitation program frees up staff. We visit stroke survivors. We have volunteers who are stroke survivors who go into hospital, either acute care or rehabilitation, and give a message of hope. The message of hope is simply this: I was there once, you are there today, and I can tell you about my story. What happens as a result of that message of hope is the nursing staff and other rehabilitation staff in hospital no longer have the barrage of questions because they have somebody else who has experienced it, so it frees up the hospital staff time but also provides those volunteers who are stroke survivors with a phenomenal way to give back. It helps their mental health as well so we are finding out that there are health benefits and fewer returns to hospital as a result of this type of thing.

In our participation in Putting People First dialogue, we learned about the clear road map aimed at improving coordination delivering effectiveness of Nova Scotia's disability programs and services. Several governments across the country have embarked on similar paths with some identifying accessibility legislation as a critical step in a clearer road path. It's happened in Ontario and Manitoba; most recently with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, which was enacted last year. In Ontario we have had Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act for the past seven years, and in British Columbia it was just announced and I received documentation yesterday about their new legislation called Accessibility 2024, so they are moving forward with a 10-year plan to improve accessibility.

March of Dimes Canada provides a number of services. One of them is our independent living services where we assist over 2,000 people in the Province of Ontario to live independently by providing them with assistance in their activities of daily living, living either independently in apartment buildings where we provide 24-hour care or in their own homes where there is scheduled care for them.

Employment services - this is the area where my colleague Sue works. In our employment services, we have been providing support to people with disabilities since the 1950s, helping them to find jobs, providing a variety of interventions along the way. All of these programs have been funded through a series of different grants - be they at the municipal, federal and provincial levels - depending on the province and the grant we were successful to achieve. Currently we provide services to approximately 8,000 consumers

who are clients of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, which is Ontario's version of the WCB, the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, and the Community Coordinator program of Service Canada, Employment Ontario and a variety of other funders.

In 2009 we created CanVet Services, which is a partnership that we formed with other companies. We are funded through Veterans Affairs and we are helping the military and former members of the RCMP find employment in civilian life. To date we have served over 700 people. At the present time, we have 250 active clients here in Atlantic Canada.

AccessAbility Services - and we do spell it a little bit differently - has been a focus of ours since 1954 with the discovery of the Salk vaccine. In AccessAbility Services, we have a program called the Assistive Devices Program where we provide financial assistance to people who are on limited incomes, oftentimes living at the poverty level or below to help them purchase much-needed accessibility devices, mobility devices, and equipment to help them in the washroom.

Our Home and Vehicle Modification Program is a program that we administer on behalf of the Ontario Government and we provide grants for people to modify their homes or their vehicles; each grant is worth \$15,000. A home modification grant is a lifetime grant, and a vehicle modification grant, you can reapply after 10 years. We know that vehicles do have an end life. That particular program is \$9.2 million available to Ontarians, and last year the service value - had we been able to fund everybody - would have been about \$31 million. Unfortunately \$9.2 million is where we had to draw the line because that's where the funding ended.

We do Barrier-Free Design Consultation Services, and those services are available across the country. There is a team of staff that work for me who are architectural technologists and other design staff who provide advice and assistance to help people make their homes more accessible. We're also contracted by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to do technical reviews of plans so when community agencies such as a Legion want to make their facility more accessible for people with disabilities, we will review the design and the plan and provide them with feedback and recommendations on what they can do to make that plan viable. We'll also identify perhaps if there are more economic means to respond to the plan that they have proposed.

We have a volunteer base program called DesignAbility where we have volunteers who are architects and engineers and people who are really good with their hands. What they do in DesignAbility is create devices to help people with disabilities become more active. One of the ones that I always like to talk about is something called the skating aid, which basically looks like a little hobby horse type of thing where an adult or a child can sit on this. It's made from parts that you can buy at your local hardware store - it has a bicycle seat, hand grips and you sit on top of it, astride it, and put bob skates on your feet. What it

allows is a person with a disability, a family that has a child, or an adult member who is no longer stable on the ice, but still wants to get out and enjoy ice skating - they're able to do it. That was designed by our volunteers. We also do other types of very simple adaptations.

The Volunteer and Peer Support Services is another area where we do a lot of work here in Nova Scotia. In Nova Scotia, we support peer support groups for stroke survivors. We have a group in Colchester and we also have one in Halifax and one in Dartmouth that we support from time to time by providing them with leadership development opportunities, by attending our volunteer conference where we give them suggestions and what they can do to strengthen their group. The model is survivor first, so we're looking at strengthening the resolve of the survivors in the leadership capacity to help their community.

Our Recreation and Integration Services consists of a variety of different things including residential camps and trips. In a couple of weeks, we'll be organizing a trip to the Calgary Stampede where we have a group of people with disabilities who will be travelling. We go on cruises, we go to Vegas - we do all kinds of things through that program.

One of my favorite programs and one of the ones that we've been operating in Nova Scotia is called Conductive Education. Conductive Education is a program for people with neurologically based physical disabilities. That particular program has been operating here since 2007 and we have about 50 participants a year in the program. The people who can benefit from Conductive Education are children with cerebral palsy, people who have Parkinson's disease, MS, stroke survivors, and individuals with acquired brain injuries. It's based on the concept of neuroplasticity.

One of the things I'm very proud to tell you about is the fact that March of Dimes supports Canadians who wish to become conductors. That's the name of the specially trained staff. We have had two Nova Scotians - Rachael Skinner and Beth Lynch, both from the Valley - who received scholarships from our organization to go to Europe and be trained at the University of Wolverhampton in England and come back. Both of those women now work for us as conductors. Beth is working here in Halifax at our Halifax office and has been working with us here for about four years now.

Accessible Biz Connections is the program that Sue runs, and that's the wage subsidy program. At this point in time - we started the program back in November and to date we've had 109 people placed, and we're getting approximately 15 people each week coming to us for support. That particular program is available to businesses, agencies, and individuals in Atlantic Canada, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Programs that we operate specifically in Nova Scotia, just to quickly recap: our Conductive Education; CanVet Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Polio Canada, our peer

support group; Stroke Recovery Canada, the other peer support group; our Recreation & Integration Services where we do wellness retreats and camps; and Employment Services.

March of Dimes Canada is currently working with governments coast to coast to coast as a result of recent expansion of services to Nunavut. We are working not only to help develop accessibility legislation and contribute to each province's dialogue, but in determining where programs and services can improve the lives and livelihoods of people with disabilities, seniors, their families, caregivers and communities.

We would be pleased to provide an advocacy session in November when we are back in Halifax with our annual event known as Rock for Dimes. For those of you who haven't been here, it is my shameless plug for a fabulous fundraising event. We do it down at the Cunard Centre and it is a bunch of Nova Scotia bands comprised of professionals and they have a grand time. We are thrilled because those funds are able to help us run the Conductive Education Program and those other services that we currently have operating here in Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms. Mores. Ms. Uteck, would you like to add anything?

MS. UTECK: Just a correction. I was a little late this morning because as of this morning when I woke up at 6:15 a.m., we had 109 employed; before 1:00 p.m. today, we have 119. I am pleased to say that all 10 are in the rural area of Nova Scotia and as far as Head of Jeddore. I was just signing off the contracts.

When we break down the percentages, we know what the need is for the jobs for people with disabilities, the most underfunded market in the country. Along with that marketplace comes what we really feel is enabling legislation because as a newcomer to the not-for-profit sector, what I do in this program is try and overcome the fear of the employer. So as you go about as a government to enact this enabling legislation, one of the things will be the education piece for you, the public, is the fear of how much is this going to cost me and my business.

I think it's why Gail, and March of Dimes, would be a major asset to the committee on a go-forth basis is that we've worked with the Province of Manitoba. Ontario was the first, Manitoba was the second. I think Nova Scotia is at the forefront. We have the highest disabled population in the country and I think it's an example that the government can move on - both the past governments and the current governments were working towards this legislation.

I'm pleased to see all Parties here at the table and I look forward to helping with this round table or any questions that you need to use March of Dimes as a resource.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Excellent, thank you so much. We'll open up the questions and we'll start with Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My first question is to Sue because I had written down here to ask about your program if it reaches rural Nova Scotia, and you have answered that. Do you have a different strategic plan to reach those communities in rural Nova Scotia? As you know, things can be quite different in rural Nova Scotia in terms of transportation issues for people with disabilities, housing issues and so forth.

I know there would be different challenges also for the employers, so could you speak a little bit about that.

MS. UTECK: For example, the client we currently have at the Head of Jeddore, she is working for Autism Nova Scotia, her family is bringing her in. So for all of us who know where Head of Jeddore is - that's almost a four-hour day there and back for that client, so I am searching with all the social agencies. They have a van that is outfitted but the gas is becoming almost insurmountable so the family is deciding if the resources for this high-functioning autistic person are present to live independently here in the city while she continues this job placement, because Autism Nova Scotia wants to hire her on. Those are some of the challenges that we're definitely having when it comes to the rural area.

But more for me, it is travelling the Maritimes, doing that outreach and working with all the service providers who work with those clients. I'm not the expert, I'm simply the money girl in between. My job is to rely on the expertise of that job developer because often a client might say that this is a job they'd like to have but the job developer knows that he or she is not capable. We need them employed for a minimum of 21 hours a week, so wherever we can fit in - for example, what is available to this family to help them in the way of gas funding here in the Province of Nova Scotia. So as this project unfolds for us, I am keeping a running - I'd say a chart of the gaps in the system of where the agencies or inter-co-operative agencies can work together.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: So you work with a variety of agencies that are actually knocking on the doors of the employers. That's not your role; your role is to . . .

MS. UTECK: No, for example, PeopleWorx in the Valley, we've had a direct pipeline for some of the jobs into Michelin where they've had the Flowercart that works with people with disabilities. We work with the Flowercart who knows the capability of their clients and we step in and offer the wage subsidy.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Great, thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I have to apologize to Ms. Uteck because I explained how the procedure worked prior to you coming here. All of our meeting is being recorded by

Hansard so if the members of the committee can wait until I acknowledge them before they ask their question, and then if our two witnesses can wait until I acknowledge you, just for Hansard purposes so they know who is speaking.

MS. UTECK: I have bronchitis, I can't hear a thing. (Laughter)

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Orrell.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I guess I have a couple of little questions with probably some big impact. We know that 20 per cent of the population of Nova Scotia are disabled. We know that there are a number of organizations around the province that are doing the work that you guys do. I have a pretty close tie to the organization in Cape Breton that does basically the same idea.

What would the disability legislation mean to you guys, as a funding agency, to be able to do the duties that you do?

MS. MORES: If we were to receive funding, we would be able to serve more people. One of the areas we could do, for instance, we would be able to help people with their independent living. One of the areas we do right now in the Province of Ontario - again, let me use an Ontario example and I apologize for that - what we do is provide people with assistance getting themselves out of bed, dressed and off to work. We also assist university students and college students living in residence with getting themselves ready for class. Sometimes we have staff that attend classes with a person with a disability and take their notes for them. We do that type of thing with funding provided.

If we had funding provided, for instance, under a home and vehicle modification type of program, we would be able to provide that same type of support. What we do in Ontario right now is a person with a disability applies, and we review their application to ensure that they meet the basic criteria. We have a priority setting because we have a limited amount of funds and we end up saying good-bye or, unfortunately, we cannot fund about two-thirds of the people who apply to us.

What we do is we prioritize based on need, then we work with that individual to help them find a contractor in their local community who will work with them. We will review the plans to make sure that the plans are reasonable, that they are safe if a person is new to a disability or they have a significant change in their disability, we will help them work with an occupational therapist again to come up with a reasonable, cost-effective design. We're talking basic and essential services only. With \$15,000 you're not going to put much more than that into a home but it's enough to get the basic and essential services.

Again, those are subject to funding. How we do those types of things is, we monitor when there are calls for proposals put out. So if a request for a proposal came out from a

funder here on the East Coast, we would actively compete for the funding and do it that way.

We also like to work in partnership with other organizations. Recently - when I was here two weeks ago - Sue and I met with Easter Seals to talk about the opportunities for us to work together. We serve a very similar population and we both have limited resources, so how can we work together to maximize the impact that we have without duplicating? It's important not to duplicate.

MR. ORRELL: So if we had accessibility legislation, would that come with the funding to do the duties that you do? Would that be part of the legislation, being the biggest question, because if we have the legislation that says it's our duty or our right to provide accessible services to people, I would hope the funding would come with it. But if it didn't, and I think you guys have, as I said, a \$92 million budget and you're funding something to the tune of \$62 million or \$66 million, you fundraise the rest of the money. That's probably one of your biggest challenges, I would think, isn't it? What's your biggest challenge to the fundraising, I guess,?

MS. MORES: The greatest challenge for fundraising is getting the message out to the people who have the funds and to be able to describe the impact. Oftentimes it's hard to get that message out to people to really understand the difference that it makes in a person's life.

In 13 communities we're funded by a United Way, and one of the things we're discovering with United Way is they're changing their focus so we're having to constantly readapt our message and find ways of describing the impact. We know that if a person has access to funding to help them purchase a wheelchair, that person will be able to get out of their home and maintain employment; that person will be able to be actively involved in the community. If they're not actively involved, they oftentimes end up suffering from social isolation, which can lead to depression, which leads to mental health issues and other health breakdown things, so those types of things.

To go to your question around accessibility legislation - in the Province of Ontario, the funding that came with the accessibility legislation was funding-driven - dedicated towards organizations to go out there and inform others within their industry specific about the legislation. So a lot of it has been really focused in on just making awareness of the fact that the legislation exists in the Province of Ontario and what an organization must do to comply. There hasn't been any specific funding come out to serve a person with a disability per se.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rankin.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I just have a couple of questions going on the same vein as the funding part. I was just curious if there is an opportunity from the government to

provide funding in a certain jurisdiction, is it possible or is it in your mandate to be able to leverage that appetite from any given government to try to attract further funding from like the United Way? Do you see any way of partnering with the private sector non-profit groups? Is that part of what your organization can do?

MS. MORES: The short answer is yes, indeed, we can and do. For example, let me go back to the Home & Vehicle Modification Program. The Rick Hansen Fund is a fund that is administered as a result of the fundraising that was done by Mr. Hansen. There are many times when we will have a family that qualifies for funding from Rick Hansen and they need a large home modification. Perhaps their child has had a spinal cord injury as a result of a car crash, and that family now needs to make their home fully accessible. So they have to put in ramps, they have to do bathroom modifications, they may have to do a bedroom modification with ceiling tracks, things like that.

Those modifications are typically much more than the \$15,000 we can do, so we will work together and we will match the funding with the Rick Hansen Foundation and work together that way. We also spend time encouraging people to go out and seek additional funding from other organizations. We'll do letters of support, for instance.

With the Assistive Devices Program, we act as a broker. In that particular brokerage model, what we're doing is taking the limited funds we have in a community and we will match it. So if a person has a disability, perhaps multiple sclerosis, we'll go to the MS Society and we'll say to them, can you throw some money towards this individual and help them out in buying that wheelchair?

In the Province of Ontario, the government will pay the first 75 per cent of the cost of purchasing a wheelchair. If it's a power wheelchair, they typically cost around \$20,000. If you're living on an income of less than \$10,000 a year, finding that final 25 per cent is near impossible. So we take our donor dollars, match them with another organization's donor dollars and then say, all right, who else can we go to? We'll go out to service clubs - the Rotary Club is a fabulous support - and other service clubs as well that we'll go out to. We match the funds together to help that person buy their device that they need.

MR. RANKIN: In the absence of a program like that, such as you mention here, what would a college student do presently? Are they able to contact you directly or do they have to always use government channels to get funding in some sort of way for wheelchair or even for, say, some kind of scholarship to a university or a bursary or something like that? Because there is no program here, how does that work?

MS. MORES: We work very closely with the colleges and universities. They often have an advocacy office or an office for students with disabilities. We work very closely with them. We ensure that they know about us and the services we can provide. In Mohawk College, for instance, in the City of Hamilton, we actually have staff that work out of that college so we have an office there. Students are directed to us that way. People can apply

independently. I believe that Sue Uteck might be able to add a little bit more from her perspective.

MS. UTECK: I have a twofold answer. Going back to the first question that you had asked of Gail, everyone knows when government steps up to the plate that private organization takes an interest because government sets an example. It doesn't say that government needs to fund all that money but it's an assurance to service providers or others willing to invest that if the government believes in this, then we see it as a good fit in a program because they've provided that initial money.

For example, when I do Accessible Biz Connections, it's 100 per cent government funded. So what it is for me is the incentive to the employer to look at this person with a disability and say, I'll give you the business case why you should hire this person, and I'll give you an incentive until the six-month completion and you'll keep them on.

Working with that, I've just started to get inquiries, actually. Mount Saint Vincent has a small - all these are one-person operations, we're very small here in Atlantic Canada as well, but Dal, Saint Mary's, the Nova Scotia Community College, and Mount Saint Vincent have an office of accessibility. I often get inquiries from them as to what is available in the form of funding.

To be quite honest, it's kind of hard to read right now what's available with the Department of Community Services. You can go to that 120-page sheet and find out what it is for this but there doesn't seem to be any special dispensation. Not everyone is in the same box; there are a lot of circles and a lot of triangles out there. That's another gap that I look at as I do research for March of Dimes Canada, as to where a government can fit into the program.

You asked about this enabling legislation. What is going to be the biggest piece for your enabling legislation is to have an advocate on board that explains the benefits and why you should do that because like any program, if communication has a breakdown, it's bound to fail.

MR. RANKIN: I do see a huge return on investment with that wage subsidy program. While I have you speaking, do we have numbers on the 109 new jobs? Have any of them lost their jobs?

MS. UTECK: To date I've had only two out of the 109. One we chose to terminate in Montague because the subsidy, what he was putting in for and what he was actually paying the person - I get it that it's a small mom-and-pop bakery but this is a guaranteed 100 per cent program, you're going to pay that employee 100 per cent, and I'm not going to take the risk that after our wage subsidy ends that this employee is not going to get paid.

We're actively working with her job service provider to look for another job and I have very good contacts in P.E.I., through the Murphys and the O'Brien brothers. They're all Irish over there, by the way, I am finding out, but very good job connections.

Again, take a rural community, even here in Nova Scotia it's extremely difficult but I'm finding it's the rural communities that want to take advantage of this program. I did the presentation to the UNSM that this is a program that I run that can be available to those smaller towns. HRM wouldn't qualify, they're too big, but any other small town - Port Hawkesbury is not even the smallest of the small. Here it is, I'm here, take advantage of the program.

MR. RANKIN: Yes, I think those are great numbers, if it's only two out of over 100.

Just one final question, I'm just curious if there is precedence in Ontario or Manitoba, because they're so much more involved in their programs - of your group or other groups working collaboratively with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development? The reason I say that is because we have a lot of schools that aren't accessible. There's one in my riding where I've advocated for accessibility to the second level. To me it's a question of equality of opportunity for some of the students who can't get up to that second level and be with their peers. That has been a huge challenge to work with that department.

I'm wondering is it just Community Services that you're dealing with or do you have a channel to work directly with some of the schools?

MS. UTECK: I'm working with the schools in actually a different form, to bring a program we call Life Living Independently. It's another living independent program but what has happened in the current education system, there's such a mishmash of programs and the gap comes between those who are about to graduate and enter the workforce or go to the university, that certain life skills are lacking.

When it comes to the physical piece, this is where we need you to bring the enabling legislation because we can gently coax people and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to say this is the right thing to do. It's entrenched. It's my understanding the government is not going to do an Act. They'll do enabling legislation.

I might be wrong and maybe you'll change your minds but if it's enabling legislation, we can work on a good blueprint and a time frame that's expedient, at the behest of the government.

MR. RANKIN: Okay, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. BEN JESSOME: I'm just wondering if you can kind of expand on - it likely falls on your Recreation and Integration Services, but could you talk a little bit about what your organization does in terms of social inclusion? I guess one of the things that I'm most aware of with regard to people with disabilities is that their parents are there to support them, their families are there to support them, their teachers are there to support them, but away from the classroom, after school, what's going on and how are you bridging that gap and bringing them into social circles within their communities?

MS. MORES: We do a number of different programs. One of the programs that we run is something called BeFriending. BeFriending is a volunteer-based friendly visiting program. Back in the early 1980s - oh my God, it was that long ago - I was hired by what was then known as the Halifax County Recreation Program and developed what we called the Leisure Buddy Program for rural Nova Scotia. I'd go to places like Ecum Secum and Necum Teuch; I was down around Peggy's Cove and those communities.

What I was doing was I talked to people in the communities who had disabilities, who are isolated, and I matched them with other volunteers living within their community so they would have someone to work with them and to go out and enjoy recreational activities, whatever those pursuits are. We run exactly the same type of program in Ontario. We call it BeFriending - the same type of program, different name. That's one of the options.

Another program that we run that I think is very successful is we have something called Coffee Connoisseurs, and this is aimed at the young people - 20 and 30-somethings who like to go to coffee shops. We have partnered up with different local coffee shops that have an accessible facility. We have a volunteer who has a disability - typically somebody that, again, is a university student. We recruit them, and they tweet or send a message out to their friends and say, we're meeting at 10 o'clock over at this place. They go out and they gather together as a group of people to do things.

Other things we do, we organize trips to the baseball game or maybe go to a theatre festival. We organize day trips. We also do long-term destination trips. One of the things that we're looking at right now is investigating setting up a wellness retreat that we would do at the Mersey River Lodge just outside of Liverpool because it's such a beautiful place. The accessibility there is phenomenal.

We do programming here at Brigadoon. We come to Brigadoon Village. We've rented it now two years in a row during March break for our Conductive Education program.

In addition to those types of things, we have two programs that I really want to talk about. One is called ICE, which is a program that's for people that use augmentative or

alternative communication devices - so you think of the people that use the computers to speak. Because they don't have a voice themselves, they may use a Bliss board, which is a board with letter symbols, those types of things. In the ICE conference - and ICE stands for independence, communication and empowerment - that conference is organized by a committee that is comprised 50 per cent of people who speak like I do; the other 50 per cent are the AAC users. We get together and we plan the conference at an accessible facility. Typically the conference is a weekend - it starts Friday night and ends Sunday at noon.

The highlight of that particular conference is something known as the Town Hall. The Town Hall is a gathering that looks very similar to this. The people sitting around the table would be the AAC users; people like me are sitting in the background. The agenda and the topic for the Town Hall is distributed about a month before the conference so people have an opportunity to plan what they are going to say.

The only people who have a voice in that Town Hall are the people that are the AAC users. It's an incredible way of empowering those individuals and giving them a chance to develop the leadership skills because they're sitting on an organizing committee for a conference so they're doing all that type of stuff; they're applying their skills. They're also getting a chance to talk about a topic that's important to them.

The second program is the LIFE program, which is what Sue alluded to. In this particular program, we're working with young people between the ages of 20 and 35, and we're helping them acquire the life skills that they need to be able to successfully enter either volunteer work or the workforce. In those programs we partner with children's treatment centres; Outward Bound is another one; and there's another organization called Camp Awakening.

In those particular programs, we do banking. One of the major banks comes in and they teach people about financial management. We do life skills and community urban exploration. Many times some people with disabilities don't even know what is available in their community, because they've been brought up that we'll keep you at home, we'll protect you, whereas, in fact, giving them the opportunity and the dignity to risk and go out there and try something independently on their own is so very, very important, so we do it that way as well. Those are just a few examples.

MR. JESSOME: I would think that it is challenging at times to keep these sustainable in some communities. Even with the challenges that I face in trying to recruit volunteers and bring people out to events and stuff like that, how do you bridge that gap, or is there an appetite that once the program exists, the people who live in that community continue to help that builder? I don't know if I'm being that clear, but how does your sustainability plan work?

MS. MORES: The example I'm going to use is conductive education. We introduced conductive education here in Halifax back in 2006. What we did at that point in

time is we had a group of parents who had children with cerebral palsy who wanted to have the program. We offered it for two weeks. We rented space at the Y, when the Y used to be on Gottingen Street. We rented space there and brought a conductor, and one of our staff from Toronto came down. We shipped in our equipment and we organized the program for two weeks, to find out if there truly was a need and an interest. Interest was definitely there, so the next summer we came back and tried it again. This time we had a Nova Scotian who had just finished their training, so we hired the Nova Scotian. That was a good idea, keep them in the province.

We started running the program on a year-round basis. We've tried that program in a number of different models. When we first introduced the program we had the person who was our conductor doing a travelling road show, I would describe it as. We ran programs in Antigonish, the Valley, and Halifax. We learned very quickly that it wasn't very feasible because of Nova Scotia weather, particularly in the winter, so that sustainability problem became a problem. We now have it only running here in Halifax.

What we do as an alternative is our camp, which I described earlier - that we do a Brigadoon Village. We do that at March break. We try different models; we oftentimes will take a program and do it for two weeks in a province or a community. Conductive education, again, we offer in Montreal. Every year we do a two-week camp. So we have some service provided. Sustainability, it's donor dollars. The Rock for Dimes event I referred to earlier underwrites conductive education. That particular program's board of directors has identified that they support the program and they subsidize the program. So that particular program is subsidized by donor dollars at a rate of 75 per cent. Parents pay a fee. It is an expensive program. It's kind of like putting your kids through competitive hockey or something like that. We do have to offer a fee, because we can't afford to run the program based solely on our donor dollars.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I have several questions, but I first have to start with when you mentioned the Leisure Buddy program. I'm dating myself, too, because I worked with Halifax County; those were John Markesino days.

The first question I have is more on coordination and a holistic approach throughout the province. One of the issues - and you've referred to it with respect to so many different organizations, not just in urban Nova Scotia but throughout the province, from one end to the other - many of these organizations were created through parents or volunteer community members who saw a need in their community, and then they would grow, because the needs were growing. As you know, some of those organizations were able to get financial support through government departments, such as Community Services. Others weren't as successful and might have sought funding elsewhere.

One of the issues seems to be that there can be an overlapping of services, yet at the same time there could be a uniqueness to that organization. The biggest challenge is because it is somebody's project that was developed from the very beginning that there is an ownership and a difficulty to sort of give up part of that. I'm going to ask you the golden question of how to go forward with that.

I realize what happens is that then you're competing for those dollars that there's not a lot of. I'm just wondering, from your perspective, what steps would you say that an organization like yourself can play in trying to take a leadership role, as you talked about the Easter Seals - that kind of conversation - and what role can government play?

From my perspective with government, like all Parties here today, it's to encourage that kind of coordination with more than one department because it cannot just sit with Community Services - it overlaps into Health and Wellness, it overlaps into Education and Early Childhood Development, and so forth.

How do we get over that, going around and around? We've had these discussions before, so how do we get on a path forward to make a difference - any suggestions by either of you?

MS. MORES: I've experienced it. I probably have some of the battle wounds on my back still. What we know is there's passion. The passion comes from that person who saw a need and said, hey, I need this and no one else out there is going to do it so I am going to do it, and they mobilize their friends. What we need to do is honour that passion. First and foremost, you honour that passion and you respect that passion, and then you say, how can we work together? Let's come up with a shared opportunity.

I like to bring people to the table. Oftentimes you start off with an individual conversation - many cups of coffee. Having the conversations, getting to know the person, saying, let's see what we can do together. We have a shared interest here; maybe there's something we can do together. We often find that works quite well. It's slow - painfully slow.

One of the things that we've learned over the years - and you see it more and more - is when you're applying for funding these days, I can't go alone. If I'm going to apply for funding, I need to have partners. So there's a grant coming up - let's say it's a seniors group, just to use that as an example. The federal government has a wonderful grant called New Horizons. That New Horizons program is a fabulous program and if you're going to go for funding from them, it really helps to be successful if you have another organization.

So if you come up with a project that is distinct from what anybody else does - it's a brand-new concept project and you take that project and you do it together because it's going to meet the needs of both your clientele, that single project where you apply for

funding together oftentimes helps to bridge the gap and it brings you together. I find that's a great way of doing it; it's proven success.

We work, for instance, in the LIFE program - again to use that one as an example - and that program runs five days a week. Outward Bound does our programming one day a week; Camp Awakening does it another day of the week. That way, we're also bringing together both organizations and have a chance to deliver their services to that same clientele, because oftentimes these groups will have overlap in terms of the people they're serving. So it's a matter of finding ways to jointly succeed.

MS. UTECK: As Gail says, we're very much an organization that believes in partner or perish. I take the same approach into Nova Scotia that I often find that in being in this job, sometimes we're a fairly kind of new organization in Atlantic Canada in many ways, so people perceive us as a threat because we're a large organization across the country. Now have I seen duplication of services? Absolutely. I sometimes have to take off my ex-government hat and put on my not-for-profit to say, why is this organization here and what is that niche? That becomes a difficulty for any organization seeking government funding because it's your statistic versus mine.

For example, the program that I have, I have a goal for the government. I don't have the statistics. By the time I finish this project, I'll surpass the government's goal so hopefully the project will get renewed - it's a real niche, but some of the smaller organizations and not even the smaller ones - for example, hopefully a new partnership with Easter Seals. The CEO, Henk van Leeuwen, and I are both on that partner or perish, so when we go into the smaller organizations - organizing a program in Pictou County - I don't come across as a threat to the organization. You're still going to have your funding, but if this is a program in the end that realistically - and I'll be realistic that someone can do better and can still provide that partnership, there might be some culling in some of the organizations. There are hundreds of silos here in Atlantic Canada, not just in Nova Scotia and none larger than P.E.I. that I encountered, for such a small province.

I think the realization basically is it has to be the accountability. It's reporting the feedback card, but not every statistic or lack of a statistic means the program wasn't a success because all programs sometimes have to be tailored to meet the needs of the individual. For example, the LIFE program that Gail was talking about, getting that age group, 18 to 25, that's tailored to the individual needs because not everyone has the same goals and successes, as anyone who has children is aware of.

We look at the partnerships but if we come in, I don't apologize if there's a program that we think that we're doing the better job at, then we'll want to partner with that organization and assume them underneath our umbrella. In fact, some of the chapters that I work with now are relieved that I'm there for them. It has been a struggle for them to keep up, as you've said - it's a mom and pop that organized this because they saw a need in their community, but they want to give it up, they want someone else to take over.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: On a different subject, I was very interested to hear that there's conversation throughout Canada, talking about brain injury and how to approach that. That is a big issue in our province, in terms of we do not have a separate funding program for those with a brain injury.

As you know, it is a very different injury - it's a physical injury that has perhaps created intellectual disabilities. Right now the way the system works is that if somebody needs assistance and they're going through Community Services, they will get the funding through the income assistance program. They need to go to their doctor to get a paper that says they have an intellectual disability. It's very frustrating for those who have had a brain injury.

We do a great job in terms of when an injury occurs and the medical response to that, but it's the afterwards and the support. I know that our Brain Injury Association in Nova Scotia has really struggled. We have helped them with some funding to educate not only the general public but our public servants, so they can have a better understanding. They need much more and I'm just wondering how far along those discussions are. Is Nova Scotia on the radar in terms of those discussions and where do you see that going in terms of support for brain injury clients?

MS. MORES: We're working with the Brain Injury Association of Canada. That's the national umbrella group for brain injury associations across the country, we're working very closely with them. One of my colleagues is a member of their board of directors. We're supporting the organization right now in a number of different ways, including helping them with organizing leadership conferences and information conferences. It's really important to get the messages out there.

There are a couple of messages. One of them is that once you've had an acquired brain injury you still have a life to live, so how do you maximize your life after that, with whatever challenges you may have facing you as a result of that brain injury? So what are the things you need to do to help you live successfully? That's one of the messages.

There's the whole prevention message and that's a huge area that needs a lot more work around it. I mean we look at the number of people - I have nieces who play rugby here in Nova Scotia and they would be shaking right now because I would be considering how you wear a helmet when you play rugby and, Aunt Gail, you're being silly. But I firmly believe that prevention of head injuries is so very, very vital and important.

The other piece we're doing is, we're working with them in their leadership, helping their volunteers strengthen. Yes, Nova Scotia is on the radar screen that way. The other area that we would love to do some more work around, and we haven't figured out where the sources are because it's always finding the source for the funding or the enabling legislation is around more accessible, affordable housing because accessible, affordable

housing for people with disabilities and the brain-injured population is certainly one of them. They really need that type of stuff.

We've had a great deal of success in the Province of Ontario and we're starting to reach out to other provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador is one that we're working closely with the association there around congregate care living, because what we're finding is that oftentimes people living with acquired brain injuries need a little bit of additional support. So a congregate care home - we've rented floors of apartment buildings so we'll have four individuals living in individual apartments, but there's a staff person there available to help them out with some of the behavioural things and issues that come across.

One of the neat projects we did two years ago is we renovated a school in Sudbury, Ontario. It was an old school that was no longer used and so we purchased that with the assistance of funding from a number of different sources, including donor dollars that we had raised over the years, and we've renovated that school and turned that into a congregate care facility for people with acquired brain injuries - so looking at different solutions if we found funding partners here. We're also working with insurance companies because often the insurance companies have something to gain from this.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I just wanted to follow up - when you asked about the resources - I don't know if you're aware, when the NDP was in government we created the Housing Strategy, along with a road map to independence. Fortunately, our new government has adopted those strategies and are supporting them, so you may want to have a conversation with Housing Nova Scotia because that's part of the strategy.

We know it's going to take time. Those things do not happen overnight, but it's good to be at the ground floor in those discussions of which way to go. They all interrelate together, from the People First strategy to the Housing Strategy to the road map to independence for those with disabilities. That's the goal that the funding in the future will be based on - an individual being independent rather than on an overall program because as you know, people have different needs. So that might be a starting point of discussion for you with Housing Nova Scotia, just as a suggestion.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Orrell.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I guess I just have a simple, quick question. It says here there are six programs offered now in Nova Scotia through the March of Dimes. How much of your budget would come to the province to operate those six programs?

MS. MORES: The Conductive Education program here in Nova Scotia, the annual budget is around \$250,000, which is one of them. The other programs, in terms of the donor dollar and recreation programs - the peer support programs and those types of things - we don't split it up that way, we just have a broader general one. The supports that we do

have - for instance in Nova Scotia this year, one of the things we'll be doing is an Aphasia Camp. We're doing that in partnership with Dalhousie University, the Nova Scotia Aphasia Association and I've forgotten the other - there's another organization.

We're all working together and this is a wellness retreat that we're organizing for individuals who are stroke survivors or people with acquired brain injuries who suffer from a condition known as aphasia. That's that communication disorder that happens as a result of either the brain injury or a stroke. That particular project will be about - actually, when that's all said and done, that will be \$100,000. Now that's bringing funds together from all different groups.

One of the things that's very interesting with that particular program is 50 per cent of the people who attend are the stroke survivors or the individuals living with aphasia. The remaining people at that event are volunteers and staff who are helping them with their communication and the various activities that are going on, so that's another one. I would suggest - and with employment services - putting all of that stuff together, probably a million dollars in the province. Sue is telling me more.

MR. ORRELL: Is it accessible through the whole province? Is rural Nova Scotia able to access some of the, say, spaces for your aphasia camp? If it was someone from Yarmouth or Cape Breton and the camp was at Brigadoon, would they be able to access that funding in order to access the program that you're putting on? I think that's a great program and when you put people together of like illnesses and conditions, it seems to bring a lot of people out of their shell.

I do some volunteering with the burn camp and have helped with the burn camp in Cape Breton. When you go there, you see these kids arrive and they're all shy and they don't talk. If it's their second time there, they're the outgoing ones. Last year I helped organize them to go to one of the local carnivals, and to see them there with each other, interacting and doing the things that they like to do, it just brings them out and allows them to be children again. The aphasia camp, I can understand would allow people to start communicating and it does allow them the confidence because everybody there is in the same boat and they really try hard so I'm just glad to see that it's accessible to the rest of the province. Thank you.

MADAM CHARIMAN: Thanks, Mr. Orrell. Ms. Treen.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Thank you. My question is concerning employment services so there are kind of two aspects of it. First of all, how do people with disabilities access you? Like what means - do they call you direct or where do they . . .

MS. UTECK: For once I listened, that's a rarity. What happens is that I've worked with and contacted every service provider which serves Nova Scotia so in Nova Scotia alone there are 127 service providers that work with people with disabilities. I travelled

Nova Scotia, face-to-face meetings, went to job fairs, Internet, social media campaign, everyone knows that we exist and everyone knows of that subsidy. So that's how we really get on was through the face-to-face, good old fashioned boots on the ground work, then in putting a face to a name. So those job developers that work with the clients with disabilities say Sue is ready to go to work now, hey, do you remember that March of Dimes, they've got a wage subsidy.

Again, it goes to the economic activity. We're on a budget of \$1.76 million, which I'm about to chew through by the end of the month. For this program, they're going to transfer money from western Canada. It was one pot - so much for Ontario, so much for the east, so much for the west. Well we've been so successful in working with the service providers - and I mean there's a clear need here; the simple answer is through the agencies. Often I just get word of mouth from a parent who had a son or daughter employed, a neighbour had never heard of us so I'm doing 9 or 10 referrals a day that way as well.

MS. TREEN: The second part is employers, how do they attach themselves to this program?

MS. UTECK: We have a partnership with Restaurants Canada and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, so I am also attached to their website but, for example, I might have had a booth at the Saltscapes show, I'll go to the Food and Wine Show, I'll meet with Jordi Morgan and say you know you've only got two job educators, your end is really not pushing with the restaurant association. We've kind of had a boom because of the recent legislation federally.

What I see is if there's any event that I can go to free or anywhere you want to drag me to as your guest - that's for all members, all Parties - that's how I get the message out. I just beat down the door and get the word in. The biggest thing about this whole program, it's about education so I offer the business case as an example and the food and restaurant association, it's usually a 75 per cent turnover rate so that means you're going to spend \$1,200 training a new employee whereas if you hire a person with a disability, it's a 33 per cent turnover rate and there's a business case. There's a federal study that was done on it.

We had one gentleman that I met here at an Ability Starts Here Conference in December. He has seven Tim Hortons outlets in Ontario, he has 75 employees, not one sick day in 32 years of those 75 employees.

The easy part for me is look, if you don't believe me, here, I'll just leave this report with you and 99.9 per cent of the time I get a call back, if I have the report with me.

MS. TREEN: So you're talking about restaurant services and you've obviously made a connection with that business. How could we attract other businesses to these programs? I know this coming from being self-employed and stuff, I don't even know that

any of this even exists. Like how can we reach all of these other businesses to know that it's out there and these programs are available?

MS. UTECK: It's a great question and again it was for me putting boots on the ground. I have met with every business commission from Elmsdale to Port Hawkesbury, whether to speak at their luncheon, whether the Burnside Better Business Association - I will be on Jobrapido. I see that opportunity because our program - it has to be a legitimate job, it cannot be a make-work job. I will send an email off to the employer and send a brochure on our program.

It's a lot of face-to-face, a lot of work but definitely it's out in Atlantic Canada because when you look at a project that really didn't start until mid-November and here we are reaching the end of June and the need, we're seeing about almost 15 people applying a day throughout this province. The great thing about it is that it's not - I have a high number employed in the IT sector; a high in the marketing, in the professions. We have people making \$25 per hour. I think we have people making more money than I do.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I'm wondering if either of you can expand on what you do specifically for military veterans and police officers who are transferring to civilian life. You made a comment about that earlier in your presentation, and I just wondered if you can elaborate.

MS. MORES: We have a contract with Veterans Affairs Canada, and we meet individually with those people who can no longer do their trade in the military or are no longer able to work in the RCMP, who are looking for employment in civilian life. We sit down with the individuals, first of all, and we take a counselling approach. We discover with them what their job interests and their job goals are. If they need to have vocational assessments done by qualified vocational assessors, where they take them through a series of aptitude tests and that type of thing, we'll work through that way.

We will also help them with paying for tuition to go to university or college, assistance with purchasing the equipment they need; if they need a computer or if they need to have ergonomic chairs and office set-ups and that type of stuff, so they can be successful in the pursuit of their studies, we will help them with all of those things.

This particular program is funded, as I said, through the federal government and through Veterans Affairs. It's in their best interest to have these individuals out working effectively and gainfully in the community, and we match them with employers.

MR. JESSOME: Is there anything that stands in the way of Person A going through this channel to get the counselling to get transferred over to that civilian job, or are there some options when it comes to that sort of stuff? Are you the first choice when someone

decides or doesn't decide to leave the military or police service? Are you the counsellor of preference, if that makes any sense?

MS. MORES: When they come to us - if they're coming through Veterans Affairs - CanVet Services, we get referrals from the military. The military or RCMP identify the individual, and they are referred to us through that service. Yes, we are the only agency that is contracted to do this particular thing. We're just waiting right now, actually - the contract was renewed and we've gone through another RFP, so we're just waiting for the results of that one. Fingers and toes are crossed that we will be able to continue to be the successful proponent for that one - don't know yet.

MS. UTECK: It tends also to add to the question that we are located directly here in Halifax, and as Gail said, all the referrals are to us, but I'm right next door to CanVet, so we have that inter-agency for us as a co-operation. For example, trying to find someone right now a trucking job in rural Cape Breton, so working on that today for this individual who said, I can't go back, but this is what I'd like to do.

So we, amongst ourselves, even from Accessible Biz Connections to CanVet, we have that co-operation among ourselves here at March of Dimes. I think we could have a bigger presence with the military. It's always, again, you're in the door with the right person. You have some fantastic job developers and then you have some, they're doing the best they can, because the client case - when you walk into their office, you can't see them because of the paperwork. It speaks to an essential need, which we hope to expand.

MR. JESSOME: How do you see that expanding, and can you elaborate on that expansion?

MS. UTECK: I think it has to be an expansion within the military - the resources that are working with the veterans with disabilities themselves. They're very understaffed, so it's on a limited basis where the clients go through. I believe we have just about 230 clients at this point. It can vary from day to day.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions? Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to ask you about the severity of the disability, how far support services you do have for - I'm going to ask about the employment first. I know that there are many programs to try to help those who have moderate or low to moderate disabilities but I have met several people who had more severe disabilities. They have a greater, of course, difficulty to get an employer to be able to support them in their efforts of working, the fear of the cost, as Sue mentioned, in terms of technology. Have you any clients who have been quite severe in their disability? Have you had any successes?

I know this is fairly new for you but I'm just wondering, are there some strategies or plans around that?

MS. UTECK: Again it's one of those that we will partner or perish. For example, if I am in the Valley area and that client requires over and above for adaptive or special needs, I'll refer them to the Neil Squire Foundation because they will have that equipment available. So we've come with a good collaborative working partnership with them from where we started in November.

March of Dimes can provide interim assistance up to \$3,000. To date, we've only had - in fact it was a ramp that was required and the employer said hey, I've got to put this in anyway. I said well just a second here, there is a grant through the Government of Nova Scotia that can pay for that ramp. So we ended up with a happy story at Mother's Pizza on Agricola Street.

What we try and do, if there are those needs required, we'll go out to the other agencies at first because we don't really have the budget here in Atlantic Canada but we can find the need for somebody.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I just want to say that your numbers are incredible when you talk about from November to now because there would be a period of time of educating and informing people, as you did. You must be working seven days a week, 24 hours, because those are incredible numbers. Thank you.

MS. UTECK: We worked hard at it.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Yes, you can tell.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Any further questions from our committee members?

Thank you so much to both of you and thank you for the amazing work you do. We really appreciate you being here to present to us and send us off with a bit more information that we can take back to others and hopefully be able to support you and your organization.

Let's take a three-minute recess and we'll come back for just a little bit of committee business.

[2:18 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[2:21 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We only have a few things to discuss before we adjourn. The first item that I just wanted to bring to the attention of members - and I know that this was sent out to us electronically by Kim, but it's correspondence from the Human Rights

Commission. That was in response to information that we requested at the April meeting. Everybody should have that in their packages to look over.

Other than that, I have no further committee business except to wish you all a very happy summer break. Our next scheduled meeting will be the first Tuesday in October, which is October 7th.

Unless there is something else that any of you would like to add, our committee is adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:21 p.m.]