

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Tuesday, March 3, 2015**

**Legislative Committees Office**

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Shore**

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## **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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Mr. Allan Rowe  
Ms. Joyce Treen  
Mr. Eddie Orrell  
Mr. Larry Harrison  
Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse  
Hon. Gordie Gosse

[Ms. Patricia Arab was replaced by Mr. Bill Horne.]  
[Mr. Allan Rowe was replaced by Ms. Margaret Miller.]  
[Mr. Eddie Orrell was replaced by Hon. Chris d'Entremont.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille  
Legislative Committee Clerk

## **WITNESS**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Shore

Mr. Jamie Irving,  
President, Board of Directors

Ms. Sandra Murray,  
Former Executive Director



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2015**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES**

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN  
Ms. Patricia Arab

MR. CHAIRMAN (Mr. Brendan Maguire): I'm going to call the meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Community Services. My name is Brendan Maguire, I'm the Vice-Chairman, I'm sitting in for Ms. Arab.

Today the presentation is the Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Shore. I'm going to ask the committee members, starting with Ms. Miller, to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: As usual, we're going to ask everybody to turn their phones off or at least put them on vibrate. We're going to ask that the witnesses - we will introduce you before you speak, just to make it easier on Hansard. I welcome you and thank you for taking time out of your day to come here. I'll get you to introduce yourselves and then begin.

MR. JAMIE IRVING: My name is Jamie Irving, I'm the Board President of Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Shore. With me today is Sandra Murray who is a former Executive Director of our agency. Sandra was ED for about eight years, up until October 2014 when she left to go into private counselling practice and so on. We're very pleased to have Sandra - I'm very pleased to have Sandra here today with me anyway, to help. She's an expert on our agency certainly.

We are very pleased to be here today to have this opportunity to give you some information about our agency in particular but on a bigger scale, the work of Big Brothers Big Sisters and some of our programs.

One of the terms you're going to hear a lot of today as we go through this is mentoring and that is really what Big Brothers Big Sisters is all about. Perhaps you have some preconceived idea of Big Brothers Big Sisters, but I think you'll see that the direction has changed a little bit over the years and we are certainly now very much focused on mentoring, helping the youth in our communities.

You do have a copy of the presentation; I'm just going to click through it. It's on the big screen there obviously. For 30 years, we've been on the South Shore of Nova Scotia now and the picture you see there is some of our kids involved in one of our activities. That's our Kids' N Cops program, which we'll explain a little bit later on.

As I say, I am the Board President, Sandra is a former Executive Director and a current volunteer. Just a minute to look at the vision and the mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, of which we are obviously affiliated. You see the word "mentor" in there very strongly through the vision and the mission. We are one of 118 agencies of Big Brothers Big Sisters across the country.

What we are going to cover today on our agency is this: We are going to look at our agency, our people, our youth, some of our programs, what our challenges are and what our priorities are for this year and beyond. As we go through this, you are going to see that we are a small agency, in terms certainly on a national scale but even on a provincial scale we're a small agency and we do have some specific challenges that we'd like to cover with you today.

Our agency started in 1985 so we've been around for 30 years. We are accredited through national Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. Our office is located in Bridgewater, we service Lunenburg and Queens Counties. We are one of seven Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies across Nova Scotia - the others being Halifax, Yarmouth, the Valley, Colchester, Pictou County and Cape Breton.

Our people: We have a volunteer board, you see the names there. It's a relatively small board - small but mighty we like to say - a very active board and a really good group of volunteers. Some have been there for many years, some are new. Sandra Mailman you see down towards the bottom there is our newest board member. She is a town councillor in Bridgewater, actually, doing wonderful work for us. She has a lot of contacts in town which doesn't hurt.

Our board committees: We have a Revenue Steering Committee, we look after our funding, the PR Recruitment Committee, Policy and Personnel Committee.

We have two staff, we have Vanessa Mossop, who is our Executive Director and caseworker. She is presently on parental leave so Sandra is filling in today. As I said, I much appreciate that. We have Chantelle Barnaby, who is our fund development specialist who looks after our fundraising events and so on.

As we go through this and we look at the challenge we have from a financial perspective you will hear that we used to have a staff of three people. We have reduced it to two by combining the Executive Director and the casework position. We were very fortunate to have Vanessa come on board who has the necessary qualifications to do both of those roles. In fact while she is on parental leave for 17 weeks, we have not replaced her so we are doing some serious cost-cutting in terms of wages this year in 2015, in the hope of gaining some financial stability for our agency. I'll take a look at that in a little more detail later on.

Of course we have another large group of volunteers who help with our fundraisers. We have three major fundraisers we look at and we also have a number of small fundraisers throughout the year as well. Fundraising is a very, very big part of our operation. In fact, at our board meetings we have to stop and take a few minutes at the start of the meeting to really remind us why we are in existence because sometimes we begin to think that we do nothing but raise money. Obviously that's not the case, as we're here to serve the youth of the community. We start each board meeting with a little story - of course respecting confidentiality we need to and so on - but a good news story about something that has happened with some of the youth in our community.

We look at our youth, this is the number of youth from 2010 up to 2014, youth involved in our programs. These are youth who are involved in matches, that are involved in our activities but also youth who are on our waiting list. That number could be much larger but we do not have the volunteers, we don't have the mentors we need to service a much bigger number than that. In fact in each of those numbers there, a significant number of those are kids on a waiting list right now actually.

We take a look at the Big Brothers Big Sisters programs. We have the traditional mentor matches and I put on there that these are becoming less common and this is perhaps what most people think of when they think of Big Brothers Big Sisters, it is just that - a big brother-little brother match, a big sister-little sister match or a cross-gender match. This is one big is mashed with one little and perform a mentoring function on a one-on-one basis and build a very close relationship with that child.

As I say, these are becoming less common all across the country, not just in our area. What we are going to do instead is what we are calling our in-school mentoring matches. This will be our primary program for the future; elementary students matched with mentors. It takes one hour a week during school time, at the school. Of course the topics are varied, according to the needs of the child. Presently we have agreements with 12 schools on the South Shore. This will be where we will push our programs and this is

where we need to increase the number of mentors involved. This is a very successful program and it only takes an hour a week, and we can involve a lot more mentors than we could in the traditional one-on-one matches in this type of program.

I want to just go through a couple of slides here, and this is information provided by National to us and this just talks about the value of mentoring - the impact of mentoring on Canada's youth. These are in your handout. I'm not sure how clear they photocopied, but you can see some of the numbers there are pretty incredible.

Youth who have been matched with a mentor are 48 per cent less likely to have behavior problems in school and 43 per cent less likely to have conduct problems in school. You can see over on the right-hand side that they're twice as likely of finishing high school and there's twice as much likelihood of high academic achievement and so on. So that's the value of mentoring and that's what we're trying to get across in our community.

This is the mentoring effect on the work life in the community. It's pretty small to see up on the screen there, but down at the bottom is a significant one: one dollar invested in mentoring by Big Brothers Big Sisters returns \$18 to society. I can't tell you where that number came from. I don't know the science or math behind it, but that's what we're quoting on a national basis from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada - certainly significant.

This is the mentoring effect on education and, again, this goes back to our in-school mentoring program. Mentoring equals immediate results, it equals safer schools, and it equals future success. You can see all the numbers in there.

I work in an environment where we do a lot of mentoring at work and certainly we see the value of it in work environments. We can certainly see it, if not even more, the value of mentoring in schools and with our youth and so on.

So those are our two main mentoring programs - the traditional matches and the in-school mentoring, and this is a program we run in the summer. This is called Kids 'n' Kops where we have two one-week sessions. It's conducted by our agency and the local police agencies in the Bridgewater area - the Bridgewater Police Service and the RCMP. Really what this does is get a group of elementary-aged children more familiar with the police and they learn about what police do and the good of police and how police can help them and so on. Besides that, we have zoo visits and beach visits. It's a summer camp to some extent, but it's very educational, as well, because of the involvement in the police service folks. We found that certainly very beneficial.

Again, just some pictures from Kids 'n' Cops. This is the zoo visit. They go to the zoo in the Valley - have a good trip over there. That's one of the highlights of the week for them. And of course, kids having fun, which is very important also - it can't all be education.

Other activities we have with our children - and this is all the children in the agency; the ones that are in matches and the ones that are on the waiting list or so on. We have a fishing derby every year in Dayspring just outside Bridgewater. We participate in the Christmas parade in Bridgewater. We give all the kids on our list Christmas presents. Many of those are donated by local businesses.

We often get hockey game tickets where we take kids in a group environment. We have a Junior A team in Bridgewater, the Lumberjacks. The kids love to go to Lumberjacks games, farm visits, cooking classes. We have a squash festival, which I believe there's a picture of in here - anything that gets a group of kids involved and having fun and being around adults who can be good role models for them.

That's our fishing derby. It looks like that young fella caught a big one there - a prize one perhaps. That's the squash festival. When we first talked about a squash festival I thought it was like a racket ball type squash festival, but it wasn't. (Laughter)

So that's a little bit about our agency, our people, and our youth. Now I'd like to get into some of our challenges. Our first challenge is our finances. We began this year with a deficit - we're in the hole. The bulk of that deficit came from a fundraising campaign that we started last year - a new fundraising initiative that we just could not make work. We came in about \$15,000 under what we projected for the year. It was a weekly 50-50 type draw that we partnered with the Rotary Club in Bridgewater. We started it early last year, ran it until the Fall and we finally had to pull the plug on it because it was not being successful.

Some other agencies have been successful with it, others have not. We were one of the ones that weren't successful. Nonetheless because we had budgeted to make \$15,000 and we made like \$1,000, we came up short last year so we started this year in a deficit situation. We are projecting a surplus for this year but we're still going to be in a deficit at year end. We'll eat away one-third to one-half of our deficit, primarily because of our reduction in staff this year and staff expenses.

Our expenses are very well controlled, year to year we haven't had trouble meeting our expense budgets but it's our fundraising which is becoming increasingly difficult for it and I believe that's a pretty common theme in many agencies around the province. Fundraising is a very difficult endeavour. We are very well established in our community, we have tremendous community support but nonetheless, fundraising is becoming increasingly difficult for us.

I just want to cover some of our fundraising events. We are projecting this year a total fundraising of \$47,900. These are the events: we have the Bowl for Kids event, in fact that's this weekend, Saturday in Bridgewater, Sunday in Liverpool. We even go to locations and do Wii-bowling - computerized bowling for those who can't make it to the bowling alley. That's a good fundraiser for us, that's about a \$12,000 fundraiser for us.

McDonalds sponsors a McHappy Day for us where we make a little money on each Big Mac that is sold through the course of the day. We volunteer time to go up and work at McDonald's and serve burgers, it's a great experience. We have a golf tournament in July, which has become our biggest fundraiser. We're looking at about \$15,000 for our golf tournament in July. We host that at the Osprey Ridge Golf Club in Bridgewater.

We have a curling bonspiel every Fall, we had our 25<sup>th</sup> annual last November. That's a reasonably successful event for us. The funds have come down a little bit over the years but it still continues. We had a casino night last year which we're going to do again this year in November at the Atlantica in Western Shore. That was a very successful event for us as well.

We're starting a new program this year, we're calling it our Sponsorship Program. Basically that's where we're going to go around to businesses in the Bridgewater-Lunenburg-Mahone Bay area to start with and Liverpool as well and ask for businesses to come on board to be official sponsors for Big Brothers Big Sisters, where we will put their logo on our Facebook page, on our website, on our T-shirts and whatever - hopefully the official car dealer, the official restaurant, the official whatever of South Shore Big Brothers Big Sisters.

We do have multiple other smaller fundraising events throughout the year. One that is ongoing right now - one of our staff had a painting donated. Her aunt painted a lovely picture of Blue Rocks which we're selling tickets on and that will raise a few hundred dollars for us through the course of the year. We're trying our best to be as self-sufficient as we possibly can. Some kids from McHappy Days, I'm sure that's good, healthy food they are eating there so they are happy.

Of course our other source of funds is the grants that we receive and we are projecting this year \$44,000 in grants. This is what we get from Community Services, we get \$22,000; \$2,000 from the municipality; United Way funds us for in-school mentoring and Kids and Cops and we have a couple of other smaller ones as well. So we are \$48,000 fundraising, \$44,000 grants. We are working hard to increase the fundraising and of course we need continued support from government and agencies and so on. I know you hear that from everybody who comes in here, I'm sure, but nonetheless that's the situation.

Some other challenges for us are recruiting. Of course our goal is to increase our in-school mentor matches, that's going to be our program of the future and that takes expense, in terms of staff time and advertising of course, to attract those mentors. Each of those matches has follow-up to do, there's monitoring of the matches after the initial setup and so on. It's time-consuming for our staff but that's what we do, we mentor kids so that's what we have to have. Our challenge is to find mentors and to have enough funding to run the programs.



So what are our priorities for this year? Really to gain financial stability, we'll call it. We're taking a hit this year in terms of reducing our staff hours. When I say "taking a hit," I mean we don't have the staff available to push the programs as hard as we would like to in the first half of this year. Once we get our full staff back the second half of the year then obviously that situation will change. We're taking advantage of that reduction in staff cost to try to get us in a better financial situation for the year. Of course our other priority, as I said, is to increase the in-school mentor matches. We want to be ready in September and have a lot of matches in place.

For the future what we want to do is to continue to provide what we see as a valued and necessary service in the communities we operate in. As I said earlier, we feel we're very well established and well respected in the communities. We get good support down there. We have to continue the programs and continue to work because we really believe that these programs can make a significant difference. Those numbers I showed you came from somewhere - somebody did those studies so we take them as very, very valuable.

We want to increase our presence through these communities; reduce our waiting lists through the in-school mentor program; and, of course, to attain financial stability through continued community support.

Our needs - we need continued financial support from the Department of Community Services, Municipality of Lunenburg, Lunenburg County United Way, and we need continued financial and volunteer support from the people of Lunenburg and Queens Counties. I said the Department of Community Services - and I'm no expert on how governments work obviously - but I think what we're doing should be seen as a help and benefit to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, for instance, with our in-school mentor program. With our Kids 'n' Cops program, is that a Department of Justice benefit? I don't know if those departments have funds for these types of things or not. Certainly I think we benefit on a wider scope than just Community Services. (Interruption) Yes, the Department of Health and Wellness as well.

So that's our presentation. Just a little bit about our agency - the importance of mentoring and some of our challenges going forward. Sandra would like to add a couple of things, if that's okay, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for your presentation. We're going to open it up (Interruptions) Oh, sorry, go for it.

MS. SANDRA MURRAY: Do I have time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely, yes. Take as long as you want.

MS. MURRAY: Basically, some of the studies that we presented the findings on here have come from 100 years because national Big Brothers Big Sisters have been around

for 100 years, which enables us to do some really good longitudinal studies so that we can see the impact, so when we say our in-school mentoring programs have a 43 per cent increase in keeping children in school, that is based over many years.

I'd just like to touch on about Big Brothers Big Sisters on this one-on-one mentoring and why we are involved. I'm sure each and every one of us here in this room have had somebody who has said something significant in order to inspire you or create some kind of opportunity for you and all the resources that may be able to provide you with additional resources in order to help that - a teacher or somebody who is significant in your life. This is what Big Brothers Big Sisters is about. It's the reason why I'm involved.

I have my Nova Scotia teaching licence. I'm also a registered counselling therapist. I have been a guardian ad litem with kids who have been taken into protective custody, and I have been their voice in the courtroom. I have worked for the Department of Community Services as a caseworker. I have volunteered for the Department of Justice along with lawyers in order to give - when children are caught in the middle of a divorce, it's a parenting information program. I have seen exactly the difference Big Brothers Big Sisters has made in children's lives. We are increasing their opportunities.

As a therapist I see about how we develop healthy relationships. Everyone here struggles with that - how do we set healthy boundaries? These children who are part of our programs have no role models in order to be able to even say where are you coming from as far as setting a boundary.

There are a couple of reasons why people don't set healthy boundaries. One is that there is definitely self-worth involved, where they don't feel they are worthy of these boundaries that they are setting. Others can be that you are afraid of what other people are going to think. Then the one that is significant for the children of Big Brothers Big Sisters is that they have no role models that would be indicating to them what is a boundary. I mean we have numerous examples that we could be telling you.

Now also the mentoring behind that, that's the passion behind that. It's that one-on-one, it's that - I can show you these two children who are up on that board right there. The one in the blue T-shirt would have been given the blue T-shirt because he earned it, he became a leader. He had been attending the Kids' N Cops camps, he has a Big Sister, he's our cross-gender match. Over the years that he has been with Big Brothers Big Sisters, he has just earned and learned and became a leader, and really demonstrated leadership qualities for all the little fellows that would be coming up and seeing that. So we've inspired, his Big Sister has inspired him.

About a year and a half ago his family had a tragic accident, both his brother and his mom have brain injuries and they are still struggling through that but with his Big Sister it has been phenomenal.

The little fellow who had an in-school mentor who has now become his Big Brother, had moved six times within eight months. So he would be going from school to school all over - and his in-school mentor would follow - all along the South Shore, he would go to New Ross, to Chester, to Bridgewater and really not fitting into the schools and very angry.

The first time he met his Big Brother he was walking down the hall and he just basically kicked him; he said I hate you, get out of here. The Big Brother said okay. But our volunteers are phenomenal. They go through a two-month process, we orientate them, we support them. They don't go out there. We support the family and towards the end, when he would be moving to another school, he would run down after, he would run down and take his Big Brother and bring him down and introduce him to all his friends and say how special he was because he had a Big Brother. He definitely has just thrived under his Big Brother.

These are significant, it's us standing up and it does take a community. Our community has stood up for the past 26 years and financially supported that because they believe in this passion. That's why Jamie and I are sitting here today and I'm sure that's a lot of why we're invited and thank you very much for that invitation because I really do believe that together, it's not a government's responsibility, we are the community but we definitely, I feel it's a responsibility of us all to work together financially and otherwise to know that this core funding - because I can get free rent, I can get free computers, people. I mean there isn't anything. We put on \$11,000 Kids' N Cops program for about \$3,000 because that's for the staffing. Everything else has been donated, everything else - from food to whale-watching to everything - going to the zoo, everybody.

We need to keep on with that momentum, we can't lose that. Jamie mentioned about going across from community services to education; like community services is what we're having. The education is in-school mentoring, our health is we have Go Girls! and Game On!, which is healthy living. It's eight-week programs that bring the - we have all these programs that we could access and basically we've seen less bullying when we had the Game On! in the schools because they learned how to do conflict resolution. It's not a mandatory program. Parents come to us and put their children in the program and then guess what? We now have the parents involved and looking at what is healthy living and healthy eating or nutritional, then the children will bring it back and going over that.

We go over a child safety program which is what is inappropriate touching, what is inappropriate, what is safety for you. The parents are sitting there and going oh yes, you know, so it's educating and it's coming from where they're at and then slowly saying okay, you've got it, you can go further.

We really, and when we're talking about the police when we're doing the Kids' N Cops program, every one of those children has had a negative experience with the police, they perceive the police as negative, they've been taken from their homes for child

protection so the police are coming in as the bad people. By the end of the program they are like hey, they'll go up to them. I remember this one little kid when the police came in, he goes oh, you pulled my grandmother over, you gave my grandmother a speeding ticket. So it had a whole other - it was just really neat because then it had an opportunity of yes, I guess she was speeding a bit, so we had this great conversation. It's phenomenal how we could - I could just regale you with stories, I'm sure, for the whole two hours. It's the reason why I love Big Brothers Big Sisters and one-on-one and all these mentoring programs.

We are accredited, we have a segregated model, we have accountability, we are under the Societies Act for our boards, we have standards that we have to meet or the doors will be closed. Anytime I do a report to the Department of Community Services, when I did, it was so easy to do because we had all the materials set there because we have to give that to the national office in order to maintain the child safety standards. So it's all set, it's just not being utilized to its full potential, just like we would like to have our children utilizing themselves to their full potential I'd really like everyone to see how they could help us do that, so we can help them. I really do appreciate this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the comments. We're going to open it up to the floor. We have a speakers list so Ms. Peterson-Rafuse, you start.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just to follow up on your grandmother story, when we went out driving with my grandmother - she didn't drive but when she was with any family member she always had her homemade fudge in her purse and no one ever ended up with a ticket because she offered it to the police. How could you offer a ticket to a family member when the grandmother is giving her fudge? It worked, anyway.

I want to thank you so very much for your presentation and for the work that you do and all the volunteers. I have a couple of little quickie questions. What is the exact geographical area that you cover in the South Shore? What communities from one point to another?

MS. MURRAY: It's all Queens and Lunenburg Counties, so anything that is encompassed within that.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: So a very large geographical area.

MS. MURRAY: It's all the South Shore Regional School Board, which encompasses about 22 schools. It's very large. Geographically it's very difficult to be able to reach, you know, and we could definitely reach - let's say there's 6,000 elementary students, there's probably I would say about 20 per cent who would benefit from and so we're not even going throughout all the elementary schools. That's just the elementary schools.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: What I would say to that is that it's very important for us and when I say "us", all of us in terms of government and in Opposition to not try to reinvent the wheel. I think that your organization is there and is established at the grass roots level, that's why the support is so important because you actually could expand. Your mandate covers those areas anyway and you just do not always have the resources to fulfill that need, right.

MR. IRVING: We certainly don't have the presence in the outlying areas of Lunenburg-Queens that we'd like to.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Are you the only organization on the South Shore that would actually be offering the mentoring program

MS. MURRAY: Yes.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Because I once again want to say how important that is. Your program is unique. It's not duplication, like we do find in some areas when there is a look at budgets and there is need to make some of those hard decisions of cuts. I think what's unique about your organization is the fact that you are the only one that offers that type of service.

Finally, and then I will let my other colleagues have the floor - I'm really interested in the educational mentoring program with all the issues that we are having in our school system. There was a recent report about the number of violent acts that have occurred - I think it was up in the 4,000s. So there is definitely a need in our school system to work with students. Can you explain a little bit more how that program actually would roll out? Like if we had a child who was being mentored, how does that work in the school?

MS. MURRAY: Well we work directly - we have a school liaison for all the schools that we work with. So if there was a particular issue, we would be working through the guidance counsellor. Let's say then - they would say, this child would benefit from a mentor - there were anger issues for that child so really what we do in the program is just be there to listen to them. Our volunteers are there just to be with that child and that presence in itself makes sure that they feel they have someone that they can talk to and that's on a weekly basis. That's already existing in the schools.

Sometimes we've had our volunteers go in with the child into the principal's office. Actually, our police chief was a volunteer and he mentored John Collier who is past president of the board here as well. He went right in with the child and worked through that and then created a resolution so that child could be heard. He ended up just being very - he wasn't as problematic in the classroom. So that's what we're already doing and we have been doing, so that's the programming.

We could bring more Go Girls! and Game On! volunteers, which we did in the Mahone Bay school and the Liverpool school and that was very well received. The guidance counsellor would identify 10 to 12 students that they felt would need to have that and we would go in on a weekly basis and basically role-play conflict resolution and do some things for a healthier lifestyle.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: It sounds to me that it's a preventive type of program because you're filling a gap, you're providing a source of mentoring comfort for that child who would not otherwise have that, which we all need. If we have an issue within our own lives and we're fortunate enough to have a supportive spouse or family member that we can talk to and diffuse our feelings and so forth and our anger, I would see that this would be a valuable program. It would be preventive that that child or student can resolve it in a more restorative manner within the school rather than it continue to go until there is a huge blow-up.

MS. MURRAY: Anger is a symptom, right? Pathology would say it's a symptom. So under anger 100 per cent of the time is hurt, so what we're doing is we're providing a service to sit there and have somebody just to be able to validate their feelings. So then they feel heard and so then it's not so necessary to take that hurt out on other individuals.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Thank you for the presentation - extremely interesting. Like my colleague, that mentoring program in the schools sounds absolutely fantastic. Just a couple of questions on that; what is the age for mentors starting with younger children?

MS. MURRAY: Traditional matches go from six until 16 so that we would like them to be able to have a language basis of being able to speak and basically speak their needs - so we say six. Of course the in-school mentoring is in elementary, but we have had children who have had mentors in Grade 6, and if they're transitioning to Grade 7, which is very scary for them - and in the Chester school - it just depends on the age, it has helped them transition to Grade 7 with their mentor.

We won't start out in a junior high with a mentor - I mean, we could. We did have a peer mentoring group that we did try as well so that we had the high school students come down to be with the elementary, depending on how close in proximity they are. The in-school mentoring is normally from Primary to Grade 6 and then what we'll do is if they've had somebody, we help them transition to junior high.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just want to remind everybody that before a question is asked or answered, we want to make sure that I introduce you. Just to make it a little easier for our friends at Hansard. Mr. Harrison.

MR. HARRISON: If a high school student went to an elementary school to be with a child, what kind of training would they have to do that and what kinds of things would they do with the child?

MS. MURRAY: Normally our volunteers are over 19, but if we do what we would call peer mentoring - well, it's not really peer, but if they're mentoring, we would go in and they would go through a criminal record check, they would go through a two-hour interview, they would receive orientation, and then they would go and basically play with that. We have a lot of activities. They each have their own backpack of activities that are specific to that child's desires and so then they would do that for an hour a week.

We did do that where we would have interviewed probably about 40 students and then brought them down, but it's very labour intensive and then you usually have about five students out of those 30 who will make it to that. They find it very fulfilling.

MR. HARRISON: I would think they would, yes.

MS. MURRAY: Again, we do not currently have the resources to be able to do that, but yes. Thank you for bringing that up.

MR. HARRISON: I have others, but I'm going to let other colleagues ask questions for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we'll float it over to Ms. Treen.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Thank you for your presentation. I'm glad you didn't tell any more stories because you would have had me in tears. I was blinking my eyes trying to keep back - wonderful stories, wonderful success. I think it's great. My two fellow people across the floor asked a lot of my questions because I'm very interested in the school one as well.

So the peer mentoring - when does it take place during school times? Is there a time set aside or do they do it during lunch or after school?

MS. MURRAY: Currently - and we'll go back to the in-school mentoring, which is the adult one - we also have employers that allow their employees to do one hour per week. It's usually whenever - we go around lunch mostly or during a specific class. The difficulty was when we got into Grade 7 where they're having courses and then you have teachers - but when they're in that one class and then the teachers were seeing the significance, they say, okay I don't care - yes, please - whenever you want. So then it kind of went in and around when the volunteers were available to do that.

MS. TREEN: So is there any peer mentoring going on right now? With the peer mentoring, how much older would you have the child to the other child and is any of that

going on right now? You mentioned that there is no funding for it, but is there anything still existing?

MS. MURRAY: Existing in the South Shore? No. That is something we would definitely like to partake in.

MS. TREEN: If it was, what would be the age difference?

MS. MURRAY: Probably if we had somebody in Grade 10 or Grade 11, then it would be somebody in Grade 1 or Grade 2, so you're looking at about a 10-year span.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gosse.

HON. GORDIE GOSSE: A very beautiful presentation. I worked in your field for a long time and I understand that you probably spend a lot of your time trying to raise money for core funding to keep your operation going. This year past the Government of Nova Scotia froze all the core funding for every non-profit organization in Nova Scotia. In the House of Assembly he keeps saying it's under review until we find out if we're getting value for our dollar.

Now today you proved the value for the \$22,000. Has the Boys & Girls Club been contacted by the Department of Community Services in this review that's underway by the department for more funding for non-profit organizations? Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, all the non-profits, has your organization been contacted by the government to sit down and say here's what we provide - you told us today - to the department and say we need another 15 per cent core funding? Have you been contacted by the department?

MR. IRVING: We are in communication presently with the Department of Community Services. We have made a request for additional funding. In January we made a request for an advance on our funding which normally comes in April, which we received. We have also asked them to look at what we could do, what they could do for additional funding for us.

I believe to answer your question, Mr. Gosse, we contacted them, they did not contact us, but that review is underway right now.

MR. GOSSE: And that's the whole thing, I don't know when the review is going to come and be presented to the House of Assembly on getting a bang for your dollar, making sure the Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters - I know Francine Hall, Big Brothers Big Sisters Whitney Pier is across the street from my office. I'm quite familiar with the organization and the work you do.

I was Executive Director of the Whitney Pier Youth Club, the Boys & Girls Club for many years. I'm just wondering, when is your financial year? Is it March 31<sup>st</sup>, and then



you receive the funding from Community Services on April 1<sup>st</sup>? Is there something in this year's budget that is going to help you on the financial crisis that you're in?

MR. IRVING: I don't know the answer to that yet, Mr. Gosse, because we've not had the final answer from Community Services. As I say, we did receive an advance but that's what that was, an advance on the funding that we normally receive in April.

MR. GOSSE: So you won't receive any upgrade like 10 per cent or 15 per cent or 20 per cent in your core funding? The \$22,000 you receive now, up to say \$30,000 for this year coming in - what would you be looking for is what I'm asking?

MR. IRVING: We'd very much appreciate that and would like to see that but we've had no commitment that that's going to happen yet, no.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. HARRISON: Seniors - how did they get involved with the program?

MS. MURRAY: I've done presentations to many seniors clubs and the retired teachers. They at first thought okay, you know, we're not hip enough to be going - and oh, it's fabulous, it's like there's this one lady, Mrs. Crouse, who is teaching this little girl how to knit and it's just really, really - yes. If you ever have an opportunity, just go on our website and then go on the national website and you'll see some of these kids running at their mentors when they're coming into the school and a lot of them are what I would consider a senior, yes. So, definitely, there's lots to offer.

At Kids 'n' Kops actually right next door is the seniors home/nursing home and all their children went over and helped them weed the garden, so they were telling them exactly what was a weed and what wasn't a weed so they wouldn't pull out some neat things and they just gravitate immediately.

MR. HARRISON: They are a fantastic resource and they love doing it, they love just that interaction with the children so I'm glad you're making use of the seniors, like myself.

MS. MURRAY: I just would like to add to that, you know it's the opportunity to get out and speak with all the seniors clubs and being able to do that, that's where the difficulty lies, too, to go and really recruit and bring them in and then take them through and then you know, take them and help them understand all the skill sets they have that would help in the mentoring capacity.

MR. HARRISON: Are there folks available to come and do those kinds of presentations, to seniors groups, for instance?

MR. IRVING: There will be. Right now with our staff situation we're down to one staff in the office right now but certainly that is going to be one of our focus areas, as we try to increase our mentoring, we're going to look at all avenues available. That is one that Sandra has utilized in the past so I would say yes, probably in the Fall of the year that we will have people available to do that, yes.

It's not just the staff, it can be the board members as well. In this time that we are running with a small staff, our board members have stepped up, where they are able to, and have gone in and done some things to help proliferate the mentoring programs.

MR. HARRISON: I'm from Colchester County so would there be people there, in that region, who would be able to come and explain the program? Not rely on you folks - I mean, there must be other organizations as well.

MS. MURRAY: There is one in Truro definitely. If you just go on the national website and the contact information is there. Michelle is the executive director, and her last name is escaping me now. Yes, definitely she could have someone go - if not herself - and do a presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Miller.

MS. MARGARET MILLER: Thank you for your presentation, it was really great. It reminds me of my past life a lot. I was associated with Mothers Against Drunk Driving so when I start hearing you talk about fundraising I think oh my gosh, I remember what that was like because it just never stopped, it was always a battle. I certainly appreciate what you are doing and certainly the work you are doing is so beneficial.

I have a couple of questions. Your volunteer base - do you have other volunteers who actually will come into your office maybe and help out? I know with MADD, even as a national organization, there's only one paid employee in Nova Scotia and the rest are all volunteers. Is there an opportunity there for people - retired people, retired teachers, whatever - to come in and be able to assist you in your office with that kind of work?

MR. IRVING: I think there probably is, yes. As I've mentioned, the board has stepped up and has taken on some of those responsibilities. On one of the slides there I just put it under "other volunteers" - people who come and help us with our fundraising events. Certainly some of those are qualified to come into the office and help us. That may be an area - in fact it's a very good suggestion that we could look to because they are very willing to help us in whatever way they can. Some of them are past board members, for instance, and so on. That's a good suggestion, thank you.

MS. MILLER: Also, national funding, I know with MADD there was some core funding that used to be provided by the national organization. Does that work with Big

Brothers Big Sisters as well or basically is each group on their own for their own core funding?

MS. MURRAY: No, we pay a membership to the national so we pay them for an annual membership so there is no funding from the national office.

MS. MILLER: Also, what about accessing summer students? I know there's a lot of programs out there for not-for-profits that you can hire summer students. I know the Boys and Girls Club in Truro usually has three or four around that office, it's where our MADD office was. Is that something that because they have the ability in the summertime even to be able to go recruit sponsors and it's legs on the ground that could probably give you some help.

MS. MURRAY: That's how we have our fund development specialist, through one of those programs. She was hired on as a summer student many years ago. Then we also access a job creation partnership which is where we could have assistance from the federal government in order to pay for an employee to create jobs for that. We've had many summer students.

MR. IRVING: We have an application in for one for the summer as well.

MS. MILLER: Can I have one more short question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to pass it and then we'll come back to you. The next on the list is Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I must mention that when Mrs. Crouse is finished mentoring the children on knitting, I could use her. (Laughter) I've tried knitting just a couple of times and anything that I knit starts this way and goes that way so put me on the list, please.

I just want to go back quickly to what my colleague brought up with respect to funding. We had discussions about the funding amount for the educational mentor program. Have you calculated how much you would require for funding in order to run that program? I'm sure you have many schools that you could spread it out to, so do you have specific schools that you know okay, in Phase I, we'd like to do five or 10 schools, we'd like to go from there, and what those costs would be to those variety of steps? Does that work out?

MS. MURRAY: There is a national fee that has been determined. It's \$650 per child for an in-school mentoring program, and \$1,200 for a traditional match. That's encompassing everything it takes from the match monitoring to the orientation and to recruiting. That takes it all into consideration.

With the geographical impracticalities, it's not taken into place. When we're going across from Lunenburg and Queens Counties, I have estimated over the past it's probably about \$1,000 per child; that would be taking in those geographical impracticalities.

The reason we're only in 12 schools recruiting volunteers is because we try to have the most children as possible in one school so that we're not going and doing a match monitoring in Aspotogan and then coming and going all the way back, which is unfortunate because we definitely could have children there. So we try to be financially frugal in being able to look at that and keeping the numbers, but we could be in other schools and I would estimate about \$1,000. Did I answer your question, Denise?

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Do you actually have a waiting list in the schools that you're actually servicing now and do you have any kind of estimate of the needs and the areas that you cannot service?

MS. MURRAY: It's astronomical. We have a current waiting list when a parent will come in and want a Big Brother or Big Sister, so we currently have a waiting list because they have gone through the process and we've put them through the process, said you're on the waiting list, and we will try to service them even while they're on the waiting list.

The in-school mentoring - every guidance counsellor just keeps saying, please give us another volunteer. So they have estimated they have about 20 per cent of their - so if you're looking at 6,000 children, that's low-balling that. They would say, we could put them on a waiting list, but we're not going to be putting them there unless we have a volunteer, but they have a waiting list and they know who - the next time we get a volunteer it prioritizes who goes to the top of that list. You're talking 1,200 and we're only servicing not even .01 per cent of that.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Perhaps with the blessing of the committee here, I would encourage opening the doors with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This sounds like a great opportunity to have governments take down the silos and do some cross-budget funding programs, which is really important and I believe that there has been discussion about how important that is - that we don't just stay within one department, because of the limited resources in that department.

This looks like it is a program that could receive support from other departments but should receive support from, say, Community Services. I don't know if we can make a request of this committee that the minister looks at that and perhaps works with her colleague, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to see if there might be some possibilities of doing that type of co-operative funding.

I have one last question. I know that Mr. Gosse said from what we've heard today, we can really see and what you have on paper - the \$22,000 that you receive is good money

spent by our government, right? We are talking about other opportunities that you can't fulfill because you need that increased money. I'm sure with the cost of living, the \$22,000 every year is not really \$22,000. So what would you be asking for this coming fiscal year that would really make a difference for your organization, to make sure you are sustainable but also give you a little bit extra to move forward? Do you have a figure on that?

MR. IRVING: We presently have an operating deficit in the neighbourhood of \$25,000. The \$22,000 we receive from Community Services, plus the money we receive from United Way, plus the fundraising we do, in a normal year should allow us to keep the doors open but we've had very little if any success on reducing that deficit.

Because of the cuts we've chosen to make in our staff situation to improve our financial situation, we're projecting about a \$9,000 surplus this year. If we had an additional \$15,000 from Community Services, that would put us in good shape.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Added on to the \$22,000.

MR. IRVING: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to pass it over to Mr. Gough.

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Thank you for coming in with your presentation today. I was wondering if you could please explain your eight-week Healthy Living program. Do you have any going on right now or how many have you done?

MS. MURRAY: We've had, over the past four years, and I don't have the numbers right in front of me, I could get them but we've had about seven or eight groups. They are eight-week programs, an hour and a half per week and it's healthy living, healthy lifestyle. They talk about - and they're for girls, the Go Girls! program and the equivalent is the Game On! for the boys, which we've never had one because we did not receive the funding for that.

Now usually the volunteers who work with the Go Girls! are all young girls themselves. So we usually have the volunteers there somewhere from about 19 to 27. So we have those young girls, and there is a tendency that they are reacting more with the young girls around that age. So we have about 15 girls and three volunteers, and they talk. They do a journal and they discuss, they talk about anything from makeup to healthy living, they create snacks that are healthy, they talk about basically how they are feeling, self-esteem issues about the effect of media, what it is on them.

They have an opportunity to be able to do some conflict resolution. There was one instance in Mahone Bay where they were getting into a fight on the playground and they were able to bring it back to that healthy Go Girls! group. They resolved it there and they did it on their own. So we have lots of opportunity within those eight weeks.

The Game On! would be by young male volunteers and that would be similar but they would just maybe be doing different activities, there's a lot of conversation about what it is to be a young man, what it is to be in this you know, what are the struggles, right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Miller, do you have another question?

MS. MILLER: Again about fundraising. Call centres are an active part in a lot of fundraisers. Do you have the ability to use them? I know it costs a lot to use them but 50 cents of a dollar is better than nothing of a dollar. Is that something that has ever been incorporated with your group?

MS. MURRAY: I'd have to get you to elaborate, Ms. Miller, I'm not quite sure. We have call centres that volunteer to be part of Bowl for Kids and they will do, like staff, yes, the call centre. Actually there's two, there's one in Liverpool, outside Liverpool, and the one that is in Bridgewater. They have definitely participated in having bowling teams and they've done staff things on their own. Is that what you're meaning, Ms. Miller?

MS. MILLER: Not quite. I mean the kind that will actually call and ask people for money to support the group. I know MADD doesn't - I think the mandate now is that you have to ask people who were donors so you can access your own files, so you would already have a list of people who have donated in the past. Do you have the ability to have call centres or somebody calling them to ask them for funding? Is that a possibility?

MR. IRVING: It sounds like it could be a possibility. It's obviously not one we've explored but it might be worthwhile looking into, yes.

MS. MURRAY: Can I just add to that? On a provincial level we have of course the TV, like the Bowl for Kids, and people can access if they call that 1-800 number. Then they are able to go to whatever area they want to donate to. That's the only thing that's even kind of similar to what - so they funnel it, but I think that's an awesome idea. If the call centres are involved with us already on that, maybe they can bring that to the administration and maybe do part of that as some type of volunteering.

MS. MILLER: One last question. Coming off Mr. Harrison's question, we were talking about the high school mentoring. I love that idea of high school seniors mentoring young people, I think it's such a valuable tool. I think everybody in elementary school looks up to the kids in high school, especially the people who are involved in sports and different things and to see that.

Is there an opportunity here again to - and I think it would have to be something that you'd have to look at with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, but to have this actually as a credit or a partial credit for a course, not just volunteering with the Boys & Girls Clubs but also other volunteering that students might

have some kind of a half credit or a credit course because of their community involvement work.

MS. MURRAY: I'm just waiting to answer that. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to go on to somebody else now, Ms. Murray.

MS. MURRAY: I love this question because being part of - I lived in Alberta, and then in Ontario you have to have X amount of community hours and you are given a credit and you cannot graduate unless you have that. I love it. Yes, that would be very, very helpful. I can say that's a bona fide yes, I think, if we could have some conversations and I have mentioned it before.

Again going back to the Honourable Ms. Peterson-Rafuse and whenever she was saying - whenever it was being considered about going across all departments, because in-school mentoring is part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Department of Community Services is all, you know, for kids and we - most of our children are part of Community Services in part because of being in protective custody. We have children who their guardian is basically the province.

Then we have Health and Wellness, so we could go into that. Locally we do get some - we can apply for funding from the wellness grants that are out so we can look at that. Then Justice, I mean I went to a crime prevention symposium where the whole conversation and all the keynote speeches were about mentoring. Here we are, we're right in that, so Kids 'n' Kops was definitely part of that. It's locally we do that so everybody is - you can pull that funding from that. So if we just increase - and thank you again for this invitation because this is exactly what this does. It just keeps increasing the knowledge of exactly what these mentoring programs that are existing here and that we could say yes, let's do this as a credit and have that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gosse.

MR. GOSSE: Thank you. You mentioned earlier about Justice, I think there's a program out there in Justice called the Lighthouses program.

MS. MURRAY: Yes.

MR. GOSSE: Have you ever applied for that and received a Lighthouses program, in Big Brothers Big Sisters. What is it, \$5,000 one year and \$5,000 the next year, if my memory serves me right? Have you ever accessed that from Justice?

MS. MURRAY: We have applied five times and never received funding.

MR. GOSSE: Oh, that's not good. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: Thank you for your presentation. It's really a worthwhile program and nice to see you involved with the schools. I think that's long overdue. I don't know how many other organizations get involved with actual school time on their premises.

I noticed in one of your slides you talk about the number of youth involved. Do all those that are involved, say, in the last year - 79 - have mentors?

MS. MURRAY: No.

MR. HORNE: Not all. That was a little unclear to me.

MR. IRVING: That's a total number of youth that are involved in our programs - maybe the Kids' N Cops events and so on - no. We feel that if we had enough mentors and we had the resources to support that much, we could certainly do more than we have today. That 79 includes all the kids who are on a waiting list as well. That's a total number. We have to remember that the kids on the waiting list while they're waiting for a mentor, they're also involved in our activities so they benefit somewhat from the program.

MR. HORNE: Just on fundraising, it is a hard thing to accomplish to get enough volunteers to work on fundraisers. There are a lot of government grants that are given out by the Department of Health and Wellness; even the Department of Energy on movement and getting kids out moving around and getting exercise and so on. It's a full-time job, I think, trying to write those up, but they're certainly worthwhile when you get the money.

I would try to maybe suggest that you have a group of people that can write up those requests and see how many different government departments there are that would give out funding every year. Not easy, I know.

MS. MURRAY: Thank you for bringing that up because it does - like if you're looking at delivery of services and maintaining the highest standards for delivery of services in the core funding and you look at - I would have put my time in. We had somebody hired to actually look exactly at where are all the grants so that we can apply for them at specific times. There is an extensive amount of time.

By the end of it, I was getting fairly quick because I would already have had a template almost, but it's like you're trying to fit it into whatever. Under Wellness, like Go Girls! and then you're under for the - and you know, I've got to go back to The Lighthouses program. We did apply to Lighthouses, but there was something before Lighthouses that we received money for computers. It was under the Department of Justice, I can't recall exactly what it was, but then it rolled over into Lighthouses, which was more around crime prevention where we would have applied for the Game On! and the Go Girls!



Again, I'm going to go back to a previous comment that I made that the community is really good about giving us, like, free computers. The Department of Community Services will give us - if they're going over to new computers, we will get the older ones, furniture and everything. Everybody knows - it's more like to go back to the core funding. I would say about 70 per cent of my time would have been around trying to gather - which is substantial - so yes, we're out there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I know that in your slide presentation you had put up what the stats are for. If the program didn't exist, what that may mean in terms of - I guess I'm switching around - dollar loss to our society or if you invest, this is what it means in terms that you get back. Have you calculated it for the program in the South Shore? So therefore, if you were not able to get an increase in your budget or if your budget was reduced, and you had to close the doors, what that would mean to the local economy in the rural area of our province, which we know is in a critical state as we speak. I guess I'm asking the question in terms of the overall effect that would have.

Do you have any calculations of what it means in dollar loss coming out of our communities because we don't have that program and those students who need the support or the youth who need the support and children, the costs that you estimate that that would affect society? I know it's a really difficult one to pinpoint and that can be arguable, but just what your sense of that is.

MR. IRVING: No, we have not. Having looked at the possibility of closing the doors - we know we're close and we know we're on the edge, but we've always found a way to survive and that's what we're going to continue to do. To answer your question, we've not attempted that calculation. It may be a good point to have, good information to have certainly, as we apply for funding.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I want to ask you, Mr. Chairman, with respect to a motion, when I can make that motion. It's in reference to a question or a little bit of a conversation that we had before, so am I able to make the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not right now, we're going to continue with the questioning.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: When do I make the motion, because it's with respect to this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: After the recess we can speak about that.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Okay, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Treen.

MS. TREEN: We're talking about the need for volunteers in schools and everything. I notice in the education review that just finished from the minister, it talked about having a citizenship course for Grade 12 - no, I don't think it's Grade 12. High school sometime, I guess - in order to graduate you have to have a citizenship course. So maybe that's the place to put this volunteerism as an outcome for that course.

Maybe as a result of our committee presentation today, we can write a letter to the minister saying the importance of volunteers and being able to put that into the program, because it's a need. Then it would be access - so many groups could access it. It's a great thing, I love it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a great suggestion and once again, we can discuss this after the break. You're making it hard today. (Interruptions)

MS. MURRAY: Can I comment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Ms. Murray, go for it.

MS. MURRAY: Thank you very much and I love the energy that everybody is thinking of solutions and how we can all work together. I do appreciate that energy about volunteers and directly towards understanding how that is related to mentoring as well, I appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that's it for questions, am I right? My list says yes, unless someone else wants to ask a question. So once again, we really do appreciate you coming out. I know it's hard to leave your warm house in the middle of winter like this. I just invite both of you if you want to make closing remarks. Ms. Murray.

MS. MURRAY: Thank you very much for inviting us, we really do appreciate this. It has been my wanting to be an advocate for children and basically I just see the significance and I appreciate everybody being aware and when it comes to when basically we're looking at when the rubber hits the road, it's required monetarily in order to make anything happen.

The government, working along with the community - you have to be aware, everyone has to be aware. If we're ever going and asking for an increase in funding, everybody who is sitting in the House who votes on that is aware. This is helpful because now when somebody says to you Big Brothers Big Sisters one-on-one mentoring, you'll know what that's about. That's where the momentum starts to go - we have people thinking of ideas and that only just creates a positive direction.

On behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Shore, I really thank you for this invitation again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: I'd just like to echo Sandra's comments and thank you very much for the opportunity. It's wonderful to be able to put our message out in front of a group like this. Obviously, I think you understand some of the difficulties we're facing and we're open to whatever support. I've listed some good ideas you've passed on here today so we appreciate that very much.

I would also like to formally thank Sandra for coming today. Sandra was the face of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the South Shore for years and really established us in our community and did a tremendous amount of work for us. Obviously in listening to her, you hear the passion and it's there. That is what has kept us going all these years and she has managed to impart that to the board members, the volunteers, everybody. So she's here today, took a day off work to come in here and do this. She's no longer an official member of our agency, but I'm very thankful for her to do that. Thank you, Sandra, and thank you everybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Once again, we'd like to thank you both for coming. We appreciate all the good work you do in the community. With that, we'll take a short recess.

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

[2:27 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm going to officially call the committee back to order. There's a few issues we'd like to deal with.

One of the issues - I don't know if we want to put a motion on the floor but I think we may just - I think we can all agree, or hopefully we can all agree that we'd like to push the committee out to the next sitting until after the Legislature is over with. Are we good with that? Everyone is going to be really busy during the session so are we good with that or do you want a motion? Mr. Gosse.

MR. GOSSE: So the committee is not going to sit when the House is sitting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right, when the House is sitting.

MR. GOSSE: Mr. Chairman, has this ever happened before? I'd like to hear from Kim.

MS. KIM LANGILLE (Legislative Committee Clerk): Not since I've been here. I've been here for five years and they have sat. They change their hours, but the committee can decide.

MR. GOSSE: I've sat on the committee from 2003 to 2009 and we sat, but we changed the hours to the mornings. I know it makes for a long day but the work of the committee has to go on. It's no good to take off two months or three months.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did we want to? We'll put it to a vote then.

MS. LANGILLE: Someone needs to make a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does someone want to bring a motion to the floor? Ms. Peterson-Rafuse.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Chairman, my head was bobbing up and down because I know there's so much work when we are in the House. But what just came to me now is that I thought one of the reasons we were actually changing the House hours was to allow for committee work on Monday. Was that not . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can't speak to why the House hours have been changed.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Oh, I thought that was part of the discussion in the House, that they were changed so that Mondays would be for committee meetings, was it not? I'm just wondering if there's an expectation for us to fulfill that because that was the conversation around changing that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The idea on the floor is that we'd like to push the committee to outside of the House sittings. Did we need a motion? Does someone want to put a motion forward for that?

MR. GOSSE: Well that answers that, I guess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne.

MR. HORNE: It was my understanding that most of the committees don't meet while the House is in session, in the past, except for Human Resources and Law Amendments Committees.

MR. GOSSE: Public Accounts meets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Exactly, so Public Accounts, Law Amendments Committee, things like that. I'm going to repeat it one more time and if we can get a motion, that would be great. What we'd like to see is a motion put on the floor for a vote that this committee not sit during the House sitting. Does anyone want to make a motion?

MS. MILLER: So moved.

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

The motion is carried.

I'm going to call on Ms. Treen - did you want to speak on your motion?

MR. GOSSE: I thought that Ms. Peterson-Rafuse had a motion first.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm going to call on Ms. Treen for a motion.

MR. GOSSE: I thought Ms. Peterson-Rafuse was first during the committee meeting. Was that not the case?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm calling on Ms. Treen, yes.

MS. TREEN: I wasn't going to make the motion, I just make the suggestion that we wait until Patricia is back since she's the chairman and we'll make a motion then. I was interested in putting a request in to the department for a letter and stuff but Patricia is not here and she loves this stuff, too, so should we not wait until she's back? I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So what you're trying to say is that it should be the chairman who puts the motion on the floor.

MS. LANGILLE: The chairman can't put the motion on the floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or that the chairman be here for the motion, okay. Ms. Peterson-Rafuse, if you want to speak.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: I would still like the opportunity to put the motion. You haven't even heard the motion and why the motion is important now to go forward. I don't want to interrupt Ms. Treen. Do you want me to speak now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you want to speak, Ms. Peterson-Rafuse, you can speak.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Okay. Just to give you an idea of my thoughts behind the motion, I want to make a motion. When we spoke with our witnesses today and the presentation, they felt very positive that we were all working together - and this committee I've seen to date work together really well - and give different suggestions to them.

As we know where the government is in terms of budget talks and so forth, that's why I think there's some immediacy to the motion that I'd like with regard to requesting that the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Education and Early

Childhood Development have a discussion with respect to the possible opportunities of funding for the educational mentor program.

The reason I'm making this motion is because of the timeliness of it. I think it's important for it to be on the table for discussion with both ministers. If not, it's not going to get there. It's just an opportunity to see if there is a funding pocket already available in education or if they can create one that would support it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm going to leave that decision up to the chairman when she returns, to put it to a vote. What I would recommend is, just as a member and someone who represents your constituents to maybe write a letter yourself. Right now we're going to wait until the chairman is back to present this particular one.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: But that will be after the House sits, so that's why I'm saying that after the House sits . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's why I'm recommending . . .

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: . . . then it's not going to be a motion that this committee is supporting before the budget process because those discussions happen right up to the last minute, right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If it's something that you feel strongly about, then I would recommend that maybe you could write a letter yourself and send it to the Department of Community Services, but as of right now, we'll wait until the chairman comes back to proceed with that.

The correspondence will be deferred until the next meeting. With that, I call the committee to a close.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 2:34 p.m.]