

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Legislative Committees Office

**Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Re: Mandate**

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Ms. Patricia Arab (Chairman)
Mr. Brendan Maguire (Vice-Chairman)
Ms. Pam Eyking
Mr. Bill Horne
Ms. Joyce Treen
Mr. Eddie Orrell
Mr. Larry Harrison
Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse
Ms. Marian Mancini

[Ms. Patricia Arab was replaced by Mr. Iain Rankin.]
[Ms. Pam Eyking was replaced by Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Ms. Stephanie MacInnis-Langley,
Executive Director

Ms. Patricia Gorham,
Director of Policy, Planning and Strategic Initiatives



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2016

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Patricia Arab

MR. CHAIRMAN (Brendan Maguire): I'm going to call the meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Community Services. My name is Brendan Maguire, and I'm the vice-chairman. I'm sitting in today for Patricia Arab who is the chairman.

We'll be receiving a presentation today on the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I'm going to ask the members to introduce themselves, starting to my right.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just want to remind committee members to keep their phones on silent or vibrate and to the members and the witnesses, I have to introduce you before you speak. With that, we'll start with the presentation.

MS. STEPHANIE MACINNIS-LANGLEY: First of all I want to thank the members of the committee for allowing us to come in and chat with you today and talk about what the Status of Women does in the Province of Nova Scotia with the Advisory Council. Thanks to each of you for letting us come in today.

We'll start with the vision and mandate of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The vision and mandate of the office is to advance equality, fairness, and dignity for all women and girls in Nova Scotia by influencing public opinion, policy and programming across the province in the following intersecting areas: violence against women, leadership, economic security, and health and wellness.

The legislation we are operating under, or the mandate for our legislation, is the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act and Regulations. It was enacted in 1977. The Act articulates through the legislation Nova Scotia's commitment to a sustained focus on equity for women. It establishes the council, and therefore speaks to the role and the parameters of council and less to the specifics or mandate and priorities of the office.

I wanted to just mention that the existence of the council goes back certainly a long way. It comes out of the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, but the existence of the advisory council and the Status of Women office were two separate entities. There was a Women's Directorate and there was a Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. These two entities were amalgamated into one in 1996. That paved the way for the evolution of the Status of Women policy office, which is a part of the advisory council today.

As you can see from the current organizational structure, it's a very small group. There's the executive director, a director of policy and strategic initiatives, and two program administration officers attached to that. Then there's a planning and development officer, a program officer, and a third program officer. We have an advisory council as you can see to the left. Those are Order in Council appointments, and there's a maximum of 12 on council.

Here's what the budget for the Status of Women looks like. It's a \$9.7 million budget. As you can see, there's a slight yellow line or silver-yellow line in the middle by the blue line, and that's discretionary grants. We have a very tiny budget for discretionary grants, which is \$20,000.

The service delivery - the model that supports the programs that are under us is over \$8 million. The operation of the office is very, very small. It's an \$89,000 or 1 per cent budget. The staff salaries are a 9 per cent budget.

Of note is that 90 per cent of our budget - just a bit over the \$8 million - is dispersed via operating grants to the network of women-serving organizations in our province to deliver the range of services and supports for women. There are nine women's centres. There are 11 transition houses, and Alice Housing is one of the operational grants we put out. We have a very small discretionary budget and it's used to leverage partnerships and to support community activities.

The council has a capacity for 12 members; as I said, members are Order in Council appointments. Regional and cultural representation on the council is a key priority. The council fulfills its mandate by supporting the Status of Women office by considering issues that impact women and girls, and contributing their expertise as a cultural and regional focus.

Council's focus for 2016 is considering a forward plan for women's health as an equity issue and researching frameworks for violence against women. There's a wide range of skills on our council at this time with educators, legal professionals, medical professionals, community leaders, and academics.

Women in Nova Scotia are 51 per cent of the population and they are 49.6 per cent of the Nova Scotia labour force. The highest rates of high school completion and post-secondary education or enrolment are women. Women entrepreneurs are the fastest growing sector in new business in our province. Women who represent this large constituency of half or over half of the population are both leaders and builders in our province.

Now the not-so-good news. Women are under-represented in leadership, trades, and science and technology. Employment is concentrated in the minimum wage sector. Women experience higher rates of poverty. They have the highest rates of violent victimization, especially in the 18 to 24 age group. Women are the predominate victims of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. These challenges are directly linked to gender in the way our society is organized and devalues women. Countering this and building capacity and resilience is a huge focus of the work of Status of Women, and we'll now present in more depth.

On this slide, you will see that gender-based analysis is a strong focus. It's a priority area. The overarching analytical framework of using a gender lens on policy and decisions is a key focus for Status of Women, as well as building capacity to use a gender lens within government.

Another area, of course, is violence against women. Prevention, education, awareness, building knowledge together, economic securities to strengthen the opportunities for women and leadership, entrepreneurship, trades and technology, community partnership, funding and program supports to women-serving organizations to do the good work they do, and multiple community collaborations are really important. It offers a visual of what our work looks like on a day-to-day basis.

The Status of Women Office approaches all issues using a gender analysis as their overarching framework and it guides our work and shapes our activities within government and across communities. Information, guidance and support to departments and agencies within government is a role we play. Collaborating with Cabinet advisors to build capacity for gender analysis and policy development across government. Historically, gender has not been identified as a policy factor in decision making. Building a strong gender analysis into government decisions is more important now than ever and it has currently been identified as a strong priority at the federal government level. We are well positioned to support this across government.

The Status of Women Office is a focal point for shaping government's responses to violence against women and girls. We co-led the Domestic Violence Action Plan of 2010 and supported the development of the province's Sexual Violence Strategy. We have a delegation to the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We are co-leading a collaborative approach with Mount Saint Vincent University and community partners to build a prevention-focused network. We recently published our latest edition of *Making Changes*, which is a key resource for women leaving violent relationships. Our *Making Changes* booklet, we had over 1,500 calls on the waiting list, waiting for the publication to come out. We're committed to building a safer Nova Scotia and it requires a focus on gender.

Governance and accountability: We manage the funding portfolio for women's centres, transition houses and Alice Housing. We have oversight of \$8 million in operational grants as of a year ago. We're developing outcomes-based service agreements. Our community collaborations are essential to the work we do. We have an ongoing partnership with the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. We are part of the design team that shaped the restorative justice inquiry into the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children and we continue to host the Voices group that was the founding group to start the initiative with government. Much powerful work evolves at a community level and we are very supportive of what the community does.

We have a bursary called Women Innovating in Nova Scotia, or the WINS bursary, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College. We identified early on the need to support women in non-traditional trades and technology. This bursary began in 2009 with a \$100,000 endowment from the Nova Scotia Government, supported by annual interdepartmental contributions. We gave out over 150 bursaries to women since this bursary program was initiated.

In leadership we do campaign schools and support the enfranchisement awareness for community and we're working with a new company that is now going to be leading the work around campaign schools to ensure that a gender lens is part of the work and that we make room for women either running in campaigns or in any leadership opportunities.

We have a partnership with the Centre for Women in Business at the Mount and we support initiatives that both they and we bring forward. We're working on girls' resiliency, we take part every year in International Day of the Girl, which is October 11th. We have a girls round table leadership program; we've already run one with the Y in Spryfield. We're doing another one with First Nations young women. We partner and support Techsploration which helps to encourage young women into trades and technology programs and sciences.

We're very proud to report this year that the interdepartmental contributions for our bursary fund were \$19,000. These are key tools to support the important work of moving

women out of poverty and we are very concerned about women in poverty. Economic security is the foundation for independence and safety.

The Status of Women's contribution really rests on these priorities, the intersectional focus on issues that impact the lives of women and girls. We're a relationship builder, internal and external, to government. We provide resource for program areas that impact women and girls, and we're often a liaison between government and community organizations. We model inclusive and respectful engagement on complex and controversial issues, and we try to promote action on equity issues. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'll open the floor to questions. Mr. Orrell.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you for your presentation. I guess I have a couple of questions; I probably won't get to both of them this time. The first question I have to ask is, with all you're doing for women like on economic security, and with your budget being what it is and the areas that you help fund and program, have you had any contact with the Ann Terry project in Sydney? They're looking at losing their funding and their identity to help women, employment-wise and otherwise, with this new government policy where they're going to blend all employment services within the province, and they're going to either be left out or absorbed by another group? Have you had contact with them or have you been able to advise government on what you're doing for them?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I'm going to pass the question over to Pat because we are on a committee and we are working with Labour and Advanced Education on this issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Gorham.

MS. PATRICIA GORHAM: Yes, the initiative being led by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to bring a more rational organization to employment services is a large transformation, and the model looks at making all of those specialized services accessible across Nova Scotia - that's the goal. The outcome of that is organizations more traditionally organized like Ann Terry, that serve one community, have to reorganize how they will deliver their services.

My understanding is there's a very challenging decision-making process for Ann Terry. We had an opportunity to speak with the director and the board there, as well as with our colleagues at Labour and Advanced Education to look at how the opportunity for Ann Terry as an institution could look forward to the future and see how they could be part of this new approach, serve more Cape Breton folks than they're serving now - by having a broader range of services while still looking at how they could identify a way forward to continue to do specialized work with women.

It is my understanding that Ann Terry, in collaboration with another community group, has submitted a proposal as to how they would develop this blended model in the forward plan. So that's our understanding of where that matter rests at the moment.

MR. ORRELL: If they're going to blend these services so that they're more available - I don't like to use the word "available". If they spread that service over a whole range of areas and there's only so much money going into one organization - to have women in need, for whatever reason, enter a building with a whole other group combined - it can't be great for women who are maybe physically or emotionally at risk with their employment situation.

If or when they do blend the model, and especially groups, would they have a special area where women would enter separately, or children or abused people or whatever, to do that? I think that would be very detrimental to women to come into an area and sit in a waiting room where there may be a bunch of other people, where the women are more vulnerable at the time.

MS. GORHAM: I think those are all options that are available for the local service providers to look at. How we can create those kinds of access pathways perhaps in collaboration with the women's centre or other models - I think those things are being actively looked at now. We're not involved at that level, but our hope is that the model that has been put in place by Labour and Advanced Education has something new that has never been present, which is a centre of excellence, which will be developing service standards and equipping all of those front-line service-providing organizations with the skills and tools they need.

So key knowledge holders like the folks at Ann Terry will have an opportunity to ensure that the way in which gender approach or trauma-informed approach is resourced out to all of the centres will have their eyes on it and they'll have an opportunity to contribute to that. I think it's hard to say at this stage as it goes forward exactly how this will all work out, but ideally it would mean that any woman anywhere in Nova Scotia could get the kind of supportive services they need, rather than those supportive services being available to only a very small group of women, so that would be a good direction forward.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: I'm going to follow along with the last question there. Actually there were some questions during Question Period in the Legislature when we asked Minister Bernard - as she is the minister responsible for the Status of Women - about whether or not the council had been consulted on the changes and we didn't get an answer. Then it was referred to Minister Regan and we didn't get an answer. So I'm asking you - were you folks consulted? You mentioned that Labour and Advanced Education set forward a plan. Did the Status of Women actually have input on that?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Yes, we've been consulted all along as they've been looking at transformation. What we've been assured of as well is that this transformation will not result in less funding, it will not result in a change to the funding of these organizations. We certainly did bring it to the attention of our community-at-large council members.

We also understand that the model that has been in place, 48 per cent of Nova Scotia's \$23 million is being spent on administration and infrastructure. The ideal is that some of those monies will now transfer or translate into direct services for the people using the service, on a broader basis. That has been the discussion - how do we ensure that the services are directly impacting the lives of people who need it most and that has been the decision.

MS. MANCINI: There are two women employment centres that we were talking about. Do you know if those people will continue to be employed?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: It's our understanding that there are no changes coming to employment. The structures will be decided or determined by the boards and the partnerships but the discussion is ongoing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Treen.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Thank you for your presentation. My first question is about the Advisory Council. You said there are 12 members on there and you were very careful for regional and cultural representation - what's the age of the youngest member on your board? I notice boards tend to be made up of maybe more mature people, so do you have that as a consideration when you are putting people on the board, that it's very important to have our younger people on there and getting involved at a younger age?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Thank you so much for the question. Yes, absolutely it's a concern. We do have a young person on our board, she's actually a medical student and we look across the board. Now the council appointments are Order in Council appointments so people apply and are nominated or appointed by government. So although we ask for a range of people from across the province and a range of ages, we're not always guaranteed that we get that. But we do try to maintain at least one seat for youth.

MS. TREEN: You talked about a round table for girls and you mentioned a couple of groups that you have had. Have you thought about getting involved in the schools? The more we empower our young girls at an earlier age and the more they understand where they need to sit in society and where they have the right to sit in society the better. I, myself, was involved in Girl Guides for 11 years. You know groups like that in high school, even junior high - have you gotten involved at those levels? Maybe there's a program that could run that somebody else could implement in the schools.

MS. GORHAM: Yes, our first foray into the girls round table was last year and we partnered with the YWCA that run a program in the junior highs actually across HRM, called Girl Space. We had them use some of the Girl Space time to do the girls round table

The round table is a model that comes out of the United Nations that creates an opportunity for girls to think about issues that are important to them and prepare presentations. Then they meet together with key leaders to try to help leaders, such as yourselves, to better understand the issues from a girl's perspective. That way, the girls have the experience of playing a role in influencing the thinking of people in positions of power and authority who could benefit from their perspectives. It's that type of model. So you want to attach that to something where girls are already gathering together. The first foray was with the YWCA.

What we're doing this year is partnering with Nova Scotia Native women. We're looking at how we can create a Mi'kmaq-focused approach, particularly around some of the work happening as a result of the national round table where it has been identified that one of the key investments we need to be able to make to change the trajectory for Aboriginal girls and women away from their victimization is to build their resilience. So we're hoping that might become a model that we could offer to other communities to try.

We're looking at a couple of different ways to try this round table model, but the opportunity to make it more mainstream or partner with a not-for-profit to work more actively is certainly on our list of development opportunities as we continue to experiment with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: First of all, I want to thank you for your presentation and certainly the work that you do. Within our caucus, we spend a lot of time discussing the mental health situation within our province. Women who are on the poverty level or below must go through a lot of emotional and mental anxiety. Certainly those who have been involved in a sexual assault or whatever go through that - women certainly more than men.

The question is, how often do you address the issues of mental health for women? Is that a frequent thing that you look at?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I wouldn't say it's frequent in that every day we're considering mental health, but it is part of our overall work. We look at the broad sector of issues that affect the lives of women and girls. So if sexual violence is a factor in people's lives, which it often is - especially in young women - then we're on the committees to look at how we're addressing it. Are the people who are addressing the issues with kids trauma-informed? Are there services across the province to provide to young people, or to all people who are victims? Also in terms of mental health, are there services available?

One of the things that we would really like to see in Nova Scotia is a women's health clinic. We see it in other provinces, but we don't see it in Nova Scotia. So it is something that is on our radar.

The chairman of my council is Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard. She is a professor at Dalhousie and she has been very concerned about mental health and mental health issues. Much of her focus has been on the African Nova Scotian community and the provision of services, but it is a piece of work that we're always mindful of and we're always looking for ways to address it. We work very closely with our colleagues at the Department of Health and Wellness, and they're very receptive to information we bring to the table.

MR. HARRISON: The unfortunate part is that a lot of rural communities do not have access to a lot of the programs. Something that you might establish in Halifax, people of all areas are probably not going to be taking advantage of.

We're MLAs and hopefully we have some influence out there. Is there any way or ways in which we can put something in place or try to put something in place that is going to be helpful, with respect to mental health and how we can help people get through their stuff? I mean, obviously there are not a lot of psychiatrists or psychologists or whatever in the province right now - we are short. We need to find other ways so I'm just wondering if you had any idea of what those other ways might be.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: One of the things I can say to you is that a large number of women in this province, especially women in poverty, often reach out to the transition houses or the women's centres in their community. The women on the front lines in those services are really adept at connecting and liaising with service providers who can assist and help.

There's not a lot of services to go around, you're absolutely right. I grew up rural, I'm well aware of the limitations of services. It's really important that we encourage women to reach out to those services that can link them to services that can provide direct help. That's something we do all the time and we talk to our women's centres and our transition houses. The transition houses, for example, have a 24-hour crisis line. They often get calls from women who need to connect with someone, whether it's around food or whether it's around issues.

I will say to you that we get calls from people not only in the rural community, but even people who work in government who are looking for connections to services, and connections. We work really hard to ensure that we have current lists to refer people to services and that we connect with those services to make sure they follow-up with that client.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: I note you used the terminology “gender-based analysis”. I guess it’s a gender lens that you use in parsing out policy that comes from government and seeing how it impacts on women. I guess it’s kind of trite to say but that’s based in our historical road map, I guess, that has seen women not treated equally, women being discriminated against, and that’s in every aspect, whether it’s the workforce or many other aspects of society.

When you start viewing that world through the analysis, then of course you’re moving toward equality toward women, I think anyway. Recently in the Fall sitting the government did introduce legislation, it was referred to as Bill No. 148. I call it wage restraint legislation but I think there’s another title. It was essentially, I think, about curtailing the collective bargaining power of unions. Again, I’m offering my perspective on this legislation.

During that period of time I had an opportunity to speak in the Legislature, and I did speak about this legislation through that gender lens. Your statistics here establish that women make up half the labour force but are in the lower paying jobs, the minimum wage jobs. They’re not earning as much and they’re not getting as many pensionable types of jobs as men.

My concern is that when I look at unions it seems to be primarily women - whether it’s teachers or nurses - and they are in positions where they will get really decent pensions and it’s through the negotiations through their unions. So there’s real value for women, especially when they retire and they end up not living in poverty like many of our senior women are currently. I had concerns about that and I have concerns about that today.

I wonder if you can tell me, when the government is developing policy, is there a reaching-out to the advisory council to discuss that and to ferret the policy through that lens?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: That practice has begun. As I said, historically gender has not been applied in policies developed by government, and that’s right across the country. Every jurisdiction and province is now working with their senior officials and government leaders to introduce the use of gender in policy development across the country.

What we’ve seen in Nova Scotia is on par with the rest of the country. What we have in this current time is that we have had the opportunity to hire a gender expert to work from our office on a contract to provide training to government policy-makers and government decision makers. We had our first session with the Cabinet advisers, and our next session will be with policy leads across government, to ensure that a gender lens is considered when policies are developed or when programs are developed. I will say that on the reports and recommendations to Cabinet, there is already a checkbox. The

governments have already put a checkbox on that to ensure that a gender lens has been applied to anything that you're putting forward.

So I think the current time is the right time because we're seeing it right across the country. We're seeing that every province is doing training with senior officials and bringing policy leads to the table to look at it. The federal government now has somewhere in the range of 30 departments using a gender lens in policy at the federal level. They've been really essential in helping provinces move ahead because the Status of Women Canada has developed a training package to start people thinking about using a gender lens in applying policy.

I think that in 2016 we're in a really progressive place so I commend all governments for moving in this direction. Every government has been challenged with how fast to move it. There are so many considerations in policy development that oftentimes gender is probably the last thing people think about, and now we're moving it up so it's in the middle of the decision-making package, so thank you.

MS. MANCINI: Just on a practical level, is the advisory council involved in the training? Do you go to each department?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: We bring teams together. We bring the policy leads together to work on the training package and look at the information. I will say, in the last three or four years we've been able to do different projects. We've had projects go forward at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. We've got some projects going forward at the Department of Community Services. We've been very well received by the Department of Municipal Affairs, for example, in their campaign schools. When they were doing a call for proposals for campaign schools, they asked us to review from a gender perspective their proposal. So incrementally we're developing that all along the way.

When you talk about Muskrat Falls and Emera, Newfoundland and Labrador has been looking at the policy in terms of gender and they always bring it back to us and say, look, here are our recommendations. So there is movement at every level and we're really pleased with governments for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: Thank you for your concise answers to a lot of the questions. I think it has been very enlightening. I just want to know how your relationship is with other councils across Canada. I hear you've talked a lot from the last speaker's question about some of the issues. Are you plugged in pretty close nationally? It sounds like you are, but I'd like you to expand on that.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Thank you for that question. Absolutely, we're part of the coalition for advisory councils across the country. Currently in Canada, not every

province and territory has an advisory council, but for all of those that do we're absolutely connected. In fact, in the last several years, Nova Scotia has hosted the council several times. A woman named Linda Ross is the chairman in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we meet once a year. We meet more than that through email, but face-to-face meetings are a bit restrictive due to cost.

We also work with the territories. We work with the folks in the territories who are challenged with rural issues, lack of services, lack of ability to access services. So it has been a real pleasure.

We're connected to all the Status of Women offices across the country, and it allows us to connect with initiatives moving forward. So sometimes a region or a jurisdiction will develop materials or initiatives and Nova Scotia is then able to adapt them for Nova Scotia, so it reduces our cost, but it also builds capacity and it builds partnerships.

We partner with the Status of Women Canada on multiple initiatives, so each province has to pay their share, but because we're a small province our share is small so it allows us to get the benefit and not have an astronomical cost.

MR. HORNE: I just want to expand a little bit on that. I was wondering how much funding does come from the federal government or groups that you can use provincially?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: We receive no money from the federal government. The Status of Women in Nova Scotia receives no money from the federal government. Their funding - the grants they offer out - are for community development and community organizations, but we recently had a meeting with them in November and we've moved to a discussion around having conversations with the provinces about what the federal government funds.

It's really important that they support initiatives that are led by our provincial governments and that lead to other initiatives that the Government of Nova Scotia can support ongoing, rather than one-offs. We find that if they fund one or a number of grants that have no future funding then we are scrambling to find the money to continue with some good ideas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Orrell.

MR. ORRELL: I guess last year when the government passed the Limitation of Actions legislation, was the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women asked to input on that legislation?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: No, I was not asked to give input on the limitation legislation.

MR. ORRELL: We had some concerns that they excluded survivors of historical abuse. We know that usually sexual abuse is towards females and we were wondering if you had input on that, with the Justice Minister. So that's a no.

I guess my other question is, last year in our province there were probably 5,200 jobs lost in our province. Do you know approximately how many of them would have been women, compared to men?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Two points - first on the limitation legislation. We weren't consulted on the original limitation legislation but we subsequently were consulted on the second with the changes, and we met with some of the survivors. We had lots of discussion and we certainly met at that time with the team at Justice and gave input at that time. So in the first instance we weren't involved, but as it moved forward we certainly were involved.

So let me clarify, 5,200 employees - I don't have the numbers but I will certainly see if I can get the numbers. One of the challenges we have when decisions are made is we don't have disaggregated data. Oftentimes what we'll get is the generic number but not the breakdown, so we will try to find that out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: A big component, of course, of your work would be involved with women and children in poverty in Nova Scotia. We had a 2015 report card on child and family poverty in Nova Scotia and it produced some fairly alarming statistics. It seems that in Cape Breton there's a poverty rate of over 42 per cent. I'm assuming you folks would have had access to all that information. I think that one in five children in Nova Scotia are living in poverty in 2013. Nova Scotia has the third highest provincial child poverty rate and the highest in Atlantic Canada.

I'm fairly new around here myself but I'm assuming that the budget consultation process is going on within the Department of Community Services. I'm just wondering if you folks are consulted for that process and what role would you have in relation to dealing with those issues of child poverty?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: We are consulted and have been consulted on a number of initiatives going forward at the Department of Community Services. Our message is always, if you don't take the mother out of poverty, you don't take the children out of poverty. It's really important to us that we look for ways to see women in this province employed in both a realistic and comprehensive way so they can afford to provide child care, they can afford to provide food.

In moving forward, that's one of the areas that we're really concerned about: how we ensure that we begin to see women move out of poverty to provide better for their

families. I'm sure the Department of Community Services can answer that question much more eloquently than I can as they'd have the rates. That has always been our position, that the most important way to change the lives of children is to change the lives of mothers.

MS. MANCINI: You again are aware that the transformation period is occurring now in relation to income assistance and that there will be no increases during that period, which we submit really amounts to a reduction, if you factor in inflation.

I guess what I'm wondering - and I would say ideally I don't know if you would support that or not, but it doesn't seem like a good way to go if we're going to get those children out of poverty and get their mothers out. What can we do, in your view? What steps can government and Opposition Parties be doing to address the crisis? Are there areas where we could work together, do you think?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I think that's the key way to change Nova Scotia - is by working together. We're huge advocates of collaboration and we believe that by coming to the table and brainstorming and working together that we can find solutions for all Nova Scotians. That's what Nova Scotians would want.

For example, our women's centres, our transition houses, Alice Housing - all the front-line organizations that work with women. In our Aboriginal community, people like Nadine Bernard who is working out of Cape Breton - she has done a tremendous amount. She's a council member with us. She's a First Nations woman. She has done a tremendous amount of work in reaching out to women in poverty.

One of the things that we've done the last two years is that we've supported the Native Women's Association to build capacity within their organization to work with women across the province. Recently - as much as I think just two months ago - they've opened a storefront in Sydney on George Street to start to work with Aboriginal women because of the poverty issues and because there have been so many news stories about Aboriginal people in poverty, but across the board we need to be working together on committees or in small groups and working with the organizations that work with women in poverty.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Treen.

MS. TREEN: You mentioned in your presentation that women entrepreneurs are the fastest growing sector in new business, which is very exciting to me. I was an entrepreneur for 29 years. Back when I started, the doors did not open easily. You had to be very determined to get what you want. I believe that's changing now and that's wonderful.

So I guess my question is, what is the role that the council plays to help encourage our women to continue with their entrepreneurial journey and to be successful? What role do you guys play in that?

MS. GORHAM: Thanks for that question. I think with the advisory council, it's an area where we're building our capacity to support women in business. We've been working with a couple of new networks of small entrepreneurs supporting a variety of efforts they're making to create a network of smaller entrepreneurs, home-based businesses, small trades people. That's where the growth is in entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia - small business entrepreneurs. Certainly the intelligence we drew from the One Nova Scotia report shows that's the sector that needs the support that is going to create those small local clusters of employment that allow a rural community to survive.

We're working with the Centre for Women in Business, which is interested in looking at how they can reframe some of their work and their mandate to be more inclusive of women who enter into entrepreneurship as a way out of poverty - whether it's micro-lending models or other approaches like that. So we're looking forward in 2016 to start exploring with them, if there is a collaboration we could do to open the doors of the Centre for Women in Business to those smaller, very early start-up entrepreneurs who are just on the edge between poverty and success? That is where you want to put your focus.

So those are a couple of things that we've been supporting, as well as an interesting network of new immigrant women entrepreneurs who are mostly craftspeople who have started to form a bit of a coalition so that they can better understand how they could market their particular home-based products more effectively. Those are some new areas that we're looking at supporting.

Our job mostly is to look for who is innovating at the community level and seeing how we can support them. We're a very small team and we're not a service-providing office, but often as my boss said, bringing people together and supporting new ideas is the catalyst work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I'm very interested in your gender-based analysis, as an educator. I'm a graduate of Mount Saint Vincent and we did gender-based curriculums and non-gender-based curriculums. Sorry, I just don't see that moving forward. I don't see inclusive language in the schools and we know that stereotypes are ingrained in the preschool years. Do you feel we're making any progress in this area?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Yes, I actually do. I see a change. It's incremental, and probably from the outside it looks very, very slow.

As I said, in the past it has never been a priority, it has never been a focus historically. However this minister had made a commitment at the federal table that she would move gender-based analysis in the Province of Nova Scotia and she would really work to move it to the same level as it's moving in other provinces. That commitment was made last June at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting. Certainly since that time we have made great progress.

As I said, in the next month or so, we will be bringing together policy leads from across government to further that discussion. Along with that, I've met with some of the folks from early childhood education to look at some of the ways we might be able to encourage change and new approaches. One of the things I've asked, and Ms. Gorham can speak very well to this, is the whole issue of using restorative approaches. We're doing that in many schools in Nova Scotia and we see that as a way to respect gender and be inclusive and be supportive of both teachers and students. I'd really like to see that come to fruition under the early childhood education mantra starting out.

MS. GORHAM: I think when people hear the words "gender-based analysis" they assume that we're just talking about women, but when you're looking at gender you're looking at how our social constructs of gender roles change outcomes for citizens. So it's also speaking about equality and fairness and access.

If you're taking that kind of analysis, then you're looking for how you change the way we interact with students, for example, so that their experience of education is more equal. That certainly is some of the goals of the restorative approaches in the schools initiative, which was a three-year initiative. Here in Nova Scotia, we see upwards of 90 schools that have reorganized the way they run the school year, I think, using restorative principles to look for where there isn't good equality opportunities for all students and to come up with ways to have their schools function as more peaceful environments. When a school does that effectively, it becomes a much safer space for a young girl to progress, as well as a young person who has other disadvantages.

We're looking forward to having those conversations with the team at Education and Early Childhood Development that are looking at what the underpinnings of an early years strategy should be - how do you weave that in at an early stage? We're so fortunate in Nova Scotia to have this network of front-line educators who got themselves skilled up and reorganized their schools to be restorative schools. We have a lot of knowledge now at that front-line in our school system that our colleagues can turn to, to better understand how we would look at organizing a preschool entry experience more appropriately and more restoratively, and those kinds of things, so that kids who are coming into the school system already at a disadvantage because of poverty, their welcome is structured so that they catch up, and those are some of the things they want to work on. I don't know if that's helpful or not.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Could you give me an example of a scenario where you would use a restorative approach?

MS. GORHAM: In the school setting one of the issues, always, is how you manage disruptive behaviour. In a typical school setting, the disruptive student would be removed from the classroom and taken down to the principal for some guiding chat or a little bit of a scare to smarten up. That means they're no longer in the environment where the conflict occurred, they're being removed. The way in which that conflict is understood is that it belongs to that child - that child is the disrupter, when there were probably a lot of reasons why that child's behaviour disrupted the class and there were probably other parties involved in it and they're happily at their desks thinking, I got away with something. That starts to build some very negative relationships between that child and the principal's office and the other children in the classroom.

So using a restorative approach - rather than isolating that child, the teacher is trained to have the class stop and say, what's going on amongst us? As a community of learners in my classroom, what are our values for how we treat each other? Which of those values went off to the side because of this situation? What are we going to do together to get back to where we were where we're calm enough to learn, and the students problem-solve together?

That changes the culture in the classroom. That disruptive incident is owned by all of the students. The teacher collaborates with the students to come up with a plan for how to manage it and it's usually around jealousy or somebody feeling upset. Maybe somebody is overtired and they are reactive. Maybe somebody has some facial difference or body difference that results in them always being teased, so it's another moment to sort of address that so it gets addressed in the moment.

When schools reorganize themselves that way, they see the incident of classroom discipline and disruptive behaviour incidents go down dramatically and it builds community. I don't know if that's a helpful example.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: That's an excellent example - we need it in the Legislature. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Apparently I skipped over Ms. Treen's follow-up so I apologize. Ms. Treen, would you like to follow up?

MS. TREEN: My follow-up was kind of to do with the same sort of thing. Have you gotten involved with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education with their sandbox pilot that they have going now?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: We were involved when we were aligned with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education because in the early days of this new

government we were under or aligned with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Prior to that we were aligned - we had Marilyn More as our minister at that time. In the last changes, we were moved over to the Department of Community Services so we're not in that same genre at this point in time, but we were in the early days.

MS. TREEN: I think you should knock on their door though and be involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. HARRISON: I was looking at the placard there where it says Director of Policy, Planning and Strategic Initiatives.

MS. GORHAM: Sounds pretty fancy.

MR. HARRISON: Yes, it does, but it's great because that sets the foundation for other things to happen. Appreciating that fact, between policies being made and being put out in society, there is a gap of time. Unfortunately, a lot of people are going to be hurt in that gap of time.

I know within my constituency, I would love to have a list of services - names, phone numbers, whatever - so that I can help people right now with whatever resources are available. I know they're limited and I know down the road we're going to have better stuff, but I'm just wondering if it's possible to have a list of the services that are now available - where and with a name, phone number, whatever - so that we can help people on a day-to-day basis get through their stuff while you're working on this end of it here of getting better policies and better initiatives in place and so on. Is that possible?

MS. GORHAM: I think that's a very wise observation. It takes a while for efforts to change outcomes to kick in and meanwhile people are living their daily lives. I guess that's one of the nice changes for our policy shop because we now have responsibility to support the network of women-serving organizations that are on the ground in real time trying to make things happen in their communities. I think they're a wonderful resource. I see them as a public safety investment by the Government of Nova Scotia.

That's how I see them personally because the fact they're in the community putting out fires at the local level and being supportive, and also being activists around tough issues that they play a very vital role, and I'm so delighted that they are there and that we are able to support them. They are a very good resource for your constituency office to make a connection with and I know they are very diligent in making sure the 211 system has accurate and up-to-date information. I think those are two resources that I think are in real time very effective resources.

As far as putting together a database of information, I think our hope is that the 211 system would become the most local and accessible situation. We haven't really done a

recent audit to see how up-to-date their information is but that's something we could do, we could reach out to 211 and see whether their listings are up-to-date. That could be something we could look at doing.

MR. HARRISON: Just a closing comment, thank you. My closing comment is that my CA and myself both sit down and we will hear a story. Then we're wondering, okay, now how can we help in this situation? We could be scrambling for days trying to get that right connection somewhere, a person or whatever to call. Whatever you would have that is easy to get to us, I would really appreciate it. It would save us a lot of time and we can get help for someone in a better time frame. Just think about that and if you can do something, please do.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Harrison. What I would say to you is if you are in that situation, have your CA call us. If you don't have a number or a name or a service to refer someone to at your fingertips, we might be able to find that person and in your region. I think that the more we can reach out like that and the more we can be supportive both of the work you do but of also sharing the information across your area. Sometimes people don't really understand what the Status of Women does or how it can be helpful.

I do get a variety of calls from multiple people with multiple issues almost daily. It's really important to us that we be there for women and girls in this province and that we provide those referral numbers or we search out who can be of help and who can be of assistance. At least if we can bring people to the service, we may not guarantee an outcome but we certainly want to be supportive.

I think that as political leaders, in any leadership role, that's one of the challenges, that it's hard to know who to refer people to and it's equally hard to know whether you've sent them in the right direction. What we don't want is for people to knock on 20 doors, we'd like them to be able to get to one door and get some assistance. I'm happy to do that anytime.

MR. HARRISON: That's my point, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne.

MR. HORNE: Somewhat in the same vein as our colleague across the side here has talked about, I'd like you to expand a little bit more on your community outreach programs or activities - how they occur and with what groups, particularly volunteer groups in community settings. You say one of your pillars here is your community partnerships. I'm not quite sure exactly who you are getting involved with in the communities. I've been involved quite a few years and I don't hear a lot about your organization being involved in that.

MS. GORHAM: I would say that the centrepiece of the community partnerships has typically rested in sort of a violence against women focus area. We're trying to, as we mentioned earlier, start to build those partnerships with women entrepreneur networks but within that group of organizations that think about and try to mitigate harm experienced by women and girls.

We partner in a variety of ways with the YWCA, with the networks looking at violence against women in all our regions across the province - Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities, looking at commemorative activities related to December 6th, celebratory activities around Women's History Month and Persons Day, International Day of the Girl. The organizations that work on these issues that are precious to them often turn to the Status of Women for support. Our boardroom is a community boardroom; any organization can use that space. They're often requesting small, modest incremental grants from our tiny discretionary grants budget to support coming together and to support community events. I think we are able to reach out fairly effectively through that. We leverage quite a lot through that.

We're also working quite closely with Aboriginal organizations, the health director networks, the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association, and the Tripartite Forum networks on the social injustice portfolio. So where we can play an influencing role, that's largely how we provide it - by supporting what's happening at the community level with small resources and with any ability we have to connect. I'm not sure if you want to add anything to that.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: For International Women's Day, for events that happen around the province, we try to support events. Sometimes it's small - a \$500 grant or a \$200 grant - or it's attending and doing some of the work for the work to take place. We try really hard to support all of our community organizations that come to us.

I would say to you that we don't go out looking for organizations to come to us because with \$20,000 at a maximum, we're in a very limited position to help people. Part of that is that we try to find groups of people that want to do something. For example, the women entrepreneurs wanted to bring together a group of women at one of the hotels this Fall and we were able to provide some support for that to happen.

The Centre for Women in Business will want to bring in someone who is a speaker to inform our province about new initiatives or a new way of doing work, and we'll support that. Alice Housing last year wanted to bring in a gentleman named Don McPherson to talk about engaging men and boys to respond to violence against women and so we supported that. So those are some of the ways.

But I would say to you, too, we leverage support across government and you can never underestimate the value of government civil servants because they are so supportive and so caring, and they really want to be helpful. We've been able to get support from

departments, we've been able to get support across departments. We might be able to get, for example, the director of crime prevention to pay some of the cost of a women's conference, but then we might be able to get the Department of Health and Wellness or the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to take on other pieces.

People joke and say that's what I'm best at - scrounging for dollars - and I think that's a way to ensure that programs and opportunities become available. We as a rule make seats available to our partners. For example, if there's an event going on, and obviously transition houses or women's centres wouldn't have the funding to attend, then we'll look at funding seats so that they could attend. So we really try to balance what we do, and we try to do that right across the province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: Last week we heard from the Department of Community Services, at the committee meeting last week about the Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Strategy. It's a huge component. It's a quarter of your circle there. I'm really asking this because it's a question - and personally, I'm not sure where I stand on this - but it came up through a constituent who had reviewed the policy. Then it came up from two different perspectives in a way, I guess. It had to do with the language in the strategy.

The language itself is gender neutral and to me - or at least the point is raised that it's a very gender-specific topic we're dealing with here. Victims are well over - close to 90 per cent are female and almost very close to 100 per cent of perpetrators are male. So it does seem that it is a gender-specific topic that we're dealing with when we're talking about sexual violence. I'm wondering, because we're talking about the gender lens analysis - and maybe I'm mixing things up here, but I hope you can straighten me out on it. If we're trying to get to the root cause of sexual violence and we're trying to create a cultural change on this, and if we ignore that - I'm not saying we totally ignore it, but if we gloss over it maybe or try to minimize that aspect just even through the language because language can be insidious, is this maybe not going in the right direction? Is there a danger here?

I'll put my two questions, is there a danger - and I won't ask for a supplementary - and then if we're using the language in this way, where could that lead us? Are we going down a dangerous path with that type of thinking?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I don't think we're going down a dangerous path. I know that the development of the Sexual Violence Strategy emanated from the work under the NDP Government of the Action Team on Sexual Violence and Bullying led by Marilyn More. The decision was made at that time to work very closely with all departments and all government and many, many community organizations and leaders.

One of the things we have to be cautious of when we create documents is that we have to be cautious. Many people today don't identify with a gender, and so we have to be

really mindful in creating documents that we're not gender-neutral. We understand clearly and fundamentally that violence against women - and the perpetrators are 95 per cent male - 90 per cent of the victims on the whole are women. So we do understand that gender is a factor and we're very mindful of that.

I don't think the strategy was ever developed without being cognizant of inclusive language, but we also want to be - it's inclusive, it's the issue of diversity and it's the issue of respect for anyone who picks up that document.

Strategies are broad documents that are then open to interpretation. So we're certainly at the table. We're certainly working with the interdepartmental committee. We sit on the interdepartmental committee. We never forget that gender is a key factor. We talk all the time about the need for services and responses to be both gender-inclusive, but respectful of the predominant victims. Young women are the predominant victims of sexual violence.

So Sarah Granke, who has been hired to do that strategy, is well aware and is very in tune with issues of gender. We think that the strategy will - the programs, the opportunities, the grants, the work that's done by community - will always have gender as a factor. We don't consider gender-neutral language ever. Gender-neutral denies that there are genders and we live in a very gendered society, so we are mindful that gender is a factor and that it needs to be considered, and that it is discussed at every table.

So I don't think the strategy overlooks that, and I don't think the strategy is not respectful of that. I think the strategy has taken all the good work that was done and created an opportunity for Nova Scotians to come together and provide services in their community that are inclusive, that are diverse, and that are respectful.

One of the challenges we had in the action team is that we as a government of the day had no way of knowing what was funded, at what level and where it was being delivered and at what level it was being delivered. It was not coordinated. It was disconnected. So things that happened in one region might not be available in another region.

So the idea of the strategy was really to create an umbrella or a framework that allowed all Nova Scotians to have access to a range of services. I think that it has been very productive in making sure that happens. The prevention grants have gone out. The committees that are working - the training committee, the education committee - have a broad range of folks at those tables and many of them are advocates for women-serving organizations. I feel quite comfortable and quite confident in the outcome of this strategy and the results.

What I would say is that it's really important to support the work going forward because what we want is for services to be available in Sydney, in Amherst, in Yarmouth

at some level. Perhaps the range of services may not be quite the same in every service because the community is deciding what services need to be there. I believe that at the end of the day we won't have the situation that I had, as an executive director of the shelter that I built in Port Hawkesbury, that I would have to travel to Sydney or to Halifax to get services for sexually assaulted or even for some of the domestic violence women that I saw. I don't think we will ever forget the primary victims and I don't think the strategy is held back by gender, I think the strategy embraces gender.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Orrell.

MR. ORRELL: Adding to what you just said about the sexual assault victims having to travel to Sydney and/or, last week we heard from the sexual violence group that there was \$700,000 to \$900,000 put into a fund to open a sexual assault nurse examiner office in Sydney, for sure, and somewhere in the Valley. I asked the question if they were up and running and they are not. Have you guys been pushing to make sure that gets up and running, so that you don't have to travel the distance or wait for any length of time to see that the people who are victims of sexual assault get the care and counselling they need?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Thank you for that question. I will reach out to my colleagues at Health and Wellness to see if we have a timeline and I'll come back to you, Mr. Orrell, with the answer. I am really looking forward to services being available in Cape Breton and I think that everyone in government is looking forward to that. Certainly the service providers in Cape Breton, they are wonderful but they need the added support, so you are absolutely right.

MR. ORRELL: We think that, too. You guys have been putting on campaign schools for women and I know - I shouldn't say I know but I think the numbers each year are getting a little larger of who attends the school. Do you have any numbers of how many of the graduates of the school actually went on to seek public office or to be successful in public office, I guess?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I don't have the number off the top of my head but what I can assure you is that the Minister of Community Services is a graduate of our campaign school. I think she is certainly a model of our success so I think we can say it is successful.

We do campaign schools a year in advance of federal elections, and we do them in advance of municipal elections. As I mentioned earlier, we're going to be partnering with a company called Springtide to do the municipal campaign schools and to make sure that there's inclusion of gender and that there are opportunities for women specific to women, because the barriers for women are different than for males running for office and we are well aware of that. We'd like to see a lot of diversity in our council so thanks for raising that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it okay if the committee allows me to ask a quick question? Just one, apparently. I would say the campaign school was highly successful if you got somebody like Minister Bernard coming out of it. My entire campaign was actually run by women so there you go and I think a few of them are actually participants in the campaign school.

I think I've asked this question before in the past, when it comes to sexual assault around alcohol. Alcohol plays a huge part especially when it comes to university students and things like that. Knowing that whether you're male or female, if you are highly intoxicated, it is impossible to consent in my opinion and I think most people would agree with that. What are we doing to educate students and young adults that when alcohol is involved that this is probably not a good idea?

MS. GORHAM: I sit on the Public Awareness Committee that is populated by a range of folks, self-identified, who apply to join that committee. That's one of the two committees that's part of the Sexual Violence Strategy. We've been looking at the best way to deploy public awareness resources with respect to the Sexual Violence Strategy's agenda, to change how Nova Scotians interact with each other so that we have fewer victims of sexualized violence.

I'm probably repeating what you already heard about that work, but as a committee member I know that one of the key issues we focused on is that the messages should not be to us as adults. They should be messages that resonate to younger people - university students, high school and early years - so that's what we've been working on. How do we talk about these issues with that demographic in a way that they'll hear it and not dismiss it? I guess we've been learning that that's one of the mistakes - sometimes advertising campaigns tend to be designed to meet the needs of the people purchasing the campaign, being adults.

So we are honing in on some public awareness messages that will be part of a whole strategy to change the conversation with young people and invite them to start thinking about personal responsibility and what consent means. We're looking forward to seeing the sort of creative and artistic outcome of the direction we've been giving - the company that will be designing the public awareness campaign is part of the Sexual Violence Strategy. I'm looking forward to seeing the final outcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not comparing the actions, but when I was younger, it was seen as okay to drink and drive, not wear your seatbelt - things like that, and they educated our generation that this wasn't a good thing to do. I'm assuming - most of the people that I know now know that it's not the proper thing to drink and drive, and to wear your seatbelt. My two-year-old son always tells me, Daddy, seatbelt.

The other quick question that I wanted to ask - and Ms. Gorham, you and I have had a few discussions, you know where I'm going with this - last year I worked with the

Baillie family in Spryfield. It marked the 25th anniversary of the tragic death of their mother Barb who lost her life in front of five children to domestic violence. I along with Denenia, Craig, Chad, Mark and David created Barb's Benches, which is as you know a purple bench that is in a very nice spot in Long Lake to remember her, but also to bring awareness to the issue around domestic violence and hopefully use it to - not just to give a safe place, but to allow people to know there are people you can go to for help. So we use that program to try to educate, and hopefully that expands.

What are you doing to educate the public around domestic violence? Especially in families, it's one of those hidden things that - dirty secrets - people don't like to speak about.

MS. GORHAM: I think you raise a very good point and some of the ways in which we're currently spreading information and education around domestic violence is the new booklet you have there, *Making Changes*, which provides a lot of comprehensive information and we disseminate that widely. I think we had 3,000 editions published in November and they were gone by January, so we're putting out a reprint. So we'll be printing many thousands. MLA offices should ask for them to have available for their constituents. It's a very great resource and it's right up-to-date. So I think that's one way.

The other way we support education is through the support we provide to the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia. We work with that network and the public education work that they're involved with. We supported a social media campaign that they designed and launched last year. Typically annually we hold at least one education event to promote knowledge. We brought in some experts from Alberta last year and we collaborated with Alice Housing to look at the role of men and boys and the responsibility that men hold to understand this not being a women's issue, so those opportunities come up.

Do we have the resources for a high profile campaign? No, we don't. So this is the way in which we've been working on this. I think there is going to be a shift ahead with the focus of this new federal government having identified the development of a national framework on violence against women that might see some new conversations around what the federal government can do, in the same way they did with drinking and driving, to throw good resources forward for changing the national conversation on this. So we're looking forward to seeing what that might bring.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: We support organizations, for example like Silent Witness, to do projects and to do education as well, in order to bring more attention to the issue of violence against women. I think it's all of our responsibility to look for ways to increase opportunities for people to come forward. So whether it's someone calling your constituency office or someone asking someone you know whether there's some place to be referred or if there's someone they can talk to, I think those are ways that people try to get the message out.

As Pat said, the federal government is committed now to a national framework on violence against women, for the first time ever. We're hoping that every province will have an opportunity to provide input and to look at ways we can bring that product or that information back to Nova Scotia.

Violence against women has so many facets, it's not just one area, so it's really important that we develop a model that addresses every facet of violence against women.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that, as the father of a young daughter, I appreciate you showing up today and all the hard work you do - really, it's one of the more important things, probably the most important thing in Nova Scotia right now.

So a closing statement.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: First of all I want to say thank you because I think the work you do is incredible. It's hard enough to do ordinary jobs, nine-to-five, but the work you do is incredible and we do appreciate the contribution you make, both as leaders and as Opposition members, we really value that. We value your opinion and we value your input and we work across sectorial, so if there's anything we can do for any one of you, you're welcome to call our office and we would do our best to try to support you and accommodate you.

I do really appreciate your time today and I think that by working together, whether it's that you're raising issues or whether you're addressing issues, we really value it as Nova Scotians and I thank you for it.

I really do want to say how important the work is that civil servants do because they've been so supportive of our work. We're a small office, we have very little money and lots of good intentions. This current minister has just been amazing to our office and to the work that's going forward, so we're really looking forward to 2016 and beyond. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. With that we will recess until 2:25 p.m., just to deal with some minor committee business.

[2:22 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[2:26 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee back to order. We do have some committee business - correspondence from the Community Society to End Poverty - Nova Scotia and Dalhousie Legal Aid who both request to appear, and the Cape Breton-Victoria Child Advocacy Society. What I would like to do is defer to the next meeting when we have the chairman here and we have all of our original members here and we can sit down

and have a discussion and have a vote then. Is everybody comfortable with that? Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: I think it was an issue at our last meeting, too, but I just want to put it out there. I recall back in October there was an individual who wanted to come before the committee to speak, and at that time the chairman had said - actually, I have it right here. What she said was that we can definitely put that on the next agenda setting and have the chance to look at it. Just as a committee member, I would hesitate having something specific to an individual case, but again, if we can have something that speaks to the generalities of the situation, like Mr. Worth - if there was a group or somebody who can help educate us better, then absolutely.

So I just want to draw that to the attention of the committee that I think clearly the three groups are within our mandate or certainly within - the Community Society to End Poverty - Nova Scotia, Dalhousie Legal Aid, and the advocacy society are all within our mandate. We've already had the comment from the chairman who said, look, maybe not individuals but if that person can make the effort to kind of tie in with a community group - and now we've got these community groups that want to come forward. I think we should be all over it to invite them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I appreciate your comments. I can't speak on behalf of the chairman. I don't know if she has been in communication with any of these requests, hence the reason I'm saying it may be best to see where she's at on this and what communication she has had with these groups.

I agree, they certainly do fall within, but that will be something that we'll definitely bring up the next time around and make sure that we get all the information from the chairman to see what correspondence she has had with these members. Are we comfortable with that?

MS. MANCINI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There was some correspondence that was passed out at the beginning of the committee - a letter from Ms. May. I just want to make sure that everybody has a copy of that. Mr. Orrell.

MR. ORRELL: Why did we get this letter here in this committee today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The lady showed up, she was outside, and she just passed it out.

MR. ORRELL: Okay, so it's not anything to do with committee work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. She just wanted to make sure that members of the committee . . .

MR. ORRELL: There was no ask.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. ORRELL: There was no request to appear and it didn't seem like it fell in - okay, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that, I'd like to adjourn the meeting. Our next meeting will be March 1st, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. It will be the Department of Community Services on child welfare services. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:30 p.m.]