

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

Legislative Committees Office

Nova Scotia Association for Community Living

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 Mr. Terry Farrell.]
[Mr. Larry Harrison was replaced by Mr. John Lohr.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

Ms. Nicole Arsenault
Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia Association for Community Living

Ms. Jean Coleman,
Executive Director

Dr. Carmel French,
President



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2016

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Patricia Arab

MR. CHAIRMAN (Mr. Brendan Maguire): We have a quorum here so I'm going to call the Standing Committee on Community Services to order. My name is Brendan Maguire, I'm the Vice-Chairman in for Chairman Patricia Arab. I'm going to have the members of the committee introduce themselves, starting with Mr. Horne.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Today the committee will be receiving a presentation from the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living. I ask that all members turn their phones on silent or vibrate. Also, I had a request earlier from a member for a motion and I just asked that member that we keep it until after the presentation is over and the witnesses have their time. With that, let's start. I'll have you introduce yourself.

MS. JEAN COLEMAN: Good afternoon, it's a pleasure to be here. I'm Jean Coleman and I'm here with Dr. Carmel French, President of the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living.

I'm the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living and I have worked for the association in various capacities for over 35 years. Dr. French is a professor at Mount Saint Vincent University and has been involved with the association on the provincial level as well as the national level, and she will be sharing some of her insights today.

For the purpose of this presentation, the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living is going to be referred to as NSACL. I know acronyms are not liked by many people but we have only 15 minutes so it seemed appropriate to use our acronym.

NSACL is a province-wide, not-for-profit association of people with intellectual disabilities, families and others leading the way to build a just and inclusive society. We do this by empowering and supporting individuals and families, promoting rights and values in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and encouraging reform and collaborating with other organizations for social justice.

NSACL was formed in 1954 by parents of children who have an intellectual disability. Initially the association provided schooling opportunities for children who were at that time not permitted to attend public school. Currently we work to promote inclusive opportunities in pre-school, public school, post-secondary education, employment, recreation, as well as in other systems that affect the lives of people with disabilities. We work closely with other provincial disability organizations to pursue common goals.

Just to tell you a little bit about the background. The organization of the Canadian Association for Community Living is not unlike government with federal, provincial and municipal levels. NSACL is part of the Canadian Association for Community Living, which includes over 40,000 individual members, 400 local associations across Canada and 13 provincial and territorial associations for community living. As well, here in the Province of Nova Scotia, there are six local branches. These branches, along with NSACL, attempt to address the concerns of the approximately 30,000 individuals in Nova Scotia with an intellectual disability.

NSACL receives hundreds of requests each month from individuals with intellectual disabilities, family members, service providers and community stakeholders, and especially families with sons or daughters with an intellectual disability. All are seeking financial and emotional support and/or information. We strive to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for people with an intellectual disability to live, learn, work and participate in their communities alongside non-disabled persons as respected, valued and contributing citizens.

Through funding from the federal government, we have an employment development director working on our Ready, Willing & Able initiative. There should be a handout - it's quite colourful - that will give you some information on our Ready, Willing & Able initiative. It's an initiative of the Canadian Association for Community Living in partnership with the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance. It's designed to build on and increase employer capacity and demand to hire people with intellectual disabilities and people with autism spectrum disorder, and create the effective response of linkages necessary between employers and employment agencies supporting people with intellectual disabilities and on the autism spectrum.

Since October 2014, 50 people with an intellectual disability or on the autism spectrum have been hired - real work for real pay. This funding will end though on March 31, 2017.

One of the reasons that there has been such a focus on people with intellectual disabilities and on the autism spectrum is that they are the most unserved people with disabilities in the employment environment. They're under-represented in our workforce.

In 2015, NSACL started an initiative called Connecting Community. The purpose of this is to engage people in the work of NSACL. Twice a month we host information sessions in our office or with church groups or we go to companies' offices where we share stories in a one-hour time frame of NSACL's work. The benefit of this is that over 200 more people are aware of some of the joys and challenges in the lives of persons with an intellectual disability. People attend these sessions from all walks of life and could be potential employers, volunteers, donors or board members.

Prior to the last fiscal budget, NSACL received \$79,000 in discretionary funding from the Department of Community Services. Last year this amount was reduced and we received \$55,000. The 30 per cent cut in funding has resulted in many hardships for the association - the most serious being that we are unable to hire a part-time family support facilitator in the Valley region.

The Nova Scotia association is a family-based association assisting people with intellectual disabilities and their families to lead the way in advancing inclusion in their own lives and the communities. Education, de-institutionalization and communication are key components of the work NSACL does in Nova Scotia. Families come to us for information on their rights, the education system, justice and health.

The kind of support that NSACL provides to families is based on the specific needs of the family. This can include, but is not limited to, providing information on local inclusive opportunities and options, supporting families to connect with local resources and support, assisting families to have access to the services provided through the Department of Community Services, provincial social services, facilitating people to seek justice when exclusion and abuse have happened, facilitating elder parents and individuals to think about planning for the future, attending school meetings with parents, and supporting inclusive education.

We respond to their requests directly, as well as share information and facilitate workshops for our families, fellow professionals and the general public. For example, we have provided sessions on issues such as sexuality, individual education plans, relationship building, inclusive recreational opportunities and RDSPs. We also offered sessions for older parents who are planning for the future when they are no longer here to support their adult children.

NSACL has been the leader in offering PATH - Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope. Residential training in the province where staff from the Yarmouth Association for Community Residential Options, Breton Ability Centre and staff from the Department of Community Services have attended to become facilitators of person-directed planning.

Families start at NSACL and are the backbone of our organization. However, our work continues as there are still many families who do not know what they are able to access in supports and don't know their rights. Many families are exhausted in caring for their loved one and often when we hear from folks they are in or near crisis.

There's a widowed mother who is in her 80s who has a son still living at home who is in his 60s. She has told me that when she goes to bed at night she prays that her son will die before she does because she does not know what will happen to him when she passes on. These are some of the folks in crisis that we work with. When they call NSACL we respond immediately, helping people navigate the system, access what they need, in plain language, and walk the walk with them until they are back on their feet and out of crisis. We do whatever we need to do for as long as it takes.

Much of our work is travelling to communities throughout Nova Scotia and interacting with families. We give presentations and they are welcomed and well attended in all communities. We believe that parents, family members and individuals with an intellectual disability are keen for knowledge and the outcome is that people are better informed and therefore can make better choices for their family member to have a fuller, inclusive and meaningful life.

We give presentations on a variety of topics that individuals and families ask for. We have given them on topics such as: the road map, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Registered Disability Savings Plan, how to form parent support groups, Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope and we give presentations at the Nova Scotia Community College, at Mount Saint Vincent University. We also have a newsletter that we produce four times a year, keeping families up to date on current issues. One of the current issues right now is assisted suicide. It's a very worrisome topic for many of our families. Individual program plans are developed at school and also for people who are living in supported homes.

We have some new initiatives. Real Homes Real Choices - the reason I wanted to talk about this is that this came about when we were working on developing the road map. There were people from the Canadian Association for Community Living who were working on that. Two of the people on that committee to develop the road map became interested and became part of this project. The purpose of this project was to increase the capacity of community-based residential service providers, to assist adults with intellectual disabilities and more complex needs, to move from large group-home arrangements to supported living in the community. This was an initiative through CACL and partners.

The two community organizations that are part of this project are Regional Residential Services Society here in Dartmouth and Breton Ability Centre in Cape Breton. To date, Regional Residential Services Society has moved three people out of a large group home into individual living arrangements in community, and Breton Ability Centre has moved nine people into community.

It has been three years since the road map for transforming services was implemented and then families had hope. Many families are now disheartened that there seems to be a lack of progress in moving forward in the direction that was framed in the original road map. The key recommendations have not begun and families are once again losing hope that their sons and daughters will have a full and meaningful life with choices, person-directed planning, and living where and with whom they choose.

In December 2015 a report card on the road map, along with a companion document was released, with comments on issues from hundreds of families who had heart-wrenching stories around serious issues such as housing, employment, and services from the Department of Community Services. This is still a huge issue for our families.

The committees that NSACL participates in are: Community Homes Action Group; Community Advocates Network; the Disability Rights Coalition; Partnership for Disability Strategy; Special Education Program Services; the Nova Scotia Partnership on Respite, Family Health and Well-being; the Employability Table; Living in Community; and the Employment Support and Income Assistance. Through these committees, we are able to work collaboratively with our allies and make sure that issues facing people with intellectual disabilities are included and represented in the work that is done.

Some outcomes from our committee work have been that documents have been developed and distributed: a Respite Guide for families of Children and Youth with Chronically High needs in Nova Scotia; Nova Scotia Respite Guide: A Guide for Caregivers of Youth and Adults with Developmental, Physical and/or Mental Disabilities; a Resource Tool Kit for Families; A Blueprint for Action: To Achieve Equitable Access to Employment Opportunities For Persons with Disabilities in Nova Scotia; and Choice, Equality and Good Lives in Inclusive Communities: A Roadmap for Transforming the Nova Scotia Services to Persons with Disabilities Program.

NSACL provides a valuable service to Nova Scotians with intellectual disabilities and their families. We are service providers and so much more. We have always supported, counselled, shared information, educated, initiated projects, and offered training to families and others - all to ensure that individuals with intellectual disabilities receive fair and equitable treatment.

Last year's funding cut has presented many challenges to NSACL as it continues to support families. Sustaining NSACL, if we receive another funding cut, would be very difficult. In order to turn this around, we'll need government, community service providers,

mainstream community systems and disability organizations all working together to create the fundamental changes needed if we are going to move the quality of lives of people with disabilities closer to that enjoyed by the rest of society. We urge the Department of Community Services to reinstate the \$23,700 that was cut from our core funding in 2015 so that together we can create better lives for our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your time and we welcome questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your presentation. I'm going to maintain a speakers' list here. I'm going to wrap up questioning around 2:45 p.m. That will give us about an hour and 25 minutes for questions if need be. I just ask that before a question is asked or answered that you'll allow me to introduce you for the gentleman in the booth over there. We'll start with Ms. Mancini.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Thank you for your presentation. On December 3, 2015, I did have the privilege of hosting the Community Homes Action Group and the release of the 2015 report card on the government's actions on transforming services for Nova Scotians with disabilities. Unfortunately, the results were overwhelmingly negative and it seems as though there is a disconnect between the needs of the families and individuals on the ground and the response from government. That's probably not shocking news to you.

Many of the comments made by families of persons with disabilities said that they feel like the government has abandoned the roadmap created in 2013. So my question to you is, in the view of the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living, do you feel the government has abandoned the 2013 roadmap?

MS. COLEMAN: It's not whether NSACL believes it - families are telling us. The families throughout Nova Scotia are telling us that there was so much hope when this was first released and they have yet to see any changes made.

I understand that there is an advisory committee and that there is action taking place within the department, but our families and their sons and daughters are not seeing any changes. So that's why they were so hopeful when this was first released in 2013, and the comments in the companion document are heart-wrenching. One person's son had died before they got a placement in a small options home. That's pretty distressing and pretty severe. So I think families are feeling abandoned.

MS. MANCINI: You mention that there is an advisory committee. How often are you in communication with the Department of Community Services on the roadmap or about disability support in general?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. French.

DR. CARMEL FRENCH: We try to stay in contact as much as possible. There are very few meetings and we recognize that this is a new venture for this current government and so it's going to take a while to see where they are coming from and to communicate with us as well. The communication isn't as often as we would like, and in some cases we're not quite sure where things are going right now. So we are left with some doubt.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Orrell.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you for your presentation. You say your budget was cut by about a third last year - almost \$24,000. Was there any indication at that time that that was going to happen? What was promoted in the media was that there was sometimes a lack of accountability in how your money was being spent, and for the sake of \$24,000 in a \$70,000 budget, that's a lot of accountability that would have to be misused or mis-accounted for. Was there any indication to you guys that there was a lack of accountability and that that cut was coming?

MS. FRENCH: No, we were totally taken by surprise. We have always submitted our budget and it has never been questioned. The amount of \$79,000 has been longstanding - well over 20 years it has been the same amount that we have been receiving, so we were very surprised with the cut. We were really told it was sort of a blanket cut across a number of groups that were considered advocacy groups, with little recognition that while we may do advocacy, it is such a small per cent of the work that is done. Most of our work is direct support to families and providing services to families.

MR. ORRELL: I see that you were talking about a position in the Valley that had to be cut because of that. Is there any indication that that budget will be maintained this year, or brought back to where it was before? Would the accountability piece have been addressed since then? Is there an indication you might get that advocacy person back or the person who did that front-line work back? Is there any indication of that or are you going to get another cut again this year?

MS. FRENCH: We have met with people in the Department of Community Services. We haven't been given a lot of hope and we've been given no indication whether it will be cut again this year, it is a possibility.

One of the things that is standing in our way is that we were left a donation, a bequest, but we have designated that bequest for long-term planning for very specific things. It wasn't our intent to run the organization on the bequest because basically we would be closing down in a few years because the bequest is not that sizeable. The government took that bequest into account when it was looking at our budget.

We are looking more at the long-term sustainability of the organization and every year we are using a portion of that bequest for both the provincial and our six branches because we also support them financially in some ways in some of their initiatives.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rankin.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I appreciate you coming in today. The information we receive as a committee is very important. I'm just wondering if you could speak to how your group handles - both how they receive information from proposed clients and how you would actually go out and find them? Do you collaborate with other groups, such as L'Arche? I know that as an MLA, the people who I have coming into my office who have autism especially, speak very highly of that group. They haven't mentioned your group yet. I'm just wondering how the whole system works.

There has been a lot of investment within the schools and I have here \$1.5 million put in over the last two years to provide supports to students with complex needs. Maybe where there's a gap that I see is particularly in housing, when the kids get beyond the age of high school and the parents have to figure out how to get them into a community. It sounds like you are advocating for an independent community model. How do we make sure that we're not losing touch and getting access to those people? Maybe you can provide an example of a service you provide for those who are leaving the school and looking for housing needs.

MS. FRENCH: That's a lot of questions there. First, we rely a lot on referrals. In some cases things come from our branches and then to us; in other cases the Department of Community Services will sometimes contact us and help deal with a family because a family will phone and are looking for information on how to navigate the system. A lot of it is through word of mouth. We are inundated with calls from families.

We do have a support person in the Port Hawkesbury area, but her geographic region is quite large because it goes right down to Cape Breton. She was hired just for part time and she cannot keep up with the demand. What she does is when she gets a referral, she goes and meets with the family and finds out what their issues are and then tries to help them and support them - whether it's housing, whether it's in the school issues, whether it's a preschool issue - and she will provide the information to them, go along as a support person to them, provide counselling in some cases, so many different types of roles. We could easily hire her full time just for the Port Hawkesbury area, plus another person in Sydney, the demand is that great.

There are many individual stories. What we're finding too is that literally thousands of families who have a child with an intellectual disability or an adult with an intellectual disability have no idea of what their rights are, what they are entitled to, and for many they've been operating on their own in isolation for years, caring for their loved one without even realizing they can access some funds. When they do find out, the funds are usually so limited - like respite funding is so limited - that there's very little they can do with it anyway. Jean will be able to share some personal stories.

MR. RANKIN: I think that's good. I'm getting a good understanding. If there was an incremental increase to your budget, I just want to know if that would go directly to a service provider and either the value where it was or perhaps another jurisdiction.

MS. FRENCH: Right now our need is the Valley.

MR. RANKIN: For service.

MS. FRENCH: We need it throughout the province, but that is our priority right now. That's the one we have listed for.

MR. RANKIN: Having said that, I'd like to put forward a motion, if I could.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was told that I can't hold people back to the end of committee, so yes.

MR. RANKIN: Just because I might not get a chance to come around. I'd like to move that the committee write to the Department of Community Services to consider an increase in funding to better support the group as you provide a service to your clients with intellectual disabilities - if I could move that.

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

The motion is carried.

This is historic. It's the first time. So we will send a letter off to the Department of Community Services requesting that there is a funding increase, and we'll continue on with questions. Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: I wanted to ask you about the report card in that the government scored very low in all five of the topic areas: 79 per cent of respondents said poor progress on person-directed planning, and 82 per cent of the respondents said poor progress on increasing employment opportunities.

I wanted to ask, do you believe that the ongoing transformation of employment services under Labour and Advanced Education will add to this frustration or will it alleviate some of that frustration?

MS. COLEMAN: That's a really good question because they're in such flux right now with the changes that are going on, on how they're providing employment support to persons in Nova Scotia, so I'm not really sure. It's going to kick off on July 1st, from what I understand. NSACL has met with Labour and Advanced Education, but we're not sure where persons with disabilities fit in. It's my understanding that all of the employment

agencies are now going to be working with persons with disabilities as opposed to the specialized groups that have been throughout the province.

The specialized groups started because their needs weren't being met in the regular employment agencies. I don't know what has changed, I'm very hopeful that people will be trained and individuals will feel comfortable going into an employment agency. It's a bit worrisome.

MS. MANCINI: In your view, the jobs that the individuals are connected with, are they suitable and appropriate? Do they make enough money to sustain themselves currently?

MS. COLEMAN: The people who are working in jobs in the community are making minimum wage and more. If they have a shared living arrangement, I think they can live in the community quite well. I don't know if a single person making minimum wage can afford housing and all that goes with that. Certainly people who are making minimum wage and have a shared accommodation, I think can live well in the community.

At NSACL we strongly encourage folks to work in community, whether it's 10 hours or 40 hours, because being involved in community gives people safeguards. I don't know if I've answered your question.

MS. MANCINI: You have, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lohr.

MR. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank you, Ms. Coleman, for the presentation. One very gripping part of your story was about the elderly lady with her elderly son, praying at night that he would die before her. That was very compelling. If I think about it, I know three families that would be in the same - maybe not exactly that situation but similar, where they are aging.

I'm just wondering if you can connect the dots for me between that situation and what the roadmap or where we should have been with the roadmap and how that would have been addressed in the roadmap. How come we're still dealing with that? Where were we supposed to be with the roadmap and where are we right now?

MS. COLEMAN: Well the original roadmap has sort of fallen off the rails. Some of the recommendations and some of the goals have been changed. Certainly if person-directed planning and the individualized funding, which had been part of the recommendations, if those were put in place then the elderly mother with her son could have worked with the department and figured out what it is they wanted for their son, where he wanted to live. If the funding that he needed for support was attached to him, he could get the living option he wanted. Those things are not in place yet.

MS. FRENCH: I also wanted to add that when we have our provincial meetings a lot of our board members are parents who have children with an intellectual disability. Some of these families are totally fatigued with the process, which is another thing that's holding things up. They're also getting elderly. Currently it's a tremendous financial output for these families. They have to secure housing and sometimes take out second mortgages. At their stage in life they're finding it very financially draining and very emotionally draining because the process has sort of been stalled and they're back to square one. One of the problems is the fatigue factor, some are just sort of dropping out and they're left back in this hopeless situation because they just can't sustain that constant going and pleading their cases.

MR. LOHR: Do you have an approximate count? Do you have an estimate? Is there a number? Do we know how many people are in this situation - maybe children over 40 years old or over a certain age and don't really have it resolved where they will go or where they will live; still living with mom and dad?

MS. COLEMAN: I don't have those numbers and I'm not sure if the department does either. I just know that we get many calls, but I have no idea of the exact number.

MR. LOHR: Over 1,000 or might be thousands?

MS. COLEMAN: I can't say.

MS. FRENCH: We do know that when we have in-services and workshops on things like the disability pension allowance and we do workshops on planning for the future and what happens when I'm no longer there, and they are always full. We literally have no trouble. If we can only accommodate 25, we have 25 families in that position there plus probably a few others who would like to attend and there is no room. Everywhere we go throughout the province doing that kind of workshop there is a high demand. The 1,000 number I would say would be a minimal estimate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Treen.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Thank you for your presentation. I actually learned quite a few things today. In my riding I have started an autism support group. It has been going on for about a year and a half, and I've had people in talking about the RDSPs and some different things. We've had a day-long autism event.

I was unaware that you guys could come out and speak to any of these things because I've worked very closely with Autism Nova Scotia, but I was never told that you could come out and speak to these different topics and stuff. A lot of parents when I ask them, they don't know what they need, right? So I will be contacting you about that and maybe you can supply us with a list of things that you can come out and speak to.

I know another one of the MLAs has started an autism group as well to help guide parents. So I'll be reaching out to you about that, but maybe you can supply us a list of some of the things you do because I was totally unaware of it. Autism Nova Scotia didn't share either so I'll be looking forward to that piece of information.

I guess what I'd like to know is, what are some of your successes that you guys have had in the last three to five years? Now I'm learning about you now and I want to know what your successes are.

MS. COLEMAN: We had a project and we were working in Amherst, and there is a transportation system now in Amherst that wasn't there before. NSACL, with our community inclusion, started that up with many other groups in the Amherst area. That was a success because then people could get into town to doctor appointments or for employment. The transportation services from a person's front door to where they were going and the costs were very little. So that's one.

We are doing PATH training and that's pretty exciting because this is a two-hour planning session with families around their loved one with an intellectual disability. It's a process that people are invited to - families and friends of the individual - but at the end of the two hours, people know where they're going and how they're going to get there and who is going to help them along the way.

This is a PATH training that we've done in Nova Scotia four or five times, so there are probably 100 people who are PATH facilitators. Two people facilitate a path and it makes a huge difference in a person's life. When I was asked earlier about what happens when someone graduates and then what do they do, we're hoping to do PATHs around students in Grades 11 and 12 so there won't be a drop-off when they finish Grade 12 and don't know where to go.

Many times parents are told at the schools that they should put their name on a waiting list for one of the vocational centres but the wait-list there is five years long, nobody wants their son or daughter, and they probably don't want to, to sit at home for five years. So doing this PATH, planning precisely what it is - and it's always around what the person's dreams are and that's a very good thing that NSACL has done, it is a success. It needs to be bigger and broader but it's a starting point and for that we're pretty excited.

MS. FRENCH: Also with the PATH, we have trained people with the Department of Community Services. They come to us for training so they can also administer and run PATH training with family.

Another real success has been our Connecting Community where we almost monthly or bi-weekly host little information sessions. So over the last couple of years we've had hundreds of people attend those so we're getting out more information slowly to people about what we offer.

I think a real big success has been hiring the person in Port Hawkesbury. This was the first time that we actually provided direct service to families; before, they had to come to the provincial organization. Having a person at the grassroots level just gets our name out there more but more importantly, connecting to Halifax is not the same as connecting to somebody within your community, which is why the Valley position is also important, because we did have a person there. So the more people we have at the community level, that's who you are going to connect to because people phone us for information but that person-to-person contact is so important and somebody from within your area who knows all the services and the contact people within the area.

That's another initiative that has been very successful. Of course the Ready, Willing & Able with the Autism Association has also, and the employment has worked out quite well.

MS. TREEN: I know it was brought up earlier by my colleague over there about the employment service centre and you being nervous about it but I'm kind of excited about it because there are so many people who live in isolation who can't get to one of these specialized organizations to get the service they need. I'm very hopeful that best practices from these organizations that have helped persons with disabilities get a job and keep a job, that that's going to be shared in these centres.

I'm in Eastern Passage and we had one that for us to access it would have been hard but now we're going to have a centre that hopefully will have these services so they can access them within my community and they can reach them fairly easily on their own and live independently so I'm kind of excited about that.

The other question that I had - for an appointment for these PATH training sessions, do they make an appointment with you? How does that work?

MS. COLEMAN: What normally happens is if people call and say they don't know what their son or daughter is going to do after school or they have some issues, we go and meet with families. You need to meet with families a few times just to get the feel of what's going on and how we can be of any help, so that's how it happens.

MS. TREEN: So I can have them contact you?

MS. COLEMAN: Yes, people would call, yes, absolutely. You don't call and say, I want a PATH and then we come out and do it. There has to be a time of building trust and building a relationship.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: I want to draw your attention back to the report card. In that report card, 85 per cent of the respondents said "Poor Progress on Reducing Reliance on

Institutions” and 86 per cent said “Poor Progress on Decreasing Waitlists.” What is the average wait time for individuals and their families now, do you know?

MS. COLEMAN: Long. It does vary, but it’s long. Some families have been waiting years and years for their son or daughter to move up on the wait-list. If somebody has a higher priority, then people on the wait-list get bumped down. I’ve known families that have been six, eight, 10 years on the wait-list.

As far as the report card and the roadmap and institutions, they’ve missed the date twice now for no more admissions to institutions, which is the first step in institutions being closed in Nova Scotia. NSACL feels strongly that institutional living is not a place for anybody, but a person with an intellectual disability. Across the country, provinces have closed institutions.

In fact, Nova Scotia used to be the leader in closing institutions - the children training centres and the training centre in Truro, and then it sort of fell off the table and now other provinces have closed their institutions and we’re still placing people in institutions here in the province.

MS. MANCINI: Just another point on the report card - 90 cent said “Poor Progress on Community-Based Housing”. There was one aspect of the report that didn’t seem to make any sense to me and I’m just wondering, one service provider commented that the Department of Community Services rejected a cost-neutral proposal that would create a new four-bedroom home with blended levels of support. Do you recall that in the report?

MS. COLEMAN: I do.

MS. MANCINI: What is your reaction to that?

MS. COLEMAN: This report came about through a survey that Community Homes Action Group did over the summer and early Fall. The cost-neutral proposal - I’m not sure why that would have been rejected. It seems to me that it would have been a perfect plan, but the survey was done anonymously and so I have no idea who the service provider was, but it seemed like a very good solution that was not taken up.

MS. MANCINI: It seemed like it was somebody working in an institution - at least in the report, that’s what it seemed like it came from.

MS. COLEMAN: My understanding was that it was a current service provider that was - and it very well could have been someone at one of the institutions that had made it.

MS. MANCINI: That’s what I read into it. Just the other question I wanted to ask you is that - it’s not on the report card, but the roadmap - at least the recommendation, a pretty strong one, I read it and it was quite a while ago now. It was tasked to reform all the

disability legislation and that seemed to me like something that was going to take place fairly early on the roadmap. It seemed like a fairly straightforward, not very costly thing to do. I'm just wondering if you're aware of any progress in that regard in terms of any disability legislation, I think it is to meet the standards under the UN convention.

MS. COLEMAN: There was a committee that was put together to work on this transformation and to develop it. We met a few times after the report was released - the document. We were told at the time that they were working on the legislation around the Homes for Special Care Act, but the last time we met was probably over a year ago and we'd been disbanded - the original committee. We were told that was put on hold. So because the communication is a hit or miss, none of us really know what legislation is being worked on at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Orrell.

MR. ORRELL: I want to go back to your funding. You get \$55,000 from the Department of Community Services and you were talking about some federal funding - I assume that was for the Ready, Willing and Able program that's going to come to an end in March 2017. What kind of outcomes would you have had, compared to the amount of funding you got?

I guess my question to you is, what was the funding from the federal government - what kind of outcomes would you have had with that? For the \$55,000 you get from the provincial government, what kind of outcomes do you have with that funding?

MS. FRENCH: The federal government funding is designated for the Ready, Willing and Able program. We have a person who is employed and the outcome is that a number of people have been placed in viable situations where they are employed full time, with good salaries - relative.

With the money that comes provincially, that pays a lot for our office space, for our travel, our expenses, salaries, and how much we can give to people. So if we do not have enough money to pay for a full-time person, it reduces our ability to provide information to connect with families, to give the support to families, so the outcome would be totally different in that we could help support a person, at least part time, working in the Valley and reach that many more families. The outcome would be, I guess, very different with regard to the number of people we could connect to, the amount of information we could get out there.

MR. ORRELL: So your core funding from the province is \$55,000; what is your total budget? Where would the rest of your money come from?

I guess you said earlier you feel like you've been penalized because you had some money left to you for operational purposes down the road, so it's kind of like a no-win

situation for you guys. You get \$55,000 in core funding, you try to raise enough money to do new programming, and they cut the core funding. So what is your total budget and how hard is it to achieve that budget goal with such a little bit of money from the province?

MS. FRENCH: Currently we operate on a deficit model, which cuts into our money that we were left, which is why I said we cannot rely on that to sustain us. Our budget is well over \$100,000 every year, and that's just to maintain our office and one full-time person.

We do have to do fundraising, which we do and it's relatively successful. All the money we raise in fundraising is based on that it is designated for hiring people. That is where the person in Port Hawkesbury, that's where her position is paid, from our fundraising. So as much as possible we fundraise to offset or just try to not be in debt too much, to maintain our services, and they're at a minimal level from what we want.

MS. COLEMAN: I just wanted to say that we write proposals and write grants, and that's how we got Ready, Willing and Able; prior to that, community inclusion, that was project funding. So anything besides our core funding is project-based, and we write a lot of proposals.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Farrell.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: I was pleased to hear you mention the work that went into forming the Cumberland County Transportation Services Society. I know the folks who were involved in developing that project, and it's a worthwhile project. I'm glad you see it as one of your successes.

Another thing that I'm aware of in the Amherst area that I think is entirely consistent with the roadmap is the development of the family demonstration project. I know a fair bit about it, but I think maybe from a technical point of view of how it fits in with the roadmap and how it fits in the work of your organization - maybe you could explain that for the members of the committee, the model and how it works.

MS. COLEMAN: Through the transformation, there were two pilot projects that families had to put together a proposal and present it to the department. The families in Amherst have successfully - three families - pulled together and they built a home in Amherst, and their sons and daughters are living there and they're thrilled. It's going very, very well.

It was a huge financial obligation on the part of the three families insofar as having to remortgage their homes and to come up with the funding to build the place, but I believe the funding for the day-to-day is part of the pilot project with the department. It is going well and the folks who are living there - the young men and women - are quite happy and thrilled to be on their own.

MR. FARRELL: It seems kind of revolutionary to me in a way because it's a step beyond what my understanding of what the traditional group home model has been. There is just another level of independence there for the residents in the home. I'm glad that we got an opportunity to bring that up today. Thank you.

MS. COLEMAN: I just wanted to say that the real difference about this pilot project in Amherst is that this is their home. They are not going to have to move. This isn't a group home that you might get moved around. This is their home for life and that's the exciting part.

MR. FARRELL: It kind of opens up another door though, doesn't it? I'll try to phrase this as a question, but there's a high level of independence there. As you say, it's their home. There's an ownership interest even. There are other - it kind of takes the role of the - it's hard for the province in that situation to define what their role is. When the residents and their families accept such a high level of independence, there are succession issues.

Getting back to your initial comment about the woman who was afraid that she would outlive her children, I know from talking to these families that they're in a similar situation. They have exactly what they want, which is a very independent living situation for their families, but it doesn't solve the initial problem of what happens later in life for the residents of the home.

I don't know if you have a further comment on that or not. It's not really a question, it's something that I think we need to answer together rather than the province being entirely responsible for that answer.

MS. FRENCH: I think that's an issue all parents have. It's not unique to families who have children with special needs. There are more issues involved, but that's going to be an issue whether they're in an institution or whether they're in a group home or whether they're in the small options.

I think the thing we have to keep in mind is that the small options - the kind of setting they have there - is more like a home setting and if the supports are in place that should be there and the residents have some control, which they do now, over who is working with them, it makes a lot of difference - as opposed to a lot of our current situations where people are in institutions and are forgotten and have no control over their lives, or even in some of the group home situations where we have nine to 12 people living in one situation, again with very minimal control over their life.

MR. FARRELL: But the trade-off in the group home situation or even in the institutional situation - and I don't want to seem like I'm sitting here defending that because I understand where progress is taking us, but it is the continuity of the residents, right, and that's the thing that maybe a parent can look at and say well, I'm satisfied with my child's

living situation in the group home and I know that will continue, even after I'm not here anymore.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: I'm going to take us down another road. One thing that struck me in preparation for our committee meeting today is the difference in the language and the sense of enthusiasm when I'm looking at the 2015 report card and the 2014 joint presentation to the committee - that was on February 11, 2014 - by the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living and Community Homes Action Group.

I guess my question to you is, can you explain to me the difference in tone and what has happened over this time to create such a shift? At least that's what I observed anyway in thinking, from a certain level of enthusiasm to well, where we are right now?

MS. COLEMAN: I think the shift is because families and individuals are not seeing any action, there's nothing concrete. So the enthusiasm of disability groups, of families, there was going to be a change. It was good for everyone and there has been no action or, if there has been, there has been no communication that there has been action. The communication has been very limited so there might be a lot that's going on, but we just don't know.

MS. MANCINI: You mentioned that certainly a few times so it's pretty clear that the communication aspect with DCS is difficult. I assume it's clearly adding to a level of frustration with the families. I'm sure you've made efforts, but is there any way you can see to remedy that, so there's more direct lines? As you say, if there's good things happening, you should really be the first people to know that that is happening.

MS. COLEMAN: I actually think the department is aware that families are frustrated and it's because of the lack of communication. I have heard - not directly from the department - I have heard that they are certainly working on communication but to date, there is nothing that is being shown to families, even on their website.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lohr.

MR. LOHR: I think I've heard you say two or maybe three different ways in which you feel the roadmap - there has been drift off the roadmap or the roadmap hasn't been followed. I guess my question is, to your group, what is the most significant way in which the roadmap has not been followed or diverted from? What is the single most significant issue with what was in the roadmap and what hasn't been done?

MS. COLEMAN: NSACL's position for many, many years has been to bring people home, bring people out of institutions and back to community. So for us, for our families and for the many 1,100 individuals who are still in institutions, that would be the

most telling disappointment, that they missed the deadlines for no more admissions and that people are still being admitted to institutions. That was a strong recommendation on the roadmap and that has sort of fallen by the wayside.

MR. LOHR: Was there consultation with your group or with other groups when those deadlines were missed, or were they just missed? Was there any consultation?

MS. COLEMAN: No, not with the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living, and certainly from my conversations with other disability groups, I don't believe that there was consultation. It was just missed.

MR. LOHR: It seems to me that there's that group in institutions that you're waiting to come out. There's also the group of people that we talked earlier - the mother with the adult son. Friends of mine who have adult children, they're in their homes waiting to go somewhere too. So the lack of small options homes, would that be your number two issue? I'm just curious - due to the populations really, right?

MS. COLEMAN: No, it's the same population, I think, but this is my take on it. If they stopped placing people in institutions and spending the money it costs on a daily basis and they took that and invested in small options - and small options can be a three-bedroom apartment - you have to start the ball rolling somewhere.

To my way of thinking, I think if they stopped placing people and started working at bringing people into community, and those dollars that were going into the institution went here, then people would be far better supported in community.

MR. LOHR: Sorry - just one more. This is underway in other provinces. Is there any indication from other provinces - like, is it revenue neutral or is it more expensive to do the institution or more expensive to do the small options? I'm just curious.

MS. FRENCH: It varies. A lot depends on the needs of the individual, and if someone has very high needs, obviously it's more expensive. Generally it is a lot more costly to maintain a person in an institution overall because you're talking 24-hour support and care and operation of the facility.

In many cases, all that's needed is a tremendous number of people in the community who are waiting to get in a small options or to leave an institution who would need minimal support. It would be a lot more cost savings for government if they were in those kinds of places.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rankin.

MR. RANKIN: I think the discussion is pretty constructive and I like the housing discussion because, again, that's my main concern. Just following up with the example that

was brought up in Amherst, with the more independent style living. That's something new to me and again, I have a family, but I'm going to have a lot more coming soon who are looking for options. Some of them aren't altogether pleased with how small options homes even work, but their biggest concern is the succession plan.

I'm just wondering again, because I asked too much of a loaded question the last time, you didn't mention L'Arche in the response - how do you see that model working? I'm actively trying to help a family right now and they even actually have an asset that they're willing to give. Besides the house that they have, they have a full other house that they'd be willing to actually donate to the government, but of course there are some challenges there because you don't want a specific kid jumping the line on a waiting list because they actually have family means or financial means.

So I'm really struggling to find a way to help that family and future families, because in rural HRM it can be even harder than in rural Nova Scotia because in rural Nova Scotia they actually have more amenities because they have towns, and in rural HRM it's becoming more of a challenge, especially without transit. My second question will be about transit, but maybe you can help me understand how to help families that are trying to find the solution, even when they have assets themselves.

MS. COLEMAN: I can respond to L'Arche. We're allies and they have a wonderful spirit and community and support people very well and it is their home at L'Arche for life.

In relation to your other question, about the person who has the asset or the family, I really don't know what to tell you. I don't know how to answer that, do you, Carmel?

MS. FRENCH: I think it's always going to be that concern with what happens. No matter what safeguards you have put in place, once you are gone there are no guarantees. I think that is always going to be an issue, no matter where the person is placed because even if they are in a group home or an institution, there are staff changes, there are belief changes, there are attitudinal changes, all kinds of things happen and people have to deal with them.

I think it's going to be a challenge for families because I think, like the Amherst situation, which is fabulous, but if you know the people you also know that this was a couple of years in the making and it was a constant engagement, struggle, confrontation, many other things. None of it was easy, every step of the way they met with some resistance and they had to negotiate and not every family has that wherewithal or the means or the ability to persevere and get what they want in the long run.

Families will very much vary on what they will bring to the situation and I think it is still always going to be a struggle. I guess in many ways it comes down to how we want people to be treated and is this what we want, to create a society where everybody is treated fairly and everybody has those same opportunities, or are we going to set up a multi-tiered

system where we make judgments and say some people deserve to live in the community and others don't and for what reason, because they don't have what we consider adequate intellectual abilities. So a lot of it comes down to, I think, us caring for our vulnerable citizens and putting the mechanism and the systems in place to make sure they are looked after.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rankin.

MR. RANKIN: Okay, I'm staying on that same vein about different communities having access. Speaking on behalf of Prospect, which doesn't have transit, there are kids down there who can't get the Access-a-Bus because they won't go beyond Exhibition Park. It's not specific to Prospect because you have Sambro, that is going to lose their transit, and you have Eastern Passage. You have all over HRM because it's very rural, so how do you even have small options homes in those areas when they don't have access to transit?

My question and I guess my request would be, do you advocate and do you lobby municipal governments - because there is funding coming from the federal budget to Nova Scotia earmarked for transit, so I would hope that you are out there in front, asking for that to be directed to disabilities and improving access in rural Nova Scotia but in my case, rural HRM?

MS. COLEMAN: Transportation is a huge barrier for people with disabilities. Yes, I mean we could certainly promote strongly that the transit dollars go into the rural so people can have employment and can get out and about.

One of the strong things for our folks is building relationships. Building relationships is what is going to keep them safe in community. So if you are isolated and can't get out and about, then you are not in a good situation.

One of the other things I just wanted to mention around transportation is that there's many folks who we support who have lost - just even here in Halifax, in HRM, they've lost their bus passes. They are on income assistance and unless they have 12 doctor appointments a month, one person who I know well doesn't have 12 doctors' appointments and has lost his bus pass, and there are many more who have lost that so we're isolated right here in HRM. It's not a good situation.

MR. RANKIN: I know that you're talking about provincial matters, but would you go see a committee at HRM or advocate on behalf of your clients to HRM or the municipalities?

MS. COLEMAN: Yes, we would.

MR. RANKIN: You would or you do?

MS. FRENCH: We have done it, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: Currently the Department of Community Services is undergoing a massive department-wide transformation, which also includes disability supports. On February 25, 2015, the consulting firm Davis Pier, who is also responsible for the ESIA transformation, was awarded \$189,000 - \$190,000 - to oversee the DSP transformation.

Was your organization consulted by Davis Pier or the transformational support unit in DCS during that transformation period?

MS. COLEMAN: No, they have not been in touch with us.

MS. MANCINI: The Disability Support Program request for proposal produced by the department, it states that Phase I and Phase II of the transformation work is estimated to take approximately three years. Using the department's own estimates - this means that the DSP transformation won't be complete until 2017 or maybe even 2018.

So it appears the Department of Community Services has effectively stopped doing much of the preventive work while they're undergoing the massive transformation. This is certainly the case with ESIA and the CYFS. In your view, can things stay as they are until 2017-18? If not, what are the risks that you see if they do stay the same?

MS. COLEMAN: The risks are to the families and to their health and to their sons and daughters' health. As we talked about earlier, families have often been fighting right from the birth of their son or daughter for the rights for their children to have medical treatment, to go to daycare, to be included in school, which is different. You can go to school and be in the classroom, but if you're not really included in all of the activities, then you're just really sitting there. So families get tired and burnt out in fighting for their loved ones. I missed the question.

MS. MANCINI: I was just wondering really what the risks are if everything stays the same with attempting to maintain even the current level of services.

MS. COLEMAN: There are more families that people are aging. Their sons and daughters are in their 30s and 40s and shouldn't be living at home anymore, as their other children have moved out. So I think the risks are great for health and frustration of families. It puts them in a very difficult and awkward place.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lohr.

MR. LOHR: I'm just wondering about last year and the budget cuts. I understand that Minister Bernard said at the time that some groups were not being accountable in the

way they spent their money. I know that it contributed directly to the loss of a position in the Valley for you. Was there ever any indication from the department that your group was not accountable or was not handling the money well?

MS. FRENCH: No, there wasn't. Like I said, we were sort of totally taken by surprise with the cut. We had actually submitted our budget and been told that everything was fine and it looked quite good, so we were very concerned and very surprised.

We have always had our budget audited. We have always submitted audited reports and we have been, like I said, receiving this amount of money for decades and there had never been any questions prior to this with the operation of the organization or our financial spending.

MR. LOHR: I don't know if you've already answered this before but have you had any indication about what is happening this year in the budget?

MS. FRENCH: We did meet with two people with the Department of Community Services and we did write a letter to Minister Bernard and we had a response. Basically it was a thank you and wait and see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: It has been fairly enlightening to me what you are trying to get done in Nova Scotia. I'm wondering if you are aware that there have been like 60 individuals or clients who have been put back into the community this year alone? I don't know if that's a statistic you are aware of or not. I wonder if you can comment on getting clients back into the community. Is that a yearly amount of people who would get back in the community?

MS. FRENCH: I wanted a clarification of the clients you were talking about.

MR. HORNE: Intellectual disabilities clients - the sons and the daughters who are getting back into the community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Coleman.

MS. COLEMAN: Lorna MacPherson had told us at a meeting that 60 individuals had come off the wait-list and had been found homes in the community, but that's not typical. The wait-list has increased, it hasn't decreased, so they're certainly not meeting the needs of people, of families.

MR. HORNE: Just to carry on a little bit about Community Services, generally their priority is the client or the intellectual disabilities person, rather than with parents. Is that

confusing or doesn't go along with the way you look at working with the communities? A family in particular?

MS. FRENCH: We have worked with Community Services in the past and we have found that they also have a more holistic view and while their main interest or their client may be the person with the disability, they do work with the families as well so it has been a collaboration on times. I don't think it has been a conflict.

MR. HORNE: It's not a conflict? No, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to wrap up at 2:30 p.m., so Ms. Mancini, we'll leave you the last question.

MS. MANCINI: Thank you, I'll be quick. The 2013 roadmap focused on choice, equality, and good lives and inclusive communities but it seems as though it's not currently the focus for the department or the minister. In your view, do you know where the department and the minister are focusing their attention with regard to the roadmap? Do you have any sense of that?

MS. COLEMAN: No. There's an advisory committee for Phase 2 that is meeting but they are unable to share information as to what is being spoken about during their meetings. I know there are community members on this committee but no, we don't know.

MS. MANCINI: Where do you think the focus should be placed?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Who wants to take that question?

MS. COLEMAN: Repeat the question, please.

MS. MANCINI: Where should the focus be right now? I mean we've missed deadlines but we need to catch up. I'm just wondering how we can get back on the road again.

MS. COLEMAN: It's hard to answer that question because the original roadmap has changed so much. It's still back to person-directed or person-focused planning and individualized funding, and closing institutions and bringing people home - back to community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that, we'll leave you a few minutes to give a closing statement.

MS. FRENCH: In closing, I want to thank everybody. Your questions were very insightful and gave an indication that you're well aware of what's going on and that you have a lot of constituents who are facing these kinds of issues.

From our perspective, we deal with families directly who are struggling with these issues and have been for quite a number of years. In a perfect world, we wouldn't be existing because people would be receiving the services that they don't have right now.

We know that it's going to be extra finances, and that's always an issue that seems to create the bottom line of what's going to happen, but we would encourage you to consider our mission and the fact that what we want is the fairness, the equity for people with intellectual disabilities and for their families, and that their concerns and issues will be addressed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for the presentations today. We will be requesting that the committee staff write a letter to DCS for an increase to the funding, and we'll request that they send that out right away.

MS. FRENCH: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that, we're going to recess until 2:35 p.m.

[2:32 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[2:37 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are going to call the committee to order. We do have a few items here - one of them being a request to appear by ACORN. We have the exact same topic coming forward with Community Society to End Poverty and Dalhousie Legal Aid. It's around ESIA special needs funding. What I am suggesting is that we combine the two groups and do either one of two things: we could split the time up so each get an hour, or we could vote to extend the meeting so there is extra time for each group.

I just think to bring the department in on the same topic twice in a row doesn't make a lot of sense when we have them here. We could accommodate the stakeholders by extending the time or splitting it in half. What is the committee's thought on that?

MS. MANCINI: I would support that with the extra hour - the extra time.

MR. LOHR: I agree with the extra time, not cutting them in half.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So a three-hour meeting. We'll need a motion from somebody on the floor and a vote.

MS. MANCINI: I move that the two groups . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are four groups.

MS. MANCINI: Sorry, I interrupted myself - would you go through those four?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is the Community Society to End Poverty - Nova Scotia, Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, Benefits Reform Action Group, and ACORN. They're all requesting a meeting around ESIA special needs funding.

MS. MANCINI: My motion would be that we allow all of those four groups to appear and that we extend the meeting by one hour.

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

The motion is carried.

We had on March 8th an information request from the Department of Community Services. This committee has a practice of posting the correspondence provided on its website, so we just need approval to post the correspondence to the website. Anybody? Joyce. It is normal practice for any information that this committee receives to post it to the website, so we just need approval from anybody on the committee to allow us to do that.

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

[The motion is carried.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then there is the information requested on January 19th from the Department of Community Services, information requested February 2nd from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Both correspondence the committee members should have received. Once again, we just need a motion to post it to the website.

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

[The motion is carried.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Cape Breton-Victoria Child Advocacy Society, which is the Progressive Conservative's witness, I know there were some issues around (Interruption) She's not well and we wanted to just leave it up to the Progressive Conservatives to determine how they want to deal with this - do they want to continue forward, do they want to wait? (Interruption) Okay, so how about maybe we'll put it back on the agenda for June, we'll revisit it. Of course, it's an already approved witness, so all the best to her.

As is common practice, we do not meet while the House is in session so we need to decide if we're going to proceed that same way: that while the House is in session we'll wait until we meet again - are we good with that?

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

[The motion is carried.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we're just going to determine the next meeting here. We'll leave June 7th open as the next meeting date, assuming the House has risen. Mr. Orrell is saying it's not going to be.

With that, we'll adjourn the meeting. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 2:42 p.m.]