

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

Legislative Committees Office

**Department of Community Services
Re: Sexual Violence Strategy Progress Report**

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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
Ms. Marian Mancini
Ms. Lisa Roberts

[Ms. Patricia Arab was replaced by Mr. Iain Rankin.]
[Mr. Eddie Orrell was replaced by Hon. Alfie MacLeod.]

In Attendance:

Mrs. Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Sarah Kay Granke,
Specialist - Sexual Violence Prevention and Supports

Ms. Natalie Downey,
Director - Prevention and Early Intervention

Ms. Stephanie MacInnis-Langley,
Executive Director - Nova Scotia Council on the Status of Women



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2017

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Patricia Arab

MR. CHAIRMAN (Mr. Brendan Maguire): I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Community Services. My name is Brendan Maguire and I am the Vice-Chairman, substituting for Patricia Arab.

We will be receiving a presentation, the Sexual Violence Strategy Progress Report. First, I'll have you introduce yourselves.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just want to also remind everyone to keep their phones on silent or turn them off.

We'll jump right into it. We'll be keeping a speakers' list and let's start.

MS. SARAH GRANKE: First of all thank you so much for inviting me to speak today. I always look forward to opportunities to share on all the important work we've been doing.

Today's presentation, I'm going to begin briefly by sharing some of the context and background for the sexual violence strategy and then focusing in on two of the aspects that have been worked on, which are the prevention innovation grants, as well as the awareness campaign, as was requested a couple of months ago. I'm going to jump right in.

A bit of context for here in Nova Scotia, and I don't think this is going to surprise anybody - we know that sexualized violence is a significantly under-reported issue, not just here in Nova Scotia but across the country. That being said, in 2014 there were 591 sexual assaults reported to police. We know that sexualized violence impacts children and youth disproportionately and we also know that Nova Scotia's rate of reported incidents is actually higher than the national average. Only 591 assaults were reported - that's only a fraction of what's happening here in Nova Scotia.

All that being said, we also know that statistical data is limiting. That shows only one part of the picture. In the first year of the strategy, there was extensive community engagement undertaken in order to hear from Nova Scotians all across the province - what their experiences are and what their understanding was of some things that we could maybe do here in Nova Scotia to work towards prevention of sexualized violence and how to better support victims and survivors.

The sexual violence strategy is a three-year commitment for \$6 million and the development of that began in 2014, with extensive research and community engagements. As many of you will recall, the strategy framework was launched in June 2013. In that first year of 2014-15, the focus was really on hearing from people all across the province. Some of the things we heard are that we needed to have services that were more visible, we needed to be able to have better navigation supports, we needed to be more coordinated, and we also needed to really focus our efforts on prevention and education. As well, making sure that government acted in a more coordinated way.

In that first year, we heard from more than 60 representatives from 40 various community groups and organizations. We also heard from over 800 Nova Scotians in an online public survey and over 100 youth from across the province, in various youth engagement sessions.

Out of everything we learned, we needed to continue moving forward with a strong focus on community engagement and that there really needed to be shared responsibility and leadership, but it can't be just one government, one group, one organization that leads this work. It really needs to be everybody working together.

The three action areas that are highlighted up there are services and supports, prevention and education, and approach and accountability. Those are the areas that all the actions of the sexual violence strategy fall under.

The definition that we've been using is guided by the World Health Organization, and that is, "Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act . . ." or other act " . . . directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting . . ."

One of the things that I like about this definition is that it recognizes that sexualized violence is a continuum. Yes, sexual violence includes rape and sexual assault, but it also includes a lot of other things - whether that be cat calling, street harassment, harassment in the workplace. It is a continuum and there are a lot of different things that fall underneath that.

Through that first year of the strategy, some really key themes and principles emerge. One was that the strategy is about the people, so that means really that the victims and survivors need to be at the centre of our work. So not what's best for my department or my organization, but what is best for the victims and survivors.

We need to make sure that we focus on women and girls because we know that sexual violence is a gendered issue. We also need to make sure that we're providing supports for men and boys who have been sexually victimized. We also need to be making sure that we're being inclusive of the LGBT community when we're looking at services and supports as well as prevention.

Clearly sexual violence impacts all of us in one way, shape or form so we need to be working together with a unified voice. That was one of the other principles that emerged. Then a third was that we can do it. Sexual violence is a hard, heavy topic, and sometimes it can seem like there is nothing that can actually be done and that prevention is impossible, but we know that we actually can make a dent in this. Societal change takes time, but we can work to reduce stigma and we can work to break the silence as well as prevent it in our communities.

So that's just a little bit of background. To focus in more closely on some of the actions of the strategy in the last year - as was highlighted in the year two report, the Prevention Innovation Fund was launched last year and this was to invest in supporting community-based organizations to expand best practices, to look at better research and evaluation, and to see how we can utilize technology better.

It was also to assist youth groups and young people to reach out to their peers in innovative ways, as well as to support marginalized populations like the African Nova Scotian community, First Nations communities and the LGBT community.

Really, with these grants, we were looking to fund projects that focus on primary prevention. When we're talking about primary prevention, we really mean looking at changing environmental factors and social norms that contribute to sexual violence. That could include things like sexism, media, marketing practices, technology, for example. Also looked at funding projects that promoted healthy relationships, consent and that foster safer spaces and strong communities.

These grants - like when I step back and think about it, it's about seeding generational change. It's about creating cultural shift and about centering and supporting the voices of groups who have been marginalized.

Last year there were nearly 100 applications. We gave out \$650,000 to 34 different organizations. This year there were over 60 applications and the evaluation process is in the very final stages right now. So that \$600,000 will go out to groups before the end of the month.

Ten of the funded projects last year in 2015-16 supported the work of marginalized groups, including the Mi'kmaq community, African Nova Scotian community, and the LGBTQI community. Nearly every single one of the 35 initiatives engage youth, and eight of them are being led by young people themselves.

These are some of the outcomes that the projects are working towards. We know that societal change takes time and so a two-year strategy or a three-year strategy is not going to solve all the problems in the world. However some of these projects - or all of the projects - are working towards at least two of these outcomes. That includes things like: a better understanding of consent; having youth in leadership; increased engagement of men and boys in sexual violence prevention work; a decrease in the hyper-sexualization of women and girls; looking at positive, non-violent forms of masculinity; and expanding understanding of best practices.

So the public awareness campaign - in the very first year of the strategy, we heard a lot that we needed to have unified messages across the province, as well as a public awareness campaign so that people are talking about this issue more. Out of that we formed a provincial committee to help in the creation of it.

I've mentioned this on an earlier slide, that the 2014 General Social Survey has reported that people between the ages of 15 and 24 are at greatest risks of being sexually victimized. So knowing this, it's really important that the prevention, education, and supports that are put in place are responsive to youth and are done in a way that makes sense for youth and that youth are involved in. Therefore, the focus of the campaign was geared toward youth and was developed with youth input.

It was launched in 2016 and it includes videos, posters, and a website. It cost about \$300,000, and that's for the development, the talent, the animation, the media buy, web posting - everything. The campaign focuses on sexual consent, bystander intervention, alcohol consumption, cyber violence, and it provides information on where to get help.

The committee was made up of community members from across the province. They met 10 times throughout the development, anywhere from two to four hours. The key message the committee landed on was that everyone has a role in preventing sexual violence. Really, the ultimate goal of that was to spark conversation as well as add to the conversation on the issue of sexual violence.

First and foremost, as far as youth engagement goes, a lot of what we incorporated was based on what we heard from youth in that first year of the strategy. We also held 6

youth engagement sessions at each stage of the development, and we also had another online survey where we had 68 respondents between the ages of 16 and 24 to share their perspectives on which topics we should focus on first. Based on that, we heard the following: online harassment, consent, partying, and photo-sharing. So if you look at the campaign, which I'll show you in a moment, those are some of the key elements that we focused on first.

The campaign is aimed at Nova Scotians ages 14 to 20. It uses an animated modern twist on the popular metaphor "the birds and the bees" to broach subjects like consent. Like needing to talk about sex, we also need to talk about sexual violence, about power and control, and about healthy relationships and consent.

The campaign consists of a 30 and 60-second video, which I'll show you in a moment. They have bird and bee characters - it's animated in a popular kind of style like BoJack Horseman or the Simpsons. So it's kind of taking a form of media that's out there and a form of content that's out there and subverting it to use in a positive way.

The first 60-second video takes place at a house party and explores the issue of alcohol and consent. Both of the episodes deal with situations of sexual violence that youth told us they are facing today. The campaign materials are unbranded and have been designed so that community groups all over the province, or schools or whomever, can use them in their communities.

I've put up some comments here that we received from young people throughout the development of the campaign. When we proposed this concept to them, this was some of the feedback they gave: they liked that it used comedy to get the point across, they liked that it is humorous so it will make it better for teens to watch, they liked that it's expandable so you can have more episodes. I've seen a lot of comments on Facebook saying like man, where's the actual TV show, I want to watch this.

Something else that I didn't put up there but that I really appreciated from the young people was, they liked that it has humour but you've got to make sure that there's a balance because this is a really serious issue. That was something we held in our minds when we were approaching this but it's really heartwarming to know that they're also in that same place.

I guess we will show you the video.

[A video was played.]

MS. GRANKE: So there's a little taste. There's a second video that can also be accessed online.

So the 60-second video that we just saw there was listed actually as one of the best ads in the world the following week after it was released and had a lot of uptake from all

over. The videos played in cinemas across the province, on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. The 60-second video as of yesterday has more than 55,000 views on YouTube and the 30-second video has more than 20,000 views.

Not in there, but something interesting I came across - sometimes people do compilations and they'll say, oh look, the 10 cutest cat videos in the world. This ad was actually listed in one of those kinds of top 10s of the most peculiar ads, and 400,000 people have watched that, so knowing that it has also reached beyond what is just on this page itself.

Some of the outcomes that we were hoping to work towards with the public awareness campaign is to increase people's comfort in talking about sexual violence, or even talking about a period, so sparking the conversation; an increased understanding of what constitutes sexual violence; an understanding of what consent is; and also an awareness about where to go to get help.

These are the posters up there, but I have them out front as well that all of you and folks here today can also take with you. The first one focuses on online photo sharing. It says, "It was meant for you. Don't share, bee brain." So if somebody sends you something, don't send it on to all of your friends. Really wanting to be careful to not blame somebody who has sent a photo themselves or tell young people what to do or not to do, but to really encourage positive behaviour of not forwarding things on. For example, revenge porn is not cool.

The second poster is "Shaking her tail feathers doesn't mean she's asking for it." The third one is, "A drunk yes is a big no."

So the last bit that I want to share with you is the website that accompanies this. I've got screen shots of each of the pages. I'll just walk you through to see all the aspects that are on here. The address is breakthesilencens.ca or if you're looking at a poster it says birdsandthebees.ca - it takes you to the same place.

Since I actually submitted the slide deck the numbers have changed so I checked again yesterday, but since the awareness campaign was launched in 2016 there have been over 9,000 views so 9,265 unique visitors to the website. Of these, almost 5,000 are from people in Nova Scotia. Other users are from other Canadian provinces, the U.S., the U.K., Australia, Mexico, Sweden, Finland, Japan, and the Philippines - so all over the place.

What I think is really positive is the where to get help page has had 662 page views and I'll show you what that page looks like in a minute, but something we also heard from youth was one of the things they really liked about the website was that it showed us where to go to get help, as well as - how can I help a friend?

So that first page is the landing page, but then the “what is sexual violence” tab has two videos that explore what is sexual violence, looks at the continuum of sexual violence, and then also talks about rape culture and what are some of the things we can do to challenge rape culture.

This is the “where to go to get help” page. So if you put in your postal code and then you put in the type of support that you’re looking for - that might be a sexual assault nurse examiner, that might be counselling, that might be legal support - it will show you what’s in your area, or you can expand and see the whole province if you didn’t want to seek support in your own community. It’s easily updated so as things change throughout the province; this won’t be static. We can go in so if there’s a new service or if what an organization offers shifts, we can make sure to reflect that.

Then there’s a page on how to help a friend and it offers some really concrete tips. Types of support looks to demystify various paths of support or choices a victim survivor has after sexual violence; for example, what you might expect if you go see a sexual assault nurse examiner and looking at what some of your rights are. The point of this page is that we want victims and survivors to be able to make informed decisions about their care and support and the choices that they can access.

Then of course, there are the videos and the posters available for download and lastly, there’s some information about prevention and about the grants. It’s soon to be updated with things happening in various different communities.

We know that sexual violence is a complex issue and that societal change really does take time. As I said before, this campaign is one step in that direction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the presentation. We’ll now open it up to questions and answers. We’ll do it this way: we’ll allow an original question and then a follow-up to it. So two questions, and then we’ll move on. We’ll start with someone from the NDP first - Ms. Roberts.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I have a bunch of questions. First of all, thank you for the presentation. I just want to follow up on something that is listed in one of the newsletters talking about the SANE program, the sexual assault nurse examiner. The goal listed here was that the service would be available in Western and Eastern health zones by December 2016. Can you give us an update?

MS. GRANKE: I’m hesitating only because I’m not sure what has been made fully public. My understanding is that the development is still in progress, but I know that nurses are being trained in both regions of the province. I think we can expect something in the near future. I can also ask for a more concrete update and email that to you.

MS. ROBERTS: There is need for specialized trauma-informed therapeutic supports for victims beyond the sexual assault nurse examiner program. Is that something

the Department of Health and Wellness is taking on? Can you give any information about that?

MS. GRANKE: One, yes, we know we need to have specialized services for certain individuals who choose to access counselling. As far as what's happening within the Department of Health and Wellness, I can't actually speak to that because I'm not sure what's happening there. We do know that the community support networks that we've been working with across the province have been working so that their counselling services in all the various regions of the province - not just counselling but other forms of support that people choose to access - are more coordinated and also providing training on trauma-informed practice as well as sexual violence response.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Thank you for your presentation. I'm just curious about the youth involvement. How were they chosen?

MS. GRANKE: Can I ask for clarification? For the awareness campaign?

MR. HARRISON: Was there a male and female involved? Were the ones involved on board right from the beginning? Did you have both sides, kind of thing?

MS. GRANKE: For the awareness campaign?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I forgot to remind everyone that before you speak, I need to say your name for Hansard. Ms. Granke.

MS. GRANKE: I assume that you're referring to the awareness campaign. We had young people of all genders and also people who don't identify as either a guy or a girl, so people within the trans continuum. Age range: I think the youngest involved was 13, and the oldest through the online survey would have been 24. As far as selecting, we ended up going into a high school, where they gathered together a group of Grade 9s and a group of Grade 11s, and then we also met with a bunch of young folks from the African Nova Scotian community as well as the native youth council.

As far as what they felt about it, we began speaking with them from the get-go, before we even had a concept. We provided, I think, five examples of existing campaigns and got their feedback on what they liked and what they didn't like. Then we went back and showed them four different versions of possible campaigns that we could do. They really liked some, they hated others, and they told us accordingly, so we adapted. Then we also would check in with the public awareness campaign, to get their expertise and perspectives as well. Then when we eventually came back the response was fairly positive.

As I mentioned before, one of the best pieces of advice was, we're good with humour but make sure that you don't lose the seriousness of this issue.

MR. HARRISON: Could you give us an idea of the range of responses? You are going to have some that were right on board from the very beginning, I'm assuming that you also had some that, given the opportunity, may enter into sexual violence. Did you get a lot of variety of responses to get them together?

MS. GRANKE: I'm going to think for a moment and reflect on that process. We heard from a lot of youth. I think that there was a variety of feedback. For the most part it was positive. There were a few people who actually rejected the whole idea entirely but that was the whole idea around focusing on sexual violence, and didn't think that it was a topic worthy of engaging in. Some of the comments I heard made me think a-ha, this is why we need to have a campaign and this is why we need a strategy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Eyking.

MS. PAM EYKING: I'm just wondering about the nine community hub groups - are they one and the same as the 10 funded projects that you had in the community? Are they one and the same or are they separate? You have hub groups - are those the same as the projects that you had, not for marginalized people?

MS. GRANKE: When it refers to the hubs, that is referring to the community support networks, which are in nine areas of the province and include all counties in Nova Scotia. They are not formalized hubs, but people who are coming together to work on the issue of sexual violence and look at coordinating services, making services visible and there are absolutely some people from marginalized communities there.

One of the things we've talked about with any committee or any group that we're working with is how do we work to better make our services and supports and prevention efforts culturally inclusive and culturally relevant, as well as trauma informed.

MS. EYKING: In regard to the focus on the marginalized groups, can you expand on the work that you've been doing within the First Nations communities?

MS. GRANKE: Absolutely. Last year actually I believe I talked about a Mi'kmaq community engagement gathering that we were in the midst of planning. That actually took place in Truro last year in April. That brought together over 80 people from all Mi'kmaq communities in the province to look at what the realities are in their communities, what sort of work is already happening to address the actual issue of sexual violence, as well as what are some of the prevention initiatives, and then also to look at how this strategy can support the work they are doing.

One of the things that emerges out of that gathering was the desire to create a tool kit in order to support Mi'kmaq communities that are looking to do sexual violence

prevention and response work. There have been some amazing things happening in Paqtnkek First Nation, in partnership with Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. They had a three-year project they were working on to respond to and prevent sexual violence in their community.

What they did was create a tool kit which will be available online really soon, that walks people through some of the similar steps that they took, as well as the lessons learned, what some suggestions are and some actual resources - whether that be a poster template or a focus group guide or an evaluation example - so that people can do this work in their own community.

In addition, out of that event was the creation of a Mi'kmaq Community Advisory Table. They have been informing one of the modules for the sexual violence strategy training that is going to be launched in the near future. That looks at the connections between colonization, both past and ongoing, and the connections with sexual violence, intergenerational trauma, but also looking at indigenous pathways to healing and community support.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Thank you, it's good to see you all again. I was looking at the provincial committee on public awareness and I actually looked at the makeup of that committee. If you'll bear with me, it's listed in your materials: sexual assault services, sexual health centres, youth perspectives, engagement, community groups representing gender perspectives, marginalized and underserved populations, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian perspectives, survivor and family perspectives, and LGBT and academic perspectives.

What to me leaps out as missing in there is the lack of any involvement from the legal community. I'm just wondering about that. I don't see any representation - at least it's not apparent on that list - of a Crown Attorney, a defence attorney, or judges. Could you comment on that?

MS. GRANKE: First and foremost, the committees were struck well before I was involved. Not to deflect any sort of ability to respond, but just to be really clear and transparent about that, and that it was a public call-out for involvement.

There are folks around that table that do have experience within the legal system and of supporting victims and survivors, but you're right. We do have somebody on the training committee who is trained as a lawyer, and within the training resources we have been confirming and validating what we have been creating with the Department of Justice and Victim Services. Yes, you would be correct on that.

MS. MANCINI: I am just putting it out there, because I would suggest to get people who are in the trenches on a daily basis would be a really helpful perspective because sometimes - and I look at this - you may find that you have not as broad and diverse a view as maybe would be appropriate. I think someone who can really talk about the nitty-gritty of what's happening in the courtroom would be something that could be really beneficial. So I just put that out as a suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Granke, I was just asked that we don't lean into our mikes because it's tough on the ears for people listening. I do it too, I'm always like this.

MS. GRANKE: The only thing I would just want to let you know about is that the interdepartmental committee does have representation from the Department of Justice as well as the Public Prosecution Service. Both of the people that are on that committee have weighed in on the online training resources that are being developed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacLeod.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Thank you for your presentation. I'd be interested in knowing who else is on that interdepartmental committee that you just mentioned because I know the last time you were here you talked about it, and it would be interesting to know just who and what departments are part of that. I guess the second part of that question while we're at it is, how often do they meet?

MS. GRANKE: On the interdepartmental committee, we have representation from the Department of Justice, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Public Prosecution Service, the Status of Women, and of course the Department of Community Services and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. So we've been meeting about once every month and a half or so. That has slowed down recently just because we're trying to get the training and all the grants finalized, and because there has been some analysis going on of the work.

The mandate of the committee is to really look at policies, programming, and funding. The first step that we have taken is to do a policy and program analysis and inventory. So, number one, what policies and programs do we even have within all of our departments? What are the definitions that we're using? That was the first step, which took a while to do that inventory and then a bit of analysis.

Then we're doing a re-analysis because we realized that certain things got left out, which is something that happens when you do an inventory, you realize oh wait, we forgot about these things. That's where the process is right now.

MR. MACLEOD: Is training for judges and other Justice staff members on your radar screen, on your list of things that need to be done?

MS. GRANKE: One of the things we've been discussing at the interdepartmental committee is promoting and disseminating the online training course throughout all departments and really encouraging people to take up because we know that folks in all sectors require additional education and training on this issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Downey.

MS. NATALIE DOWNEY: I just wanted to add to that; I think that's an excellent question. When we talk about the interdepartmental committee I think part of what we're looking at when we look at complex issues like sexual violence is the systemic pieces.

The training program is going to knock you off your feet, it's an excellent training program, mostly because anybody in Nova Scotia would benefit from taking that training and it's really geared towards that. So whether it's your daughter, your sister, or somebody you're working with at all levels within communities, it provides people with additional skills and experience in how to respond and, most importantly, what not to do. From a trauma-informed perspective, that is so important.

The issue you're talking about is more from a systemic perspective. I think that would really rest well and that's worked further for that interdepartmental committee, because not only would it be judiciary, but also looking at front-line protection workers - so when we look at police officers, from a systems perspective, really looking at it from that perspective. As we move forward the work of the interdepartmental committee is to look at those systemic type issues.

I think we can overuse the word "training." I've gone to training for two and three days. I go home with my binder but then what, right? So part of it is training but part of it is the work of this committee, which is looking at its policies, its procedures, and also its practices really imbedded within that - so absolutely looking at a change of culture that is congruent with the work that we're doing in the strategy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Treen.

MS. JOYCE TREEN: Thank you for coming and giving us an update again. I want to ask about with the strategy, what is our focus on youth? A lot of this is pointed towards youth - these grants, the awareness campaigns - but what is the strategy doing to focus on youth? If we can get their minds when they're young thinking the proper way, then they grow into adults who think the proper way.

MS. GRANKE: A lot of the work we're doing is really focused on youth. As I've been mentioning, basically the entire public awareness campaign has been focused on engaging youth, as well as the Prevention Innovation Grant. Almost every single one that we funded last year went towards programs that work with youth, as well as ones that are led by youth.

We also held - well, we didn't - HeartWood partnered with us to host engagement sessions with young people so that young people could put forward their own ideas for prevention of sexual violence. Those would be some of the key things, as well as consulting with them and hearing from them on a regular basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Treen, a follow-up?

MS. TREEN: Are there any programs being developed that could be used maybe as an awareness tool in junior highs or high schools, developing a package that someone could use as a teaching tool in the schools?

MS. DOWNEY: That's an excellent question because some of the Prevention Innovation Grants, what we're gleaning from that are promising practices. When you look at promising practices, it's what is to be applicable across the board. There are some really innovative Prevention Innovation Grants that are led by youth that are happening within schools. We are just going through another round of grants.

I mentioned this in another forum. We forget what it's like to be a young person, so what we tend to do is develop these curriculums of teaching youth. I don't know why, but I really forget what it was like to be 15. I have a 14-year-old niece who lives with me, and I'm thinking the way I have to communicate and how I have to do things looks completely different.

What we're working on with these prevention grants is looking at what the promising practices are that are youth-centred and innovative, and use technology - those sorts of things. At the end of the day, we will roll that up and look at it. Here are the promising practices. Here are some of the things that are working. We have an interdepartmental committee to leverage some of the stuff moving forward. That's all happening now. We have a lot of hot spots.

I would like to tell you about some of the grants moving forward because there's some really exciting pieces happening there. That's really the purpose of the Prevention Innovation Grants. It's not to create all these one-offs but how we develop these promising practices that are innovative, haven't been tried before, and are unique to Nova Scotia - and actually if I could also add, unique to certain parts of this province so that they are not developed in Halifax and then don't really apply to youth in Whitney Pier or Yarmouth, so really looking at local solutions.

I also want to add that we talked about how it's everybody's responsibility at every level of our society - at a citizen level, at a school level, at a parent level, at a government level, at an institution level. Certainly what Sarah was talking about today even when we're talking about young people, it's at all of those levels that we have to unpack and apply an approach and a strategy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I would like to go back to the interdepartmental committee that was formed as part of the strategy and ask about the Department of Justice's participation in that committee. Can you share what in that department is being reviewed or what policy change or practice change is planned?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacInnis-Langley.

MS. STEPHANIE MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I think from my history working with the department in the Victim Services unit, I can say that Victim Services has a tremendous concern and a tremendously strong approach to victims of sexual violence. They've had that for quite some time, and they're always looking at their policies and practices to see if there's anything they can do to improve or to change their approach or to make their approach stronger in terms of victims.

I hear from victims from time to time who have gone through the criminal justice process. The majority of victims that I hear from have been very satisfied with the services that they've received. They may not be satisfied with the court outcome. Often people have challenges around court outcomes. But they're very satisfied with the services they've received from Victim Services.

I also have to say that the Department of Justice is very quick to refer to any of the community agencies that do terrific work in our communities. There are organizations right across this province. Women's centres, transition houses, and sexual assault services are all very, very connected to victims and do a great job. Victim Services does refer and refers quite consistently.

In the Halifax region, the Halifax Regional Police's victims' services unit has an approach and has made some strong initiatives around sexual violence. Initially, when that unit was set up, it was to look at domestic violence or intimate partner violence only. But that has changed over time, and they've got a concerted effort around sexual violence as well. We have a large number of sexual violence cases in metro.

MS. ROBERTS: As part of interdepartmental work, what conversations have there been around consent and arriving at a consensus definition or element of consent? That strikes me as something that is challenging and still evolving, I think.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I can speak to the issue because I was involved from the days of the tragedy of Rehtaeh Parsons. We started with the NDP Government. We had an action plan to look at sexual violence because of that terrible situation.

Consent is an ongoing issue. It's a global issue. It's not Nova Scotia-central. Every province is struggling with the issue of consent. The Criminal Code does not clearly define it, and I'm sure Ms. Mancini would be able to speak to this clearly as a lawyer. It's very clear that there's no clear definition of consent. That's where we get into a grey area, and

it's open to interpretation. There's a very narrow definition in the Criminal Code, and oftentimes victims are very disappointed in the outcome of their cases because of that definition.

So my hope would be that eventually with this kind of work that we'll spark a conversation and a discussion that will lead us to the Supreme Court of Canada, which will then perhaps wrestle with the definition of consent for the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code is extremely outdated from what I hear from my friends who are lawyers so perhaps at some point we will have a clear definition in the Criminal Code of Canada on consent. It's a very murky area and it needs continual discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. HARRISON: There was an article in the *Globe and Mail* not too long ago that said, I think, 25 per cent of the sexual assault allegations were filed as unfounded by police. In that - I'm from the Truro area and it said 55 per cent. That seems extremely high. What are your thoughts on that article?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I absolutely read the *Globe and Mail* article - I've been following the *Globe and Mail*. I would say to you that it's something that we need to examine. I don't think it's something we can ignore. When we get that kind of information and it's very clear that we have gaps or discrepancies in what goes forward and what doesn't, it speaks to me from an education or a training issue rather than any other issue.

I think that oftentimes people need the tools to understand and to either lay charges or take the case forward. So I think that with more education and more awareness - I also think that in Nova Scotia I would welcome if the police were willing and interested to unpack those statistics and have a conversation about why those cases were unfounded and what might have helped in making those cases move forward.

Oftentimes we have to recognize the Crown and the police have an obligation to determine whether the case can go forward in the justice system with a reasonable prospect of conviction. If that isn't evident, then the case would not go forward, but I really do think that police would be very willing to look at their caseloads and look at why those cases were unfounded.

I think again it speaks, as Sarah and Natalie have said, to the work that needs to be done. This is a very complex issue. This is very different than a bank robbery. So it's really important that these kinds of crimes get the attention and the time and the education that they deserve.

MS. DOWNEY: Probably I would also add that "unfounded" doesn't necessarily mean that it didn't take place. Certainly, I think that's the other important piece, and please excuse my legal naivety, but in a lot of cases it depends upon the - not necessarily physical evidence as much as it does testimony as well, but also the way of envisioning sexual

violence in the strategy itself. There are many iterations of sexual violence that don't meet Criminal Code criteria. So for example, in domestic violence, mental abuse, emotional abuse - I don't think you can find those in the Criminal Code anywhere.

So the benchmark of legality is certainly an important aspect from a Criminal Code perspective, but there are so many iterations of sexual assault and violence - assault not from a legal perspective - that's happening every day that the strategy is also having to be mindful of because we don't want to necessarily wait for those legal benchmarks to happen. I just wanted to throw that out as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: I don't know where to start, but I'd like to ask you some of the outcomes that you find in your strategy, how would you evaluate them as the outcomes - things like talking about sexual violence, understanding what constitutes sexual violence, increased understanding of what consent is. We've heard earlier today from all of you a little bit about all of those, but I would like to gather what the value of your work has shown and how you can show its value.

MS. GRANKE: This past summer, we conducted polling throughout the province to collect baseline data and these would have been some of the questions that we asked. Not exactly like that, but to gain insight into where people's comfort levels are, where people's knowledge base is, as far as where to go to get help. So based on that, we have just finished a second round of polling because we wanted to see if the public awareness campaign had any impact on this. Those results are being analyzed right now and I'd be happy to share them once I receive them.

One of the great things about having done that baseline polling before the awareness campaign was released and before the training has been released and just at the beginning of all the community network projects - they would have just started happening, unfolding - is that not just eight months later but even two years from now, we can assess and see what has shifted in our province.

MS. DOWNEY: I also wanted to add in terms of the outcomes, the grants that go out in the communities also have individual sort of outcome pieces to it. So at that local level we look at what the outcomes have been that contribute to those and certainly looking at the community support network investments, does that result in more coordinated, visible services where definitely our most marginalized see themselves reflected, so those sorts of outcomes.

Then people who are much smarter than us in evaluation will roll up all that data - I don't know what you call that in the research world - and come up with some larger outcome pieces. But again, two years of work on a complex issue, we definitely are seeing

some of these outcomes emerge. We definitely want to ensure that outcomes continue to be achieved in the future.

MR. HORNE: As a follow-up, I now understand that this strategy will go on for a number of years probably, or maybe continue for a long time, I don't know. Is there sufficient funding or is that something that comes every year about this time?

MS. DOWNEY: Wow, I feel the seat really hot.

MR. HORNE: Not meant to be.

MS. DOWNEY: Come on, you tell us. Well, I don't want to sound like I'm being evasive, but certainly based on the work thus far and moving those pieces forward, people are well aware of some of these pieces. I think everybody knows that our work is supported and there's commitment to the work in an ongoing way.

What that looks like, there's a budget process and all those things that are wrapped up but I'll certainly let my other two colleagues answer that.

MS. GRANKE: One thing I would add to that is the position I am in is a permanent position within government so regardless of what happens, there is a position dedicated to sexual violence prevention and supports. Obviously having a budget is beneficial in being able to continue the work but there is still a lot that can be done with somebody dedicated to that. I will echo that there's strong departmental support, there's strong ministerial support and government-wide support for continuing this work.

We know that sexual violence is not going to be solved in three years. I mean, for goodness sake, people across our province and across the country and the world have been working on this issue for decades so we can't expect that a three-year strategy and actually only two years of implementation are going to solve the problem.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I would say that of course it would be up to government of the day whether the strategy continues in the current budget format, but I certainly think that there has been a commitment certainly by my minister to this work and to the evolution of this work.

We want to see this work continue because of the value and because of the wonderful product that we're seeing evolve. I think that we're all very proud of this strategy and we're very proud of the work that has been done in this province and the work that has been done by both government and community in developing a model of practice that allows for community messaging and community intervention and community partnerships.

I think we're seeing partnerships at all levels. I can say that Crown, police, community, victims, and government stakeholders have been at the table now over the last

two years. Sarah is modest when she says the interdepartmental committee meets monthly or every other month. The reality is that we have multiple committees going. We have a committee going in the Department of Labour and Advanced Education on sexual violence in universities. We have committees going - I would say there are probably five different committees talking about this issue on a daily or weekly basis.

I think that we can be very proud in a non-partisan way as a government that we have very much taken this issue and started to make a change in Nova Scotia. As a long-term Nova Scotian, Cape Bretoner, I think I'm very proud of where we sit in this province. This is great work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Mancini.

MS. MANCINI: I think that's a nice segue into what I wanted to make mention of. I've been around a long time - I've been practising since the 1980s - and I've seen it with my own eyes, the cultural shift of what has taken place.

It was my daughter who actually pointed this out to me with the recent matter that's in the public eye at this time. The fact is, there was a female officer who was the investigating officer who arrived on the scene and did all the right things and ended up with an assault charge - the DNA sample, everything. I can assure you that I lived through a time and practised through a time where first of all there wouldn't have been the female officer. A male officer would arrive, maybe take the girl home or to the hospital and tell the cab driver to get out of Dodge, and there would have not been a charge laid.

I think we need to take our victories where we see them, and I think that that is a very positive cultural shift that we've seen and I think it's coming from many sources. It has been happening for a while, but all the stakeholders you mentioned have been at the table for many years and have been working hard on this.

I did want to ask you though just a little bit more about statistics because there was an August 4, 2016, clipping that I looked at. At that time, the Minister of Community Services said that now we are seeing results, but in the article the columnist went on to say that the minister was unable to quantify those results and she deferred questions about whether more people were reporting and laying charges for sexual assault to the Department of Justice. I was a little surprised at that response because the DCS has taken the lead on this particular strategy.

The article did go on to cite some numbers: in 2007 there were 708 sexual assaults reported to the police; HRP, from January 2010 to December 2015, there were 2,186. The numbers are kind of all over so it's really hard to get a picture. I'm just wondering if anyone can comment about what numbers we're seeing, even if it's from 2015-16 to present if those are available, specifically in terms of reporting.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I'm certainly willing to take that question and go to my police colleagues and ask them if we have both for metro and for Nova Scotia, I can certainly ask that question.

I think that there's not a clear picture in terms of numbers. We see that in whether it's the General Social Survey when we're looking at violence against women or whether it's looking at sexual violence in our small province. I think it's an area where we're weak in collecting statistics so I think that it's hard - and numbers vary. So I think that we can ask the question, but whether we'll get completely accurate numbers - I mean, it's always my hope that victims will report to the criminal justice system and that we can provide support to them going through the system.

When cases are brought to the system - I don't know if we have the numbers of cases that are actually brought to the system that don't proceed, so there's a number of statistics that I'd like to see us collect over time. We've always looked for data. I will tell you that we have a real challenge in getting disaggregated data in the province for even the work that I do. I'll ask Sarah or Natalie, maybe you have better stats.

MS. DOWNEY: Not necessarily stats but maybe a little bit of commentary and to also go back and talk about the benchmark from a legal perspective versus the more holistic definition of sexual violence. When it does meet benchmarks from a legal perspective, that part of that is congruent upon all of these other pieces of creating safe spaces and people talking about it. There's so much contingent upon each other.

So as we create gains in these other societal pieces, in terms of reporting and people feeling confident to come forward, we would also want to look at that. One certainly doesn't happen without the other. But also again, the benchmark of sexual violence, as Sarah had mentioned earlier, everything from catcalling to derogatory comments - things that don't meet that benchmark - have just as much impact on our citizens. I was going to say young people, but it's certainly more than young people. I just want to say, when we talk about results, it's an important stat, don't get me wrong. But I think we need to kind of unpack it too.

MS. MANCINI: I don't have a follow-up, but I really appreciate that response. It's a great response. Thank you both for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacLeod.

MR. MACLEOD: I find this quite an interesting topic. Lately, as we all know, there's been a lot of media attention to the types of situations that are going on in our communities. I heard you, Ms. MacInnis-Langley, talk about the definition and the challenge that that brings to the court services and the police services and prosecution and I hear you say, we're here to educate and to try to make people better aware. I look at your material, and I see this poster here that I found very interesting, "A drunk yes is a big no." Then we hear a public statement made by somebody that a drunk can give consent.

The elephant in the room is, how do we educate the people who are listening to these court cases? Is it by changing the Criminal Code and making sure the definitions are better? Is it by making sure the training is better for the people who are receiving the information? There has been public outrage about what has happened, and I know you folks are probably even more aware of it than I am.

Like I say, it's sort of the elephant in the room. We can't have a meeting like this and not talk about it. I'm not going to put anybody on the spot as to who should answer it, but I would be appreciative if anybody does have a comment to pass on to help fix the situation, not prolong what has happened because that's happened. We need to find out what the ones who are working with it on a daily basis feel is the best way of tackling this problem.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Your question is very timely. I think that there are several ways - obviously, education and awareness, all those issues, all the work that's being done through the sexual violence strategy. The fact that this particular case has sparked a discussion is really helpful to the whole approach to looking at sexual violence in our province and in our country.

I think I will also raise that the federal government is working on a gender violence strategy; we are waiting to hear and to see what that will look like. This is an issue we'll bring forward to Status of Women Canada when we have our next meeting with them. I think it's going to take time for us to get to a place where there's more clarity around this issue and around decisions on this issue.

The National Judicial Institute is a place for training. It's not the norm for people in our positions to do any training with the judiciary. We would hope that the opportunity presents itself at the national level for training. I'm sure Ms. Mancini and others can speak to how that works in the criminal justice system or in the legal profession.

I think it's an ongoing discussion, and I think that over the last year we've heard a tremendous number of stories around sexual violence and sexual misconduct. I think that that will help us to come to a better resolution.

I have to say that in 2017, we're in a better place than we were in 2015 or 2016 because the discussions are on the table. They're at a national table. We have a Prime Minister, in fact, who has stood on the national stage and spoken to the issue of sexual violence. I think that that in itself is an anomaly. It's a welcome change. I think that we'll get there. I welcome comments from my colleagues.

MS. GRANKE: Not just this case but many cases that we've seen across this country really reflect the need for the type of work that we've been doing in the last year.

Also - and I think that Stephanie alluded to this, too - the response and the outcry and the outrage that we have seen is an indication of some societal change because 10 or 15 years ago that would not have happened in the same kind of way.

We have probably hundreds, maybe thousands of people who are going to be gathering in an hour right out there and there's another demonstration being organized for tomorrow. The community mobilization and the community outcry against, and not just here in Nova Scotia but across the country, to me indicates societal change.

Any kind of approach addressing sexual violence needs to include education, needs to include policy, needs to include awareness and prevention. It has to be multi-faceted because it's a complex issue. So whatever goes forward in future years as this work evolves needs to include all those factors.

Also, you mentioned consent. I feel like I really need to say that this is also not just about consent, it's not just about what the law says. A lot of this is about power, it's about control, it's about issues like sexism and other forms of oppression and those also need to be focused on when we're doing this work, as well as looking at system challenges and systemic oppression. It's not just did the person say yes or no because there are so many other factors underlying that, and when can someone say yes or no? I'm not just talking about alcohol, I'm talking about power dynamics, I'm talking about a lot of those other things that are at play underneath that we're not always talking about in the public sphere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A follow-up, Mr. MacLeod?

MR. MACLEOD: Yes. I appreciate your answers and I know it's not something that can be actually addressed in the four or five-minute time frame, so I do appreciate what you said.

I'm a layman and I don't really understand the court system or all those things, but when you did your opening and you were talking about putting everything in the context, you mentioned that these things are severely under-reported, these types of actions. My concern or worry is - and again I don't know, but when you get this type of a reaction from the system, does that actually deter people from coming ahead? Do they just throw their arms up and say it's not worth it because look at what happens?

I don't know if that's factual but that's sort of what happens in other situations, people say well no need of me to go out to vote today because it don't make no difference who's in power anyway, type of thing. I'm not trying to make light of the situation, I'm just trying to get a handle on when somebody makes these kinds of public statements, especially somebody in a very significant position, what does that do to the ordinary individual who wants to tackle this?

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I think it's a really good question. Yes, I think it does deter some people from coming forward, victims from coming forward. My hope is

that it will spark enough conversation that it will encourage victims the more we speak out, the more we support one another, and the more supports we offer to victims of sexual violence so that they have a safety net, so they will feel safe in coming forward.

Because someone is found not guilty does not mean that something didn't happen. It means that the bar is set very high and someone is making that decision or a group of people are making that decision. What we need to be able to do is support victims to understand the criminal justice system better and to understand the outcomes of the criminal justice system.

I have often been in court with children as young as four years old in a criminal justice case where someone has been acquitted of wrongdoing. It's very difficult to explain why it has evolved like that or what has happened but it's really important that the story gets told. So rather than focus on the outcome, whether we're challenged or not challenged by the outcome, it's really important to focus on doing the right thing and telling the story. By telling the story we are then able to deal with some of the trauma that the victim has encountered and not focus on an offender or on an accused person. We focus solely on the victim and the resulting harm to the victim.

My hope would be that we will use more restorative approaches in the future in criminal justice cases. Oftentimes we find that the thrust of the criminal justice system does not satisfy victims so I think that this opens the door to a world of conversation, both in Nova Scotia and at a national table. I testified in front of a federal standing committee this year with senators and it was really important to talk about. We need to look at how the criminal justice system meets or does not meet the bar of justice.

I think that it's an ongoing discussion, Mr. MacLeod, I don't think there's an answer today but I think there's an answer in our future.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Eyking.

MS. EYKING: I just want to go back to the strategy and its impact on the marginal groups such as First Nations and if we could just go into more detail of how the strategy might have impacted an Aboriginal male or female youth's life, between the ages of 13 and 24. For instance, they are getting up, they are going to school, they are going to their jobs, they are going to parties - what might have happened during a day or during a week that would have had some positive impact, based on this strategy? Something that wouldn't have happened say in the past three years before this strategy was put into place?

I love the video, I think there's some great messaging there. I'm certainly going to go back and find it and share it on my Facebook social media page. In other ways, how would they be tangibly affected positively with this strategy? Could you give some details or some examples of that?

MS. GRANKE: I could speak for a long time on some of the really exciting work that is happening. One project I would like to raise up and share with you is being led by the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. You may have heard that recently, last week, \$40,000 was given to the Jane Paul Mi'kmaq Women's Resource Centre. I can't actually say that it wouldn't have happened without the support of the strategy because those women are so good at organizing and doing things. They just signed a lease and said, we're going to do this because this is a need for the women in Sydney and in Cape Breton living off-reserve.

How we have been able to contribute is they've received a Prevention Innovation Fund grant last year for \$30,000 and that has enabled them to have some volunteers to be able to keep the centre open for longer hours, to make sure that women - and these women, some of the most at-risk, vulnerable people in our province - have supports, have a safe place to go, have people they trust and people that they can open up to and be safe with. They also utilize a lot of cultural practices there so it's a space and a place that is also very culturally specific for them.

MS. EYKING: That is a great initiative and I'm really proud that that happened and I have heard many people speak to that and I'm really happy that happened.

Just going back to the reserve and just the daily life of a youth in regard to prevention, what would they have experienced that might impact the outcomes of the situation? What are they seeing? Are they getting information at school? Are they seeing flyers at stores? Are there groups being formed to talk about social behaviour and how to prevent things, sexual events from happening? Is there anything in that way from this strategy that would play out in that way?

MS. GRANKE: Yes. One of the projects we funded through the Prevention Innovation Fund grant last year is also Paqtneq First Nation, which I mentioned earlier. I'm trying to remember what they called it - not peaceful warrior, something along those lines. It's a group for young men and boys to come together and to look at issues like healthy relationships and consent and also to promote help-seeking behaviours and where to go in their community or outside their community to get support.

One of the challenges has been getting a permanent staff for a one-year project. What has come out of that are these young men and boys going to the health centre even when there's not the program running, because they want to get there, they want to talk about these issues, they want to have that space and them saying, can we have our programming, please? So then really highlighting the need for that in the community.

MS. EYKING: So they are self-driven?

MS. GRANKE: You've got it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: Ms. Granke referenced the protests that will be happening shortly at Grand Parade and Ms. MacInnis-Langley referenced the Rehtaeh Parsons case, which I remember the protests so clearly that happened at that time. One of the resulting conversations was the actual increased need for support for survivors in the wake of a lot of publicity of one particular case, and of course the resulting demands on services of sexual assault centres that are providing a service day in and day out, but without sufficient resources.

My question is, can you please describe how, for example, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, which has crowd-funded this year to raise money to fund its prevention and critical intervention services - can you describe how services like that are supported through the strategy?

MS. DOWNEY: There are multiple ways to answer that question and I'll go back to what Nova Scotians told us in the first year. It was clear in this particular issue that people wanted to have a broad range of responses available to them. Certainly when we looked at our most marginalized communities, like what our indigenous communities told us - their traditional ways of healing and responding to harm and trauma didn't necessarily look like what existed outside of their culture.

We heard that very parallel message from our African Nova Scotian community. We heard that from a lot of other sources. So at the end of the day, as you probably have heard from Sarah's strategy, the approach was multi-pronged because we had to ensure a multi-pronged approach.

In terms of programs like Avalon and in terms of the Antigonish Sexual Assault Centre - and there's also one in Colchester. Do we have anybody here from Colchester - yes, Mr. Harrison. They did receive additional funding for the community support network grants to support some of their work in their community. So they did specifically receive some additional funding. Now granted, that's attached to the strategy at this point, and again as we move forward we've talked about the commitment of government moving forward.

So I guess I wanted to put the response there that, yes we did provide some additional resources there, but we went broad and we went wide. Certainly from a professional perspective and from a personal perspective, I think it's very important to have diversity there.

We also want to make sure of who the most vulnerable people are connecting with in their communities? Who do they have the relationships with? How do we best support and leverage that as well? I guess my message is we want to be sure that we don't create one line of support - that we want to be broad, but certainly for those particular sexual assault centres they did receive extra funding.

MS. ROBERTS: Can you provide an update on where the department is in establishing multi-year funding agreements with some of those core organizations?

MS. DOWNEY: I'm actually supposed to be at a meeting at 3:00 p.m. to discuss corporate agreement management within the department. That is our goal with all of our funded programs, is to have multi-year agreements, and we're doing it sequentially.

As you can imagine at the Department of Community Services we have hundreds of organizations that we provide funding to. I will hopefully be meeting with the sexual assault centres in the very near future to discuss our next steps, but that definitely is our move forward in terms of all government funding through the department, so yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacLeod.

MR. MACLEOD: I know when Ms. MacInnis-Langley answered the last question, you said something and I want to hear it.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: What were we talking about?

MR. MACLEOD: It was about people being discouraged . . .

MS. DOWNEY: Oh yes, people not reporting. There is the potential for harm at every level of the system of reporting - not just the judicial response. There are people that have to face their accuser in courts or because we don't have specialized courts and those sorts of things. I'm kind of getting ahead of myself in terms of my bias.

There is potential for systems harm at every level of that - from a police officer getting evidence or showing up at your door with a subpoena and all of those other levels. I think when we talk about reporting, yes, certainly those messages are not all helpful. But we also have to unpack and look at what the multiple levels are that deter people from coming forth as well. I think that's kind of what I wanted to say, that there are multiple levels that we have to be mindful of.

MR. MACLEOD: I would agree with you. There are multiple levels. Most of them don't get that kind of attention, unfortunately.

MS. DOWNEY: I was sitting back, and I was thinking . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Downey.

MS. DOWNEY: I'm originally from Newfoundland, so I'm kind of animated too. I've been here a long time, though. (Laughter)

I think people showing up today in the square, over at Grand Parade, is support to victims, and can be in some ways comforting - I think both Ms. Mancini and Stephanie

mentioned that 10 years ago you probably wouldn't see that. There may be much more on Facebook, judgmental pieces - you're seeing on social media groundswells of support that I think can help carry and encourage victims as well. I think the issue that you're talking about is probably bigger than the three of us in terms of that. I think it's a very valid comment, and I think that moving forward, you can look at good coming out of not so good.

MR. MACLEOD: My final question is going to be about the SANE program. The announcement was made in May 2015 that it was coming to Sydney. Well, it's almost two years past that. I'm just wondering where we are or when everything may happen. The need there is as great and growing I guess for a whole number of reasons that you're probably more aware of.

I would just like to know where we are because two years seems like a long time for a plan to fall into place. I was at the announcement for the Jane Paul. It was great to see those people interacting and the way they were going about it. I was very impressed. But it also proved that programs like SANE need to be done. Let's get it done.

MS. GRANKE: Absolutely. Maybe I'll just give you a quick timeline of what's happened. The first step was to determine the model of sexual assault nurse examiner program. There are a lot of different models across the country. So it took a while to determine what the best approach was for our province. The approach was to partner with a community-based organization. Then it was an open call for community-based organizations that wanted to partner with NSHA to be able to host the program. That happened, and the selection process happened.

So Every Woman's Centre in Sydney and Tri-Country Women's Centre in Yarmouth are leading that development. Since they received funding and the funding agreements and all of those kinds of things, they have been hiring their nurses, training their nurses, figuring out protocols, all those kinds of things. You don't want to start a program without having that in place. My understanding is that it's in the next couple of months - few months. I don't have an exact date, but as I mentioned to Ms. Roberts earlier, I will follow up with NSHA, and I can give you a more concrete answer.

MR. MACLEOD: Thank you for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacInnis-Langley.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I would say to you, Mr. MacLeod, you need to follow up with Louise at Every Woman's Centre in Sydney to see where she is. Louise is leading the work in Sydney, as is Bernadette MacDonald in Yarmouth. We're very excited, and as one of their supporters who wrote a letter of recommendation, we're very glad to see that they were the people who were chosen.

MR. MACLEOD: I will talk to Louise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got about five minutes left, but if it's okay with the committee, can I just ask a quick question?

Everybody is working hard. All governments no matter the political stripe, no matter where you fall in society, we're trying to move this forward. Like you said, the rally at three o'clock today, you may not have seen that a few years ago. But we get these very public incidents.

As a father of two beautiful daughters and a beautiful son, I find it hard to explain to them. Part of this is educating our sons too; that's a big part of it. I find it hard to explain to them how this is all going to turn out okay and how we get past that, this is my body, you can't touch it, and if somebody touches it, if someone violates you, when you seek help, when you seek justice, that it's not going to fall on deaf ears and there won't be victim-shaming.

How do we explain this? How do you deal with that when you feel like you're moving forward and then you have these very public incidents? How do we explain that to our children, and how do you explain that as this is your job? Your job is to have us talk about this. I'm just kind of at a loss for words and that doesn't happen very often. Who wants to tackle that?

MS. DOWNEY: That's a pretty loaded question. In terms of talking to children, one of the things that we've talked about is that this particular issue is something we should be talking about in our prenatal programs or post-natal programs - not in an overt way - because this doesn't just pop up overnight. Somebody just doesn't turn 16 or 17 and all of a sudden they perpetrate this particular violent act. We need to talk about it from prenatal and post-natal but most important, from a developmentally-appropriate perspective - what a two-year-old or three-year-old can handle or a five-year-old or six-year-old?

I'm a firm believer that positivity will overthrow negativity so what can we share about what is working. Some of the things we talked about today, the groundswell of support and pockets of young people coming forth, the stories of young people coming forth after we showed that video at its launch, to say thank you. Those are the things that we need to also focus on.

I think the conversation should also focus on what is working and what is working well. I'm not trying to downplay and I'm certainly not trying to evade an issue that's much larger than each of our individual roles. I'm sure we'll be pulled in different ways to respond in various capacities. I hope that what we presented today shows how the work - whether it's talking about the culture of consent or youth engagement - all helps tackle this very complex issue. I guess that was my piece to add.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: I think my message would be that harm happens and we need to figure out, as a society, and as parents, how do we restore or repair the harm. I think the message that the rally in Grand Parade sends to us today is that people care. There's not a better message to give to a child than people care - people outside mommy and daddy care, and people in the community care.

Sometimes things happen that are beyond our control but it's really important to know that people care and we will make every effort to work towards making this different. It's not a Nova Scotia issue, it's a global issue and we need to be part of the conversation both locally and globally. If we can make a difference so that one victim feels they have the trauma support to come forward, whether they go through the criminal justice system or whether they just tell somebody, that helps to start a journey in a different direction than the harm.

I think it's not a simple answer, it's a complex problem. It's going to face us for many years to come but we need to work together in a non-partisan way to figure out how we address this challenge for all of us. As grandparents, Mr. Horne and I just shared stories as grandparents. So we want this to be different for the next generation.

If we've failed our generation then let's not fail the next generation of your children and our grandchildren. And by the way, Happy International Women's Day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And with that, we're going to wrap it up. (Interruption) The time is 2:30 p.m. It's end of questions and we're going to do about a 15-minute wrap-up or however long you have. (Interruption) Ms. Treen.

MS. TREEN: I want to thank you all for the work that you've done on this strategy. It is so important to have this moving forward. I can't even imagine how you've handled to sort this out to create a strategy to move it forward, but thank you for all your hard work.

I do believe we're moving forward - the grants, how they're supporting the strategy are wonderful. There has always been a ton of thought and a ton of consultation put into this to understand how to help and how to move forward.

I agree with the tragic situation that just happened, and it was very tragic for women especially. The public outcry - we are changing as a society. We can see that from that public outcry, but on Page 13 we have outcomes and I'm wondering - you have obviously thought about things a lot, but is there a way to evaluate so there's a way to measure that we're getting these done?

MS. DOWNEY: Yes, we will be evaluating and looking at all components, as I mentioned earlier - looking at each individual pod, but also rolling and wrapping it up with hopefully some good recommendations, but absolutely I think the way of the Department of Community Services moving forward is looking at outcomes-driven work, so yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll give you five minutes to wrap it up. We appreciate the presentation.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: Can I just bring to your attention, Mr. MacLeod, I just heard from one of my colleagues at Public Prosecution and she's just headed off to Ottawa with Justice Canada. Justice Canada is hosting a knowledge exchange on the criminal justice response to sexual violence against adults. Step one.

MR. MACLEOD: That didn't take long.

MS. MACINNIS-LANGLEY: It didn't take long - from your lips to Ottawa's ears. (Laughter)

I want to thank you for being allowed to come and be a part of this table today and share information. I know that our jobs are challenging and your jobs are just as challenging. If there's anything we can do at Status of Women to be supportive or to provide information, we would try to do that if you have any requests going forward. We're just really glad and grateful to have been here today to meet with all of you.

MS. GRANKE: I echo that. I always appreciate an opportunity to share this important work and to get more people involved. I know I saw most of you here last year, but I've got seven numbers so if you ever have questions, do call. I'm always happy to provide updates or answer questions or brainstorm or get your perspective on what some things are that we should be doing. I really believe that this is all of our issue to tackle so I want to hear from all of you at any point.

MS. DOWNEY: I would certainly echo that and I think very humbly - thank the great bipartisan questions, but also the demonstration of support right across here today on this very important issue. It's not always easy as a public servant to come here and answer questions because you never quite know, but I think today we were so confident in the work that has been done - certainly from Sarah's perspective. I just want to plug here that she has been the sole civil servant assigned to the strategy and working with the communities and getting the momentum going, which has been exceptional, but also the response from Nova Scotians. The momentum has been very heartfelt and heart-warming.

I think moving forward it's leveraging a movement of all that work. So thank you very much for welcoming us here today and we look forward to continuing this great work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that, we will take about a one-minute break and we'll come back with some committee business.

[2:34 p.m. The committee recessed.]

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

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to bring this committee to order. If we could have everybody get in their seats, that would be great. We need our MLAs in the seats, please. Thank you very much. We'll just jump right into committee business.

I have a couple of articles submitted by Kendall Worth for the committee's information. This information was emailed to all members previously. We all received a copy of it, hopefully. Is there any discussion on this piece of material? No.

Do I have the committee's approval to post these articles and presentation to the website? Agreed.

Our next meeting is actually the last approved witness so we'll need to approve one more witness from the agenda list for the upcoming meetings. Just to go off the agenda list a little bit, we did have a request come in from the Sexual Assault Services Network to come before the committee, so I am wondering if we could approve them for May 2nd or June 6th? Is everybody comfortable with that if we go off the list a little bit and have them come in?

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

Alright, and that's it. Our next meeting will be April 4th from 10:00 a.m. until noon and it will be Feed Nova Scotia.

This committee is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 2:39 p.m.]