

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

RED CHAMBER

Centre for Women in Business

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Ms. Pam Birdsall (Chairman)
Ms. Vicki Conrad
Mr. Clarrie MacKinnon
Mr. Brian Skabar
Ms. Lenore Zann
Hon. Keith Colwell
Mr. Geoff MacLellan
Mr. Chuck Porter
Mr. Eddie Orrell

[Ms. Vicki Conrad was replaced by Mr. Howard Epstein.]

WITNESS

Centre for Women in Business

Ms. Tanya Priske, Executive Director

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Leadley
Acting Legislative Committee Clerk



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2013

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN

Ms. Pam Birdsall

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everyone. We're meeting as the Standing Committee on Economic Development. This morning we're very pleased to have Tanya Priske, of the Centre for Women in Business, for a presentation. We've been looking forward to you coming and we're very pleased that you are here.

The format of the meeting is that we are here from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. We have some business to discuss, so what we'll do is have the presentation of about 15 to 20 minutes and we'll do our regular 10-minute questioning. If there are more questions after everyone has asked their questions, we'll go for some short questions. That will give us time to discuss our trip to DSME.

So we'll begin by introducing ourselves.

[The committee members and the witnesses introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Okay, Tanya, it's all yours.

MS. TANYA PRISKE: I am Tanya Priske and I am the executive director of the Centre for Women in Business. Thank you very much for inviting us here today to share our story, 20 years in the making. We're a little bit proud this year. I will do a brief presentation on our history, our programs and services, and also on our goals and objectives in moving forward for the next 20 years for the Centre for Women in Business.

I will start with - and you can follow along - in your package you have copies of the slide presentation as well as a copy of a supplier diversity article on the PanAm Games that I thought you might find interesting, and a copy of our presentation is included on the hard drive, in case you want to use it in future. Please, share it.

Basically, our story - 20 years ago one of the professors at Mount Saint Vincent University recognized the need to include more women in business. From that a proposal was written and submitted to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to create the only women-based business centre in Canada, and we still remain the only university business centre for gender.

We opened in 1992 on the Mount Saint Vincent University campus and we still reside there today. You'll see in the photo there, the top photo, a CWB team back in the 1990s with the late Daurene Lewis, who was a former executive director, and then our current team in 2012. You can see our team hasn't really grown exponentially with our 20 years, but we still remain a vibrant force.

I just want to talk a little bit about women and why we are gender-focused. We know from research, and recent research, that women entrepreneurs are an important part of the small- and medium- sized enterprise landscape in Canada, especially here in Atlantic Canada. We know that developing entrepreneurial activity among women has a vital impact on wealth and job creation, especially in rural economies. In 2010, 18 per cent of small- and medium-sized enterprises in Atlantic Canada were, majority, female-owned, 8 per cent were half-owns, so a total of 26 per cent of SMEs are owned by women business owners.

In 2010 we commissioned a report with Drs. Barbara Orser and Sandra Findlay-Thompson, who took a look at the women we had worked with over the last 10 years as part of a federal initiative called Women in Business. They reported to us that a significant percentage of the clients that we worked with were high-growth firms, typically between the ages of 35 to 55. Although we do look at all stages of entrepreneurship, those really were the majority of the clients that we served. Our focus for the centre is really on growth - it's about the advancement of women and the advancement of women business owners, and the development of those skills necessary for them to become a major force here in our economy.

I'm just going to show you a short video, and this is a little bit more about the history of the centre. This was a video produced for our 20 years at our gala celebration.

[Plays video.]

MS. PRISKE: So, a short history of the 20 years of the Centre for Women in Business and, as you can see, we certainly have moved through the years. This is a sample of some of the articles we've been featured in this year. Certainly the Centre, in our 20th year, wanted to get the story out that we are not just a place to come when you have a business idea, we're there for women no matter what stage of growth you're in - from start, grow, succession planning, we see the full gamut of women business owners that we help.

We've also become a little bit more viral in social media. We have a Twitter following of just under 1,000 people, and Facebook of about 1,700. Our Web site hits this year have grown exponentially, over 18,000, which is up about 25 per cent from last year. We have a following of women from across our province, from across Canada, and internationally I get notes, from time to

time, asking about the programs that we offer and how they can implement those programs in their home countries. So that's a little bit on our famous side.

Our mission is really the advancement of women and the growth of women-owned businesses. We set out to put together a team of supportive business development and training experts to help women achieve their entrepreneurial goals. We've trained dozens of women in all areas - supplier diversity; if they need information on human capital we help them to remove barriers to build connections and relationships; we've led four consecutive missions to a large conference and business fair in the United States, called WBENC, the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, focused on supplier diversity - and I'll touch on that a little bit more. Some of the outcomes from that have been five of our women here in Atlantic Canada have landed major contracts with Fortune 500 companies, and some of them being significant - Walmart.com being a huge supporter and also, I believe, three of our women business owners are selling into them now.

Our small team has conducted 379 business advisories. We have two business advisors - that's a huge amount. We connect with women and we ensure that they have the tools they need in order to succeed. Those business advisories would be pretty much 50-50 that we see start up. So, from I have an idea, where do I take it? I need a business plan to go for financing, or where can I find financing, to women who are looking to expand their markets. They may be looking to strengthen their operations, so looking for help in developing a human resource plan, or it could be in developing a marketing strategy. We really do provide a full-service operation.

We've hosted multiple sold-out training and networking events this year. A lot of our training comes back to us from our members. They are looking for just-in-time pieces that they perhaps may need, so we'll quickly pull together a workshop to meet their needs. One of our most popular workshops this year has been How to Use your Apple Products, and we're in number four this year, and we're also taking it out to the regions now. We've had requests; so an excellent workshop. We have one coming up in New Glasgow on May 24th, if anybody is interested.

Blueprint for Success is really about starting a business. It's a small, intimate group setting. We're now up to four deliveries a year. We usually have between eight to ten women, over a six-week period, who come in and we walk them through all of the steps of creating a business plan. We bring the service providers in, Canada-Nova Scotia Business Service Centre, we'll bring in Export Development Canada if we need to, small loans, and so we have all of the information there.

We've also done a Pan-Atlantic program called AMMP, which is an Advanced Management and Mentoring Program where we have paired 22 women in Atlantic Canada with mentors, to help them build their business. These women would be \$250,000 plus in revenue, most of them around the \$0.5 million mark.

International Women's Day we featured Jodi Glover, RBC Women Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the technology start-up, and she was here to celebrate. In June we celebrate the

closing of our 20th Anniversary with the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia - he is hosting us on June 13th.

We just don't promote entrepreneurship; we promote leadership. We've hosted the Atlantic Canadian Chapter of the Women Presidents' Organization in 2011. It was an important piece for us - for 10 years WPO, our Women Presidents' Organization, attempted to establish a chapter here in Atlantic Canada and they were unsuccessful, so we helped them do that, and we now have two chapters. The Women Presidents' Organization are women who are service industry, \$1 million or over in revenue, and in manufacturing or goods, \$2 million over. And two of those members of our Atlantic Chapter here in Halifax are over the \$10 million mark, one over the \$50 million mark - so very significant women that we work with. Our own Laurie Sinclair, our Business Development Officer, is now the chairman of that chapter, so it brings us a closer connection to these women - and it also provides women who are looking to grow their business the opportunity to really see how these women do it.

So our focus is, as we said, women. We're gender-specific and we know why we're here. We know that women need some additional support, a different way of doing business. We want to increase the number of women exporters here in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada. We want to encourage more women in the non-traditional sectors, technology and engineering, and in the manufacturing or the construction trades as well. We know through our experience in working with Fortune 500 companies in the United States, those are areas that they are not able to include a lot of women in their supply chain. So there is lots of opportunity there. We also work with any woman who has a business idea, but no formal action - and we're very imbedded in the university campus with students, so trying to ensure that they recognize that entrepreneurship is a viable career option upon graduation.

We also work with women, not just in entrepreneurship but intrapreneurship - those women, business professionals, who may want to apply being entrepreneurial in a corporation and eventually hoping that, once they start their second career, it will be as a business owner.

And innovation and research has really become a pinnacle for the Centre - we are trying to work very closely with our industry liaison office to encourage the number of women using researchers, not only on the Mount Saint Vincent campus, but we work also with Saint Mary's and NSCAD, so trying to ensure they understand that creativity and innovation is the generator for growth. We've also worked with on growth and, I guess, on export with WEConnect Canada, and the Centre for Women in Business is a regional partner organization of that national organization.

Increased supplier diversity is an important piece, and we know that supplier diversity, which is really the inclusion of women in the supply chains, can help grow a business - and I'll talk a little bit more about that. Also, I talked a little bit about WBENC and taking four missions into that area, and we'll continue. This will be our fifth mission this year, going into Minneapolis in June, and we consider WBENC, and it's been known as, an MBA in marketing - basically it's a place where we take a group of women from Atlantic Canada and they're able to really understand the procurement practices of Fortune 500 companies, and how they can become Tier 1 and Tier 2

suppliers. Our programs - as I mentioned before we have our Blueprint series that we encourage women to take to help them develop their business plan and to launch it.

With a staff of six - and seven if you include a co-op student on a rotating basis - this is just a sampling of what we were able to offer in fiscal year 2012-2013. We operate on a very small core budget of under \$600,000, and that includes all of our training, that includes all of our activities. The only other money or financing that we would get would be if we do a specific pan-Atlantic project that would be separate. So it's pretty significant - add 379 business advisories to that list, plus our regular activity, we're a very busy, efficient centre.

So the case for supplier diversity - I really wanted to touch on this today because it's becoming, certainly, an important focus and a way that we know that we can have our women business owners grow. And this is a picture that you will see from our first foray to the WBENC Conference in Baltimore. It's a sampling of women from across Atlantic Canada

Supplier diversity - it's more about economics and social responsibility, and I've just put an example up there. In 2009, Walmart alone - so this is just one of the Fortune 500 companies that will be at the conference - spent \$6 billion with women business owners, that was their target. To them - why would they do that? It really is about growth in the communities that they sell into. They know that the changing demographics - we know that in 2040, the United States, half of the population will be visible minorities. We know that in Canada, in the next 30 years, there will be, I believe - sorry, I had my statistics here. I just want to make sure I have the right one - it was, I believe, 1.4 million Canadians will be visible minorities. It's a significant piece and they want to make sure that they are able to have goods and services to serve that population. Really they are on the cusp and on the leading edge of market research, and knowing that they have to engage diverse suppliers in order to make sure that they are selling into that population.

The challenge here in Canada is that there is no government policy on a spend with women business owners. Federally, provincially, municipally, no one counts or can tell us how many women business owners have actually sold into those supply chains. It's not a requirement, so that's a challenge. In the United States, ever since the end of World War II, the United States Government has committed to buying 5 per cent of all goods and services from women business owners, so those are billions of dollars that they are able to access. Even now, in 2013, they are still not able to meet that target, so there is a tremendous opportunity for our women here in Canada to be able to start selling into those supply chains.

About four years ago, when we went to WBENC, we were met with some skepticism. Some of our U.S. counterparts asked why the Canadians were there trying to take business away from them. It was a downturn in the economy and it was challenging for them, but we know that when we go there in 2013 we will be welcomed with open arms, and we're now building those relationships and strategic alliances between Canadian and American women. Not always can an American company have the strength or the capacity to sell into one of those corporations, so now they're embracing certified women here in Canada and building those alliances to be able to meet those targets.

We know that Canada needs to reflect the growth of supplier diversity. We know that the trend towards contract bundling in the U.S. - over 80 per cent of multinational corporations are now requiring supplier diversity efforts from their Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers, and they advertise the spend with diverse populations. Firms with a U.S. base are likely to have a supplier diversity program and our national certification, WEConnect Canada has companies that support them such as Ford, Acensure, Alcatel-Lucent, TD, RBC, Walmart and RIM. In Atlantic Canada, we have McCain's who doesn't have a Canadian supplier diversity procurement strategy - they do in the U.S. and in other countries that they operate, but not here in Atlantic Canada, and we aim to change that.

The other move-forward for supplier diversity and the inclusion of women was the Hebron Project and our sister organization in Newfoundland and Labrador, NLOWE, was able to have them include women in the Hebron Project, but they wouldn't specify a target. There's still some work to do, but Exxon Mobil, WorleyParsons, Encana, SMB and, most recently, Shell and BP have indicated to us that they would like to see more women in the supply chains, especially as they complete their exploratory drilling off of Nova Scotia.

We talked about starting and growing; we also like to connect. Women are great connectors; women are always willing to introduce you to a new contract, a new partnership, and we see that time and time again. We have some signature events that we offer, which is the networking that we like to bring in women who have been successful to talk about their challenges and how they've overcome them to grow their multi-million dollar businesses. We offer ongoing breakfasts - Women, Business & Breakfast, an intimate 10 to 20 women who come in and just basically talk about business and offer peer-to-peer suggestions to each other.

Toastmasters came to us and said they would like to start a chapter on the campus, and we have grown out of our location, so we're now trying to move out of our offices at The Meadows and looking to move into the university campus into a larger area. It's really important; we really are making some strong connections there.

We are a membership-based organization; however, we do serve all women regardless of whether they are a member or not. For membership we basically provide discounted rates to some of our activities and we also highlight them in our BizBeat Newsletter, which goes out to about 2,500 people on our distribution list, so an opportunity for them to get their story out. Our membership is at about 250; we continue to work on that but, again, we service any woman who comes through our door regardless if they are a member or not.

Our small team is made up of professionals, both academically and professionally, entrepreneurs, and we have a wide range of experiences. I'm very proud of our small team, that we're able to deliver what we do.

Our major funding partners for the last 20 years have been the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency which supplies 75 per cent of our core operating budget, and Mount Saint Vincent University which supports us on campus with space, technology, and human resource - they also allow us to operate our bank account through Mount Saint Vincent University. Other

partners that we have worked with - the Province of Nova Scotia, and last year was the first time Economic and Rural Development and Tourism had committed \$25,000 to our core budget, which was much appreciated, and that was really for focusing on growth, and we also benefit from the co-op programs of the Province of Nova Scotia that allow us to bring our PR students in three to four times a year.

Other partnerships that we would have worked with - the CBDC Association, which are our partners in rural areas, and they would have been part of the Women in Business Initiative 10 years ago in delivery of loans; and we also work very closely with the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurs with Disabilities. I just want to showcase that we don't work in isolation and we're not about overlap and duplication. We really try to provide those services to women who may come to it for a start-up loan, and also the Self-Employed Benefits Program, and may need just a little bit more nurturing in some of the opportunities that we can give to them.

Our collaborators - I call them my sister organizations - in the other provinces are: the New Brunswick Association of CBDCs, they don't have a dedicated women's centre but they do have a women's file so we work very closely with their staff; PEIBWA, the Prince Edward Island Business Women's Association; and the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs. We work very closely together to ensure that we are servicing the needs of Atlantic Canadian women.

That's about it for my presentation, so I will pass the floor back to the Chairman.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, that was very interesting. So what we'll do now is invite questions from the committee.

I have Mr. MacKinnon first on the list.

MR. CLARRIE MACKINNON: Thank you, Tanya, for your presentation. As a graduate of Mount Saint Vincent, I'm aware of, and very proud of, what you're doing there.

I certainly want to begin by saying this is an organization that has existed for 20 years and you certainly have not been empire building when you started with four and you now have seven, including the co-op student who is involved with you.

From a funding perspective, we're looking at \$600,000 and the province, for the first time, put in \$25,000 - do you feel that you are getting the kind of support that you should be getting from the three levels of government, and are you doing any lobbying to get more money?

MS. PRISKE: Thank you, it's a good question. I think that the federal support has been significant over the last 20 years. Provincially, we are building that relationship with the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism; we would like to see more of a buy-in from the province, and we know that we can help you with your jobsHere strategy.

We have a new program that we would like to roll out this year called Business Connection, and it's about including more women in supply chains. So - how do we help those women understand the process; how do we help them develop that procurement strategy; and how do we encourage them to export?

We have the opportunity to deliver the program here in HRM, but an inability to do it in the rural areas where we think it is really greatly needed. That's where we would like to approach the province for support to deliver that program. It's been tested in Newfoundland and Labrador and we know that the program does work. In that piece I guess yes, we would like to build a stronger relationship, and just basically a stronger relationship so that you have a better awareness of what the Centre is doing. We work very closely with Nova Scotia Business Inc.; they have been supporters of ours in supplier diversity.

It took a little bit of time for them to understand why we wanted to encourage more women into the supply chain, but certainly they have supported us over the last three years. When we go to WBENC they help us with a trade show booth so that we're able to focus, showcase our suppliers to those Fortune 500 companies which, last year, resulted in an actual sale to a company, so we were very pleased.

Municipally, we usually don't really delve that far down into those budgets, but we certainly try to include them. When we had the Women in Business Initiative program we did have regional facilitators. When that program ended with the federal government, they had provided us with 100 per cent assistance to have facilitators in the area. We had to pull back, so our only outreach is either through Webinars in training, we do Skype meetings, and we have a lot of women who will travel into HRM in order to meet with us, but we know that we are missing out on a strong segment there.

MR. MACKINNON: I'm wondering if at any time there has been any encouragement of members or others associated with the Centre to actually get involved in politics. For example, in this Legislature we have one caucus with no female representation at all - we have another with three, and another with nine. The percentage of women, when you consider that 52 per cent of the population is female, we should have - and it would be a much better House if we had - at least 26 members in this House who were female. We certainly have four Cabinet Ministers in the province, but we should at least have half of everything in this House that is, certainly from a representation perspective, women.

I'm wondering, do you encourage members to get involved in politics? I mean we're sort of at a peak right now, and that is no peak to have in 2013.

MS. PRISKE: Certainly, I think we encourage women to look at leadership, whether it be in their own business or in their community, so that's certainly a focal point. We certainly advertised sessions that would have been held throughout Nova Scotia on women in leadership and in the government, so we certainly support that and would like to see an increase, definitely.

MR. MACKINNON: In the same vein, you are now at 26 per cent of businesses in Nova Scotia that are being operated by women. I'm wondering if you might be able to give us a little bit history in relationship to 20 years ago - what that might have been and how far we have come over those years.

MS. PRISKE: Sure, I'm just trying to see if I have my statistics here. I know that about 8,800 women would have been self-employed approximately 20 years ago, and the statistics from last year show us approximately 18,300 are now self-employed in the Province of Nova Scotia. We like to think that we helped in that regard in terms of encouraging more women to look at entrepreneurship.

A lot of women will look at starting a business for work/life balance, so it may start as hobby at their kitchen table and turn into opening a storefront once the children are grown and they are able to concentrate a little bit more. We know that women spend approximately 40 hours a weeks in business compared to their male counterparts who will spend about 70 hours, and we know that relates back to raising a family and also the challenges that go along with balancing that act.

We did a little research piece on women in the Nova Scotia economy and I'll just run through a couple of the statistics for you very quickly. The increase in presence of women in the Nova Scotia labour market is one of the most significant events to have incurred in this province over the last four decades. I'm not sure that that's a proper statement, but certainly in terms of women - women employed in 1976 were 98,000 to just under 213,000 in 2012, so we're seeing a shift in, I guess, the major breadwinner in terms of families. Similarly, the increase in self-employed was 32 per cent.

However, according to Statistics Canada, in 2011 the national average of women in business was 12 per cent in any province. We're a little bit behind that at 10 per cent, Newfoundland and Labrador being the lowest at 6 and B.C. the highest at 15. Across Nova Scotia self-employed in 2009, the lowest was in Cape Breton and northeastern Nova Scotia; the highest was in the Valley and the South Shore - and we kind of look at the Valley and the South Shore, a lot of artisans, a lot of agricultural opportunities, so probably higher - and that's self-reported.

The only counties that really showed a decline were Yarmouth-Digby, Cumberland, and Inverness-Richmond. We also know that the sector women typically serve is service, professional services, business-to-business, 90 per cent and about 10 per cent goods - so that could vary 10 to 20 per cent, but mostly 80 per cent in the professional services area. We also know that in 1976, when we talked about those 8,800 women business owners, only 6.7 per cent were incorporated compared to 2011 of 17.11 per cent. We feel those incorporated companies are more likely to invest in growth and, certainly, human capital, so they are on the verge of growing.

Gross revenue - 60 per cent, in 2011, of women employed were less than \$100,000 so there is a tremendous market for us to help those women reach economic prosperity; 23.5 are between \$100,000 and \$500,000 and that's a key target market for us, those are the people we want to help, that's where out AMMP, our Advanced Management and Mentoring Program, is trying to get

those women to the next level; and less than 10 per cent had an annual revenue of over \$1 million. We want to take that 23.5 per cent and move them up to that \$1 million-plus mark, and there are ways of doing it.

We know that if they're selling business-to-business, that if they have export propensity, and through supplier diversity and other tools we believe that they have the opportunity to do it. Women just take a little bit longer to enter those export markets.

MR. MACKINNON: Thank you very much. I am being cut off at this point by the very good female chairman. I have many more questions, but that's the end for me now.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Orrell.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you for your presentation and thank you for being here this morning. You talked about 26 per cent of businesses in, I think you said, mainland Nova Scotia as being either majority female-owned or half female-owned. Is that just mainland Nova Scotia or is that including Cape Breton?

MS. PRISKE: That would be the full province.

MR. ORRELL: The full province, but you only have your Centre here in . . .

MS. PRISKE: HRM.

MR. ORRELL: Are there plans to expand that into some of the rural areas, or is it something that people can get on-line or travel to, or is it open to everybody else in the province?

MS. PRISKE: We would love to be able to have a wider presence, a more physical presence in the province. We did with the Women in Business Initiative, which was an initiative by the federal government to include more women business owners. We operated that for almost five or six years at 100 per cent. We did have regional business facilitators - five of them - but with the end of that program we had to just focus and concentrate on our Centre here.

We still try to encourage with technology, we deliver Webinars, we try to get the information out as much as we can, but we know that we're not making the impact that we did when we were physically located in some of these areas and we had representatives.

The Centre, typically we will work with women all over Nova Scotia; however, because of our federal funding component, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation basically works with women on the Island and we typically kind of stop most of our training programs at the Causeway. Although we do continue to work with the University Business Development Centre there, or we have in the last couple of years, we know there's a lot of work we could be doing there as well.

MR. ORRELL: You talked about the provincial funding last year - was that one-time funding or is that added to your core funding?

MS. PRISKE: That was included in our core funding, so under \$600,000 included the \$25,000 from the province.

MR. ORRELL: But you'll keep getting that from year to year?

MS. PRISKE: I hope so; I've made the request again this year.

MR. ORRELL: I guess my big question - you were talking about diversity earlier and in a former life of mine I dealt a lot with people with disabilities - do you have a disabled component to your program or do you rely on the outside agencies that you talked about, that you collaborate with, to provide the adaptability for females with disabilities to succeed in business?

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely, we work very closely with Brian Aird of the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network. Most times he'll have clients who come in to see him, they want to start a business, and we'll bring in one of our business advisers to sit with him and the woman entrepreneur to help them develop their business plan and anything else that we can do. We allow them to take the lead, but we fill in where needed and as requested.

MR. ORRELL: Do you have any prerequisites for, we'll say, a person who comes in off the street who has a business plan and has no formal business background and they come in and pitch the plan to you guys - are there any prerequisites for that person to be able to work with you to develop that plan and move it forward?

MS. PRISKE: Female, male, we'll help everybody. We'll certainly walk them through all aspects. If they come in and they just have an idea and they don't know where to take that idea, we'll sit with them. We usually provide one hour of free counselling - we don't charge for our business advisories. So they are open to make sure that women have access.

A lot of organizations will charge for those, so that could be an impediment to them. We want to make sure that we're open and accessible to everyone.

MR. ORRELL: When I was listening to you earlier, you were talking about the bulk of your clients are, I think you said, between 35 and 55. How about the younger generation, are they more likely to be entering - you talk about traditional sectors - the traditional sectors on their own or is there a way we can push them a little bit into that area, through you guys, to try to develop that sector because we know that it's necessary?

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. I think we see a lot of our other service providers, like the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Education Development - CEED - typically their mandate is to work with youth, so a lot of people will start through that organization and then move into ours.

A lot of younger women haven't entered, I guess, opening a business, a lot of them are getting their career experience with corporations and governments and then they're looking at entrepreneurship, sort of as that second step. So they want to gain the experience and that's pretty much typical of women, I would think.

We know it's a target market. We know that it's an area that we would like to encourage, and certainly our work with organizations like CanWIT, which is Canadian Women in Technology, we work with them very closely - a national organization - to encourage women here in Atlantic Canada, working in the universities with engineering and technology students, and also on our own campus with the young women entrepreneurs. They know who we are, and we hope, as alumni, they'll come back to seek us when they want to open their business.

MR. ORRELL: Are there people getting to the children, the young adults who are in high school who may be thinking about a career path down the road? I know if we can get to young ladies and gentlemen, ladies especially in the 10, 11, 12 age group, to put in their minds where they may go, it may not be traditional sectors, nursing sectors - I don't want to sound like I'm pegging people, but I see more and more people now getting into the non-traditional areas because of the opportunities that are available out there - is there any work done with the school system to let them know what is out there so they can encourage a little more of that?

MS. PRISKE: The Centre for Entrepreneurship Education Development, CEED, that is their mandate to work with that Primary to Grade 12 group. Certainly some of the entrepreneurial programs have in place in Grade 8 - also in Grade 12, the Entrepreneurship 12 program is really to encourage that work.

MR. ORRELL: Okay, my last one - you were talking about no statistics that have been kept on women in the supply chain. Do you guys keep your own statistics on how successful your programs are and which would be better leverage for funding and expansion of your programs? What would the percentage be of people who start, to completion, to success?

MS. PRISKE: Well, it has been a challenge over 20 years to keep a functioning database. Through our specific programs, we would certainly have those benchmarks. Women in our advanced program, who would have gone through peer-to-peer business skills development sessions, plus we would have provided them a consultant to help them in their operations, most of them would have reported a 10 to 30 per cent increase in their business.

We also offer consulting advisory services through a federal program. We don't advertise it, but we work with women who we know have the potential for growth. One example is a woman in Pictou County whom we did a consulting advisory piece on. She needed a new business plan and we worked with her and she reported, in year one, a 600 per cent increase in revenue in the retail operation side of her business. Those are some of the things - we know that our intervention works; we know that we can help them effectively grow. It's not for every woman entrepreneur, but for those who have the capacity. Mostly a lot of those selling business-to-business, we know that there are huge opportunities there for them.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Colwell.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I want to commend you for the fine work you've been doing to create new entrepreneurs in the province and help the ones who are there. It's a very, very difficult task.

MS. PRISKE: It sure is.

MR. COLWELL: I'm pleased to see that the government has invested \$25,000 in your organization, and hopefully that will continue year after year to give you stable funding, which is necessary. I would also like to say that our chairman is an entrepreneur herself, which is very good, so we have some experience in government that can directly relate to what you're doing.

In my past career, I was an entrepreneur so I know how difficult it is to start a business, run a business, and make it profitable.

Besides the money that the province has provided - \$25,000 - what other things do you see where the province could really help business, on the soft side of it, maybe helping your organization to help your members better or to actually, through you or through the members, actually help their businesses more? I know there was a lot of assistance in the past for trade shows and things like that, which are very important, especially when you're going to try to do export marketing. What types of things do you think the province should probably step up to and say we should be able to help you with this, besides providing funding, and make it more accessible to entrepreneurs?

MS. PRISKE: I would have to say that the 2010 Taskforce for Women's Business Growth, which was a national study that was done - the challenges don't change from province to province - I would think that development of new markets, supplier diversity leveraging, but most importantly I would say that a lot of women still have a challenge of access to capital. It still remains - even though we work very closely with our financial institutions, our Community Business Development Corporations in our communities - there is still a segment there that could take advantage of small micro-loans.

Certainly the reporting and accountability of including more women in those supply chains - so really the opportunity for them to sell into their communities, to their municipal governments, to their local hospitals, to the local business, just really being able to increase their confidence that they are able to do that. I think that's part of building, especially our rural communities.

MR. COLWELL: I guess that capital is always a big problem.

MS. PRISKE: No matter what size your business.

MR. COLWELL: No matter what kind of business you're running and what size it is, it's always a major problem.

You said you do business plans, help with business plans, and that's a very complex issue, of course, when you're preparing a business plan - most people think they can write a five-page report and they have a business plan; that's definitely not the case, as you're well aware. When you do a business plan you have to know what your financial organization is looking for; you have to have the right ratios; and you have to have the right market research. And on the financial side of it - because that's usually what the banker looks at, they have ratios they use and they go through the ratio and see if you meet the standard for their bank, and if you do, you get money and if you don't, you don't, as long as all the associated arguments support that - have you talked to your entrepreneurs about what those ratios should be and how they should affect the ability to get money?

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. Even our start-up, our Blueprint program, we would more often than not bring in a CA and probably one of the loan - the CYBF or CEED loan programs, just to talk about what they do look for in terms of their financial projections. And also through our more growth-oriented women business owners, we will help a lot of them find a CA to strengthen their business projections when they are going to the bank. A lot of times we'll even have the CA go with them if they're uncomfortable talking to their banker about their business projections and how it relates back. So we try to be there for them every step of the way.

MR. COLWELL: That's a very important part, being able to get your financing and follow through and make sure you make your sales projection, your gross profit margins are where they should be. When I had my business I went through several CAs before I got one that really understood business - it was unbelievable. They're really good at reporting what happened, but not very good at preparing you to make it happen right.

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely.

MR. COLWELL: Do you have those resources available now?

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. We have a roster of CAs we work very closely with, and are always on the lookout for additional people who can provide that service. We recognize that they have to be more than just able to crunch a number; they also have to effectively be able to tell them where they need to put their money and where they are losing their money - as you said, recognizing those ratios and really understanding their business, which is difficult. We have a couple of professors we work with who are CAs and authors and make finance actually hilarious - those are the ways that we learn. So I guess the short answer is yes, absolutely.

MR. COLWELL: Do you have any programs available around job costing? When I say job costing, someone who would know in detail how much it costs in a retail business or a manufacturing facility exactly what, for instance, if you're selling a dress in a shop, which is a very good business, that you know how much your cost is around selling that one dress with everything factored in - or if you're manufacturing some kind of a gadget that you know exactly what that cost is and what your gross profit margins would be.

MS. PRISKE: We have offered programs, usually they are specific one-to-one for a business owner. We would put someone in front of them who is able to help them with that, to help them understand where they're making money and where they're not. So yes, absolutely, we don't really offer those courses out, we don't get a lot of people coming to us and asking for that, but where we do have that necessity we will. Also through our consulting advisory service we can put someone in there to really help them focus on how they can grow that revenue and reduce the expenditures.

MR. COLWELL: Yes, because that's one of the key things to business success - you have to know exactly what the cost is because oftentimes when you do have information available and all of sudden realize the nice gadget that you were selling or manufacturing, whatever the case may be, it was your star project that was making you all kinds of money, indeed isn't making you any money.

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely.

MR. COLWELL: And the one that you thought that you weren't making any money on is actually the one that you really need to concentrate on.

MS. PRISKE: Key example of the women business owner I mentioned making a 600 per cent revenue differential in her sales, and that was basically understanding what products sold best and what didn't, and when she made that adjustment that's when she saw her retail operation grow.

MR. COLWELL: I can imagine with a 600 per cent increase that she is looking at new products every day now and that growth will continue exponentially.

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. Service and retail, so a little bit different, but professional service - that's where she has shown her increase in her revenue. I would say when I first started working with her maybe about \$350,000 in revenue and now she's up over \$600,000. It shows that there is opportunity there, and, like I say, it's not for every woman business owner but those who are committed and want to grow, we can provide that assistance every step of the way for them.

MR. COLWELL: It's hard enough being an entrepreneur anywhere, it doesn't matter if you're here or where it is in the country, or even in North America, and I'm really pleased to see the type of work that you're doing to help entrepreneurs because it's a very lonely field out there. Most people don't understand how to run a business, even some of the experts out there who say they know how, they don't. It's very, very difficult to get the kind of advice and the direction that you should go in. And real advice and not just someone saying it would be nice to do this - I mean, you've got to do this if you want to make money attitude.

With the success in the time you've had you must have gained a tremendous amount of experience around that which is so important. It must be really enjoyable working with and seeing the businesses grow and prosper.

MS. PRISKE: Best job ever.

MR. COLWELL: What's your ratio of businesses that succeed? And when I say "succeed" you know, they continue on. Maybe they can do better, but that's always the case no matter how well you're doing. Even the lady with the 600 per cent increase could always do better - she would say that herself, I'm sure. What kind of ratio do you have to that, as compared to businesses that falter?

MS. PRISKE: I really can't report on the statistics for the clients that we have serviced. I've taken over as executive director in the last year and our CRM, our data base, has only been existence for about five years, so I'm not really sure on the transition of women through entrepreneurship. I would say that probably one out of three will cease operations at the end of year one, mostly it will be because they're not able to financially continue to operate, especially those who may have been on a Self- Employment Benefits Program that provides them with a salary while they're operating their business in year one.

I'm sorry I can't really give you a fact; I can certainly go back and take a look for that statistic if you would like, and provide it to you.

We see a lot of women come - probably we had 60 women from the Self- Employment Benefits Program from the Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development come to us, as we would provide them with a free membership, trying to encourage them to come to our networking and our workshops to help them build their business. Of those 60 over the last two years we've retained six as members and CEED is unable to tell us how many of those women have continued in business. I would say probably a third remain in business after year one - it might be a little bit higher than that, but certainly after year two it would drop dramatically as well.

MR. COLWELL: That's about the same as any business. It doesn't matter what it is, usually the first two years 60 per cent or something drop out and the next four or five years - I forget the exact numbers but I think it's something like 50 per cent again drop out. That's normal . . .

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely.

MR. COLWELL: . . .and anything you do to even get one percentage point above that is a big bonus.

I'd love to see those numbers and I'm sure, from what you're doing and how you're working, I would think that your numbers would be much better than the normal entrepreneurs would see out there, and I think your success rate will be higher when you review your numbers and check with national standards.

I think that's great, and I think we need to do more to help businesses in this province, and not necessarily with cash, but with the support and training and all the things that are so important to run a business, because it is difficult.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Colwell, I agree with what you are saying.

Mr. MacLellan.

MR. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you, Tanya, for your presentation. I learned two valuable things this morning so far, certainly the merit and the impact that the Centre for Women in Business has and, secondly, that I have to put my hand up quicker in committee because I had eight really good questions that would have made me look smart and I'm down to about one and a half, so at least for you, it will be a quick one.

The first question, I think all of my colleagues who spoke before me talked in bits and pieces about it, but I'm very interested in it and that would be accessing capital. I think something that relates specifically to this committee, we had a presentation - I think it was two meetings ago - with respect to the credit union loan board, the micro-loan program. I just want to get your thoughts specifically on that.

It looks to me like a great program that the province partners with the credit union and I think there wouldn't be a downside to expansion in a variety of ways for that. The commercial banks - and I saw some of the logos with RBC in your presentation - and I know that they obviously want to take on risk and they want to get into the loans, but there's a limit to that. I think that with an extra provision of risk points for credit union loans, so they say they're a little bit riskier and we'll back that with public dollars, I think it's a good thing.

So can you give me, in your own broad strokes, your sense of how that program has impacted women in business and women entrepreneurs and where, if anywhere, you could see that expanding, moving forward?

MS. PRISKE: Wow, that's a huge question.

MR. MACLELLAN: That's pretty much my style.

MS. PRISKE: I would think that through the credit union, the provincial program, Community Business Development Corporations that are funded by the federal government, there is opportunity there for women. As you said, the financial institutions, the larger banks, they like the winners - if you have a dollar, they'll give you a dollar - but they're also very supportive in other ways of women, so encouraging them, working with them, supporting the Centre in terms of our business skills to help them build that capacity.

Where does the challenge lie? I guess the new business start-up is really the challenge, unless you have the necessary capital going into that business, the working capital to do it, banks are finding it difficult to be able to provide a loan, and most women are adverse to asking for capital. They'll use family savings. They may ask their family members to contribute to it. They typically start very small and they want to be able to build that capacity; they don't want to take on debt, so it becomes a challenge for them.

I don't know that I have an answer of how more effectively it could, but I just know that the way that women operate their businesses is a little bit different and they are very cautious and they

don't really want to take on - they don't want to jump into the pond. They certainly want to take it step by step, so we may see a woman business owner take a small loan out and we may not see her for two years. Then she comes back and says I'm ready for the next stage of growth - very methodical.

MR. MACLELLAN: Secondly, I'd like to get your thoughts on the Centre's managing of clients as they come through the door. You talked a lot about - and which I think is great and I'm assuming that this is sort of one of the flagships of the program, in terms of sectors - you talked about supply chain procurement, exports which are all great things, and if you look at any indicators and forecasts, that's where you have to grow from a provincial development perspective with the GDP and the like, so how do you manage clients who come in and have an idea that doesn't fit in specifically with some of those things that you are obviously passionate about and the Centre, and I don't want to say "focuses on", but certainly has an interest in - what is the different process that one would follow if, say, they were directly involved with exporting versus it was a manufacturing or product development idea that they have, and does that differ in any way?

MS. PRISKE: Not at all. We're supportive of any woman, any idea. What we want to do is make sure they're successful, so from idea-generation. We had a woman come in the other day and she had five ideas to start a business. She wanted to know which one was the best. We start from that to - a woman business owner that I recently sat with from Antigonish County who is exporting, but she's not sure how she's doing it so she's doing it via the Internet - it needs to be a little bit more focused.

We have women who are in a service industry - salons, massage therapists, they may have retail operations, and we help them the same as we would anybody who has a million dollar company looking to expand their supply chains. Really we're there for all women. I focus a little bit more on the export supplier diversity, the global supply chains just simply because we know that is where the growth opportunity is for this province and that's where we would like to lead more women. We know there's the opportunity there, but along the way we certainly open our doors to anyone.

MR. MACLELLAN: Finally, and this has been touched on as well, just looking at some of the demographic shift for women in business, first of all, you say the age is roughly 35 to 55?

MS. PRISKE: That's our median of who we would work with as clients.

MR. MACLELLAN: So since 1992, have you seen that move downward, stay relatively constant, or is that . . .

MS. PRISKE: I would say it has been relatively constant. I can't really speak to 10 years prior, but I would think that has been the majority of women. I used to work for ACOA so many years ago and my first file was the Centre for Women in Business. I can remember going to one of the first workshops that the Centre offered and it was about idea-generation, starting your own business, and about 20 women sat around the table and it was like - what are we going to do? What type of business are we going to start? That was really where it all began.

I think that there is more opportunity now. We are a global economy so there is so much out there that the idea-generation comes faster, and we hope that the start-up of businesses will remain on that upward swing.

MR. MACLELLAN: My final question - and it's triggered from an example you just used. Have you seen, and would you say that the Centre has seen, since 1992 and since your time there, a shift from the one-idea type of entrepreneur versus the career entrepreneurs that see a broad spectrum of options under, say, if it's a sector or some kind of specific area that they want to focus on? Do you see people - because entrepreneurs fail and they try again and it's all about the risk - do you see a movement towards people who want to be an entrepreneur, they want to succeed and they'll tweak their ideas, change direction and, as my colleague mentioned, something that they thought would be the flagship isn't and they sort of shift? Are there large-scale changes in how entrepreneurs sort of manage the ideas that they have for economic growth?

MS. PRISKE: I would think so. I would think since 1992 that you're seeing more women jump directly into a full-time business, whereas back in 1992 it may have been more of a hobby - you know, I'll try it from home. I think there is a change and, exactly, we encourage innovation. We say, if you don't stay above the trend, you're going to be old news. So you do see a lot of women who start in one direction in their business and they will certainly change that to reflect the trends in the economy, recognizing that they found a new business stream that will make them significant revenue.

MR. MACLELLAN: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Zann.

MS. LENORE ZANN: First of all, I'd like to say thank you so much for doing what you do for women in the province. I think it's really important and I always have. How much do you think self-confidence plays in the role of women even thinking about starting their own businesses? Do you find that perhaps women of various ages have different feelings about whether they can be successful or not? Do you find that younger women are more readily able to say oh, I'm just going to jump into this and give it a try? Or do you find that some of the women who are starting second careers are now starting to find the confidence in their own abilities - do you have any comments on that?

MS. PRISKE: I think it's a mixed bag. Certainly the younger generation, it's trying to get them to focus sometimes on one opportunity, but I think their global experience - more and more students are now travelling and they're coming back with new products, new ideas, they see the way the world operates - I think they are a breath of fresh air in terms of bringing new businesses to the area.

Confidence is personal, so I think it's one that we try to encourage. We do a lot of peer-to-peer mentoring, bringing women together in groups so that they're able to hear common stories so they know they're not alone, that they know their challenges are the challenges of other women business owners and how somebody may seize an opportunity. That's that

confidence-building and, I guess, a way that we do business a little bit differently. We find that when you have a group of women business owners and you put - and I don't mean this offensively - a few men in the room, the women tend to become very quiet and not ask those questions. So it's in terms of helping them build that.

MS. ZANN: Yes, I just find that when I am talking to people in the community about these ideas, all kinds of diversity actually, it's not the first thing sometimes that people will think of because they've been taught to think differently or look towards, say, men to make decisions for us. So when you start to say what about forming your own business, a lot of women, I find, haven't really thought about it and then it's a matter of, if they did have an idea, where do they go?

It's nice to know that you exist and that we have somewhere to go. I know also that a lot of women have very creative ideas and I think that traditionally they have not necessarily been looked at as a money-making venture, or something that even Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, for instance, would take a look at. Usually it seemed to be the more traditional types of businesses that they would invest in.

I've always been somebody who has believed in the creative economy and, as a full-time professional artist myself until I got into government, it was always hard to get loans from banks, just traditional banks, to say that you are an entrepreneur, you are self-employed, you are a business and you want to expand, but the idea of investing in creative industries was always a bit difficult. Are you finding that people are more open to that idea now and banks, in particular, are more open, and governments are starting to become more open to it?

MS. PRISKE: No.

MS. ZANN: No, it's still tough?

MS. PRISKE: It's still tough. My counterpart sitting behind me, Gordia Macdonald, who is in the Valley, a few years ago she put together a group of seven artisans and they wanted to do an export mission, so helped them in that identification, moving forward, and they were successful in receiving a grant from the Nova Scotia culture department in order to do that, to showcase their products in Denmark, I believe - correct me if I'm wrong.

We recognize there are opportunities in that cultural sector, and sometimes it is a little bit more difficult. What I've seen - and a lot of times we don't think of them selling business to business as well, so it's where they are going into small galleries, there are opportunities in the corporations for artisans. I've seen corporate gifts - it's just opening up their mind to new opportunities, I think.

MS. ZANN: Yes, expanding their minds a little.

MS. PRISKE: We do work closely with Bernie Burton and also with Susan Hanrahan. We're not there to tell artisans how to develop their product, we want to be there to help them with

those business skills they need. That's where we try to complement the programs that they would offer.

MS. ZANN: That's good. Are you aware of the new - we just announced it before Christmas actually - the new Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia agency?

MS. PRISKE: Yes.

MS. ZANN: It was called Film Nova Scotia, but just before Christmas we expanded it to include all of the creative industries. The reason for us doing that is so that more creative industries can have an actual portal to go to in order to get help, as well, with their creative business ideas for everything: photography, theatre, dance, print, publishing, writing, as well as just film and television, animation, digital animation. There is a lot of interest in this knowledge-based economy of the 21st Century and it's going to be a great portal for people to go to, and it will be a direct link to Economic and Rural Development as well. Keep that in mind. That is going to be growing as we move forward. I think they're about ready to announce the new executive director for that particular agency. Keep that one in mind.

The other thing, too, just in my travels, I've noticed that they are saying we need more women in IT jobs and we also need more women in the trades. Even to think of being an electrician and having your own business, women are notoriously really absent in that and we need more of them. What my principal at the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro always says is that parents, mothers in particular, aren't necessarily telling their daughters to go into these different types of businesses because they just don't really think of it. There is a real dearth, and a real spot there for women to fill, so we need to be thinking outside the box and encouraging them to tell their daughters that they can do some of these jobs.

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. We've been working with Nan Armour on The Hypatia Project, trying to determine, once we get women through those trades and through their apprenticeship programs, how we can encourage them to then start their own businesses. Again, I guess I go back to the supplier diversity piece. I know Kellogg's, for example, is screaming for women in the trades. They have a 5 per cent buy and they don't have anybody in that category. We are trying to work with women who own their own companies, electrical companies, it could be maintenance in plants; there is a huge opportunity there.

For a lot of women here it is, how do I expand outside of my borders? That's teaching them how to build those strategic alliances with other women business owners across Canada and in the U.S. so they can become those tier one, tier two suppliers.

MS. ZANN: Actually, last year in Truro I held an event called High Tea with the Queen of Cups for women in my area who might be interested in entrepreneurial ideas. I brought in this woman, Margot Bureaux, have you heard of her?

MS. PRISKE: Yes.

MS. ZANN: I think she's based in Hantsport.

MS. PRISKE: She is.

MS. ZANN: I loved her story. I met her through her husband, Don Bureaux, who is the president of NSCC. He told me her story about how she was an accountant or something like that, she had a steady, regular kind of job that she was totally bored with. She was very good at it and totally bored out of her mind and she just said one day, I can't do this anymore. She quit her job. He quit his job at the same time. He was an accountant, too, and he said they just decided they were going to sit around the house for two weeks and just brainstorm about what they really wanted to spend the rest of their lives doing because they couldn't foresee themselves getting through life just doing the same old kind of dead-end jobs.

He said he came up with the idea that he was interested in education and community and helping communities grow and helping with kids. Fast-forward and now he's the president of Nova Scotia Community College. She said, I don't know what I'm interested in. I love tea - she grew up in Ceylon or somewhere like that when she was a kid - she just had this delicate palate that tasted different teas, could tell the difference and she was interested in the different properties of teas. She said how do you turn that into a business?

He said that she started researching it and found that there are these people who go around the world and actually taste tea and tell people what types of tea goes with which courses of food, and they get paid really big bucks for it as well. She also got into the whole idea of blending tea and coming up with your own blends, and again fast-forward, now she has her own business. One of these big coffee companies - I think Just Us! Coffee - has hired her to blend a Maritime Breakfast Tea which they then sell.

She is a going concern so I thought I'd bring her in, have her do a presentation to all these women in Truro who might be interested in forming their own business and realize that no idea is too crazy. It's never too late to start your own business. It's never too late to start a second business, and just to instill in them this inspiration. It was very interesting to see people's reactions and a lot of different women there are now talking about starting their own businesses. Some of them have already started, and then it's a matter of how do you keep it going, how do you expand and all of these things? I think the more types of events that we have that are interesting and maybe a little out of the box that women can be attracted to, is a good way to sell our message.

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely.

MS. ZANN: She's a great example.

MS. PRISKE: Actually I met Margot. We hosted The Dolphin Tank. It was the first time in Canada, through Springboard U.S.A. and in partnership with CanWIT, and Margot was at the event. I did happen to meet her, so a great opportunity for women to network, to get to know each other, to kind of understand how you pitch, and that was the purpose of The Dolphin Tank, to pitch to investors. We had eight women, one lady from your area that would have - and for the life of me,

I'm sorry, I can't remember the name of her company, but it was a natural paint company and I think she's in the innovation centre there.

MS. ZANN: Okay, yes, the agri innovation centre.

MS. PRISKE: Yes, a great opportunity.

MS. ZANN: Perennia, I think they call it now. Oh good, yeah. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Does anyone else want to ask anything in the first round? We have two names for the second questioning and then we'll just wind it up. Mr. MacKinnon.

MR. MACKINNON: Tanya, based on your presentation and your answers, you have gotten a tremendous handle on a position as executive director in a relatively short period of time. One of the questions that I always try to do in any forum, whether it's Public Accounts or another committee, is to try to ascertain what is happening in other provinces. Actually, your last overhead that was shown shows activity in the other three Atlantic Provinces. I guess there is a spirit of co-operation between the organizations.

I'm wondering what is happening in other provinces and states and whether there is a national organization of women centres, and perhaps even what's happening on the international scene. I believe that the more we co-operate in Atlantic Canada the better we advance any cause, and certainly the causes of women are international in scope. Can you elaborate, perhaps, a little bit on what's happening nationally and internationally, perhaps in other states and provinces? It's a broad question.

MS. PRISKE: Here in Atlantic Canada we have four women business centres that are funded federally. Provincial funding differs in each province. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador would have significant funding that goes into the creation of new programs and opportunities there. Nationally we do have the women entrepreneurs of Canada, of which the centre is a founding member. We were incorporated last year. We host two in-person meetings each year. We have yet to identify a national project in scope that we would deliver but that's our intent, to be able to meet. We typically meet monthly via phone just to see what the other centres are doing, so that is kind of our thread.

Again, I go back to the task force study that did indicate it would be nice to have a federal strategy for women entrepreneurs - that request has gone nowhere at this point in time.

Internationally, we work closely through our WEConnect partners. WEConnect International, which Canada would be part of, is around supplier diversity but, more importantly, it's about connecting women with other women - business owners in various countries. We've established a close working relationship in India with Sucharita Eashwar whom we hosted here two years ago. We have been developing relationships in Peru with the WEConnect group there; also in Europe. Most recently we're looking at Jamaica. They have just established a WEConnect presence there, but also looking at developing some strategies for our women business owners,

perhaps exporting into that country and vice versa for Jamaican women to look to import into this country.

Really, I guess in terms of our work, we like to think that we are global. Certainly most of our work is really here in Nova Scotia. Some of it is done on an Atlantic-wide basis and our reach across Canada through WEConnect Canada - we are on monthly phone calls with each of the regional partner organizations that we would call women business centres, so we continue to share notes and best practices.

MR. MACKINNON: I'm very pleased that you used a Pictou County example of an increase of 600 per cent that took place with an enterprise there. That probably bodes very well for the event that you're having on May 24th from an attendance participation perspective. I'm wondering if you might briefly tell us what will take place on May 24th when you have that event in Pictou County.

MS. PRISKE: That is a workshop. We've been asked - we had several women entrepreneurs in Pictou County say we can't make it to Halifax to attend a workshop, would you mind bringing it to Pictou County? We're at the end of our fiscal year and we have a little bit of extra money so we're able to take the facilitator there. And we more than welcome requests - we often can't accommodate it, but certainly we're able to do that.

There is a group of women entrepreneurs in Pictou County, Mr. MacKinnon, that run between 20 and 40. I guess they try to meet on a monthly basis and they have reached out to the Centre to ask, how can you help us? We would have had a presence there five years ago that we would have helped them kind of coordinate at the networking events, similarly in all of the regions in Nova Scotia. So I'm meeting with them to try to figure out how we might be able to assist them, to help them keep that group, recognizing that there have been several closures of businesses in that region. So they're really trying to make sure that they remain strong.

MR. MACKINNON: The chairman is about ready to cut me off, but she's allowing me to have one more question.

The member for Preston talked about a previous life before politics and I would like to just refer to trade missions. I participated in a number of trade missions and headed one to South America, and ended up with a very aggressive showing there - it took a lot of Chilean wine and Solomon Gundy from Nova Scotia to make it the most aggressive province or country involved in that particular one.

I noticed that trade missions came up a number of times in relation to your involvement. There are good trade missions and bad trade missions, and I'm just wondering how much you have gotten, or the organization has gotten, out of those trade missions - have they been successful and have they translated into ventures that are very advancing for your members?

MS. PRISKE: I'll be very clear - the work that we do in terms of women in export is really on the development of the soft skills, so those business skills that they require in order to export -

helping them develop an export strategy, identifying simple things, their zip codes, their – it can vary, but really, it's around that support and developing the confidence that they have, then to take them to the province or to the feds, and if there is a trade mission to say we have a woman business owner who is now ready to compete in that marketplace.

So I want to make that perfectly clear. The trade missions that we have done in the past four years, and will continue this year, are to the largest conference around supplier diversity. And we went in there year one, in Baltimore, not really knowing what to expect. What we have found is that we have taken women, we expose them to, as I said, an MBA in marketing in terms of they're able to actually talk to the procurement officers, making the decisions in those Fortune 500 companies, to make their pitch in order for them to be able to be included. Are we successful? Absolutely.

Very quickly - Ruth Grady, who has Northern Abrasives in P.E.I. - when we first did our first mission to WBENC in 2010 I called her up and said, why don't you come with us? And she said, why would anybody want to buy from me? I'm a woman business owner. She said, what difference does it make? I sell to Canadian Tire, and it doesn't make a difference to them if I'm a woman or I'm a man; it's my product that makes a difference. So we finally convinced her to come along, and on the showroom floor you have 350-plus Fortune 500 companies that are there ready for you to pitch. She was able to get her first appointment with Walmart - she had tried for three years to get in the door and couldn't find the right opening, and that was where she did it.

And I'm happy to say that in two years she will be on their shelf with her product, competing against 3M. So it's huge. Supplier diversity allows you to enter that supply chain from a small contract. They're not looking to be any more than 20 per cent of your gross revenue, and so it's a welcoming way for you to develop your business as you go along.

We have had great success at WBENC - Galloping Cows, Joanne Schmidt and her husband Ron, they received a \$100,000 contract from Walmart.com - that was a result of her presence at the WBENC Conference; Brenda van Duinkerken, P.E.I., Duinkerken Foods, gluten-free products, she's been selling to Walmart for the last three to four years. So there have been some huge successes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Colwell, and we'll be brief.

MR. COLWELL: The honourable member for Pictou took all the time.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No, you have enough time.

MR. COLWELL: But I listened intently, and I have a few questions to ask. Outside of your core funding, is there any funding available to help your clients with accounting and management training? That's so important - and I don't mean accounting so they learn how to account, but how to understand the spreadsheets, and to work and know who to hire and who not to hire to help them

with their business. Is there any outside training through the province or federally, or anything that they can tap into, or you can tap into to help them tap into that?

MS. PRISKE: There are various programs that we try to encourage. Our Consulting Advisory program, we've used that. Basically, we typically do between - I'm going to say maybe 20 or 30 advisories a year with women business owners. There are some provincial programs, but mostly we do that through our core budget, through our training. With Debbie Peverill, who's a CA, we did a high-level management course, or a financial management course for women business owners to better understand their statements and, you know, where they can have a few tax breaks and things like that. We've also done financial management training for women in the start-up phase, a little bit more elementary so that they are understanding the need for their financials, and how to read them and how to be able to grow their business. So, not really a lot of outside help that we use, mostly we do most of our work from our core budget.

MR. COLWELL: Wouldn't it be better if you had introduced, in your core budget, some programs you could easily tap into for specific issues and help the entrepreneurs, because the accounting and management of your business is so important, and 99 per cent of the entrepreneurs are so interested in their product, and rightfully so, but they miss that and that's why they often fail.

MS. PRISKE: Financials aren't sexy, that's for sure, and it's definitely a difficult piece for them to grapple. Even the women we see who are in the Women Presidents' Organization still continue to ask for assistance in terms of their projections and understanding their financials and how that impacts their business.

So yes, I mean any programs that we can refer them to, we certainly will. We have in the past, even myself, some of the clients that I've worked with - in production being able to have that capacity, lean manufacturing, those pieces, we certainly reach out to any other program that's there and is available for them.

MR. COLWELL: The other thing is around technology and I understand you're going to do one around Apple very shortly, a program on that. When I say "technology", it is so important today because there are so many tools available that really can keep you on top of what's going on, but also about simple things like Web sites. If I go on a Web site, and there are some horrible Web sites out there - not anyone that I know that you work with but some of the major companies out there have horrible Web sites - if you go there to look and buy something, you're not going to buy from them because the Web site is so crappy, and that's being polite, and they've spent thousands of dollars getting these things in place.

Is there some effort in that regard, because that's a tremendous sales tool today, and not only a sales tool but a confidence-builder in customers and also overall credibility of the company.

MS. PRISKE: We don't assist with the actual creation of the Web site, but we have helped women entrepreneurs in the past understand the questions they need to ask of their developers to understand the language, so that when they are working with them they know how to set up Web

site pages - basically what information is there, how writing is important, how they can outsource. We have definitely done a lot of work in that area.

MR. COLWELL: It's a very difficult thing because you really have to blend it to each company, and the technology is growing so rapidly that what you do today is sometimes really good and lasts a long time, but maybe it isn't because something else has happened.

Do you have ongoing support for when you go through the Web site development, because as businesses grow sometimes they forget that as part of the necessity to grow your business, and as your business grows substantially, you also have to change how you're presented out there and how your marketing goes in that avenue - is there ongoing support in that area?

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. We delivered a three-month series, January to March, on social media, Internet design, marketing, so it was a webinar that you could access from anywhere. It was an hour at lunchtime and it touched on all those topics: the analytics; how to remain relevant; what information people are now looking for when they come to a Web site; how to make it user-friendly. Actually, I think it was a 13-part course that we offered.

MR. COLWELL: The next question I ask is a very sensitive one with entrepreneurs. Is there anybody from your organization who actually looks at the Web site and says maybe you should really fix your Web site - maybe not in that terminology - but really fix your Web site because if you do it will improve your business and, if you don't, you're going to have a problem. Do you have that sort of discussion? And it's a very sensitive discussion.

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely. We're very honest and open with our business advisory, so anything we can do to help them grow. And certainly that's why the workshops that we do provide on Web site evaluation, and we've done quite a few of them - of 40 points, what's your Web site missing? - those are things that open their eyes and then they're able to go back to their developers and say this is really what I need.

It's ever-changing, so we have to stay above the trends and that's what we try to do.

MR. COLWELL: That's very positive. The other thing is that it's hard to get an entrepreneur, and anyone who has ever been an entrepreneur is in the same boat, me included, everybody, to really understand their business. It doesn't matter if you have a business that does \$25,000 a year or \$5 million a year, the issue is still the same - you've got a lot of pride in the business, a lot of pride in the way you do things, and sometimes you do things very well, and some of those things you don't do very well. That's the sort of thing I would think, as a past entrepreneur, would be very, very helpful to grow businesses and grow them strong in Nova Scotia, which we desperately need - how do you handle that process?

MS. PRISKE: We usually try to encourage women to buy their weaknesses. If they need help in accounting, if they need help in marketing, that's where we step in with our business skills development and also access to some of our programs. We've done small group mentoring, small

consulting projects with women, maybe just in time, maybe it's \$100, \$250 that we invest in them just to put someone in front of them that can help them understand a little bit better.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We have one quick question from Mr. Orrell.

MR. ORRELL: Just to finish up, I was watching in your slide presentation about your breakfast you have every third Thursday. I guess the big thing is, is it well attended and do you see a turnover of people, or do you have just the core people who keep adding people to it? I think it would be a great networking cause for anyone who's new in developing new business to deal with someone who is well established, to get little trade secrets, little hints, and it's an informal way for young entrepreneurs or new entrepreneurs to get some little secrets on how to deal with that. So is it well attended?

MS. PRISKE: Absolutely.

MR. ORRELL: Does it continue to be well attended, because sometimes they tend to drop off a little bit?

MS. PRISKE: Very quickly, we used to do monthly networking and they got to be very labour intensive for a small staff. We used to have 60 to sometimes 70 women business owners who would show up on a monthly basis to network. We found that in those networking pieces we were losing some of our more seasoned business owners coming in and we felt the interchange in the room, the dynamics had changed, so that's why we went to the breakfast meetings.

We started by doing start-up one month, growth the next, and now it has morphed into a combination of both start-up and growth. We have those growth women entrepreneurs who are coming and providing assistance to the start-ups, and start-ups who are coming in with new ideas and suggestions for those women who have been in business for many years. We have one of our strong supporters of the centre who goes to every single breakfast because she sees the opportunity there to help these young women who are coming through the start-up process.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you so much, this has really been a wonderful presentation, and as Mr. MacKinnon said, 52 per cent of the population is women and I have to say I'm very gratified in 2013 to see women reflected in so many more professions and so many engaging in the world and in economics and in business in very different ways. It looks a lot different now, to me, than it would to my 26-year-old daughter who I'm hoping will see many changes in the next 20 years as well.

I'd like to thank you, Ms. Priske, and I'd also like to thank Ms. Macdonald for coming in as support and all the work that you're doing, as well, in the Valley. On behalf of all of us, thank you so much.

MS. PRISKE: Thank you and on behalf of the Centre for Women in Business - and not just myself, my entire team - we really appreciate the opportunity to present to you today.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, we'll spread the good word. After you take your things, the committee will continue with some committee work that won't take too long.

MS. PRISKE: And if you have any questions at any time, please don't hesitate.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, we will.

[10:43 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:46 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, let's officially say our break is over and we'll reconvene the meeting just to talk about our next steps.

Our next committee business is to discuss our trip to DSME Trenton, which is our next committee time. It's for June 11th. We need to talk about a few things - first of all the time we'd like to start. It's going to take some of us some time to get there. We have here - Kim has been speaking to them to arrange things and we're saying a 10:00 a.m. start with a question mark. That sounds a bit early to me. What are we thinking? We're talking about an hour-and-a-half tour on Tuesday, June 11th.

MR. MACKINNON: I think it should not go any later than 10:30 a.m. because the tour is for an hour and a half, and you don't want to be there during the actual lunchtime. I personally would like to show the Liberal caucus where the parking lot actually is because I think they saw the wrong one when they were there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. So your vote is no later than 10:30 a.m.? So we've agreed that 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 11th we will all meet. We'll get directions before that so we all know exactly where we're going.

Who will actually be coming? Are we all committed? So we are talking about Mr. Orrell, Mr. MacLellan, Mr. Colwell, Mr. MacKinnon, Mr. Skabar, and Ms. Zann. Okay, we also need to know for any of us who don't have steel-toe boots, which I do in the trunk of my car, we need to know the size of your feet so they can supply us with steel-toe boots. If you can give that to Kim before we leave, I think that's all we have to talk about with our tour.

The next and last thing is just talking about our next date. Normally we don't meet over the summer so that takes us to September 10th and we still have lists of presenters to work through. If we continue with that, it will allow the clerk to be able to make arrangements with the next person on the list, if that's okay with everybody. September 10th and then as we move into the Fall, we'll have another organizing meeting. Mr. MacKinnon.

MR. MACKINNON: That, of course, will be cancelled if we are engaged in something else at that time, wouldn't it?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's absolutely right. Is there any further business? I think we can ask for adjournment. Are we all agreed?

It is agreed.

Thank you, the committee is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:50 a.m.]