

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Wednesday, April 13, 2016**

**LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER**

**Department of Internal Services  
Department of Justice  
Department of Community Services  
Housing Nova Scotia**

**November 2015 Report of the Auditor General  
Chapter 3, Business Continuity Management**

## **Public Accounts Committee**

Mr. Allan MacMaster, Chairman

Mr. Iain Rankin, Vice-Chairman

Mr. Chuck Porter

Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

Mr. Brendan Maguire

Mr. Joachim Stroink

Mr. Tim Houston

Ms. Lenore Zann

Hon. David Wilson

[Mr. Terry Farrell replaced Mr. Brendan Maguire]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

Ms. Nicole Arsenault  
Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

Mr. Michael Pickup  
Auditor General

Ms. Evangeline Colman-Sadd  
Assistant Auditor General

## **WITNESSES**

### **Department of Internal Services**

Mr. Jeff Conrad, Deputy Minister  
Ms. Tracy Crowell, Executive Director, Corporate Affairs

### **Department of Justice**

Ms. Tilly Pillay, Acting Deputy Minister  
Mr. Bill Smith, Executive Director, Correctional Services  
Mr. Ken Winch, Executive Director, Court Services  
Mr. Greg Penny, Executive Director, Finance

### **Housing Nova Scotia**

Mr. Dan Troke, President and CEO  
Mr. Cyril LeBlanc, Chief Financial Officer  
Ms. Lindsay Wadden, Chief Operating Officer

### **Department of Community Services**

Ms. Lynn Hartwell, Deputy Minister



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Allan MacMaster

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Mr. Iain Rankin

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning everyone, I call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order. We have many guests with us today. We are here to discuss business continuity management which was in Chapter 3 of the November 2015 Auditor General Report. We have the Departments of Internal Services, Justice, and we have Housing Nova Scotia here by way of Community Services.

We'll begin with introductions, starting with Mr. Farrell.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have Mr. Wilson who will be attending. He was caught in traffic, I believe there was an accident, so he will be joining us shortly. I want to welcome Mr. Porter to the committee. He has been on this committee before, in the past.

I'd also like to acknowledge Maureen MacDonald who is not with us today. Ms. MacDonald is going to be retiring from politics. I know she spent 18 years in this Legislature. From my own observation, I saw her as a very effective MLA, a very simple, direct approach, and easy to understand. We will miss her in here - maybe some won't miss her in here but that is a compliment to her, so here's to Ms. MacDonald. (Applause)



We'll now proceed with introductions of the various departments. Perhaps to try to have some order, because we have so many guests, I will allow each department to introduce themselves and then provide a short introduction, and then we'll move to the following departments. Mr. Conrad, we'll start with Internal Services.

MR. JEFF CONRAD: Good morning, I'm Jeff Conrad, Deputy Minister of Internal Services, and I have Tracy Crowell, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs with me this morning. I want to thank the committee for inviting us today to provide an update on our business continuity management work.

As noted in the Report of the Auditor General, business continuity management is really about protecting an organization from the impacts of natural and human-induced events and the development of plans to resume urgently-required services if they are interrupted for any reason.

A business continuity management program identifies impacts to the organization, mitigation strategies, action plans, resources, key personnel, information equipment, and infrastructure that allow us to either continue or resume our business. I'm really pleased to say that in our department we've made good progress since the 2015 report was released. There was one recommendation for our department and that was that the department complete its business continuity templates for use by other departments and entities of the provincial government. We agreed with that recommendation and we're finalizing those templates now so that we can share them with other departments, and we know this will help with some consistency across the organizations.

The work of individual departments and government as a whole, as you all know, is quite complex. There are many different and often interrelated systems and functions that need to be thought about. How we prioritize those systems and functions for responsibility is the responsibility of each individual department. However, one of the things we see in our department is, because we have a number of the corporate issues of government - information technology, corporate risk management, financial service delivery, procurement - we are often involved in the work of other departments as they stand up their business under a BCP. We try to align our work with the priorities of other government departments in an effort to get those services up and running quickly.

We've been working on a business continuity management process and we really break that out into five phases. You'll see as an example the first phase of that is how do you understand your organization? So when the Auditor General talks about providing templates, we're really working with departments to help them understand those phases and the various pieces of documentation that would help delineate and clarify those phases.

I'm really pleased to report that we've completed all of the templates for Phase I and we're getting ready to roll out those templates now across organizations. The other four phases are in various stages. Phase II, we expect to complete later this month to have

those templates done; Phase III in June; and Phases IV and V are a little bit longer term and we'll have those done, we hope, by the end of the fiscal year.

Our prep work also includes not only the templates, which is the recommendation of the Auditor General, but we have also been involved in some training sessions, some workshops with coordinators and a number of other things across the organization.

I'd just like to say that I'm really pleased with the work of our Internal Services business continuity team. In fact, last year our team won an award from an organization called the Disaster Recovery Institute, that awarded us with an Award of Excellence for our work in creating the program that we've been working on. We've also been contacted and know that it's influencing the work of provinces like New Brunswick and P.E.I., and some of the municipalities. So we've been quite pleased with the reaction to the work that we've done.

We plan to continue to work on the recommendation of the Auditor General. As you can see, we're taking this quite seriously. I would just acknowledge in closing the great work that my team does, not only in the work of business continuity planning but across the entire department - a big, complex department. We have great public servants working really hard on this stuff. Thank you - I look forward to the conversation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Ms. Pillay.

MS. TILLY PILLAY: My name is Tilly Pillay. I'm the Acting Deputy Minister of Justice, and I have with me today to my right, Bill Smith who is the Executive Director of Correctional Services; directly behind him to the right is Greg Penny who is our Executive Director of Finance, and he's our sort of all things audit in the department; and Ken Winch, directly behind me, who is the Executive Director of Court Services.

Again, like my colleague, Mr. Conrad, thank you very much for the invitation to be here. I'll just make a brief statement and then we'll continue. We're very pleased to be here to discuss the Auditor General's Report with respect to business continuity planning. I may ask my colleagues to help me respond more expansively - depending on the questions that I receive - but I would like to make some preliminary comments with respect to one specific recommendation that the Auditor General referenced in his report with respect to the new Northeast facility, which is a correctional facility in Pictou County.

I want to thank the Auditor General for his recommendations. I also want to assure this committee and, indeed, government in general that we take his advice very seriously and we act on it appropriately. I'm pleased to say that the recommendation that the Auditor General has made has already been completed. The Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility does have a business continuity plan in place. In fact, it was provided to the Auditor General in August last year, but because the Auditor General has a period of time that he has to cut off his report, he could not acknowledge that, but my colleague Bill Smith took him on a tour of the facility at the time and he did acknowledge that he received it.

I do want to speak briefly about our business continuity plans, which we have in place not only at the Northeast facility, but other correctional facilities in case the committee has some questions about that.

As you know, the business continuity plan is an all-hazards plan focused on the resumption or maintenance of critical operations in the event of things like fire, pandemics, power failures, suspicious packages or other disruptive events.

In the case of Correctional Services, they plan for events that are more specific to their environment as well, such as bomb threats, situations that require evacuation, hostage taking. So they're very conscious always of the safety of not only the offenders, and the public and their staff, so they have all these plans and procedures in place to address those issues. As my colleague, Bill, likes to say, in the case of corrections they plan for the worst and hope for the best, so that is the approach that they take.

As I speak here today, I'm confident and I know that Bill shares that confidence with me, that our facilities are able to provide essential services in the event of a crisis. I think it's important for the Nova Scotia public to hear that as well.

I just want to say to you that the Correctional Services division has had policy and local standing operating procedures related to contingency planning since 2007, so this is by no means a new notion to them. Consequently, when the new facility was opened in February 2015, they had those policies and operating procedures available to them.

As I said, the business continuity plan has been in place there since the Fall of 2015, and all other noted deficiencies identified in the audit directed towards Correctional Services have also been addressed and current completed plans are in place at all facilities across the province.

The Auditor General, while just making one recommendation in a report with respect to the Department of Justice, also made some general comments about government's overall business continuity planning process and a desire to have a coordinated approach, so we're taking that very seriously as well. We recognize that working with our colleagues at the ISD - the Internal Services Department - we need to have a coordinated departmental plan and that the Legal Services Division has to complete a business continuity plan as well.

We have a coordinator at the department who is working with colleagues at Internal Services, following the templates, following the phases, so that we can have that plan in place. We are consistently approaching it across government that way.

I would also like to assure this committee that I know that the deputies, all my colleagues at the table, take this very seriously and we are very focused on responding in an appropriate manner to these types of recommendations. We're currently working on a



business coordinated management plan and we expect the completed plans to be in place in August of this year. Those are my preliminary remarks. I look forward to the discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Pillay. Ms. Hartwell.

MS. LYNN HARTWELL: I'm Lynn Hartwell, the Deputy Minister of Community Services with responsibility for Housing Nova Scotia. To my left is Dan Troke, who is the Chief Executive Officer for Housing Nova Scotia; to my right is Cyril LeBlanc, who is the Chief Financial Officer for Housing Nova Scotia; and directly behind me is Lindsay Wadden, who is the Chief Operating Officer for Housing Nova Scotia - a very skilled team of expertise in housing who will help me in answering, providing you with some of the detail that you require.

Housing Nova Scotia delivers housing services and programs to low- and modest-income homeowners in the province. We also obviously have public housing that we're responsible for. There are five housing authorities that report to Housing Nova Scotia around the province. They provide safe, affordable housing and we do so for more than 18,000 Nova Scotians. I don't have to let this committee know about the importance that housing plays; having safe, affordable housing is a key determinant of social health and it is a responsibility that Housing Nova Scotia takes very seriously. We know that people will thrive if they have access to that safe, affordable housing.

Like my colleagues, I appreciate the time that the Auditor General's Office took in reviewing our business continuity management plans and processes. We were very pleased to see that it was noted that all of our Housing Nova Scotia offices do have emergency plans, which include procedures for scenarios that we have been expecting or that we have experienced. All offices had completed a business impact analysis and had clarification of both recovery support and roles, they were defined in the plan.

Obviously the safety and security and well-being of the residents is utmost, so like my colleagues, we want to work across departments and make sure that if there are best practices and new approaches that we are incorporating that and making it a priority. We do have very strong relationships and procedures on the ground so we work very closely with Emergency Measures and with the Red Cross, again because if people are struggling with emergency housing issues, it can be a significant impact.

All 10 of our offices, as I say, have had business continuity plans in place and all 10 are now working to address some of the issues that were raised in the Auditor General's Report. While we do have the process in place, we do update them regularly. We had been relying on real life crises to test the effectiveness of our plans so one of the recommendations from the Auditor General was that we should put in place regular testing to ensure that the plans were responsive, without waiting for an event to happen. I'm pleased to say that we've started that process, we've already tested the plans in two of our Housing Nova Scotia offices and the rest will have the testing complete by May 13<sup>th</sup>. So, as I say, it has become a priority for us.

Again, just to echo the comments of my colleagues, not only is this a priority for us at Housing Nova Scotia, it is also a priority for the Department of Community Services servicing very vulnerable Nova Scotians.

I will be pleased to answer questions on that and look forward to the discussion. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Hartwell. We'll begin with Mr. Houston of the PC caucus.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for filling those benches today and easing me into tomorrow. (Laughter)

Who is ultimately responsible in the government for government-wide business continuity?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houston, would you like to direct your question to anyone specific today?

MR. HOUSTON: Based on the answer, I will - I'm wondering, who is responsible?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Conrad.

MR. CONRAD: Thank you. I think one of the recommendations in the Auditor General's Report, as you see in Recommendation 3.1, is that while all departments are responsible for their own business continuity planning, one of the issues that the Auditor General has raised is that there needs to be better coordination across the entirety of the system. At the moment, each department is responsible for its own business continuity plan, but the question of who is responsible overall, like anything else, would essentially rest with the Executive Council. But there is not a coordinating body officially appointed at the moment.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, and that's what I was curious about - so that was one of the issues identified in the report, and that kind of is central to everything in my estimation; I mean somebody has to be responsible. So, as we sit here today, we don't know who that person is; obviously, there has been no direction to you from the Executive Council to make your department responsible - has there?

MR. CONRAD: No, again, each of us has been directed that we are responsible within our department. There are resources available to each of us to work on those plans, and we all have been reporting on our individual plans to the Clerk of the Executive Council, for example, so there is coordination going on in terms of - are we prepared, do we all have plans, and are we on track? But the coordination of things like templates and training and some of the mechanics of how we coordinate that responsibility is yet to be

determined. That's something that government is working on as a result of the recommendation at the moment, and I expect that will be resolved in the coming months.

MR. HOUSTON: To your knowledge, is there anyone who is receiving these templates at a higher level that's kind of making sure they work together? I can see there's a number of emergencies that I can envision that would impact multiple departments, and the plan should kind of be coordinated, but I guess at the moment the province is not at that stage yet where somebody is saying this department's plan is that and that kind of contradicts with this - nobody is really pulling those together to your knowledge?

MR. CONRAD: I think in the report the Auditor General uses the words that Internal Services has been informally working on a number of these things, so as I said in my opening remarks, we have a lot of the coordination points in our department as a result of having a lot of those support services. So, for example, our insurance in risk management group - which if you'd like some detail, Tracy could give some examples - has a responsibility to coordinate when an incident happens across government. So when there is an incident, we have a critical response process in place where we go out and work with departments and partners and others on responding to that incident. So the ability to respond to any given incident, absolutely there is lots of coordination.

I think you heard my colleagues talk about working groups and committees and working with outside agencies, all of that sort of thing. We in addition to working on the templates have been providing some training support. We have a cross-departmental working group that's working on the coordination of those things. I guess the issue that has been identified is that's not formally assigned to anyone, so while there's good practice and people working collaboratively together, there is not a formal assignment of that work at the moment for someone to take ownership over, I guess.

MR. HOUSTON: I worked in Bermuda for a number of years, and we were always concerned with hurricanes there. In the office we had a very simple thing that in the event of something like that happening, I was to call these three people and they were to call these three people and that's how we kind of disseminated information and warnings. But in the government that doesn't happen amongst the departments, so would something in your plan - say if I have a catastrophe or I have something, I'm going to call these deputy ministers or I'm going to call this clerk or something, is that kind of not thought out at this stage, I guess?

MR. CONRAD: Absolutely, I would say those processes are in place. Again, we have this coordinating group that's in place and a group of people who are responsible within each department who liaison together and meet, and some folks in my department support that. Again, through our contingency planning on the insurance side and the risk side, every department would have those plans in place across their organization so I'm quite comfortable to say that there is absolutely a network. I think it's the question of the formality of that network and the assigned responsibility of that, versus departments

coming to the table in goodwill and doing all the right things together because it's the right thing to do.

MR. HOUSTON: Would that be something that you would say should be formalized more than anything?

MR. CONRAD: I think the Executive Council Office accepted the recommendation. I think the recommendation is a good one and it should be formalized. My understanding is that that process is underway and it's a bit of a review of what the right body is, where the right organization is, who brings the resources to the table, and how significant that piece of work is. So yes, I think it needs to be done, and I think it will be done within the next few months in my sense.

MR. HOUSTON: Just in terms of the preparation for today, I did read the Emergency Management Act. In the Emergency Management Act it says, "The Executive Emergency Management Committee shall provide oversight and direction to the Minister regarding emergency preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery." So the Executive Emergency Management Committee shall provide oversight to the minister.

It wasn't clear to me as to which minister or ministry they were talking about - are you familiar with that Act?

MR. CONRAD: It may be useful to turn to Tracy for a bit but we differentiate in government between emergency management and business continuity planning management. So there is an emergency management - the minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office, I assume that refers to, which would be the Minister of Municipal Affairs - they deal with major-scale emergencies: White Juan, hurricanes, and some of the examples you've given. Whereas business continuity planning you may think of as kind of the next step down: power outage, there's a building that goes down because there's a flood, or we have a fire in a building - so how we keep doing business during that next stage down kind of reaction is the business continuity network.

The emergency management structure, when there's a major cross-government emergency - Swissair, those kinds of things - as I understand it, is a very rigorous, very defined process in which there are committees and a number of other things. I don't know, Tracy may want to comment on that as well.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, no, that's actually helpful. I know that last week the Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal was pondering about an asteroid maybe hitting us so I guess that would fall into the emergency management category. (Laughter) But hopefully we don't come to that.

I would like to ask some - I guess maybe we'll go to the Department of Justice but before I do, the Auditor General's Report referred to schools and drills at schools and stuff. Would there be anyone here today prepared to speak to any of those education things?

MR. CONRAD: Not me.

MR. HOUSTON: I didn't know if it might have fallen under your department in the capacity that you have for organizing some of the other stuff.

MR. CONRAD: Only in the broadest sense of again, providing templates, but in terms of individual plans or reviewing those plans or some of the recommendations or comments the Auditor General made, sorry, I'm really not familiar with that.

MR. HOUSTON: I don't know, Mr. Chairman, maybe that was something we didn't specifically schedule around schools or something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In terms of witnesses?

MR. HOUSTON: Yes, because there's a whole section in that chapter on schools and fire drills and this type of stuff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can't recall specifically now but usually we get advice from the Auditor General's Office about what would be the most appropriate departments to bring in as witnesses. If you want to review that perhaps in subcommittee sometime, we can do that.

MR. HOUSTON: In terms of Justice, I guess just to orientate myself a bit, how many people in the province are serving custodial sentences? How many - broad numbers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Pillay.

MS. PILLAY: Approximately 500.

MR. HOUSTON: And in how many facilities would they be housed in?

MS. PILLAY: Four adults and one youth.

MR. HOUSTON: Is that the capacity of those four-adult and one-youth facilities? What would be the capacity of those?

MS. PILLAY: They have more capacity - for adults it's 704.

MR. HOUSTON: You did mention a series of things that the department envisions when they're preparing - and even some additional ones - for your department, like bomb threats and stuff like that. I just wonder, has the response plan been triggered at any point?

MS. PILLAY: Mr. Smith has been the executive director now for about four years and not in the time that he has been there, but I do know that they've tested the plans.

MR. HOUSTON: So there are regular tests at all the facilities. Would they be monthly tests?

MS. PILLAY: Annual.

MR. HOUSTON: You mentioned that for the new correctional facility in Pictou County, the plan is in place there and it has been tested presumably and everyone is confident in that.

MS. PILLAY: They haven't tested the plan yet, but there are plans - I talked to you about fire safety, things like that - they actually test those more frequently. They don't just do that on an annual basis. The entire business continuity plan is not being tested, but portions of it have been.

MR. HOUSTON: Would part of that plan involve moving inmates to another facility in certain circumstances?

MS. PILLAY: In certain circumstances it could, yes.

MR. HOUSTON: Would those moves all be within the province? I know you mentioned - it seems like there is capacity there. Is there any situation at any facility that would result in inmates being moved out of the province?

MS. PILLAY: That would be the first initial approach to it, provided there was capacity and provided the other facilities were in a good condition to be able to take them, yes.

MR. HOUSTON: Are there agreements with other provinces?

MS. PILLAY: There is an organization - it wouldn't surprise you - called the Heads of Corrections and they have formal arrangements amongst them for that type of incident.

MR. HOUSTON: I did want to ask you - the sheriff's deputies' issue has been in the news the last little bit. I know former Minister Diab had talked about an internal report that would see the deputies being armed. I think I read over the last couple of days that's no longer the case and I wonder if you can clarify. Is that the case that sheriff's deputies will not be armed?

MS. PILLAY: Yes, a decision has been made that the sheriffs will not be armed with firearms. There are some people who think those conductive energy weapons - CEWs or Tasers - are weapons, but a select group are going to be armed with Tasers.

MR. HOUSTON: So no firearms, but Tasers.

MS. PILLAY: Twenty-four are going to be selected.

MR. HOUSTON: So 24 sheriff's deputies in the province will be armed with Tasers. They would have that on their person at all time, would they?

MS. PILLAY: Yes.

MR. HOUSTON: How many sheriff's deputies are there in the province?

MS. PILLAY: Over a couple of hundred.

MR. HOUSTON: So 24 seems like a bit of an odd number in the face of a couple of hundred. Is that coming from the internal report that was referenced?

MS. PILLAY: The internal report, as you know, made a recommendation to arm sheriffs with firearms. No, that recommendation is coming from a risk management approach that we're taking to it.

The other thing is to do a cautious approach because I think there are some individuals who would, quite frankly, be alarmed with even sheriffs carrying Tasers, and so we want to make sure that we have a good, solid approach that requires training and professionalism that's associated with it. So it's really about taking a stepped cautious approach, but trying to mitigate risks at the same time.

MR. HOUSTON: Are Tasers expensive?

MS. PILLAY: I really don't know.

MR. HOUSTON: I wonder if the 24 would be a budget decision.

MS. PILLAY: It wouldn't be the Tasers that would be the expensive part of that process. It would be the training because it would be the same rigorous training, quite frankly, that you would take if it was firearms training.

MR. HOUSTON: Just 24 people would receive that training?

MS. PILLAY: For now, yes.

MR. HOUSTON: So the Taser is allocated to an actual sheriff's deputy. There aren't 40 people who are trained and at any given time 24 have it?

MS. PILLAY: The Executive Director of Court Services tells me that there would be more people trained but at any given time there would be only 24.

MR. HOUSTON: And a decision with 24, there's no financial constraint on that? Nobody said, here's your budget for Tasers, spend it how you would like?

MS. PILLAY: I think it was more a decision about the number, as opposed to a budgetary consideration. Obviously there are some budgetary considerations in there, too, but I think it was more about the numbers and proceeding cautiously.

MR. HOUSTON: And the 24, does that give province-wide coverage at any given time? Is that the magic behind the number?

MS. PILLAY: You will recall that I talked about the risk mitigation aspect of it. There are certain parts of the province where there is more risk, for different reasons, and sometimes just the big volumes that go through courthouses, for example, in a metro area. So others, it depends on the services they are providing.

Sheriffs do more than just be in courthouses. They also transport prisoners, they serve civil documents, they are often the ones who go out and seize assets under execution orders and judgments. Those are the types of situations that can sometimes be dangerous for them, so it would depend on where that risk existed.

MR. HOUSTON: So if there's a couple of hundred sheriff deputies in the province, any rough estimate of how many would be on duty at any kind of given time? At least there would be multiple shifts, I'm sure.

MS. PILLAY: It would be over 100 but really would vary day-to-day, as I said, because they have all these different duties you couldn't nail it down every day.

MR. HOUSTON: If there's 100 on duty, would you expect that 10 of those might have a Taser somewhere in the province?

MS. PILLAY: It would be expected that 24 would have it. So for the 40 people who are going to be trained, there will always be 24 who will have Tasers.

MR. HOUSTON: I've been hearing a lot about the Boots on the Street program as well and I think obviously people would accept that law enforcement are a key part of public safety and emergency response and stuff. Do you know how many officers around the province the Boots on the Street program has put into the communities?

MS. PILLAY: I don't have that information at hand. I came here prepared to talk about business continuity and I'm afraid I haven't reviewed that file so I don't have that level of detail for you right now.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, your colleague seemed like he knew.

MS. PILLAY: He says it's about 150.



MR. HOUSTON: So around the province there's about 100 law enforcement agents who have been made possible by the Boots on the Street program. I read now that there's a review taking place on that program.

MS. PILLAY: There is.

MR. HOUSTON: What's triggering that review?

MS. PILLAY: To ensure that we've got the right number of officers in each area of the province, so to make sure that we're using our resources wisely and to look at whether there are certain officers or the functions that they perform can be shared amongst the different regions.

MR. HOUSTON: How much does the province invest in the Boots on the Street program every year, do you happen to know?

MS. PILLAY: About \$17 million.

MR. HOUSTON: So the review would look at whether that's enough or not enough, properly allocated - I guess that's the type of purpose of it?

MS. PILLAY: I think the review is really focusing on the allocation of resources, yes.

MR. HOUSTON: And do you know where those officers are allocated at the moment?

MS. PILLAY: There's about 79 municipal police and about 70 RCMP police right now, and they are spread throughout the province.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, I appreciate that. I think I'm out of time in this round?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have one minute remaining, Mr. Houston.

MR. HOUSTON: I think I will pass that minute to my colleague.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you to all our witnesses. I think this is the largest presentation of witnesses I've seen at the Public Accounts Committee in some years so I appreciate it. I'm sorry for my tardiness, the traffic has been pretty bad out our way in Sackville. When there's a six car pileup it kind of blocks everything, but I think everybody was okay.

Thank you for being here today. This issue and the audit that took place deals with some important internal functions that need to continue to happen. Of course with EMO, when there is a disaster or an emergency outside, they tend to be the focus of how we get back to running things properly and how we can address those emergencies. I think we can learn a lot - and government can learn a lot - about the structure of EMO and how they run through practices and emergencies and how they are prepared.

Coming from a first responder background, I know quite well that they do that extremely well. I think just a word of advice that you can learn a lot from that and hopefully that's where you're going and that's the direction where you'll seek maybe some input and some advice from.

During the audit the Executive Council office responded to one of the recommendations by saying that they will request government to, "... assign responsibility for government-wide business continuity management to a single entity." Has that actually happened yet and is that with Internal Services or are we still trying to figure out exactly which single entity will oversee this.

MR. CONRAD: No, that hasn't formally happened as yet. We are still in the process of looking at the options for the assignment of that. You can appreciate that within government, there are a number of players that are involved in business continuity management so it's really a question of determining what the best spot is to house that responsibility.

As I said earlier, there continues to be very strong relationships and informal work that's done together. I shouldn't say informal, it implies that it's kind of loosey-goosey, but it's not. It's very serious work, but again, through kind of a coalition of the willing. It's goodwill work rather than assigned work that's currently underway.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Would it not best fit under Internal Services, knowing that's the new department, and from what I can see, its main focus is to kind of get departments to work together. Have you put up your hand and said, we'll take it? I know you're probably not; I've been there in government before. Would you not think that your department would be the best to do that work?

MR. CONRAD: I think there are a number of options. Certainly Internal Services is definitely a contender - we've said that we have some capacity, we have some expertise. As the Auditor General noted in his report, we've stepped in to do a bunch of the work already. I think you could envision that in government, there could be some other spots. Previously EMO held responsibility for business continuity planning. As you say, they've got some great best practices and structures that we work with them regularly on. That would be another option, I think, in terms of government.

Government business planning is done out of the centre so is this more like government business planning or more like emergency measures or more like corporate

issues; I think those are the considerations that government has been working through since the recommendation was made in the Fall. My sense is that we're getting close to a decision on that.

MR. DAVID WILSON: That was going to be my next question - can you give some kind of timeline? I would think during the budgetary process - this will take some support or revenue. I think within each department, you can designate people to work on this, but would you expect with the budget coming in and estimates that that timeline of knowing who the lead is would be within the next month maybe. Can you give a timeline on this?

MR. CONRAD: Unfortunately I really can't speak to what will be in the budget process, but my sense from conversations that have been held over the last few months is that we're probably looking at something, I would guess, early in this fiscal year. I can't speak to whether it will be in the next month or not.

Again, on the fiscal side, I think one of the things we're always conscious of is what is the fiscal ramification of these kinds of things? I don't think we should anticipate that we're going to stand up a huge team. I think this is a question of coordination. The primary responsibility remains in the departments. I suspect we're likely to see an important and significant team and process set up, but I think it will be modest in terms of any budgetary impact, quite frankly.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Maybe I will ask the minister, as the Internal Services critic for our caucus, once estimates start. Maybe you'll be there with him and we'll see if we can get a better timeline on this because it is important. I think it's something that was recognized by the Auditor General that I think needs to be done.

I want to now turn to Housing Nova Scotia. I know in the AG's Report it found that "Housing offices' continuity programs address emergencies, but lack other components," and they broke it down into central region, eastern region, and the western region where it was indicated there was no risk assessment completed, no business resumption services addressed, no external communication protocols addressed, no business continuity management program tested, and no business impact analysis. Most of them fell in all those regions - not all of them. What has taken place since the AG Report? Have you been working hard to address the concerns and the findings through the audit?

MS. HARTWELL: We, in fact, accepted all those recommendations and have been working through. What I'm going to do is ask Mr. Troke to give you the details of what that looks like in the different offices.

MR. DAN TROKE: First, I want to thank the Auditor General and their staff for the work that they do. Housing Nova Scotia actually goes through three separate audits each year and one of them, obviously, with the Auditor General's team.

The 10 business continuity plans that Housing Nova Scotia did have in place, the Auditor General identified some pieces that they recommended that we do better, so we accept that. When you think about how Housing Nova Scotia is structured, you have housing services which does home repair work and then housing authorities that essentially look after - particularly seniors' housing but a number of our social housing stock. In those cases the day-to-day interaction is different in how the teams work with the clients.

When it comes to housing services, individuals normally would come in and be looking for either repairs or emergency repairs. On the emergency repair side, particularly when you think about things like furnaces, we already have immediate processes in place in working with technicians. Communication really comes about when you pay the cheque, rather than if the work is going to get done.

When it comes to the housing authority side, we have always relied on kind of as things occur, you update your plan to then account for new things that you learn as you go along. What the Auditor General points to is there really is a need to spend more time thinking about that external communication. We're very good at talking to our teams, we're very good at talking to the tenants, but how can you actually make sure that comprehensively you even go beyond that?

I'm happy to say that all 10 of our business continuity plans have been updated. We have had the opportunity to run two tests which were live tests that gave us an opportunity to expand some of those communication messages. By May 13<sup>th</sup> we're going to have what we call Phase I, which is all of our offices tested, and we're going to continue moving forward that work with not just kind of the simulations but also looking at when you run a simulation, what are some of those things that you can do better so that you can update the plan again?

MR. DAVID WILSON: Thank you for that. It's interesting that you kind of went into where I was going to next. I was going to indicate that the Auditor General found that the communications plan did focus internally, and that work for external communications needed to be developed and worked on. That's often where I think the MLA office work starts with clients and with constituents, when they don't feel they're getting the information, the communication is not there. Of course then the calls from our office start into housing or into the department. Is that a priority, to make sure that your clients are understanding what's going on? I mean it's great to have the internal business continuity of communications there, if one of your offices is closed and your employees know that they need to do this.

I think what's indicated in the report is that the communications to the clients themselves are not there. Are you confident you'll be able to ensure that the concerns of the Auditor General will be met? Can you give kind of a timeline on what the expectation is from you to make sure that those recommendations are implemented? Can you give me a timeline on that so that we can hold your department and the government accountable?

MS. HARTWELL: It is a priority and I will say that we've had the occasion with some instances over the past six months where there have been issues - whether it's water shutdown or a power outage or an elevator issue - and so we've actually asked that we centrally see copies of notices and make sure that the information that's being given to the tenants or to clients is appropriate; that it gives enough information and it provides people with a sense of the timelines so that they know when things are going to happen. That's something that we're looking at quite closely.

I would say that there have been occasions where the management team sitting around me has gone to buildings where there has been a protracted power outage or there has been a protracted issue, and they've put on spaghetti dinners and they've delivered water and things. So we are trying to have that personal touch, again, because housing is such a personal issue and people have concerns about where they live. They need to see that people are taking it seriously, and so we have certainly been paying attention in that way.

In terms of the finalization of the recommendations from the Auditor General, as we've said, we're looking to - by the end of May - have the testing complete and then if there are any final issues, either improvements in communication or any issues that come out of the testing, our expectation is that we would have all of those things in place before the summer.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I know in the chapter something stood out where the auditors mentioned that the lack of continuous service in the event of disruption could cause additional stress in the lives of vulnerable individuals using these services. So I'm glad to hear that you are putting a priority on it - that you're giving somewhat of a timeline on that, and I hope that the audit has resonated throughout the department to make sure that we move in that direction.

A Housing Strategy for Nova Scotia was completed over a number of years, and several key areas seem to be not moving forward with commitments in the past. I'm sure you're quite well aware of the Bloomfield Centre and a strategy to develop that site - a lot of frustrations, I think, within the community and those groups that have been trying to move that project forward.

I can go back through a lot of data and timelines and commitments and updates that were supposed to happen, and construction. Why is there such a delay with that? Is it because of a new government coming in and things being put on hold to reassess or re-evaluate? I'm concerned that project is still not moving in a direction that I think would best serve Nova Scotians when it comes to housing issues and housing needs - not only in the city, but in the province.

MS. HARTWELL: We remain very committed to affordable housing, and as you say, it is affordable housing across the province. The needs are very different community to community, and the needs of peninsular Halifax is one area where it's highlighted that

there are needs that need to be met that in the past we haven't always been successful. When I say "we" I include government, community, and private development - in meeting some of the affordability needs of people of that area.

The needs in rural areas and other areas around the province of course we have slightly different issues, all of which are a concern. We do have a waiting list for some of our affordable housing and we do know that more innovative approaches are required than simply building congregate housing in one area. That was a model from several decades ago.

So all of those are some of the things that lead to the conversation about Bloomfield being a possibility for moving forward. I will say that we've heard loud and clear the frustration. There is frustration internally, as well. Why it has taken so long is - there are a number of pieces. I do think that the decision to move forward with Bloomfield was made at a point in time. Since then, we've heard from the community that they haven't necessarily been thrilled with the way that we moved things forward so they want us to reconsider our role.

We certainly have had - late-breaking, of course - significant new investment from the federal government in affordable housing and we want to make sure that we're capitalizing on that.

So as frustrating as it is, we recognize the need and we want to move. We have been really focused on trying to get it right rather than trying to get it rushed, but that doesn't mean that we haven't heard the concern, we don't feel the concern, and we obviously want to move forward on affordable housing outcomes as soon as we can.

MR. DAVID WILSON: So, there seems to be a different view on Bloomfield over the last little while. You just mentioned something about the community maybe looking at a different project. From my understanding, it was well supported when it was announced in 2013. I think at that time it was supposed to be about 12 months it would have been started, once some of the concerns and consultations happened. However, in a briefing note prepared for the minister by Housing Nova Scotia in March 2015, it said Phase I of Bloomfield development would be completed by Spring 2017.

Is that date still the advice to the minister, or has that changed also? Has the view of Bloomfield changed within the department and within government, on the support that is needed to get this project moving?

MS. HARTWELL: I would say yes, our view on Bloomfield has changed. A couple of external factors influenced that, as well as I would say more internal factors. You did mention there was a change in government so we wanted to make sure that we understood the new government's desires around affordable housing, and they have a very strong affordable housing agenda - we wanted to make sure of that. We also had some change in leadership within Housing Nova Scotia which meant there were people getting up to speed.

Those were some of the internal things that I think you know took a little time and caused the frustration.

I will say, and I've said publicly and I say again - the community gets to decide if they feel like they've been involved and communicated with enough. We heard from them that they didn't feel that we had appropriately communicated with them in the loop in part because we wanted to be able to report where we were going, and they were looking for that. All of which is to say that when you have a community group come out and say they want you to reconsider your role, we have to consider that.

I'm not quite sure where that will land us. I think the time frames on any go-forward - there still is a desire to have affordable housing in the peninsula move forward quickly. Whether that meets the time frame at this point, I wouldn't want to commit to that. Certainly we want to take into account what we're hearing from the community and frankly what we're also hearing from our partners at HRM. So we are having some conversations about the best way forward.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Has there been any indication from Executive Council to put the brakes on this for a little while? I know just over 12 months ago, the Bloomfield project was never said to be a substantial risk to taxpayers or a cost. Has there been any discussion or direction to your department to hold off, there's going to be costs here, and we're not prepared to support that at this time.

MS. HARTWELL: What I will say is really, at this point, it's recommendations from Housing Nova Scotia, and the department moving forward. It's not that we're receiving direction in another way, we're hearing from stakeholders and we're also looking at federal opportunity that has come, so we're making recommendations on the best way to maximize the benefit to Nova Scotia.

I would say that there has always been risk associated with any new approach to affordable housing. As Mr. Troke has said, we generally are in the public housing business. We're a landlord, we provide some housing repairs and others, and we have some other programs related to financing. A departure from that ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. I'm sorry, time has expired. We'll move to the Liberal caucus and Mr. Rankin.

MR. IAIN RANKIN: I just want to start my questions for our caucus around the same theme that was started by the other two Parties around the whole continuity and congruence of each plan.

I guess my concern lies on the information provided that this was a recommendation in 2004 from the Auditor General so we've seen governments change four times now, I think. Back then it was accepted that there would be sort of a hub, a kind of centralized authority mechanism that goes to Recommendation 3.1 in this case. So are the plans

congruent with one another? In other words, how do you ensure that they are coordinated within each department, beyond just providing templates and the mechanism to provide the material?

MR. CONRAD: Maybe I'll make just make a couple of opening remarks and then I'll let Tracy talk a little bit in detail. In the 2004 recommendation, since that time there have been a number of things happen. After that recommendation that's the point at which the Emergency Measures Organization really stepped into the fold and was assigned responsibility for coordination, provided quite a lot of material, did some updates to their websites, and then essentially had all departments up with our business continuity plan.

Then a number of years ago, as part of us trying to find new ways to do business and be sustainable in terms of the government's responsibilities, we moved towards assigning a greater amount of responsibility to departments to use the website materials to continuously update their plans. I think that's where the current review has said that it maybe hasn't worked quite as well as it could have and we should become more active again.

In terms of the question about what we do beyond just providing templates, maybe I could ask Tracy to make a few comments about some of the other supports that we have in the department that help.

MS. TRACY CROWELL: Thank you very much for the question. You can redirect me if I'm not answering your question. I think there are a number of mechanisms that help ensure coordination. I will say first and foremost that within the Department of Internal Services, as you know, we provide services across multiple departments and organizations in many different service areas, whether it's information technology, whether it's a corporate risk management insurance and corporate security function, whether it's procurement - all of those areas. For that reason we have a view into those departments and into the supports that are required to help ensure the delivery of their important programs and services.

Typically, depending on the incident, if it's significant and could potentially have insurance implications, we would usually be the first to get the call. Usually it would come into our risk management group and, again, we've sort of constituted an informal incident management team that would respond to those types of incidents, to ensure that we've got all the appropriate players around the table, and make sure that the response to that is coordinated.

MR. RANKIN: Are we going to go to a more formalized approach? I think that's what the recommendation kind of implies.

MS. CROWELL: Yes. Again I think, just back to Deputy Conrad's comments, the recommendation was accepted by government and we would expect that as part of that, you would start to see more formality brought to that. I would expect the common templates



and forms will enable some consistency and continuity across departments. Then with the more formalized coordination of those, it will again just bring, I think, a little bit more discipline to that. But I will say there is a fair bit of coordination going on today already in a number of different areas.

MR. RANKIN: And I take you at your word for that. So could you say that all departments have their plan in place? I know Justice has said their plan will be in place in August. We don't have all departments here, but is Internal Services able to basically say yes, we know that they're all in place and we can enable coordination amongst them all?

MR. CONRAD: Yes, I verified a couple of days ago to make sure and was advised that all departments have reported to the Executive Council that they have their plans finalized and in place.

MR. RANKIN: So when there is an incident, and maybe it goes across different departments, how do you prioritize resources to determine which one will get critical resources faster? Is that within Internal Services?

MR. CONRAD: Again, that would be a collaborative process. Some of those decisions would ultimately be inside Internal Services. We are a relationship-based organization, we work with partners and clients and others on making those kinds of decisions. In our IT world, for example, we have a pretty well-defined structure in what we - you know, we get the provincial data centre up and running, and we get emails in hospitals up and running. So we have a bit of a laid-out plan in terms of what priorities are.

It gets a little more granular as you spread more deeply into departments and services, so again, we should remember with business continuity that it can be a particular site down, which might involve four or five departments that are all in that same building, or it could be a site that just has one department in one town because there was a fire or some sort of disaster.

So every circumstance is a little bit different, but yes, we have a bit of a staged-up approach. That's part of what we think would get stronger through a stronger central coordination process. We have the high-level stuff in really good shape, but as you boil deeper down into departmental plans, I think that's where cross-departmental coordination would help us even more.

MR. RANKIN: Do you think maybe some of the challenges are the other departments aren't officially accountable to your department? You can't be accountable unless you actually have some kind of mechanism to say no to one department and yes to another department.

I guess what I'm getting at is, you said in opening comments that it's each department's responsibility, which I don't think aligns perfectly with having a centralized accountability that was recommended by the Auditor General. I don't see perfect alignment

there. I think that's maybe one of the challenges - if you don't have any mechanism to say no or yes to each department and make that decision.

MR. CONRAD: I think you're right. I think that's part of what the Auditor General's recommendation is getting at. I think it's a number of things. One would be the centralized unit - and I want to be careful because a number of you have now said "when I" or "if I" or "when you become" - it's not yet decided that it will be us. But from what I know, I think one of the opportunities in this is that coordination so that we are all using that template and we are getting those decisions made in a more corporate kind of acknowledged way.

Again, I would stress - as I think you heard my colleague say earlier - it's a very collaborative group now and we've been able to respond to all of the issues that have been raised so far, but ultimately we would like to see that it's a business continuity process that makes a decision, not me saying, I'm in charge of IT, therefore, I shall decide. It should be some sort of a conversation that really is based on business continuity and a shared understanding of the corporate priorities.

MR. RANKIN: I guess I'll just end with a comment that I think the bureaucracy really needs to own it - the senior executive level - and that's because governments change so much. Since 2004, we're the fourth or fifth government since then and governments change, so we need to have people in there that know what their responsibility is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stroink.

MR. JOACHIM STROINK: I guess I just want to go back to housing for a moment and talk about what's happening in HRM - in Halifax. I think private sector development has a huge part to play in affordable housing.

If you look at just my riding - not including what's going on in Mr. Kousoulis' riding and in Maureen MacDonald's old riding - we have The Keep on Quinpool Road; the McDonald's lot on Quinpool Road; St. Pat's; Quinpool Road and Robie Street, two towers from 12 to 18 storeys; Oxford-Chebucto, which is the old nun housing; Chebucto and Kline Streets, which is the Shell station, which is another seven stories. Then you have Oxford Street and Robie Street across from Bloomfield, five acres of land being developed. Then you have across from that the old Piercey's lot, which is up for development. Then you have the Ben's Bakery lot on Quinpool Road. That's just in my riding, which is a lot of housing to coincide with that.

I think two things are going to happen there. One, the abundance of condos and housing is going to be way up and might either lower pricing or increase pricing, but I guess that's up to the developers to decide. But with all this within the riding of Halifax Chebucto, how are you guys working with those developers to ensure that there is affordable housing in those areas?

MS. HARTWELL: I'll give a bit of an overview and again turn to Mr. Troke to talk specifically about some of the work that we've been doing with developers, including conversations about rent supplements.

I agree, the volatility, the change in the housing market - it changes constantly - but there has been a significant change over the last couple of years, which is one of the reasons why we want to make sure that Housing Nova Scotia is playing the right role in incenting development and supporting a focus on not just all people who need affordable housing, but we have a responsibility to provide housing supports for some of the most vulnerable and some people who can be termed hard to house, not just people who may have mental health issues or addictions issues. Sometimes finding a way to support those folks requires creativity because they won't be able to thrive in a private landlord environment necessarily; some of the behaviours may not be acceptable to the other tenants, for example. They still need to be housed and they still require housing that is safe and that gives them dignity and quality of life.

We always will have a role so our conversations are on what is the best way to incent the private sector to come to the table. I'll turn that over to Mr. Troke.

MR. TROKE: First I guess a couple of things that have been happening quite extensively is, one, we've had many conversations with the development community, particularly around the Investment Property Owners Association of Nova Scotia - they are essentially together some of the largest landlords. We have been able to access a number of units and get individuals off the various wait-lists, largely through rent supplements. Recently announced, the minister talked about getting over 300 individuals off our wait-lists, using funding through deferred federal contribution. I'm happy to say that over 353 people have come off our wait-lists utilizing this program this year alone.

In addition to that, we also work with the development that is going on around looking at capital contributions through our affordable housing program - essentially, an incentive to buy down the rent on a number of units. It's a way to get into a building where, if there are 50 or 100 or however many units being built, a certain number of units can be made affordable. We can stream either individuals from our wait-list or, as you know, there are many organizations and non-profits that we work with in helping to stream individuals. So maybe individuals for the first time are trying to leave a shelter and working with our support workers to find their first home. Those are some of the things we have been able to do to make inroads to take individuals off the wait-list.

In addition to that, we are continually making efforts to make sure that the non-market housing that we have is available for a long time through continuing the capital investments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Stroink. Mr. Porter.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Thanks for the welcome back to the committee, it has been a while. I've been here in this House for about 10 years and I think that eight of them now have been spent on the Public Accounts Committee so I'm certainly not a stranger to this committee. I think as Mr. Wilson mentioned as well, it's probably in all this time one of the biggest selection of witnesses that we've seen before us.

My focus today is going to be strictly on housing - it's something that I hear about weekly. Not that the rest aren't important, they are very important. It's an important chapter that the AG has delved into. Housing, however, remains one of the busiest components of my office. It's huge, it's easy to say but it represents a great many pieces.

I guess I would start with being very clear that the relationship my office has with all facets of housing, Community Services, et cetera, is very good. These folks are working hard out there to help get folks placed or whatever their need might be and we should recognize it because I think those are really the people on the front line. We all have a role to play but they are doing a good job out there, they really are, and they are very helpful.

One of the other pieces that I'm quite interested in, we have an affordable housing committee that meets in my area on a regular basis, they're always looking and they bring stakeholders to the table. So there's a variety of partners that have an interest in how we move forward. Fortunately we've had an announcement recently with the federal budget there's a fair chunk of money there, I believe \$2.3 billion is the total. How does that affect us in Nova Scotia? I don't want to say specifically rural Nova Scotia but things tend to be a little bit different, depending on where you come from, but Nova Scotia in general. What's our plan? How are we going to make that work for us?

MR. TROKE: First, I'm very happy that the folks out there, that relationship is strong with the advocates and very strong with those who are looking to help low-income individuals.

With regard to federal funding in first early days, really the federal budget hasn't been passed yet so the details around kind of that funding, what it will look like, are still coming in and obviously decisions need to be made around that. But the signals around it certainly are continued investment in affordable housing, continued investment in seniors and vulnerable populations. As I know you are aware, and as I know many of the folks who are involved with the affordable housing meetings going on are aware, there's often a need to continually look at how we can increase capacity in the rental sector and there's also an opportunity to continually educate how we can let folks know about those programs. So with new funding, typically there is an opportunity for us to go out and speak to those organizations about what's happening and what's coming.

The existing affordable housing initiative really focuses on not just developing new rentals, but it also focuses on how folks can fix up their home and stay in their home longer. One of the biggest things that we are seeing is on the side of adaptations. About half of all of our home programs now are seniors, and within that is a large number of individuals

looking to make adaptations so they can stay in their home. The home may have a good structure and may be fine electrically and so on, but they're having challenges - the bathroom may be on the second floor, they may not be able to use stairs, and so on. Those are some of the investments we've been making through the existing program, and I would anticipate that with more money, even more would be available.

I think one of the other signals here that we've heard from the federal government is the interest in talking about a national housing strategy; this is something that all the provinces have been working to have a conversation on. Over the coming months I'm sure we'll be in a position where we'll be able to talk a little more - and not just about what the investments look like but talking about the next couple of years and the idea of coming up with a more cohesive strategy that everybody can endorse.

MR. PORTER: Thank you for that. Something that we deal a lot with as well when folks are looking for affordable housing, more in the last couple of years I think it has become - I don't want to call it more popular but more to the forefront - is the subsidized housing that is offered through the department and through housing. A lot of people aren't aware of it. We introduce it to many who are coming in and were struggling with the day-to-day bit and who are looking for that lower rental or government housing as it is often referred to.

I don't know what all members do so I'll speak to my own - in my office, we have a list of our local landlords, and we tried to build a relationship over the years as a resource to direct people there, where sometimes the rent is a little less or who work with Community Services clients or whomever - seniors, whomever it might be, fixed-income folks - it doesn't really matter. A lot of the landlords were not aware of the potential for subsidy, how that works. I heard even yesterday from another one that we had been working on a file with who said, we didn't know about the subsidizing, we had never done that.

This is a guy who has been around for quite a while actually - probably 20 or 25 years he has been in the business of renting and is a landlord. How do we reach out to these folks? Is there a package that Housing Nova Scotia has designed that I just don't have as a resource yet or that I should be handing out? Should I be doing something or does the government have a plan or maybe we've just missed it.

I think that when you look at the numbers - and I guess I want to focus on the numbers because they're high. This is a weekly occurrence in my office every week all year long every year - somebody is looking for housing in some form. Whether it's grants, repairs, affordable housing, whatever it might be, the situation is real it does exist. I'm hoping it gets better as we move forward. I mean you like to think things are getting better, but we're busy. I've often said our office is one huge resource centre and it's about directing folks through programs and processes and so on.

I'm just kind of curious, given that we do provide a lot of resource of what's out there that we can reach out to landlords with, and, just on top of that maybe, does the province - and maybe they do for the most part but I don't know, I'll leave it to you to clarify - do you have a list of landlords or people that are in the business of providing affordable housing or otherwise?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Troke, there's about 20 seconds remaining.

MR. TROKE: Very quickly, from time to time we do calls for proposals so looking for landlords to participate. Second to that, we've been working with the Property Owners Association to spread the message out through there. If there are any opportunities for us to do presentations to local groups as well, we're interested in that.

MR. PORTER: Thank you. Maybe we'll get a chance in the next round to come back a little more to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Houston for 12 minutes.

MR. HOUSTON: I'm pretty impressed with that fast talking there at the end, Mr. Troke.

I do want to wrap up on the Taser thing and then I'll go to housing as I have some questions as well. So, the 24 Tasers - that's coming from an internal report that talked about arming sheriff deputies. Is that a report that you'd be willing to share with this committee?

MS. PILLAY: That report is an Occupational Health and Safety Report and so, under legislation, we are not allowed to make it public. Of course, that report is circulating. The sheriffs have it. I couldn't hand it over to the committee unless the committee required me to do that.

I want to make it clear that the 24 Tasers are actually not part of that report. As I said before, the recommendation in the report - and this is public knowledge - was a recommendation to actually arm the sheriffs with firearms. It was a decision of the government to take a more cautious approach to arming. They consider these Tasers to be a form of arming, and so the 24 number was something that was a stepped and cautious approach as opposed to 48, 64, whatever you may think about.

MR. HOUSTON: So the report recommended arming all sheriffs' deputies?

MS. PILLAY: No, it did not recommend arming all sheriffs and deputies because there's a recognition even in the report and amongst the sheriffs themselves that not everybody wants to be armed. So it would be individuals who would be selected and trained and would be willing.

MR. HOUSTON: Did it put a number down as to if it didn't recommend all, did it recommend a certain amount?

MS. PILLAY: It wasn't recommending all, it was a limited number, and my executive director tells me about 100.

MR. HOUSTON: So it recommended to arm 100, and the government decision was to not arm but to provide tasers, which is a form of arming, to 24. The reason for that - that's why I was curious is if it's a budget issue or not.

MS. PILLAY: I think the focus was more to - if you're going to go down the road of arming - whether it's a firearm or a Taser - to really be planned and strategic about it and to be cautious because there are lessons to be learned as you implement something new like that. So I think it was that - budget is obviously a factor as well, but the overall sense that I get is it was more about caution.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you heard from the sheriffs' deputies how they feel about this?

MS. PILLAY: We have heard, because we have communications and consultations regularly with them. There's also a JOSH committee - occupational health and safety committee - that they are part of. We've all read what some sheriffs have said to the media so we certainly understand some sheriffs don't agree with that process.

We equally hear from other sheriffs who don't want to be armed, who don't want to carry Tasers, and so it's really a balancing act of trying to find what the right answer or response is, but always taking into account what you need to mitigate the risk because that really has to be the driving consideration here.

MR. HOUSTON: In terms of housing, Deputy Hartwell, you mentioned there are 18,000 Nova Scotians. How many units does Housing control?

MS. HARTWELL: Approximately 12,000 units.

MR. HOUSTON: And those would be a mix of owned by the province or leased by the province from the private sector?

MS. HARTWELL: Those are the ones that are owned by the province. It's our public housing. In that, roughly three-quarters of the units are seniors and the others are for families.

MR. HOUSTON: Yes, because 18,000 Nova Scotians in 12,000 units seems like a pretty small occupancy rate, but I guess that's mainly because it is mostly seniors.

MS. HARTWELL: That's right. We have a majority of seniors and I would say that we also have changing family compositions in the sense that there are some people who have been in units for a while and whose children have grown, and they may be a single person or a couple who are living in a two- or three-bedroom unit that was designed for their family.

MR. HOUSTON: In terms of communicating with those 18,000 residents, what is the main form of communication? I think you referred to notices at one point, but is it electronic notices, mailbox notices? What's the main way you would communicate with people in an urgent situation?

MS. HARTWELL: The main way would be on the ground at the residence. So in many of the locations we have on-site managers, and if not, we have staff that would travel to the locations. We do everything from knocking on doors and passing out notices to posting notices in entryways and so on. If there's something that would require a more urgent response, we would obviously dispatch staff to have that one-on-one. We do not - that I'm aware of at present - have an electronic distribution system, although maybe moving forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century there might be an opportunity to do that.

MR. HOUSTON: So part of your plan would be that if units are damaged or otherwise uninhabitable, you'd move them somewhere, I guess. Where would you move them? Is there a variety of things, like hotels?

MS. HARTWELL: It very much depends on the situation. If there's an urgent situation, such as a flood or a fire or something, then of course we would take steps to have people moved to safety. That could include temporary lodgings, like a hotel, et cetera. It could also be exploring what other units we have that are available.

If there is something that is less of an urgent matter, like there has been damage to a unit, for example, but it's still possible to live there with some modification, then we would prioritize that repair.

MR. HOUSTON: And have you had occasion over the past year to move a block of people from a certain residence?

MR. TROKE: From time to time we've had smaller units that may have had floods or may have had fires. We haven't had any larger complexes that have had a fire or anything like that. Our housing authorities actually work very closely in those situations with EMO so that's really not in the business continuity piece.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, that's fair enough. I've read a lot of reports in the media about vermin in residences and stuff, are those reports true? Are you getting a lot of reports about that?



MR. TROKE: As in any case with a landlord, we have very active pest control systems. In fact we've actually developed some of our own because we found that things like spraying don't necessarily tackle issues like bedbugs. It makes them slow down, but it doesn't actually make the issue go away.

We actually have come up with our own protocols. Then these protocols are now made available to the contractors to be putting in places, as well as our own staff doing. So from time to time, especially, as I say, as you come out of winter and individuals may identify that some damage has been done or what have you - if there's a hole, a space, a gap, those are things that as soon as they are identified we would go out and we would fill them. Also, if we're getting notices from tenants that they have concerns, we would obviously meet with those tenants and also be working with our own contractors to make sure that the protocols that we ask for are being done actively.

MR. HOUSTON: I don't know if you've seen recent reports about rats and stuff. Would those be situations you'd be investigating and actively working on, like today, as we speak?

MR. TROKE: In the recent report I think you are referring to, there was a meeting directly with those tenants. Any challenges or issues, we are actively addressing them but also as I said, as the seasons change you also look at okay, have there been any changes to conditions that over and above a maintenance program you might have to make sure there's a repair piece that needs to be done. Sometimes in these cases, it can be as simple as a small hole in the siding or whatever after the winter being the cause.

MS. HARTWELL: Mr. Chairman, if I could just add, we have put in place an accelerated pest control program recently in the metro region. As Mr. Troke has mentioned, we've worked with some contractors, so we're planning on having two big pushes where we'll have completion by the end of June. We've put, I think, an additional \$1.6 million into pest control. I'm not sure if it was related to the things recently in the media but in anticipation of Spring and other things that we know we're likely to hear about the pests.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you for that because I was going to ask, what is your kind of annual budget for pest control and spraying?

MR. TROKE: It varies from each of our housing authorities, because of the composition. Typically our larger buildings might have a more aggressive budget. I think as Deputy Hartwell alluded to, what we've done this year is actually put over an additional \$1 million, particularly around the bedbug issues. We really have accelerated those investments to make sure that they are all made as we head into the early summer months.

MR. HOUSTON: Do you have a centralized system that aggregates incident reports and issues so that you can see across the various regions what types of reports you're getting?

MR. TROKE: The way that we do it is each of the housing authorities have their own data collection point. Each of the directors meet quite regularly and we actually have a property facilities team that coordinates all the capital and maintenance activity - so both looking at budgets, but also looking at designing specific repairs so if there's any technical advice or whatnot needed. So all of that data flows to those individuals regularly, but we specifically bring everybody together on a regular basis to go through if there are any new challenges or things that are occurring.

MR. HOUSTON: In terms of the 12,000 housing stock that you have, has that been constant for a number of years?

MR. TROKE: We typically each year will have some additions to that. Certainly the stock has grown over the last number of years, but pretty consistent from the social housing perspective, it's about 12,000 units.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, we'll move to Mr. Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I want to continue on quickly with housing and the Bloomfield Centre. There has been a lot of confusion and concern around the delay and some of it stems from a press release and a government-issued request for expression of interest this Spring to explore the options of partnering with the business community on the Bloomfield project - that was March 21, 2016.

I'm a bit confused also where the government and Housing won an RFP from the municipality to develop the Bloomfield Centre. How do we get to Housing issuing a request for proposal when it was Housing that actually won the original request from the municipality? That's where the confusion out there is. How can you deviate from the path that you presented to win that original request for proposal to where we are today where you are actually expressing a request of expression of interest? If you could shed some light on that, it would be appreciated.

MS. HARTWELL: The original agreement that we entered into as a result of the tender doesn't preclude the province from exploring opportunities with the private sector so we're within the bounds. I think the real question is, why now - why not take that approach from the beginning?

I would say that really has been informed by a number of things. I think the changing housing market, particularly on the peninsula; the changes within Housing Nova Scotia, and I think clarity around what the mandate is of Housing Nova Scotia and what the objectives are. We're crystal clear that our objective is increasing affordable housing, including on the peninsula, but increasing it across the province.

For us, it was an opportunity to explore what's in the art of the possible. I alluded earlier that while there's incredible expertise in the private sector that we need to draw on and we want to draw on, how we actually harness that and meet the affordable housing

outcomes, especially for those who are more vulnerable, that's a little bit of a harder nut to crack.

So I think some of the original desire behind Bloomfield was quite ambitious and innovative, but not necessarily taking into account some of the issues around how we support the most vulnerable. If there's anything that we've been hearing from our clients around the province it is that they are looking for support and want the province to really focus in on meeting their needs and not necessarily moving too far away from core business.

All of which is to say it has caused us to rethink, and that's why we've really been trying to question - what's in the art of the possible? We're a small province. Sometimes that's a benefit, sometimes it's not, but what has worked in larger centres might not work here. We have to have our local development community help inform us what the environment looks like. So that's really why.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I just want to try to emphasize the fact that - I agree with what you're saying - increasing affordable housing is so important. I hear from people on a weekly basis who live in deplorable conditions - deplorable - and it hasn't gone away. Every time we take a delay or we look at changing our path forward, those people are still living in those deplorable conditions.

I appreciate the sentiment around the national housing strategy. I've been here 13 years and I've seen the federal government be involved in the federal-provincial housing strategy and funds being provided to the province, but I've seen them walk away too. Now potentially they'll be back, I welcome that, but as a province we can't depend on the federal government's involvement in this. We need to step up to the plate.

We have municipal leaders across the province who have advocated that they are there to work with us. Here is a project that is stemming out of municipal lands so I think we need to see action yesterday to address it because there are people living in - I'm very fortunate, I count myself very fortunate in my family and I think everybody here should also because people are in need and there are people waiting - families, single parents, children and more importantly, I think, which I deal a lot with, the seniors.

In my area - not in my riding but close by - there was a project a number of years ago that opened up, it was the Millwood seniors' apartment. I believe it's very successful, I engage with the residents often. In your view, is it a success? Is this a model that has been working well? For those who don't know, it is capturing seniors who might be just over the threshold for low-income seniors' housing that we typically see in the province and where their rent is 30 per cent of their income. This captures some of those seniors who were falling through the cracks. In your view, in the department's view, in the Housing view, is this a successful venture, project? If so, are we going to see more of it?

MS. HARTWELL: I'll start and then again ask Mr. Troke to step in. I want to address some of your earlier comments. We feel the weight, as well, and we know that this is a priority and we are taking steps to move forward.

As was alluded to, we have worked with some private landlords. We've moved 100 people through rent supplements into private housing in the peninsula so we're continuing to move on that. We've also had some great successes working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, so this year five families are getting a home in HRM. We are not standing still but certainly are hearing and are in agreement that we need to move faster in some of the areas.

On the seniors piece, and then I'll turn it over to Mr. Troke, we are very mindful of the changing demographics of our province. We know that seniors' housing is an issue for us across the province and that sometimes the income levels that are set may not necessarily reflect some of the needs, particularly seniors who may have other disability or medical issues, their income may actually not reflect what they have available for housing so that is absolutely part of the conversation, how can we have some flexible arrangements? I'll ask Dan to talk about Millwood.

MR. TROKE: You mentioned the Millwood project, you're absolutely right, very successful, 59 apartments and we have an equally long wait-list for a number of individuals looking to get into it. It really is quite a supportive community. The individuals who live there really care about their home and care about each other.

That was constructed during a period when we had some funding under economic stimulus and we have about 200 units that were created during that time period. Interestingly enough, the same kind of model over the last number of years that we have been doing with the private business and private sector, as well, so many of the developments that you would see going up, not just in metro but throughout the province, we will often have the development partners approach us and looking to add a certain number of units of affordable housing.

This has been hugely successful, especially when we get into small-town Nova Scotia, in stimulating more development and not just senior but family or even single individuals, for which there's a need.

During the last number of years we've really spent a great deal of time making sure that when we have an opportunity to do something like a Millwood, we certainly do. In addition, we've also been making a lot of investments into the stock that the province maintains, those 12,000 units, to make sure they're there and continue to do what they were intended to do since the inception of the social housing agreement.

MR. DAVID WILSON: The one difference - and I think it's a very positive one - is that there is provincial ownership of the Millwood apartments. I hope private developers continue to look at options and opportunities to support them - support affordable housing

- but this is owned by Nova Scotians and I think the opportunities are better to control and ensure that we're meeting the needs of those seniors.

I know I only have a few minutes. I know our caucus does a lot of FOIPOP's on wait-lists and everything so I'm going to ask here - how many seniors are currently on the wait-list for public housing? If you don't have it at your fingertips, could you please provide that to the committee - and a breakdown in a regional basis, if you could? I don't know if you can answer that right now or if you could just agree to make sure that you provide that to the committee as soon as you could.

MS. HARTWELL: I do have some overall numbers for the wait-list, but can commit to provide you with a breakdown regionally and then a little bit on whether people are waiting for senior housing or whether they're waiting for family housing.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I'm good to just wait for the information.

In recent times we talked about co-operative housing, where it's owned by the residents and there have been some issues. We brought a case to the floor of the Legislature in the last sitting, a senior who had been living in co-op for over 30 years who was going to be evicted. From my understanding, Housing Nova Scotia will no longer provide rent subsidies to the co-op. Is that true? Are we going to be seeing the same situation as a number of months ago where we have seniors who have been living in a co-op for 30 years being evicted because of the rent subsidies being eliminated?

MR. TROKE: That particular situation that you described, the operating subsidy has expired as per an agreement that was in place. We actually extended funding beyond that in order to try to help the very challenges that you described.

I'm happy to say that we have also been able to meet with that board of directors so that no one is being evicted from that particular situation. A number of options have been discussed, and we obviously will be having continued conversation with that board of directors on the way forward.

With regard to overall co-operatives and non-profits that were in the social housing agreement as their mortgages mature and subsidy disappears, we've been through what we call our Social Housing Assistance Repair Program (SHARP). We've been making investments in those that are equivalent to the kinds of investment you would make in a private sector development.

So instead of those organizations having to re-finance at the end of an operating agreement to try to keep moving forward, we're making those investments in a way that's allowing for them to do their major capital repairs instead of planning for immediate refinancing when subsidies are gone. It's actually making those investments so that then they can think about how they want to run with a building that's in good condition once those operating subsidies are finished.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I did have some Justice questions, but I believe I've run out of time . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your time has just expired. We'll move back to the Liberal caucus and Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I am glad to see you back, Ms. Hartwell, because I have a question that I started at a previous meeting and was cut off because of time allotment.

I raised a concern about homeless men who are struggling financially in Nova Scotia. It really came to light to me this past winter. I had several cases at my constituency office. I really found there was a lack of resources and support for these men. I know Halifax is stretched that way as well. Can you fill me in on what is happening right now and what the plans are to address this issue?

MS. HARTWELL: Thank you for remembering the question because we did start to have a dialogue on it. I agree that there are particular challenges around supporting homeless men. We have a number of shelters, as you know, in HRM and they are often at full capacity. I would say that unfortunately a number of clients that the Department of Community Services and Housing Nova Scotia support have all sorts of stigma around their needs. I'd say that there is probably less public sympathy sometimes for the plight of single men who may be grappling with mental health or other addictions and so sometimes, the fundraising and other efforts for those organizations, they have a way to go. That's certainly something we hear when we meet with shelter operators on how we can better support them both in their infrastructure, but also in their programming to really reach out to some of these folks who may not be getting the support they need. So we are aware of the issue.

One of the conversations of course is, well it's wonderful that we have shelters and it's wonderful that we are working with the shelters, but we need to have a longer-term plan. I would say most of the men who are in the shelters, particularly in HRM, are also on income assistance and are probably receiving the bare minimum of income assistance. They don't have any payments for dependents, they are not attached to the labour market, and may have all kinds of challenges.

As part of our transformation of our income assistance system, we are looking at how we can better craft the income supports for those people who are less likely to attach to the labour market in the short- or medium-term. They really have chronic issues and they are going to need assistance so we're looking at how we can best design a benefit for them, and to take into account some of the particular needs they might have around health and medical issues.

For us, it is an area of focus. We keep a close watch on the composition of the caseload on income assistance. Over time, the caseload has moved so that the number of

people who are on income assistance with children continues to drop, the number of people who are single individuals who would have some sort of a challenge or an issue with attaching to the labour market is continuing to increase, and they are aging in our system. We know that our current interventions aren't necessarily altering the course of that trajectory, and that's why we're looking at the transformation.

I don't know if there's anything we want to add on that we've particularly done with the shelter community, if you are interested in that. We have had ongoing conversations about how to better support that community.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: I even had some who had issues where they had no money and they had support payments, maintenance enforcement issues with Justice as well. As soon as they seemed to get back on their feet, they lost the income from their DCS to maintenance enforcement issues as well. We need to sort of - not these silos that we have in government, I think we need to work together so that your department is talking to Justice and that we're working collaboratively to help move these people forward.

MS. HARTWELL: If I may, I recently attended a lunchtime drop-in for people experiencing homelessness in Halifax. I moved sort of to the corner and invited people, if there was anything they wanted to raise with me about the services and supports they were getting from their department, I'd be more than happy to hear. I had a steady flow of customers.

I'd say the one thing that people said almost uniformly was that they felt the system, as we had set them up, didn't respect them as people. That was reinforced by many of them and living in a shelter environment where there's no privacy. They have very busy days when they're living in a shelter - they have to line up to get breakfast, they have to line up to get lunch. It seems counterintuitive, but people are very busy trying to just survive.

I've obviously taken all of that back and it's very much going to inform not just the benefits that we provide to individuals but how we can empower our front-line staff to make sure they are treating people with the respect and dignity they deserve and how we can empower our service providers to be providing those supports. Just the other day I met with a service provider who had been crunching numbers and found that the number of families in shelters has not decreased so we need to look at that population as well.

There's lots of good work to be done and I'm quite hopeful that with our focus on affordable housing and supportive housing, and our focus on looking at income assistance, we can look at those together to have a more dependable safety net.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: One more question on housing. Being from rural Nova Scotia, in our demographics, we have an increasing population of seniors and there seems to be a lack of affordable housing, or some of the housing that is there is not accessible - there's no elevators, no wide doorways and whatnot. Is anything being addressed or will there be something coming in the future?

MS. HARTWELL: We agree that the demand for seniors' housing is only going to increase. Again, the need is going to look different in our urban, rural, suburban settings, we have that very much as a focus for our affordable housing.

On the accessibility piece, two things. The government has committed to look at accessibility legislation. There was a working group set up with government and business and community folks that has moved forward that agenda. Our expectation is that there will be some movement towards legislation in the Fall. That will talk about the need for accessibility and broad strokes, not just accessibility to the built environment but accessibility to service and supports.

One of the challenges that my colleagues remind me of sometimes is that some of the buildings we have in Nova Scotia are among the oldest housing stock in Canada. Some of the buildings we have in places where people live, the modifications to make them accessible are exorbitant so we have to actually look at and make smart decisions on when we do new builds and when we adapt what we have. Again, I think that will vary from community to community, but certainly the accessibility piece is a huge focus for the next year.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Thank you. I'll hand it over to my colleague.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Farrell, you have about three minutes.

MR. TERRY FARRELL: I just wanted to go back to something that Mr. Troke mentioned earlier. It's really encouraging to see that wait-lists for affordable housing are going down in the province. In my area I see that happening as a result of the partnerships that the department is entering into with the private sector. The quality of the housing that is being provided under those programs is beyond what I think we've seen in the past through either developers providing low-cost housing on their own, or some of the older stock that we have as a province.

Could you maybe just get into it a little bit more about an explanation of why we're seeing that flourishing so much over the last couple of years and how developers may be able to take advantage of that to provide better low-cost housing in the community?

MR. TROKE: The developments you speak about are essentially developed through an affordable housing initiative. We have a five-year agreement with CMHC. We've just completed year two so we're just starting our third year.

A lot of the development community see it as an opportunity to talk about a conversation about what a community's needs are, and so adaptations actually are becoming more and more a part of the individuals who are approaching them. We have a set of standards that we use - we call them visitability standards already, but those will obviously increase as we continue with the initiatives that the province is moving forward with. This is all about wider doorways, no thresholds and those kinds of things that the



development community has bought into wholeheartedly. They realize it really opens up the extent to which a building can accommodate older individuals, or individuals with disabilities, or what have you.

The contracting of this has really been a long-term conversation. Sometimes, and I know in your jurisdiction we've had some old schools that have come to the market and have been purchased. It has taken them a while to develop because they are big buildings; there's a lot of engineering work that needs to happen. But as early as possible when there's any kind of development happening within a community, anybody can put the plug in to say you should come and have a conversation with the folks at Housing Nova Scotia. It gives us an early opportunity to talk a little bit about some of the needs and demands we see in a community, but also then to be able to explain our programs and how they can access them.

Those contributions not only reduce the overall cost of financing the building, but it also gives you some breaks with your mortgage insurance with CMHC, which is another important factor. At any point, any time, that those developments are happening in a community we are happy to come and have conversations. Even at the early stages, if there's some kind of building that a community is interested in looking at what might come, we're happy to come and have those as well.

MR. FARRELL: I get quite a sense of nostalgia when I'm sitting at a kitchen table talking to one of my constituents and I'm actually in my Grade 2 classroom where I went to school at St. Charles School. It is a wonderful program and, as I say, it is providing a quality of affordable housing that I'm not sure we've seen in quite some time. That's all for me, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That concludes our questioning. I would like to give each department an opportunity to provide some closing remarks, beginning with Mr. Conrad.

MR. CONRAD: I would just like to say thank you to the members. I think a good debate, good discussion, this morning - really pleased to be here to represent this really important work and again, I would acknowledge the wonderful work that's done by the staff in my department and the collaboration that you heard referenced through various comments this morning. I think we're making good progress.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Pillay.

MS. PILLAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to members for the questions and for the opportunity to share with you what we're doing with business continuity and with respect to the other aspects of programs going on at the Department of Justice.

Like Deputy Conrad, I am very grateful to have a wonderful team of support, individuals around me. You see how I drew on them today and we are very privileged at

the Department of Justice to have some very committed and dedicated employees so I thank them for their work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Hartwell.

MS. HARTWELL: I am always pleased to have the opportunity to answer questions and talk about the wonderful work that is being done at Housing Nova Scotia and in the Department of Community Services. Thank you again for your interest and I extend - if you have any questions or concerns, you can contact Dan Troke or myself. We'd be more than pleased to have a conversation. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That concludes our meeting. We do have a couple of items for committee business. Our next meeting will be April 20<sup>th</sup> next week with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to look at funding to universities. That's from Chapter 4 in the November 2015 Auditor General Report. We will be having a briefing before that meeting immediately following this meeting.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, we have a Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures meeting scheduled. This is to review topics going forward. We do have meetings scheduled well into June, but you will be asked by our clerk for ideas for future meeting subjects.

If there are no questions or further business before the committee - and seeing none - we will take a very short recess and come back with the Auditor General. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 10:52 a.m.]