



ANNUAL REPORT

of the

STANDING COMMITTEE

on

COMMUNITY SERVICES

2006 - 2007

First Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly



**Legislative
Committees Office**

House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

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Honourable Alfie MacLeod
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Committee for the First Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn More, MLA
(Dartmouth South-Portland Valley)
Chair
Standing Committee on Community Services

Halifax, Nova Scotia
November 16, 2007



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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Community Services, an all-party Committee of the House of Assembly, was struck at the beginning of the First Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly. Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(d) of the *Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedures of the House of Assembly*:

(d) the Community Services Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters normally assigned to or within the purview of the Departments and Ministers of Business and Consumer Services and of Municipal Affairs and matters relating to the Human Rights Commission and the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission¹

In 1998, the Speaker, as Chairman of the Legislature's Internal Economy Board, gave the Community Services Committee written permission to also consider matters within the purview of the Department of Health and the Department of Community Services.²

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Community Services Committee currently is as follows:

Ms. Marilyn More, MLA - Chair
Dartmouth South-Portland Valley

Hon. Ronald Chisholm, Minister
of Fisheries and Aquaculture
MLA, Guysborough-Sheet Harbour

Hon. Len Goucher, Minister of
Tourism, Culture and Heritage
MLA, Bedford

Mr. Pat Dunn, MLA
Pictou Centre

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
Cape Breton Nova

Mr. Trevor Zinck, MLA
Dartmouth North

Mr. Stephen McNeil, Leader of the
Liberal Party – Vice-Chair
MLA, Annapolis

Mr. Keith Colwell, MLA
Preston

Mr. Leo Glavine, MLA
Kings West

¹ Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, July 1999, Rule 60(2)(d) Page 61.

² Nova Scotia, Letter from the Speaker to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Community Services, August 27, 1998

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

During the First Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly, the Committee underwent no membership changes.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Community Services Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of the month in the Legislative Committees Office. During the First Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly the Committee met on the following dates:

September 7, 2006
October 26, 2006
November 30, 2006
January 25, 2007
February 15, 2007
March 29, 2007
April 19, 2007
May 24, 2007
June 21, 2007

NOTICES

Notices of the Committee meetings are sent to all members of the Committee, staff of the caucus offices, the Legislative staff and the House of Assembly Press Gallery. The notices are also posted in Province House and are on the Committees' web-site at the following address:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/committees/schedcs.html>

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts of all Community Services Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the Community Services Committees' web page at the following address:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/>

RESEARCH MATERIAL

All research for the Community Services Committee is compiled by the Committee's clerk, and distributed to the members. Reference material is placed in binders and distributed one week prior to meetings. A copy of this material is also made available to the witnesses appearing before the Committee, the Legislative Library in Province House and to Hansard Reporting Services.

ANNUAL REPORTS

All reports from the Community Services Committee are compiled and written by the Committee's clerk. The draft is then sent to the individual Committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the Report, the Chairman tables the Report with the Clerk of the House.

Distribution of the report is as follows: to the Speaker/Clerk of the House, all members of the Legislature, all witnesses who appeared before the Committee, the Legislative Library in Nova Scotia and in all other provinces and territories, the caucus offices and the Media. This report is also available to the general public upon request through the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the Committee's web page at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/es_pubs.html

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Committee wishes to extend its gratitude to witnesses for their time and cooperation; Ms. Mora Stevens and Ms. Rhonda Neatt, Clerks of the Community Services Committee and the staff of the Legislative Committees Office for the organization of research for Committee meetings. Others whose assistance has been invaluable to the Committee are: Mr. Robert Kinsman, Editor of Hansard Reporting Services, and Hansard staff; Mr. James MacInnes, Coordinator/Director of Legislative Television and Broadcast Services, and staff; and Ms. Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian, and staff.

WITNESSES

Thursday, September 7/06 Organizational

Thursday, October 26/06 Department of Community Services

Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Mr. Harold Dillon – Executive Director, ESIA and Housing
Ms. Janet Rathbun – Director, Income Assistance
Mr. Mike Townsend – Director, Employment Support Services

Thursday, November 30/06 Department of Community Services

Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Mr. Harold Dillon – Executive Director, ESIA and Housing
Mr. Dan Troke – Director, Housing

Thursday, January 25/07 Department of Health

Ms. Cheryl Doiron – Deputy Minister
Mr. Keith Menzies – Executive Director, Continuing Care
Ms. Susan Weagle – Director, Standards and Policy
Ms. Lynn Cheek – Director, Systems Planning and Liaison
Ms. Karen McDuff – Director, Financial Services – Programs
Ms. Valerie Bellefontaine – Director, Communications

Thursday, February 15/07 Forum on Poverty

Women’s Centres CONNECT!

Ms. Lucille Harper – Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre
Ms. Della Longmire – The Women’s Place, Bridgetown

Community Action on Homelessness

Ms. Darcy Harvey – Capacity Development Officer
Mr. Tom Frizzell - Member
Mr. Robert Borden – Member

Public Good Society of Dartmouth

Mr. Gary Healey – Program Coordinator

Affordable Energy Coalition

Ms. Laura Lannon – Member
Mr. Marc Dunning – Member

Community Advocates Network

Ms. Anne Duffy – Member

Face of Poverty

Ms. Elizabeth Brown – Co-Chair

Ms. Carolyn Earle – Co-Chair

Thursday, March 29/07

Department of Community Services

Ms. Judith Ferguson – Deputy Minister

Mr. George Savoury – Executive Director,
Family and Community Supports

Ms. Virginia O’Connell – Director,
Early Childhood Development Services

Ms. Jane Breckenridge – Director,
Early Learning and Child Care

Ms. Krista Grant – Communications Advisor

Child Care Connection Nova Scotia

Ms. Elaine Ferguson – Executive Director

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

Ms. Margo Kirk – Nova Scotia Board Member

Ms. Karen Geddes – Director, Alexander Children’s Centre

Thursday, April 19/07

Department of Community Services

Ms. Judith Ferguson – Deputy Minister

Ms. Mildred Hayward – Director,
Services for Persons with Disabilities Program

Ms. Lorna MacPherson – Coordinator,
Direct Family Support and Assessments

Thursday, May 24/07

National Council of Welfare

Mr. John Murphy – Past-Chair

Ms. Gail MacDougall – Nova Scotia Representative

Thursday, June 21/07

Services for Persons with Disabilities

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

Mr. Ron Levy – Chair

Mr. Claredon Robicheau – Past-Chair

Ms. Bernadette McKeough – Coordinator

Ms. Joan Leback – Secretary

Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia

Mr. Thomas Merriam – President and CEO

Ms. Faye Joudrey – Coordinator,
Community and Client Relations

People First

Mr. John Cox – Development Coordinator

Ms. Nancy McKinnell – Support Person

PUBLIC

HEARINGS

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Thursday, September 7, 2006

WITNESSES

There were no witnesses as it was an organizational meeting.

BACKGROUND

The Committee discussed the position of Vice-Chair and decided to consult with the Striking Committee, which is comprised of the three House Leaders, before proceeding on the matter.

The January 2006 Forum on Poverty was discussed and the Committee would like to meet with the Department of Community Services for an update on what has been done with five recommendations that arose from the Forum. Also, the possibility of meeting with four or five of the groups on the anniversary date of the Forum was discussed.

Each of the three caucuses put forward topics for future meetings. The Committee discussed and approved a number of agenda items and future witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2006sep07.htm

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, October 26, 2006

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister

Mr. Harold Dillon – Executive Director, ESIA and Housing

Ms. Janet Rathbun – Director, Income Assistance

Mr. Mike Townsend – Director, Employment Support Services

BACKGROUND

Senior staff from the Department of Community Services were asked to appear before the Committee for an update on what progress had been made on five recommendations that resulted from the January 2006 Forum on Poverty.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional information from the witnesses:

When available, a copy of the independent report by Gosse Gilroy Incorporated on the Employment Support Programs, which is expected to be available at the end of December 2006;

A copy of the statistics concerning the 928 affordable housing unit locations and statistics on which of the categories they fall under; and

When available, a copy of the Harvest Connection Project numbers on both the producer and ESIA client side.

To date, the above documentation has not been received.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2006oct26.htm

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, November 30, 2006

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister

Mr. Harold Dillon – Executive Director, ESIA and Housing

Mr. Dan Troke – Director, Housing

BACKGROUND

The Department of Community Services is responsible for the implementation of the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement Programs in Nova Scotia. The Committee wanted to discuss the range of support services available for low-income families and/or persons, asbestos issues, air quality, conditions in seniors' housing, rent supplement programs, housing wait lists, as well as future plans for the replacement of housing units.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional information from the witnesses:

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation given by the Deputy Minister at the beginning of the meeting;

The location and status of the new rental properties that have been or will be built on Cape Breton Island;

Comparing for-profit versus private sector, non-profit builders, information on the financial split and breakdown of costs for the projects;

Addresses of the new rental housing projects in Dartmouth; and

Information on specific cases requested by some individual members, not to be tabled with the Committee as a whole.

The information regarding affordable housing commitments for Cape Breton, as well as all provincial commitments; the address of the new rental housing project in Dartmouth; and a copy the PowerPoint presentation were received by December 15, 2006.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2006nov30.htm

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Thursday, January 25, 2007

WITNESSES

Department of Health

Ms. Cheryl Doiron – Deputy Minister

Mr. Keith Menzies – Executive Director, Continuing Care

Ms. Susan Weagle – Director, Standards and Policy

Ms. Lynn Cheek – Director, Systems Planning and Liaison

Ms. Karen McDuff – Director, Financial Services – Programs

Ms. Valerie Bellefontaine – Director, Communications

BACKGROUND

The Department of Health, Continuing Care Division, is responsible for the Strategic Plan. The Committee wanted to meet with the Department to discuss the Strategic Framework that was announced in May 2006. The Department of Community Services has been working with the Department of Health on this initiative, as clients within Continuing Care often need a continuum of care from both Departments.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional information from the witnesses:

A list of the factors that go into the auditing process and what is tracked concerning the funding that is given to agencies;

A copy of the long-term care beds needs-based list from the report; and

Whether there is a standard of hours worked versus time spent traveling by a worker within contracts with the agencies.

All of the above information was received in full on February 23, 2007.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007jan25.htm

FORUM ON POVERTY

Thursday, February 15, 2007

WITNESSES

Women's Centres CONNECT!

Ms. Lucille Harper – Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

Ms. Della Longmire – The Women's Place, Bridgetown

Community Action on Homelessness

Ms. Darcy Harvey – Capacity Development Officer

Mr. Tom Frizzell – Member

Mr. Robert Borden – Member

Public Good Society of Dartmouth

Mr. Gary Healey – Program Coordinator

Affordable Energy Coalition

Ms. Laura Lannon – Member

Mr. Marc Dunning – Member

Community Advocates Network

Ms. Anne Duffy – Member

Face of Poverty

Ms. Elizabeth Brown – Co-Chair

Ms. Carolyn Earle – Co-Chair

BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee on Community Services held a two-day Forum on Poverty in January 2006. Out of that Forum, and subsequent meetings with officials from various Government Departments, 10 recommendations were made, seven of which were directed to the Department of Community Services.

The Standing Committee wanted to hold another Forum with the original presenters for an update on what progress had been made concerning the recommendations. This Forum consisted of a morning session of presentations and an afternoon round-table discussion.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following additional information from the witnesses:

A copy of the Federal Government's Senate Committee's interim report, entitled *Understanding Freefall*; and

A copy of the new Women's Centres CONNECT! report.

To date, the above documentation has not been received.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Committee on Community Services agreed to make the following recommendations to the Department of Community Services:

1. Reduction of Clawback. The Department of Community Services shall eliminate the social assistance recipient clawback across all sectors of work in Nova Scotia, up to a \$3,000 level of income; and
2. Review of the Remaining Clawback. The Department of Community Services shall review the remaining clawback after the \$3,000 threshold is reached and look at reviewing such options as:
 - a. Reversing the current 70/30 rule; and
 - b. A sliding scale of clawback should also be reviewed.

All options studied should include a cost-benefit analysis, as well as an outline of short, medium and long-term benefits. This review shall take place within the next six months and be reported back to the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee on Community Services also made the following recommendation to the Office of the Premier:

3. Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee. The Government shall create a Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee. This committee will include representatives from the voluntary sector organizations and coalitions that work on a daily basis to reduce poverty, representatives from relevant Government Departments, and members from all three parties of the Legislature. The Committee asks the Government to look at the attached Bill No. 74, which was tabled in the House of Assembly in 2006, to use as a guide in creating the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee.

TRANSCRIPTS

Copies of the transcripts for these meetings are available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following addresses:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007fby15.htm - **Morning session**

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007feb15.htm - **Afternoon session**

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Judith Ferguson – Deputy Minister

Mr. George Savoury – Executive Director, Family and Community Supports

Ms. Virginia O’Connell – Director, Early Childhood Development Services

Ms. Jane Breckenridge – Director, Early Learning and Child Care

Ms. Krista Grant – Communications Advisor

Child Care Connection Nova Scotia

Ms. Elaine Ferguson – Executive Director

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

Ms. Margo Kirk – Nova Scotia Board Member

Ms. Karen Geddes – Director, Alexander Children’s Centre

BACKGROUND

Early Childhood Development Services, a division within the Department of Community Services, offers programs that support families with children between the ages of newborn and 12 years. Operating under the Nova Scotia Day Care Act and regulations, the division is responsible for licensing childcare centers, and also provides funding to early intervention programs.

The Committee wanted to meet with senior officials of the Department of Community Services, as well as representatives from Child Care Connection Nova Scotia and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, concerning the Department’s Early Childhood Programs.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007mar29.htm

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, April 19, 2007

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

Ms. Judith Ferguson – Deputy Minister

Ms. Mildred Hayward – Director, Services for Persons with Disabilities Program

Ms. Lorna MacPherson – Coordinator, Direct Family Support and Assessments

BACKGROUND

The Services for Persons with Disabilities Program within the Department of Community Services is responsible for services provided to children, youth and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities or long-term mental illness. The Committee was interested in meeting with the Deputy Minister, as well as other senior staff, on the topic of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

MOTION

That the Standing Committee on Community Services not meet during Budget sessions of the Legislature.

By: Mr. Leo Glavine

Motion: Carried

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007apr19.htm

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WELFARE

Thursday, May 24, 2007

WITNESSES

National Council of Welfare

Mr. John Murphy – Past-Chair

Ms. Gail MacDougall – Nova Scotia Representative

BACKGROUND

The National Council of Welfare is an independent body that researches poverty issues in Canada and advises the Federal Government based on the information gained from that research. The Committee was interested in updated poverty statistics, specifically relating to Nova Scotia, contained in the National Council of Welfare's latest report, and requested a meeting with the Nova Scotia Representative and the Past Chair of the Council.

MOTION

That the Standing Committee on Community Services form a Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee made up of Government Departments and non-governmental agencies and, in consultation with the National Council of Welfare, start the process of developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Nova Scotia.

By: Mr. Leo Glavine

Motion: Withdrawn

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007may24.htm

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Thursday, June 21, 2007

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

Mr. Ron Levy – Chair

Mr. Claredon Robicheau – Past-Chair

Ms. Bernadette McKeough – Coordinator

Ms. Joan Levack – Secretary

Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia

Mr. Thomas Merriam – President and CEO

Ms. Faye Joudrey – Coordinator of Community and Client Relations

People First

Mr. John Cox – Development Coordinator

Ms. Nancy McKinnell – Support Person

BACKGROUND

On April 19, 2007 the Committee met with senior staff of the Department of Community Services regarding Services for Persons with Disabilities. The Committee wanted to continue on that topic and hear from the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities, the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia, and People First.

The Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities is an organization whose mission is to achieve recognition of the abilities of people with disabilities so that they may function as equals in society. The organization is concerned with issues such as affordable, accessible transportation and technical aids such as wheelchairs, hearing aides and personal lifts, which improve a person's quality of education, quality of employment and quality of life.

The Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia, the Easter Seals organization in Nova Scotia, works with both children and adults with physical disabilities. Services are provided to enhance quality of life by encouraging participation and inclusion, and to realize individual potential through education, improved health, and independence.

People First, the only self-advocacy group in the world for people with intellectual disabilities, has a chapter in every province and territory in Canada, and nine local chapters across Nova Scotia. A specific issue that the Nova Scotia membership has taken up is deinstitutionalization, believing that with the appropriate supports, people with disabilities can live in their communities.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript for this meeting is available at the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2007jun21.htm

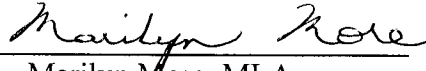
STATEMENT

OF

SUBMISSION

STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the
House of Assembly this 16th day of NOVEMBER, 2007


Marilyn More, MLA
Chair

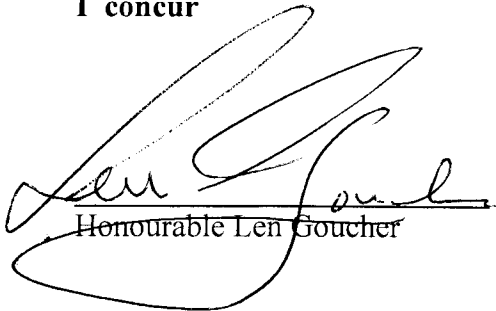
I concur


Honourable Ron Chisholm

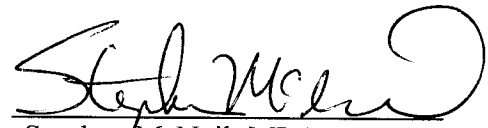
I concur


Trevor Zinck, MLA

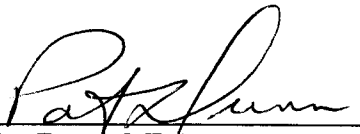
I concur


Honourable Len Goucher

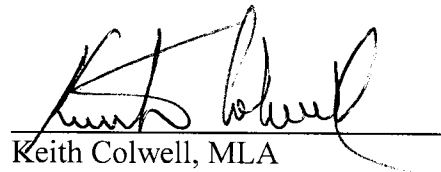
I concur


Stephen McNeil, MLA
(Vice-Chairman)

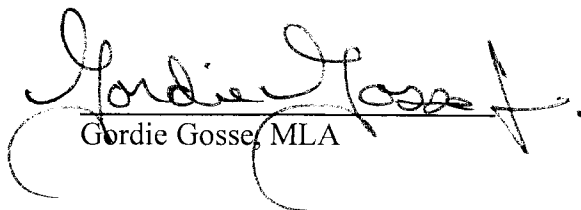
I concur


Pat Dunn, MLA

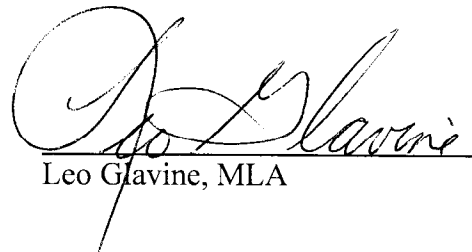
I concur


Keith Colwell, MLA

I concur


Gordie Gosse, MLA

I concur


Leo Gavine, MLA

APPENDICES

The following is a list of documents requested and received by the Standing Committee on Community Services:

Department of Community Services

- A copy of the PowerPoint presentation given by the Deputy Minister at the beginning of the meeting
- The location and status of the new rental properties that have been or will be built on Cape Breton Island
- Addresses of the new rental housing projects in Dartmouth

Department of Health

- A list of the factors that go into the auditing process and what is tracked concerning the funding that is given to agencies
- A copy of the long-term care beds needs-based list from the report
- The standard of hours worked versus time spent traveling by a worker within contracts with the agencies

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