



Standing Committee on Community Services

ANNUAL REPORT

2018

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

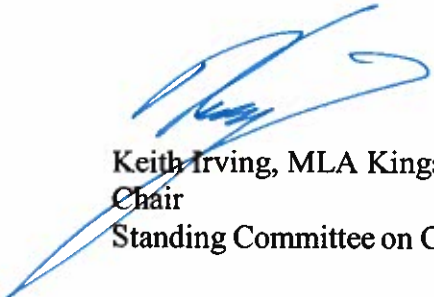
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Honourable Kevin Murphy
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

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 period from November 2017 to June 2018 of the Sixty-third General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,



Keith Irving, MLA Kings South
Chair
Standing Committee on Community Services

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2018

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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 Sixty-third 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 Commission.

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.

MEMBERSHIP

There shall be no more than nine Members of the Legislative Assembly appointed to this committee. The current membership of the Standing Committee on Community Services is as follows:

Mr. Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South

Mr. Keith Bain, MLA
Victoria-The Lakes

Ms. Rafah DiContanzo, MLA, Vice Chair
Clayton Park West

Mr. Larry Harrison, MLA
Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley

Mr. Ben Jessome, MLA
Hammonds Plains-Lucasville

Ms. Susan Leblanc, MLA
Dartmouth North

Mr. Bill Horne, MLA
Waverly-Fall River-Beaver Bank

Ms. Lenore Zann, MLA
Truro-Bible Hill-
Millbrook-Salmon River

Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA
Clare-Digby

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

As of December 10, 2018 Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA (Hants West) was replaced by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA (Kings South) as Chair and Mr. Keith Irving, MLA was replaced by Mr. Ben Jessome (Hammonds Plains-Lucasville) as member, Mr. Eddie Orrell, MLA (Northside-Westmount was replaced by Mr. Keith Bain, MLA (Victoria-The Lakes), Ms. Barb Adams, MLA (Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage) was replaced by Mr. Larry Harrison, MLA (Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley), and Ms. Tammy Martin, MLA (Cape Breton Centre) was replaced by Ms. Lenore Zann, MLA (Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River).

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Community Services Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are usually held on the first Tuesday of the month in the Committee Room, Granville Level, One Government Place.

NOTICES, TRANSCRIPTS, REQUESTED INFORMATION, PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS

NOTICES

Notices of committee meetings are sent to all members of the committee, caucus office staff, legislative staff and Communications Nova Scotia. The notices are also posted in Province House and on the Nova Scotia Legislature website at the following address:

<http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/calendar/>

TRANSCRIPTS

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

http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C6/

REQUESTED INFORMATION

On occasions when the committee requests information that is not readily available during a meeting, the witness will be asked to provide the requested information as soon as possible following the meeting. Once the requested information is received and approved by the committee, it is placed on the Community Services Committee web page and can be viewed at the following address: http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C6/

PRESENTATIONS

Witness presentations are distributed to committee members in advance of the meeting date. Presentations are placed on the Community Services Committee web page after the meeting and can be viewed at the following address:

http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C6/

REPORTS

All reports of the Standing Committee on Community Services are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the report, the Chair tables the report with the Speaker of the House of Assembly or with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

Distribution of the report is as follows:

To the Speaker and the Clerk of the House of Assembly; committee members; all witnesses who appeared before the committee; the Nova Scotia Legislative Library; the caucus offices; and the media. This report is available to the general public upon request from the Legislative Committees Office, and is available on the Community Services Committee web page at the following address: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/reports>

RESEARCH MATERIAL

All research for the Community Services Committee is compiled by the Legislative Library in consultation with the committee clerk. Research material is compiled in an electronic format and is distributed by the committee clerk prior to the meeting to members, staff, and witnesses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to all witnesses for their time and co-operation. Special appreciation is extended to the Legislative Committees Office; Hansard Reporting Services; Legislative Television and Broadcast Services and the Nova Scotia Legislative Library.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Standing Committee on Community Services held its first organizational meeting on November 16, 2017, after the call of the Spring 2017 Nova Scotia Election.

The committee discussed its upcoming agenda, choosing several items for future meetings. The following approved topics are:

- Department of Community Services and the Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia re: Sexual Violence Strategy
- Status of Women re: 40th Anniversary of the Status of Women
- Department of Community Services re: Foster Care Funding
- Department of Community Services re: Children in Care
- College of Social Workers re: Changes to the Children and Family Services Act
- Cape Breton Community Housing Association re: Housing and Homelessness in CBRM.

The committee also discussed a request from Mr. Kendall Worth to present on behalf of the Benefits Reform Group re: Annual Review for ESIA (Employment Support and Income Assistance) recipients.

The committee agreed there were several issues within the request that had already been discussed and well documented. Therefore, the committee passed a motion to:

“send [the letter] off to the department of Community Services with a request for a follow-up, not only to the committee but to Mr. Worth himself”.

Once the department responds back, the committee will revisit the request to have Mr. Worth appear before it.

Moved by: Mr. Brendan Maguire, MLA
Halifax Atlantic
Motion: Carried

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The committee also discussed some housekeeping business regarding the storm closure policy which states, *“at the beginning of every winter season the Speaker of the House of Assembly notifies all Committee Chairs about the Storm Closure policy of the House. While the House of Assembly is independent of Government the House will follow the Province’s snow closure decisions. However, there may be circumstances in which the Chief Clerk or the Speaker will make a call to send staff home earlier than the province does or despite the Snow Closure Committee’s lack of a decision to close. In those instances, Chairs would be notified immediately by committee staff to enable the postponement of a committee meeting”*.

They also agreed to keep their schedule for the first Tuesday of every month beginning at 10:00 am; and to adhere to the choosing of topics according to the directive of the Liberal House Leader (September 28, 2015) as to how standing committees set their respective agendas. The current process is: Government Caucus to choose three regular or emergency topics; the Official Opposition to choose two regular or emergency topics and the Third Party to choose one regular or emergency topic (an emergency topic will replace a regular topic).

DOCUMENTATION

No further documentation or information was requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/archive/community-services/cs2017nov16>

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services – Sexual Violence Prevention and Supports

Ms. Natalie Downey – Director of Prevention and Early Intervention

Ms. Sarah Granke – Specialist

Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia

Ms. Georgia Barnwell – Co-Chair

Ms. Jackie Stevens –Co-Chair

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia (SASN) is a group of 30 community-based agencies, including sexual assault centres, women’s centres, transition houses and other equality-seeking and anti-violence groups and agencies that provide services to marginalized populations.

These marginalized populations include not only women who are targeted by male violence, but racialized, rural, indigenous, African Nova Scotian, male survivors, newcomers, and people with disabilities.

The SASN recommend that the province make a minimum investment of \$2 million yearly in sustainable core funding for sexual assault services across the province. Why? Because despite the many short-term projects, there continues to be a significant gap, especially in the need for specialized therapeutic counselling and services to support rural communities and marginalized groups.

Termination of strategy funding will leave organizations without the capacity to meet the demand for prevention, education, navigation, and coordination, in addition to other services. SASN feels it is unrealistic for the province to expect community-based agencies to sustain essential services through project funding when sustainable core funding is required.

The Department of Community Services provided an update on the Sexual Violence Strategy from its inception three years ago to present date. Key actions include community support network grants, prevention innovation grants, developing a public awareness campaign, expanding the sexual assault nurse examiner program, and developing online training resources. Three areas that were identified for the strategy and will continue the work moving forward are services and supports, prevention and education, as well as approach and accountability.

In April the department launched an online training course, “Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence” which looks at all the different avenues of choices following a sexual assault, as well as issues of consent and perspective of indigenous communities.

Currently, the department is in the process of a community African Nova Scotian engagement project in partnership with the East Preston Family Resource Centre. The purpose is to look at what the realities are in communities, hearing from the community about prevention initiatives they’d like to see or are already going on, training resources and support services that are there or that are lacking, as well as potential education and training opportunities.

There is an evaluation of the Sexual Violence Strategy to help understand the impact of the strategy in achieving more coordinated response, supporting public education and awareness, and identifying opportunities to improve. There is a third round of prevention innovation fund grants available until December 15, 2017, for investment in community-based initiatives supporting youth and marginalized communities.

Moving forward, the government has committed to ongoing funds to this work. In areas of prevention and early intervention of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people, prevention innovation fund grants and an increased capacity for organizations that provide therapeutic counselling for victims, as well as targeted initiatives on ensuring victims have a choice and a voice within the legal system.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence

The committee noted the correspondence received from Mr. Kendall Worth for information purposes and the response from the Department of Community Services regarding a request to present from Mr. Kendall Worth on behalf of the Benefits Reform Action Group re: Annual Review for ESIA (Employment Support and Income Assistance) recipients.

The committee also agreed to post the presentations on the website.

DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested and received information regarding the research available on the cost of health, education, justice and community services in terms of the cost of the impact of sexualized violence.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/archive/community-services/cs2017dec05>

WITNESSES**Department of Community Services**

Ms. Lynn Hartwell – Deputy Minister

Ms. Nancy MacLellan – Associate Deputy Minister

Mr. Leonard Doiron – Executive Director, Child, Youth & Family Supports

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Child, Youth and Family Supports Division is comprised of three areas: the prevention and early intervention area which address early issues affecting the health development and well-being of children and youth to keep them safe and free from harm and to prevent the family from breaking down; the child protection area which responds to allegations of child abuse and neglect; and the placement area, which is when children come into the care of the minister. This could be on a temporary or a long-term basis.

The Child, Youth and Family Supports Division is responsible for programs and policies required to implement the Children and Family Services Act (CFSA) and its regulations. The Act addresses over 90 amendments, essentially addressing improving child safety, and removing provisions that impair the department getting to permanency. Secure care provisions have also been addressed in the Act. The Act and the provisions under it has been made a lot more culturally sensitive.

There are various levels of Children in Care. Voluntary care, which is temporary. The parent recognizes the need for the service and is engaged in the provision of those services. Voluntary care arrangements are agreements for up to one year and can be terminated by either party with notice.

A temporary care and custody agreement is one where a child is taken into temporary custody when the child is at imminent risk of harm. The department will only remove the child from their home when they have exhausted all attempts to find a way to alleviate that risk. The identified risk may be mitigated by the engagement of the parent and the service provision and support by agency.

Permanent care in custody is when a child is placed in the care of the minister and the rights of the parent are permanently terminated. This often follows a long process of unsuccessful periods of supervision, of temporary care and custody, which is fully utilized, and many services provided to try to resolve the situation to the point where the children can go home.

Post care and custody agreements are also available. When it is appropriate for a child that is transitioning from permanent care and the custody of the minister, they may be eligible for support of financial services for their post-secondary education.

In terms of children in care, as of April 1st, there were about 1,048 children in care, 650 were in permanent care and custody, 343 were in temporary care and custody, and 26 were placed in the voluntary care arrangement. Currently there are about 40 former children in care receiving post-secondary support. In addition to those, 1,048 children, there are about 527 who are receiving services under a supervision order.

Case planning is ongoing to ensure the needs of the child are met while in care. Every child has a social worker who is responsible for them; sometimes multiple social workers are responsible for their needs.

As a go forward, the department would like to broaden their alternative out-of-care placement options to allow private family members financial support and services to related children in their care. They would also like to make additional improvements to their foster care model, to enable foster families to be paid more than a small stipend to take care of these children. The department is also looking at diversifying their residential system to increase capacity and to focus on emergency placement options.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

A committee motion was required to deal with the response from the Department of Community Services regarding correspondence from Mr. Worth on the annual review for the ESIA recipients. The following motion was put forth:

Motion

“I’d like to move that the letter from the Minister of Community Services serves as a reasonable response to Mr. Worth and that no further action by the committee on this matter is required”.

Moved by: Mr. Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South
Motion: Carried

DOCUMENTATION

No further documentation or information was requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/archive/community-services/cs2018jan09>

WITNESSES**Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women**

Ms. Stephanie MacInnis-Langley, Executive Director

Ms. Pat Gorham, Director of Programs and Stakeholder Relations

Ms. Heather Ternoway, Director of Policy and Research

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Advisory Council) came before the committee to discuss their 40th Anniversary and what they have accomplished over those 40 years and what is to come.

The Advisory Council was established in 1977. The Status of Women Act speaks to the role and parameters of the Advisory Council itself, and is less specific to the mandate and priorities of the Status of Women office. Early in the 1990s the Women's Directorate and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women combined and became the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Advisory Council is an arm's length agency whose focus is to change outcomes for women, to work collaboratively with government partners, and community stakeholders to try to advance women's equality.

The National Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils meet once a year to look at ways where they may be able to collaborate on changing things for women.

The vision and mandate for the Status of Women office has been, and remains to advance quality, fairness, and dignity for all women and girls in Nova Scotia by influencing public opinion, policy, and programming across the province in the following intersecting way: violence against women, women's leadership and women's economic, as well as health and wellness.

For the 40th Anniversary celebrations, the theme for this year's Women's History Month was Claim Your Place. To not only recognize women who had been recognized repeatedly for their successes but women who may never have been recognized. This year's choice was Granny LeJeune Ross. A medical trailblazer and fierce homesteading pioneer from the Margaree Valley. Granny Ross was the person who was fearless in her community. She became the community's most trusted medical practitioner for childbirth, end-of-life care, and all points in between. She contributed her time and became a folk hero, building trust and community engagement.

The Nova Scotia Archives, in partnership with the Advisory Council and the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, did a community timeline of domestic violence. They tracked the work and the achievements and success of the work over a long period of time. The Barb's Bench program is on behalf of the Baillie family from Spryfield. It is an idea that was developed to recognize the victimization of women. Mrs. Baillie had been murdered by her husband many years ago. The Advisory Council, in partnership with Silent Witness Nova Scotia, place benches in communities as a reminder of how important it is to recognize families dealing with domestic violence.

The Advisory Council will highlight their work with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. A national inquiry was launched by the federal government in partnership with all the provinces and territories in September 2016. The Status of Women office formed a collaborative network, an information-sharing network with Mi'kmaq organizations and women leaders to gather and demonstrate care and support for the families going through this process. The Status of Women will be playing a serious convening and collaborative partnership-building role.

Currently, the Advisory Council is working on a recruitment strategy to increase the number of women applying to agencies, boards, and commissions to ensure gender balance. They will be celebrating International Women's Day in partnership with the Centre for Women in Business and the Campaign School for Women will be held in Late May 2018 at Mount Saint Vincent University. They will be reaching out to all the female MLAs in the province, to the municipal council and anyone who is sitting federally to be part of that campaign school as a leader, mentor, a shining star.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The committee agreed to posting the presentation on the Legislature website.

The committee also agreed to not meet while the House is in session.

DOCUMENTATION

The following documentation was requested and received by the committee:

- Maternity Leave - Is the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women able to advise as to when or if Nova Scotia is planning on introducing legislation to ensure that this is an opportunity for Nova Scotians,
- Intimate Partner Violence Factsheet - the statistics of violence against women regarding how the rate of violence may have changed over the years or the rate of conviction,
- Nova Scotia Nine - to provide to the Standing Committee on Community Services with additional books.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/archive/community-services/cs2018feb06>

WITNESSES**Cape Breton Community Housing Association**

Mr. Fred Deveaux – Executive Director

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Established in 1977, the Cape Breton Community Housing Association is an organization that provides supports and residential options for individuals living with mental illness in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM).

The association operates three group homes and eight small options homes, as well as an independent living support program, outreach program and other programs in the area.

In 2005, they were asked to assume operation of what was formerly known as the Open Door Homeless Shelter due to the danger of the shelter closing at that time. They have been operating the now known Community Homeless Shelter ever since.

Approximately 350 to 400 people use shelters per year in CBRM, this figure also includes Transition House and a transitional housing facility called Almost Home. The association was having difficulty in finding stable, affordable housing for people trying to escape homelessness despite data suggesting there were a lot of vacancies available in CBRM.

Because of these issues, the Community Homeless Shelter decided to form a community group called Affordable Housing and Homelessness Partnership to design several research projects to try and figure out the scope of homelessness in CBRM. This partnership is made up of Public Health, the Cape Breton Community Housing Association, the Cape Breton Regional Police, Cape Breton University and the local community advisory board on homelessness.

The group undertook the following research studies to gauge the number of homeless individual in April 2016. The first study, Point in Time Count (PiT), is where volunteers go out -- over a 12-hour period -- and interview people in the streets to figure out how many homeless individuals are in an area during that period. A lot of the homelessness in CBRM is hidden. There aren't a lot of people sleeping on the street or in places that homeless individuals are normally sleeping.

Because they were concerned that the PiT Count would not capture the full extent of homeless individuals, they designed a second research study Service-Based Count. In April 2016 they found 304 homeless individuals in a one-month period. Most were single and younger than 60 years of age. They were surprised by the number of women and youth who were homeless. Sixty-nine percent reported low income and poor housing options as the main reason for their homelessness.

In comparison with HRM, the one-day PiT count in April 2016 found 137 homeless individuals in CBRM and 198 in HRM within the same timeframe.

Categorically, there are no emergency shelter services currently for women and youth in CBRM. In HRM there is a robust shelter system; shelter beds for women, youth and families. In CBRM there is Transition House for women escaping domestic violence and occasionally they can assist women who are experiencing homelessness, however, they send referrals to Community Homeless Shelter. There is nowhere for youth to stay. If they are a male over 16 years of age they can stay at the Community Homeless shelter.

With respect to the affordable housing stock, the Community Homeless Shelter partnered with Cape Breton University to try to figure out exactly what they were facing. They came up with a list of landlords who participated in a survey. The study mirrored the Service-Based homeless counts which showed there are very few housing options available for single, non-senior adults in Cape Breton. Most units are targeted towards seniors and families. Within public housing there are no units for single, non-senior adults. In addition to the target renters, the average housing costs are far higher than what is reported. The practices of housing providers haven't caught up to socio-economic trends. The trends in CBRM are high unemployment, low median household incomes for single households, high youth unemployment and an increase in single-person households.

The CBRM listed the following recommendations: the need for expanded shelter services for women and youth, the need for health services such as the Mobile Outreach Street Health Unit equal to what is offered in HRM, the need of an increase in shelter allowance for single households or to have a portable rent subsidy program for all low-income renters implemented, or implement a basic income, avail rent supplements to clients in CBRM the same as those that are available to clients in HRM, allow single, non-senior households in public housing, continued funding for Housing Support Workers in CBRM, ensure that new investments in affordable housing do not exclude single, non-senior households.

There needs to be the ability to collect better data on rental housing through Housing Nova Scotia, and Canada Mortgage and Housing, so there is a clearer picture of their situation. They would like to see a commitment from the government to ending homelessness in the province.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motion

During the meeting, the committee put forth the following motion:

“That this committee write a letter to the Minister of Community Services, requesting her urgent action and attention in investigating the disparity in funding between HRM and CBRM regarding homelessness and commit to a review of homelessness in CBRM”.

Moved by: Tammy Martin, MLA
Cape Breton Centre
Motion: Carried

Correspondence

The committee received the following correspondence:

- Requested information from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (February 6, 2018 meeting)
- Requested information from the Sexual Assault Services Network (December 5, 2017 meeting)
- Response and request from Kendall Worth on behalf of the Benefits Reform Action Group, re: Response from Department of Community Services (December 1, 2017)

The committee debated the request for appearance from Kendall Worth on behalf BRAG. BRAG was unsatisfied with the department’s previous response to their letter regarding income assistance.

The committee discussed sending this current correspondence back to the department to ask for clarification of their answers to Mr. Worth’s previous letter, but decided to take it back to caucus and bring it back to committee in June.

As for the request to appear, this will be added to the committee’s agenda -setting meeting in June.

The committee agreed to move the September 4 meeting to September 11, due to Labour Day Holiday.

DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested and received the following information:

- The costing of the various programs and additional costs to implement each of the recommendations presented within the transcript from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/archive/community-services/cs2018may01>

WITNESSES**Department of Community Services**

Mr. Nancy MacLellan – Associate Deputy Minister

Ms. Leonard Doiron – Executive Director, Child, Youth and Family Supports

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

There are about 1,055 kids in care who rely on the Department of Community Services (DCS) to keep them safe and to provide them with a range of supports to meet their basic needs. Placement options include 663 foster homes and 19 residential child-caring facilities. Foster families provide day-to-day care for approximately two-thirds of the kids in care.

Foster care placement is the only option when there is no other option available within the child's extended family. Foster families provide temporary stable, nurturing care to children who are unable to remain with their birth families while parents work with the child protection program to address the concerns that brought them into care. They provide 24/7 care, accept a high degree of scrutiny from the department and government into their lives and, in return, they need and expect support, development opportunities, and a respectful relationship with their partners at every level.

There are three kinds of foster care: general foster care, which provides temporary, stable, nurturing family care to children in care who are unable to remain with their birth families; kinship care, which is temporary care provided by a relative or someone who has an established relationship with the child; and contracted care for children with extraordinarily high needs by foster families who have specialized skills and ability to meet the needs of special needs kids.

Financial support for foster families is in the form of monthly payments to offset expenses associated with providing day-to-day care and is based on a per diem rate. In addition, approved foster parents receive financial recognition through competency payments for participating in ongoing training and demonstration of knowledge and skills. Maintenance of children in care is available to all children regardless of their placement for their developmental and other needs, be it recreation or therapeutic services. All decisions on purchases for children in care are consistent with ongoing planning for the child and are reviewed during the case planning process with a social worker, casework supervisor, the child, as appropriate, and the child's caregiver.

There are 13 recommendations for improvements that have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented from open dialogues the department had with foster parents over the years.

These recommendations are: the mentoring program for new foster parents and an on-call peer support program supported by the Federation of Foster Families; after-hours support for foster parents, leveraging the provincial after-hours response team so that foster parents have a single point of contact for children in care issues that arise after regular business hours; immediate provision of emergency funding of \$200 per child to foster parents to obtain basic necessities when a child initially enters care; three new automatic payments that do not require receipts (\$30 per month for non-prescription items, up to \$150 for infant needs and \$50 for child's travel with the ability to submit receipts if more than those amounts are required. An increase in the respite rate of \$56 per day and babysitting rate to \$10.60 per hour for first child and \$4 per hour for each additional child up to four children. The daily per diem for children zero to nine is \$19 and children 10 years and older to \$27.50.

A streamlined financial reimbursement process makes submitting expense claims easier and faster; a new quarterly auto-payment for the children's recreational expense - \$90 for children zero to four and \$150 for children five to 18.

There are ongoing efforts to recruit more foster parents, including reducing the timeframe from application to approval, targeting recruitment efforts in African Nova Scotian communities, upcoming rebranding of foster care and rapid respite approval process to all fast-tracking promising candidates as they complete their training to offer respite services. The department is planning on introducing a foster parent's screening and approval process to make it faster and more efficient to approve foster families, and continued dialogue with foster parents with a focus on strengthening the foster care program.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motion

Regarding the request to appear portion, the Benefits Reform Action Group again asked to come before the committee, the committee put forth the following motion:

“that the April 16, 2018 letter from the Benefits Reform Action Group, be sent to the Department of community Services; the Standing Committee on Community Services also asks that the department to sit down and meet face-to-face with BRAG to discuss the terms brought forth.”

Moved by: Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South

Motion: Carried

The committee then moved into its agenda setting portion of the meeting whereby they chose the following:

Liberal Caucus:

Department of Community Services re: Youth Employment Programs;

Department of Community Services and Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage re: Building strong and vibrant communities; update on building income security and update on poverty blueprint;

Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage re: Economic impact that sport and recreation have on communities;

Motion by: Mr. Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South

Motion: Carried

PC Caucus:

The motion to call in the Department of Internal Services on protection of confidential information of the Department of Community Services.

Motion by: Mr. Eddie Orrell, MLA
Northside Westmount

Motion: Defeated

The motion to call in the Ombudsman re: Complaints Report, and the Department of Community Services re: Employment Supports for Income Assistance Recipients.

Motion by: Ms. Barb Adams, MLA
Cole Harbour Eastern Passage

Motion: Carried

NDP Caucus:

United Way Halifax and the Halifax Regional Municipality re: Building Poverty Solutions: Focus Areas for Change & Ideas for Action.

Motion by: Ms. Susan Leblanc, MLA
Dartmouth North

Motion: Carried

DOCUMENTATION

No further documentation or information was requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/community-services/archive/community-services/cs2018jun05>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – CORRESPONDENCE

The following is a list of correspondence received by the Standing Committee on Community Services:

December 5, 2017

Department of Community Services
Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia

The following correspondence was received by the committee:

- The committee noted the correspondence received from Mr. Kendall Worth for information purposes and the response from the Department of Community Services regarding a request to appear from Mr. Kendall Worth on behalf of the Benefits Reform Action Group re: Annual Review for ESIA (Employment Support and Income Assistance) recipients.

May 1, 2018

Cape Breton Community Housing Association
Re: Housing and Homelessness in Cape
Breton Regional Municipality

The following correspondence was received by the committee:

- Requested information from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (February 6, 2018 meeting)
- Requested information from the Sexual Assault Services Network (December 5, 2017 meeting)
- Response and request from Kendall Worth on behalf of the Benefits Reform Action Group, re: Response from Department of Community Services (December 1, 2017)

The committee debated the request to present from Kendall Worth on behalf BRAG. BRAG was unsatisfied with the department's previous response to their letter regarding income assistance.

The committee discussed sending this current correspondence back to the department to ask for clarification of their answers to Mr. Worth's previous letter, but decided to take it back to caucus and bring it back to committee in June.

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

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

December 13, 2017

Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia

Re: Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Strategy

The following documentation was requested and received by the committee:

- Information regarding the research available on the cost of health, education, justice and community services in terms of the cost of the impact of sexualized violence.

February 6, 2018

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the

Status of Women

Re: 40th Anniversary of the Status of Women

The following documentation was requested and received by the committee:

- Maternity Leave - Is the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women able to advise as to when or if Nova Scotia is planning on introducing legislation to ensure that this is an opportunity for Nova Scotians
- Intimate Partner Violence Factsheet - the statistics of violence against women regarding how the rate of violence may have changed over the years or the rate of conviction
- Nova Scotia Nine - to provide to the Standing Committee on Community Services with additional books.

May 1, 2018

Cape Breton Regional Housing Association

Re: Housing and Homelessness in Cape Breton Regional Municipality

The following documentation was requested and received by the committee:

- The costing of the various programs and additional costs to implement each of the recommendations presented within the transcript from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality

APPENDIX C - MOTIONS

The following is a list of motions made by the Standing Committee on Community Services:

November 16, 2017

Organizational/Agenda-Setting

The committee also discussed a request from Mr. Kendall Worth to present on behalf of the Benefits Reform Group re: Annual Review for ESIA (Employment Support and Income Assistance) recipients.

The committee agreed that there were several issues within the request that had already been discussed and well documented. Therefore, the committee had passed a motion to:

“send [the letter] off to the department of Community Services with a request for a follow-up, not only to the committee but to Mr. Worth himself”.

Once the department responds back, the committee will revisit the request to have Mr. Worth appear before it.

Moved by: Mr. Brendan Maguire, MLA
Halifax Atlantic

Motion: Carried

January 9, 2018

Department of Community Services

Re: Children in Care

A committee motion was required to deal with the response from the Department of Community Services regarding correspondence from Mr. Worth on the annual review for the ESIA recipients. The following motion was put forth:

Motion

“I’d like to move that the letter from the Minister of Community Services serves as a reasonable response to Mr. Worth and that no further action by the committee on this matter is required”.

Moved by: Mr. Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South

Motion: Carried

May 1, 2018
Cape Breton Community Housing Association
Re: Housing and Homelessness in Cape
Breton Regional Municipality

During the meeting, the committee put forth the following motion:

“That this committee write a letter to the Minister of Community Services, requesting her urgent action and attention in investigating the disparity in funding between HRM and CBRM regarding homelessness and commit to a review of homelessness in CBRM”.

Moved by: Tammy Martin, MLA
Cape Breton Centre
Motion: Carried

June 5, 2018
Department of Community Services
Re: Foster Care Funding and
Agenda-Setting

Regarding the Request to appear portion, the Benefits Reform Action Group again asked to come before the committee, the committee put forth the following motion:

“that the April 16, 2018 letter from the Benefits Reform Action Group, be sent to the Department of community Services; the Standing Committee on Community Services also asks that the department to sit down and meet face-to-face with BRAG to discuss the terms brought forth.”

Moved by: Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South
Motion: Carried

Liberal Caucus:

Department of Community Services re: Youth Employment Programs;

Department of Community Services and Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage re: Building strong and vibrant communities; update on building income security and update on poverty blueprint;

Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage re: Economic impact that sport and recreation have on communities;

Motion by: Mr. Keith Irving, MLA
Kings South

Motion: Carried

PC Caucus:

The motion to call in the Department of Internal Services on protection of confidential information of the Department of Community Services.

Motion by: Mr. Eddie Orrell, MLA
Northside Westmount

Motion: Defeated

The motion to call in the Ombudsman re: Complaints Report, and the Department of Community Services re: Employment Supports for Income Assistance Recipients.

Motion by: Ms. Barb Adams, MLA
Cole Harbour Eastern Passage

Motion: Carried

NDP Caucus:

United Way Halifax and the Halifax Regional Municipality re: Building Poverty Solutions: Focus Areas for Change & Ideas for Action.

Motion by: Ms. Susan Leblanc, MLA
Dartmouth North

Motion: Carried

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