Special Committee To Prevent The Abuse And Exploitation Of Children Through the Sex Trade

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 34 — December 14, 2000

Saskatoon

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-fourth Legislature

SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO PREVENT THE ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN THROUGH THE SEX TRADE
2000

Arlene Julé, Co-Chair
Humboldt

Peter Prebble, Co-Chair
Saskatoon Greystone

June Draude
Kelvington-Wadena

Ron Harper
Regina Northeast

Carolyn Jones
Saskatoon Meewasin

Don Toth
Moosomin

Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

Published under the authority of The Honourable Ron Osika, Speaker

The committee met at 9 a.m.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and we would like to take the opportunity to welcome all of you here today. We are here today to hear from people within the community of Saskatoon and the surrounding district on their knowledge about the sex trade on the streets that involves our children. And they're also here, we hope, to provide us with some ideas for solutions and to let us know what kind of services and so on are being provided in the city already at this time that might help the children or help the community to build in a healthy way.

So we welcome all of you and we're very fortunate to have with us today Doris Colson and Norinne Shewchuk. They're from Saskatoon Community Resource Development Network. And we welcome you today, ladies, and thank you very much for coming.

Before we hear your presentation, we'd like to take the opportunity to introduce ourselves to you, the committee members, and we will start just over at this end of the table.

Ms. Draude: — Good morning. I'm June Draude and I'm the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Toth: — And I'm Don Toth, the MLA from Moosomin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Arlene Julé, MLA, Humboldt.

Mr. Yates: — I'm Kevin Yates, the MLA for Regina Dewdney.

Ms. Jones: — And Carolyn Jones, MLA, Saskatoon Meewasin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And we also have Mr. Peter Prebble, who's the other Co-Chair. He's co-chairing the committee with myself. I'm not too sure where Mr. Prebble is this morning but he most likely will be here shortly. And we also have Mr. Ron Harper that is not able to be with us at this time.

But we'd like you ladies to just give us a little bit about your background if you could, just a short introduction on what your work is about, and then get right into your presentation.

Ms. Shewchuk: — Norinne Shewchuk from the Saskatoon Community Clinic. I do health promotion and community development part time there, addressing needs of children at risk.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much. Yes, that's great.

Ms. Colson: — And I'm Doris Colson. I work with the Department of Social Services in the area of youth.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. Thanks, Doris. All right. You can just feel free. We're brothers and sisters as they say. We're Saskatchewanites, so relax please and feel free to just go ahead with your presentation in whatever way you feel comfortable.

Ms. Colson: — Well good morning. On behalf of the Saskatoon resource development network, I'd really like to thank you for allowing us to come and provide some information for you today around the concerns for the need for shelter options for youth, especially those who have been victimized by both their family and their environment.

As I begin, I'd just like to give you a very brief history on who the resource development network is. In 1997 a number of Saskatoon agencies and professionals began to meet regularly to discuss the needs of youth. Out of these discussions came a design to target the issues of the need for alternative housing options for youth.

From 1997 to 1999 this committee made a number of applications to both private and public funders, such as population health, the Saskatoon Action Plan for Children, the Saskatoon Foundation, etc., looking for the ability to get some funding both to create some alternative housing options as well as to be able to go out and find out what those options needed to look like.

We were unsuccessful at getting any funding for any of these programs, but in 1999 we resubmitted again to Health Canada and did receive a grant to conduct a youth-driven needs assessment to determine if in fact alternative housing for youth was even required in this city.

So the Saskatoon Youth Resource Development Network commissioned Moore Chamberlin & Associates to conduct a needs assessment in order to provide concrete evidence that we are needing to develop alternative residential resources for youth in our Saskatoon community. One of the ongoing themes during our focus groups was the need to hear and include the voices of youth in any planning that we do in our community.

We completed this assessment in four phases. Firstly, a literature review of both the existing information and statistics available in Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon and other parts of the country. Secondly, a written survey was conducted with local service providers. Thirdly, focus groups were conducted in Saskatoon with youth and with adult service providers in the community. And lastly, we sent out a number of youth with cameras and asked them to photograph the places that they spent the night when they did not have an alternative place to reside.

The information presented today will include the results of our literature review as well as the results of our hands-on discussions with both youth and the service providers in this community.

Although these youth do not speak for all youth in this city, we feel that their discussion reflects the heart of this assessment and this information.

So we're going to invite you to hear the voices of these youth through video. Unfortunately they're not able to come today. And we will also present highlights of that on the Power Point.

Randy's agreed to move it along for us and hopefully we'll work together. We'll see what happens. So we'll begin.

The following is a transcript of a recording played during the presentation. It consists of statements by several different individuals.

The biggest issue is community and family and unhealthy environments within.

I guess maybe I felt that the help that was out there wasn't really appropriate as far as my father was concerned. Like, you don't see psychiatrists or whomever. You don't see someone else going to get into your head, as you would say.

I found vulnerability to be, I don't know, just kind of like an action or a reaction to an action that happened in my family.

Well, pretty much with me as I kind of grew up with an unstable home. I had to like, at the age of 4 I was probably about 12. I felt like I was 12. I was looking after kids and everything. Kindergarten I was cooking for my family and all that. It's just in some cases kids have to grow up so quick and then they kind of do a lot more mature things at an earlier stage in life. And it gets to you. You make the wrong decisions and everything. And also with the abuse and everything I've had, it kind of made me a little bit vulnerable and that's pretty much why I left home.

I know I'm kind of on the same track as Joey here. I grew up and my parents separated when I was really young and I guess . . . I went to live with my mom and I had to assume the role of the man of the house at age, like eight and I just felt I was too young for that. And there were other things going on that I guess I was too little to comprehend. But I feel that I had to grow up too fast.

I guess maybe another part of it was too is that adults not telling children the truth puts children in a dangerous situation a lot of times, too. I know my parents lied about lots of different abuse that was in our family. But for me there was the instinct that I never really knew and that caused a lot of confusion and that made me lead like a path totally blind, so didn't know where to go.

I was the opposite where I knew everything that was going on in the family since I was like little. Like there hasn't been a time in my life where I did not know what was going on in the family. And I think that kind of made me the opposite to you, you know, like I wish I didn't know, because it was really annoying.

I guess I would put down . . . (inaudible) . . . as in getting off the reserve or moving off the reserve and having to move into a big city, not knowing anybody and not knowing where the supports were going to be coming from.

My mom wasn't there for me emotionally growing up, and it's generations of violence.

I left home, I guess, it was because I assumed that my parents were always standing beside me, but when I got into drugs quite a bit, it got to the point where they thought they were using tough love, but they just ended up pushing me away. So I lived in my car for quite a while, without any support, not knowing who to go to because having a counsellor there and letting your parents beat up on you at the same time wasn't very helpful for me.

Mainly with me, I never had any, like, I didn't have my father around throughout my whole life. And well pretty much the last year I was living at home, he came into my life, and then there was always my uncle and aunt and my mom I lived with. And my uncle would always discipline me. And when it came to discipline, it wasn't like one or three swats across the butt, it was like five, six, sometimes ten. And I started standing up to him because I figured he's not my father, he has no right to even touch me.

I left home, but I can't say that I never went back, because I did. But I was into drugs and drinking, and my mom didn't approve of that. And I just figured that I'd spite her by moving out because I wanted to continue what I was doing. And she wanted to stop me and I wasn't going to let anybody stop me from what I wanted to do. And I guess it was the whole thing about a problem with authority.

I was told because I was feeling abandoned and because I was always being left alone. And then whenever I would go out, I'd like stay away from home for so long, and it felt like my parents didn't really care, because they never even tried to make an effort to come try look for me or anything. And when they did, I think they just wanted me to go home and then there again I'd feel abandoned, because I'd just be staying home alone and I don't know, I think that's one of the reasons why I felt that way and that's how come I left home.

I left home so I could be a parent to my baby, not rely on my mom to do it. So, like, grow up.

I think some parents lack the skills to carry on a relationship with a teenager which I think we can all relate with, wouldn't be easy. That if the parent doesn't have the skills to deal with that relationship, then the kid definitely is not going to have the skills, because where are they going to have learned them from? So it's not going to work.

I think a big part of it all is children not being taught how to deal with their emotions and how, you know, like if you're mad you can't go around hitting someone. Or if you're sad, that's okay. It's okay. You're a little boy and you're crying, that's fine.

And then these children that weren't taught that grow up and have kids, and then the cycle just goes on. Like they've never, ever stopped and looked at their life to decide that it was wrong, or looked at an alternate way as opposed to their parents to like make it so that their kids when they grow up, they'll be able to teach their kids a better way, a more healthier way to act and to be accepting, and to like love and be loved and like truly be able to connect with another human being and stuff.

And I think when these kids are coming from these families that are so broken and so like just out of touch and out of sync with

society, because generations of abuse and violence and oppression because of cultural backgrounds and just like even like, doesn't even have to be Native or Korean or any colour. You can be like white and been raised on a farm that was just like totally whacked out because you were like isolated. You just end up being screwed because no one ever showed you how to act towards another human being.

It goes back to, what's the saying, it takes a whole community to raise a child, or there's some kind of a cliché which I think is really true. And people don't seem to give that enough merit, I don't think.

Where does someone who is being taught or has picked up these abusive behaviours or even neglectful or whatever behaviours that aren't healthy that they've gotten from their parents, where do they even learn that these are wrong if they have no community around them to help them.

It's as normal as the block you live on. Like totally.

Exactly.

Sometimes I guess that even a community can kind of banish someone, you know. Like there's one kid that causes trouble and then if anything bad happens, that's the kid that does it. Now soon you find, you know, all these kids saying, well we can do whatever we want because so-and-so is going to get blamed for it anyways.

I found, with me I had to . . . I always had to be the strong one in the family. I always had to hold everything together. And I was pretty much taught, growing up, you don't show your feelings; you don't show your fear; you don't show your sadness or your madness. You just lock it all away inside. And that's what I pretty much did with my whole life.

I remember going to my auntie's funeral, and I had to be the strong one. I had to comfort all the . . . everybody, and I had to kind of brighten everybody up. I couldn't share my feelings how sad I felt or whatever. And that was kind of harsh on me because age of 13 I couldn't handle it any more. I exploded and I took it out on the wrong guy that got me angry and I ended up putting him in the hospital. And now I realize . . . I still do once in a while but once I catch myself I try to relive it all.

A lot of kids come from homes where the rules are don't speak, don't feel, don't trust. And if you don't have again the community support, whether it's your friends or sometime a mentor or whoever it is to help you through that, then it'll just continue on.

I grew up in a home where it was, don't show any feelings or emotions, you just got to bottle them up. It's like anything that's traumatic that happens to you, you have to just hold it inside and you can't show any remorse or whatever.

And I guess I ended up misplacing my anger and all those bottled up feelings on the wrong person and I got the consequence that I guess I deserved in a sense, but then I never, because it wasn't . . . it was my fault that I misplaced my anger but it wasn't my fault that I was taught to bottle them up, like, bottle my feelings up.

I was always told that, you know, I'm not the one that pissed you off, you have to like just straighten your feelings out. Like, don't be mad or don't be sad. That's all it takes.

I think the most important thing is for a person to have a stable home, because if you don't have something stable to come back to, it doesn't matter what services, what people are trying to help you, you still have that unhealthy environment that you're going back to every day.

And I think the second most important thing is to have some kind of mentors, healthy role models.

Yeah, constants in your life. People that are always there.

I'd say love and acceptance. Someone to like smile at you in the morning and give you a hug. This makes the day good. It makes you want to like come back to school.

Well I'd say it's pretty much has to do with everything, and most of all, like all we want is the chance to prove ourselves that we're just as good as everybody else.

I think teens now they want to feel wanted and they want to feel needed because it goes along with acceptance. They just want to belong; they want to find a place where they can belong and not be an outcast or not be a person who's looked down upon.

You need to feel valued and to be able to accomplish things which sometimes isn't something . . . often isn't something that happens with teenagers.

I went through my teenage years thinking that my basic needs were like water and shelter. Like, no one ever told me about the emotional basic needs until I finished detox, which is kind of like beyond the point of needing it.

Well for me, when I found that support it was pretty much freedom to be what I want to be; freedom to live my life my own way and make my own decisions, like learn from my mistakes and everything and not having my uncle and auntie and my mother telling me that everything I do is wrong and I'll be a nobody for the rest of my life.

You need to feel good about yourself and you need to be able to be comfortable in your own skin, which sounds pretty basic, but I think that's a really big deal for a lot of people.

Yes.

And to be listened to and actually heard.

And not pushed so hard. Like it just seems, like, all the time, there's people behind you, adults, that seem to push and push and they don't even know where you're going.

I would say that it would be good to be able to talk to somebody and just sit there and talk and give them all your emotional feelings because most of the time you can't really turn to your parents to talk to. And there's always, like, other people to talk

to and just tell them how you're feeling.

We need somebody to listen to us, pretty much.

I think a lot of kids don't want to go into sitting with counsellors and stuff because of peer pressure. Like, once you're on the streets, you have your own family and it's hard to get out of that. And sometimes, even if you do want to get out of it, it's really hard.

I have a really good example of that. When I was living on my own, I was pretty young. I guess I was, like, 16, 15 . . . no, I was 16 because I had my license. And I was talking to one young lady who was 13 who was prostituting. She wanted to go home. She was so scared and she just wanted to go home. So a bunch of us ended up taking her home. And like, two days later, her dad dropped her off where we picked her up. And that was just it. And we ended up being friends for a long time after that and she's passed away now of hep C. But she had no support. Like her parents didn't care, you know, and she just felt that she couldn't go anywhere else. She stayed where she was.

I think there's a really strong sense of belonging and kind of brotherhood within the horizontal family, rather than the vertical family; which has grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren. You've got friends who are all in the same age group, so horizontal rather than vertical. And seeking help is leaving that brotherhood to an extent. And so there is big pressures from your horizontal family to stay exactly where you are. So they'll pull you back down every time you try and go out.

Yes, exactly. And lots of times . . . Like I know from experience raising above . . . raising yourself above problems . . . Like for me, it was drug addiction, I lost so many people. I lost so many people that used to just say, oh you know, you're my best friend; I need you, like, we're going to be friends for ever.

And now, like, I don't ever see them. I don't hear from them. I think deep down inside they actually really know that once they start being healthy again that their friends really are going to leave, you know. Like, when you think about it, how . . . you know, yes, we're friends, we're going to shoot up together and stuff. How can you really sit across from a person and think that, yes, you're my buddy for life — until one of us dies.

Well I think one of our greatest fears is with the friends and all that and us wanting to get help. But we fear if we go and get help we'll be all alone again and we won't be accepted. I mean that's one of our biggest fears.

Yes, I don't know. I think, like, especially on the streets when one person goes to get help and they figure out, you know, a couple of things and kind of step out of the fog, the people that are left behind like to disassociate themselves because they say, well, you know, I don't have a problem. I'm fine. But you know, they . . .

Maybe a little bit of resentment towards you, a little bit of jealousy.

Probably a lot.

But lots of people are scared of being shot down if they try to go for help, and then scared to get rejected, I guess you'd say.

And one of the ways we deal with that is we put that big cement wall up between society and ourselves to protect ourselves from getting hurt any more than we have to.

I think the pain too has a lot to do with it. Like when you start working through the actual hurt and the actual, you know, garbage that you've been put through, it's hell. Like it's complete hell. And when you start feeling that, just the inkling of it, and if you're already on drugs you're going to be like I'm X-ing out like totally. I'm not going to feel this.

So it's the whole process. It's not just oh today I'm going to change my life. It's years of work. And it's not just I'm happy tomorrow. It's damn hard and it takes a pretty incredible person to be able to step out of that garbage.

It takes someone to think, you know, like I am going to get help and after that I am going to have to work every single day to keep myself on an even path. I practice safety for myself and put myself ahead of others, which is selfish, but people have to do that when they're in crisis lots of time. When they're coming into it, they're finishing going through the garbage, they can't just step back. They have to keep stepping forward and thinking you know today I'm still a drug addict but I'm non-using and this is what's happening to me today.

First of all, they need to be non-judgmental. You need to be able to walk into a place not feeling, not feel like there's someone up above you and you're down below.

There's always those councillors that sit behind the desk and say well you tell me; I don't know what it feels like. And someone sitting back there, totally sympathetic, is not going to help anything. Like they can read all the bloody books they want to, they're still not going to know how you feel. They need people that have been in your situation, have got themselves out, to look back at you and say this is okay the way you're feeling. You know, they're the people — empathy. Yes, that's it.

I say like comfort level — being able to go into a room and not having like your big A, like your attitude there. And being able to bring it down to like a comfort, like a comfortable level where you still have your little attitude but be able to mingle with the people that are supposed to be authoritative. You know get to their level and like the councillors and that can get down to your level — like swear with you. And I don't know just . . . I don't ever want to go into a room to talk about my problems with, you know, where it's all like cold, metallic and you know, echoey, you know what I mean?

With me it's . . . I prefer somebody I know and I can trust like a friend and everything. And I like to go and talk to my youth pastor because I know everything's strictly confidential. He doesn't judge me and he's not dressed up in all these fancy clothes and everything. He's like the youth pretty much and he does everything with us. He's just one of us pretty much and

that makes me feel comfortable talking to him.

I think it's . . . I think that it'd be more comfortable if they were like around your age, and like, if they knew what you were going through. And I think it's easier to get help for your problems if you know that somebody is going to be behind you and there's somebody there to help you.

It's good to talk to people that you feel comfortable around with. And that they know what you're going through and then they're not trying to pretend to be somebody that they aren't and trying to say that they wouldn't do what you would do.

I think you need someone that can do more than one thing or have a vehicle, like the integrated schooling services here that can do more than just one thing for you. Like, if I finally get to the point where I'm going to share my story and I go and drop that on the social worker, for instance, they may not be able to meet all my needs. But I'm not going to go and then drop my story on the student-parent counsellor and then drop it on the addictions counsellor and then drop it on the next person. Like it's hard enough for me to do that once. I'm not going to all of a sudden spread myself all over the place.

So you need people that can do a lot of things for you to get you what you need.

When it comes down the system, I guess time is a big issue because I remember being at Social Services and there is never time. There is never time for me to explain things or how things were going. It just always seemed, you know, well I have 700 more cases to see today, like, scoot, you know.

A safe place needs to be convenient for children, or youth I should say. And it's got to be a place where there's people there that are close to their age. Like, I find that foster homes, they're not cold but they're very uneasy. Like, you go into this place, new people, new surroundings, new everything, there's nothing that you know in that single place.

It has to feel warm and loving and you have to have . . . it's like a basic need to have your privacy.

It's pretty much . . . you need your freedom too. You need just as much say as whatever, if it's foster parents you're staying with or a teen group home or whatever. You need to have just as much say as the people that are running it. And you need your freedom. I know a lot of them are strict about that. The freedom, you know, that's like, you've got a tight schedule to go by.

You need a healthy, stable, loving environment. I think that's kind of the bottom line. There's a lot of details in and outside of that. But you need somewhere where you can be safe. Somewhere where you feel comfortable and accepted.

And things like, have parents or guardians or whoever's with you needs to keep regular schedules. Needs to not drink in the house, need to not smoke in the house, you know, some basic things like that.

You need to trust them and they need to also trust you.

But everything can't be perfect I guess. And there has to be a point too where there is rules, but there is rules that not only . . . you know, they have to respect everyone in the house.

It's got to be real. You can't just go into, you know, what is that family? The Robins family, I don't know, whatever, 1950s . . .

The Brady Bunch.

Yes, it's got to be totally real. Like what kid who came from like a broken home and stuff is going to like come into *The Brady Bunch* house and be like yes, you guys are like all psycho. It'll never work. You can't be too good, too nice. But you know, you've got to have respect.

Just like in a normal family.

Yes, but then like I don't know if I totally agree with some of the things here. Like, if you walk into the house that is like there's no drinking or nothing around, I don't know if that works either. I think you would have a hard time learning about . . .

Social skills.

Yes, social skills and you know, etiquette, all the stuff she's saying.

You want to be taught what's appropriate to drink. Like, you know, it's not a bad thing. And that smoking is wrong.

You need that extra guidance like the helping hand. That's pretty much all we'd like if we went to a home like that. We'd want just acceptance and not somebody telling us what we can and can't do, like kind of guiding us in the right direction.

Giving choices.

Helping you figure it out.

Healthy choices.

Or a clean place would be a safe place.

Ms. Colson: — The youth that we — just as you're sort of watching that — that we spoke to in our focus groups, the youth that you heard speaking on the tape are students at Nutana Collegiate. They were students that were partially representative of the focus groups. Although we're not 100 per cent representative because our focus groups more were out to the street and we invited a number of those youth to come to sit on sort of the speaking session when we did the tape, and some of those youth didn't make it.

So, you know, I know one of the comments when this was heard the first time was, well Casey sounds pretty middle class to me. And I guess one of the things that's clear in the groups that we did is that these issues affect everybody. They're not just Aboriginal youth, they're not just Caucasian youth, they're not one type, Korean youth.

The reality is is that youth from every walk of life is affected by

not having a stable family atmosphere, not having the support they need from their community and family to get on with things. And when things don't go well, they're in a very vulnerable position to be, you know, affected by a pimp coming along and being their best friend for a while until suddenly he needs something more than to be their best friend. And they're very vulnerable to that time.

So certainly in terms of service delivery, I think that the results of this survey and assessment for Saskatoon were pretty clear. The kids were pretty clear in some of the things that they said they needed. Fifty-five per cent of the youth surveyed said the greatest need was to have a stable, supportive place to live.

Many of them talked about family group settings, not necessarily fitting for them. And certainly that has been my own personal experience is that family group settings can be very threatening to young people who have not had a good family experience in their life. They want somewhere where they have maybe the needs met that will be similar to family, but families are a scary sense for them. So foster care doesn't work for some of those youth because it does represent family.

Without stable shelter, kids who are, you know, don't feel nurtured, respected, and accepted, often really become quite angry and very despairing. They don't know where else to turn. They're very lost.

Sixty-seven per cent of the youth that we spoke to said they were unable or unwilling to access existing services. Certainly there are a lot of services in this city that young people could be accessing, but they're not. Young people indicated some of those reasons being on the tape and in assessments of a fear of reaching out.

No transportation. How do you get to some of those services? A lack of trust. Being ineligible for programs. Some programs have things attached that don't let young people become involved in them.

Youth unfriendly services. One girl talked about, you know, a cold metallic room. And I shouldn't be saying this but I thought, you're at the Social Services waiting room. I mean finding a place for them to come where they do feel that yes, somebody care about me here, was very important.

Long waiting lists. That's something else when they're looking at counselling, etc., is that for young people in need — they're in need when they're in need. So for them crisis is the time when they may be willing to make that change or willing to take that step. Many of our services aren't able to respond to crisis the way that kids needs are in terms of crisis.

A serious concern of the youth resource development network is the perception that youth have the right to self-destruct. As our assessment has demonstrated many youth do not make use of existing services that are available, and it's a concern that we in some ways, as a society, are giving you the opportunity to continue to make very self-destructive choices.

When we look at residential care, it's our feeling that we need to develop a large range of resources for young people but we also talked about the need to look at the security of those resources. And that's a very controversial issue, but it's our belief that we do need to look at the potential for secure treatment in this province; that some young people are not in a position to make a choice about what's the most safe thing for them.

So if you're 12 and you've been abused and you're scared, but you're also scared of that very foreign resource so you run, is that okay? Is that okay to let that young person run and be at risk?

So we're recognizing that there is a need to hold youth who consistently demonstrate at-risk behaviour in a residential resource long enough to help them to be able to make an informed decision regarding their own safety. That's not necessarily 72 hours. I mean it needs to be long enough that they feel comfortable, and the service needs to be something that cares about them.

So currently many of these young people end up getting held, but they get held through the young offender system, custody as opposed to secure treatment where we're talking about availability of supportive counselling, resources that are going to work very hard to move them back into the community not when their sentence ends but when they're ready to move into that resource.

We feel that there needs to be a variety of residential resources available that will meet their needs, matched with their need for security and support, and that will very different for every young person.

Resources need to be able to deal safely with the anger and frustration that these hurt young people express, without further victimizing them and kicking them out of the resource for expressing these very real emotions. What we mean by that is that often resources are unequipped to deal with the violence that we need to expect these young people are going to present.

They have had a tough life and when they're mad they need a safe place to show that without now facing the repercussion of having a chance to demonstrate that anger. So resources need to have both the training. Sometimes it's the safe place for a young person to be while they're expressing that anger, without knowing that once they're calm — now I'm in trouble again. I'm out of that resource because they weren't able to manage me and now I have to start at the beginning again.

I'm ad-libbing here so I'm going to get lost in my notes.

Violence is a fact of life for many of these young people. And it also becomes a part of the healing process. For them, they need to express that in order to be able to get on with healthy recognition of their own needs.

We feel that resources need to allow for and be able to deal with all of these emotions without revictimization.

During the past six months, the youth resource development network, while it was completing its assessment on the needs of youth, we did have the opportunity to take some action despite

never having had any funding. We were able to partner with a number of agencies in the development of several alternative housing options for older youth.

Although these resources are at the far end of the continuum, and by far end, I'm thinking of the right end where you know we're not talking about heavy-duty treatment and that kind of thing. This is something where they need to be very independent. But they are excellent examples of youth involving and being involved in the development of their own needs.

Two of them that I want speak very briefly about. One is called the My Home project. My Home was an acronym that the youth resource development network developed for all of our proposals. And what it stood for was mobilizing youth for housing opportunities, mentorship, and education.

And when this particular project started, we needed a name and we were so excited about wanting the My Home concept that we gave this home the name My Home. Now we've had a hard time using it for anything else so that's a problem.

But what My Home is, is it's basically very simple. It's a five-bedroom house in which one individual who has had street experience provides mentorship and support to three female youth who are currently fighting substance abuse and street involvement. These youth are viewed as partners in this home. Generally they're over the age of 16, which allows them to be in a position of making decisions for themselves.

The home is managed by a number of support individuals and agencies including a youth committee. There is an advisory committee for this home that's made up of the same youth who reside in this home who talk about what do the rules need to look like? How are we going to manage our behaviour at this house? They've set up a lot of rules for themselves that create that safety, i.e. no camp-overs, no male guests. Those are things they said, if we're getting off the street we need to have a sense of safety. These are things that we need to have.

Helping support the youth committee in it's development of rules and safety plans for the home, Egadz Youth Centre's being very involved in this project. They provide both after-hour support to the home. If there is an issue, there is an outreach worker who is on call. The judicial interim release program through Social Services . . . one of their staff has also been very involved in this project, again providing after-hour support. Many of the young women who have been in this home, and it's been in operation for — I can't tell you — about two and a half years I guess. Is that right, Heather . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. We'll introduce some people here in just a second.

During that time, many of them have had custody sentences or probation sentences and so there has been someone there to, through that program to help provide some of that after-hour support. Have these youths still continued to use? You bet they have. Have they been able to come back and say this is an issue, how am I going to handle it? Yes they have.

Some of these youth have spent a lot of time on the street and they've come back to this home again and again. Each time we've talked about how we create a new plan. One of the other things we've tried to do is, is we've made the people involved with the home accountable — Social Services, the support people at Egadz — by having weekly conferences, tiny little conferences; 15, 20 minutes at the home for the youth, setting a plan for that week. These youth don't think in terms of four-month plans. They think in terms of how I'm going to manage tomorrow or the next day or the next day. And that's what services need to look like to manage them.

The home's not an institution. There's no paid staff. We have the mentor who resides there and yes, I mean we provide some support to the mentor but this is not an institutional setting in any way, shape or form. The youth are given the challenge to manage their own behaviour with support. And through its flexibility, I think that's what's helped it to meet the needs of these young people.

And I would like to introduce Heather. Heather is the mentor for My Home and she's joined us this morning so if you have questions after I sort of talk about the other project we have ongoing, she'd be more than happy to answer those for you.

The second project that we have ongoing is called Pleasant Hill Place and you have a brief pamphlet on your table about that. Pleasant Hill is a co-operative housing program for student parents between 16 and 21. These young women are young and although they have the desire to be successful, they've lacked the consistency and support in their lives to be able to get on with this.

They have struggles with a variety of abuse issues but are determined to provide a better life for their own children. Residing in Pleasant Hill has given them the support, safety and confidence, and some opportunity to develop the skills that they're going to need to manage their goal of independence. Pleasant Hill is located in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood . . . And I've lost my spot here.

It's a large residence; it's actually the old Larson House for anyone who's resided in Saskatoon. It has five adjoining bedrooms so the moms are able to go directly into their children's bedrooms without having to go out into the hallway. There's large study spaces and places for the children to play. The residents are responsible for their own cooking and cleaning, which is done co-operatively.

To support them this project has two half-time mentors, facilitators, who support and guide the operation of the co-operative interacting with the parents to problem solve issues as they arise. So these young women are responsible for this home, but they need support. And so the facilitators are there to provide that support when and at the times the young people indicate they need them.

One of the major partners in this project is Quint Development Corporation. It's an example of a project being developed inclusive of youth. We had youth involved in the development process, in the meetings around how would this work. We had youth doing renovations to build the home, which was quite exciting. It's a very good example of partnership. It included

both work with our own network as well as Nutana Collegiate, the Saskatoon Community Clinic, addictions services, both the school boards, a whole variety of community agencies came together to lend their support to make this work.

We have a couple of representatives here who can also, if there are questions specific to Pleasant Hill, who might want to speak to those, and that's Cyndy and Kris Kell. And Cyndy and Kris are the two facilitators at Pleasant Hill. The girls are at school today so they're not here, but if there's questions you have they're certainly welcome to answer those as well.

So before questions, I guess, in summary the above examples demonstrate two co-operative youth inclusive options. However, we recognize a need for far more options with varying levels of support and guidance.

As you move through the province listening to the needs of our youth, it must be apparent to you that those remaining on the street face great personal risk and may never be able to remove themselves from the street on their own. These young people lack the trust to welcome a family based setting. They need to feel some control of their surroundings. However, if they are too young or too vulnerable to make safe decisions, then it's our belief that there needs to be an opportunity to provide a secure treatment atmosphere for those young people.

Without the ability to access secure treatment, we will continue to see youth spiral downward, never being able to develop their own capacity and experience their potential in a positive way. We recognize that with a move to suggest secure treatment comes a very serious accountability. We recognize that there has been the suggestion that secure treatment akins itself to residential . . . the old residential school housing issues, or again, victimizing these youth. And that's not our goal. We're recognizing that we need to work really hard at making the services, if they are secure, very, very kid friendly. So we're not talking lock-up in the old sense of the, you know, traditional lock-up.

It is a concern that if we don't do this, however, these kids may be locked up anyway. They become victimized for a crime that someone else has committed. Sentencing these youth to custody does not meet their treatment needs and re-victimizes them, increasing their anger and frustration, and they're marked failures in life.

So we do support that, however, we recognize it needs to look very different. We recognize that if we move to secure treatment, we must be held accountable; that we need to be able to appear and talk about why youth are being held — every day if that's what it takes — to ensure that when they're ready to move on, there are appropriate resources to accept them.

In summary when you listen to this tape, Casey said that it's an old cliché that it takes more than a — what did he say? — it takes a community to raise a child. And we are hopeful that you will help to provide this community and the province of Saskatchewan with the resources, the support, and the networking that we need to raise these children.

So that's sort of our formal comments that we wanted to make. And we thank you for listening.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — A very interesting presentation, and for presenting us with the voices of some of the youth. I think that was also a really important addition to your presentation.

So I know members of the committee will want to ask you questions if you're open to receiving those. And Don, we'll start with you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you very much. As I was listening to the voices, a general consensus seems to be arising. We're hearing it from many people. What I'm hearing is we've got a very ingrained, if you will, inter-generational, dysfunctional family problem. And I'm not exactly sure how at the end of the day we're going to address it all.

You're doing, making some concerted efforts as a group and as an organization to reach out to kids that are hurting right now. We've heard from other agencies that are trying to reach, if you will, basically the same group working at different levels, and yesterday asked: how do we bring everyone together so that we're actually working together as a team versus 20 different organizations looking for some support and funding.

I guess at the end of the day my concern is, and my question is, how do we change this? How do we move to that support mechanism, that family support mechanism? Now you said, and one child said it, they have a difficulty really identifying with a family. And I guess that comes from the type of abuse or the home environment that they've faced. I did hear someone else mention it would be nice to wake up in the morning and have a smile and a hug so you could be ready to face the day. And that comes from a secure family environment.

So I guess my question to you is we have a lot of problems with us right now, and there's no way, most of these young people, there just isn't that family environment and setting that you could put them in, that secure family setting environment, where they've got the shelter, the home. But what are we doing for the next generation so that we don't have to address this ongoing but we can maybe begin to build that safe family environment versus inter-agencies having to always reach out because we've got these hurting children on the street?

Ms. Colson: — That's a very big question, Mr. Toth. I guess in terms of trying to network, I mean Pleasant Hill's an example of when you talk about the next generation that is for teen moms, so the children in that home hopefully will start to get their needs met in a way that those moms will better be able to meet the needs of those children. I certainly believe, and I think the network believes, that working with those young moms that are out there is a crucial time.

It mentioned in the tape several times that if you haven't ever learned those skills, how are you ever going to be expected to provide those to your children. And so when you look at a cycle, where do you stop and where do you put those services? Certainly putting those services into adolescents who will become the teens of tomorrow or those young adolescents is crucial.

One of the things that's nice about Pleasant Hill is that many services that are provided to youth stop at the age of 18, because that is The Family Services Act mandate. Pleasant Hill goes to the age of 21. And that's, you know, we've received support from income security to meet the needs of those young people. However, Pleasant Hill is a program that everyday has to fight to try to find money to pay the mentors because there is no ongoing support to that.

So I think there needs to be a recognition that we need to provide services to young people longer than 18 in a very concentrated supportive way. And one young lady talked about, I've got 700 cases more to see today so scoot; I don't have time to hear all of the issues you have.

I think many of our agencies unfortunately are like that, that you are able to provide what you can provide in a very short time; and that we need to recognize it's going to take a very intensive effort, very costly and time-consuming effort today to hopefully reach a point where tomorrow we won't have as great a need in that direction.

Not sure I answered your question, but those are some thoughts.

Mr. Toth: — Well I don't think there is . . .

Ms. Colson: — Yes . . . there is a answer. I certainly believe networking . . .

Mr. Toth: — I don't think there's just a simple answer, but certainly if you can build up some, if you will, some real value and so that these young — we're talking here young girls; there's guys as well that have that dysfunctional system — but even young girls, they can portray and pass on. You've got that support mechanism up until 18, the other project up until 21.

Hopefully through some of the services you're providing, some of the other agencies, by the time they're 21, some of these individuals begin to realize that they have responsibility as a parent to provide love and care, shelter, food and clothing, rather than that empty environment of drug and alcohol abuse that will then get passed on to the . . . just perpetuates itself, I guess.

Ms. Colson: — The network really is not an agency. It's not a non-profit corporation. It's none of those things really. It's a matter of people from schools and from . . . all, everywhere. We probably have about 30 organizations that sort of talk about these needs. So it is an example of sort of people pulling together and recognizing some of the same needs. I think we vie for the same money every day and that is an ongoing issue.

I think this community is maybe slowly starting to recognize how do we work together better. But that's a very time-consuming task as well, and for people who are wanting to move ahead and make something work, that's tough, you know.

My Home came about very quickly because a number of agencies said, okay we're going to do this and Social Services said, yes, and we're going to pay the cost, right now, today, because we need it for these women.

But as the tax base goes, Social Services is often at the bottom end of the stick. So the reality is is that that money isn't there to provide those ongoing services in the way that young people need them.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'm going to ask committee members unfortunately to limit themselves to one question each. And the reason I need to do that is because it is 10 o'clock and we actually have another witness scheduled for 10. But I don't want to cut the discussion off on this prematurely. But if we could limit questions to one each. Ron, did you have any questions?

Mr. Harper: — Yes, thank you, Peter. And thank you very much for your presentation.

I'm going to ask your opinion on this particular issue. As you are aware and we are aware, there are a number of agencies in different communities delivering, mandated to deliver perhaps different focused services but all trying to address much the same issue. Do you think that that is a hindrance to actually being able to deliver the help, the need, the care to the folks that really need it because it's splintered off within so many agencies?

Ms. Shewchuk: — I just see that there needs to be more team effort and co-operation and communication. The truth is that a lot of groups don't . . . the right hand doesn't know what the left hand's doing necessarily. There's, depending on what funding you're looking at, there's different criteria that you're following. So what one group is doing doesn't quite fit with what the other group is doing, and each is very committed to what they're on about.

So I see certainly potential and willingness in the community to work together. But there is also obstacles.

Ms. Braun: — I'm Lynne Braun and I'm the program director for the Students and Kids program at Nutana Collegiate. I believe that all of us can work together in an integrated way and I mean I see this happening every day at Nutana Collegiate.

My background is also nursing, and in the 1980s the World Health Organization said that in order for us to meet the needs of the people in our community, we had to have those services available, either where the people live or where they work. And I believe that if we can integrate those services in a certain place, we can all be doing our, you know . . . we can be delivering our individual mandates but we can also be doing it collectively. And I think Nutana Collegiate is a really good example of that, but it's not the only example that we can have.

So I think as individual agencies we can work and do . . . reach the potential we want to. But also as working with a team, I think that team effort, that community effort, that networking is really important to eventually meet all the needs of that individual.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. From your presentation, I think what I gathered from it, it's one . . . the biggest reason why young people are out in the streets is because of unstable homes. And it wouldn't matter really what the economic

background was then, because you can have an unstable home regardless of how much money you have in the home.

So I'm wondering, just sort of working within the mandate of our committee, are the girls that are at your homes right now, the two facilities that you manage, are girls there — have they been sexually exploited? Like, is that one of the reasons?

And just give me an idea of the waiting list that you have, the number of young people that are needing these facilities.

Ms. Doxtator: — Hello. My name is Cyndy Doxtator, and my co-worker, who also works a lot at Pleasant Hill Place. The two of us have been working since March this year and Pleasant Hill Place opened up on May 1 where five families moved in. And right now, there's three that are still there that have been there since May 1st and so we've had a turnover of two other families.

Two of the women that have lived at Pleasant Hill Place have experienced sexual exploitation and those two have been very upfront in disclosing that information. And whether the other families have, I don't know that right now.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. Waiting list?

Ms. Doxtator: — And the waiting list, there's a big waiting list of youth that are looking for housing, that need housing in order to stay in school. And right now, that waiting list for Pleasant Hill Place is a small list.

But there is a lot of youth that are looking for housing; the type of housing that Pleasant Hill Place is about. What we found out is . . . are the youth that are leaving bad relationships where they've been physically abused or sexually abused in relationships that they've left and are ready to live independently away from . . . out of those relationships.

Ms. Krieger: — Hi. I'm Heather from My Home. Currently I have nobody living with me at the present time — until tomorrow. But I have had living with me girls that have been sexually assaulted. That is not something that they will . . . they need to feel comfortable with you in order to open up and talk to you. So that generally takes time.

The girl that just left me was 14 and she did eventually open up and discuss it. But she did not get into great details. Thank you.

Ms. Colson: — I would say almost all the girls who have been at My Home to date have been young people who are victims of sexual exploitation and some of them have presented here in different capacities. So you will have seen some of them.

Mr. Yates: — I'd like to ask a question that has to do more with the coordination of services. Services delivered to youth come through a variety of government departments and community-based organizations. And there is competition I would guess or I would say between the Department of Education, the Department of Health, Department of Social Services for funding for different projects, community-based organizations looking for funding from a variety of sources, often difficult in the government bureaucracy I would suspect.

Do you think that it would be helpful to put in place, to help coordinate a transition from how we've been doing things to new methodologies, a minister responsible for youth? Or some umbrella organization at the senior government level where organizations can go and speak directly to somebody that would advocate, you know, for resources and needs and moving the issues forward?

Ms. Colson: — Absolutely, without question. Certainly in our brief looks at funding and presenting to the regional intersectoral committees, it appears often that the people who come to the table aren't necessarily the people who have the funds even. So it's very frustrating to make the presentation over and over and not necessarily have the ear of the person who can make the difference. I think that's clear.

I think that having somebody who is recognizing the issues of youth, because youth is . . . youth are our tomorrow. So when you look at even an agency such as Social Services it's massive; it's dealing with people from all ages, all walks of life. Justice the same.

I do think there needs to be a recognition for youth around a . . . I mean it could include a variety, a large variety of kinds of services but I think that networking and that coordination would be very helpful.

Ms. Shewchuk: — Yes, I'd say that's one of the reasons why a lot has not been achieved in this area because anyone who goes down the road to creating change just finds it a complete maze. And Doris's choice of word of frustration is the key to that lack of accomplishment.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I don't really have any further questions but I would like to make a couple of comments. First of all, I want to tell you that I'm totally grateful and impressed with all of the forethought and the work that you have been doing for quite a number of years already, and for being there when this situation with our youth had to be recognized. And thank you both for having the heart to be there.

And you know we have a number of people that have presented to this committee the need to have the coordination. And what I'm recognizing is that we need to have people in place that are in it for the kids, that are in it for the youth, that are focusing on the youth. And so the motivation is the youth.

And we as well as I'm sure you have seen that there are people sometimes in this to exploit the issues, to exploit a situation. And so part of the challenge I guess in order to have an effective and efficient and coordinated system in place that's really meaningful and effective in assisting youth with their needs, is to be able to discern how to come about with service providers that yes, they have their mind where it should be, focused on the youth.

So it's really helpful for me to hear from people like you because I can see the amount of thought that you put into things and I can see the results of it from what you've said. And I just wanted to say thank you.

The one thing, I just maybe will ask you a bit of a question

here. When we were listening to the voices of youth on the video, there seemed to be an awful lot of wisdom there coming from these youth from Nutana, considering what they have been through. When you don't have an exemplary model in your life of a parent or an adult that can model not only behaviour but thought process and the whole gamut of what helps children become healthy, and still can come up with the kind of comments and remarks that these youth have made that reflect to me a great deal of wisdom, how do they get to that point? Where do they learn that if they haven't learned it in their life before them?

I mean I know that there's innate goodness and a deep understanding in everyone, but sometimes it's really buried up, or buried rather, and covered up. And so I'm wondering if you can tell me how do they come to this point where they're in their early 20's or late teens and have gained this much wisdom to be able to identify the needs they have that will lead to a full, healthy life?

Ms. Colson: — I think that, and I'll let Lynn speak to that because she comes from Nutana, but very briefly, is that these young people have been given an opportunity through Nutana to talk a lot about these issues. And because they're a little older they have had that chance to go back and look. And that's one of the experiences that I have in terms of my own employment is that youth who are in it sometimes find it very difficult to look at what you need because you're in it.

But the youth who are very recently passed, can do some of that looking back and say, okay, now I'm out of it. This is what I could have done, should have done, needed, and can express that and had ample opportunity and tend to talk about that. They do a lot of focus.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So that's obviously the explicit importance of counselling mixed with all the other services.

Ms. Colson: — Peers as well, peer counselling. The ability for young people to have those discussions with other young people.

Ms. Braun: — If I can just give you a bit of a background. We have had students and kids program in Nutana Collegiate since 1995. So some of the student parents that you heard from have actually been in the program or been going to school for four to five years. So I think they're a good example of when you allow them to have a safe place where they are heard and they can again safely say who they are, where they come from.

When people are respected in that way, they start respecting themselves and they start growing in their skills, and they blow me away. They absolutely blow me away with their wisdom, with their straight shooting, but also once . . . an amazing thing started to happen. Once their needs were met, they wanted to turn and help others within their community. And that wasn't just the community of Saskatoon . . . or the community of Nutana Collegiate, but also the community of Saskatoon. They are very often the ones that say can we do this, can we do that; can we go here, can we go there; can we talk to these people?

So I think once you're in a safe place and you have a safe foundation yourself and your needs were met — and their needs are met — then they can start growing with their skills and turning outward and seeing what they can do in their community. And they amaze us. And some of these people are from the street. They have been prostitutes and are coming back to school.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well it's so great to hear these success stories. Because we weren't just sort of hatched out of a little shell yesterday. We know about life. We've all been through some lives ourselves that and have relatives that have lived through very difficult lives.

But when you sit here behind . . . on this chair rather, for a year on end hearing of the desperate stories of the youth that seem to be immersed in a quagmire of confusion and destruction and don't know how to get out, it's really refreshing and helpful to hear of the movement towards growth, healthy growth that's coming with programs like Nutana, and programs that come as a result of people recognizing which needs have to met first and so on and helping youth to move ahead in a life that they're proud of and they're successful at.

So I thank you. Peter would you like to ask any question?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, I have one final question. I have many actually but I need to limit myself to one as well.

And Doris, maybe I'll ask you and Norinne, but please draw on others if you want to in terms of answering this. But I think, first of all, congratulations on working on getting these two alternative housing projects off the ground.

I guess what I'm trying to grapple with, and I know your housing projects are just not meant to meet the needs of sexually exploited youth, although that's a group . . .

Ms. Colson: — That's sort of what . . . (inaudible) . . . but not Pleasant Hill.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — That's right. Exactly. That sums it up.

And I know that we're going to have a need, in some cases, as we're helping children to get off the street obviously; we've got a lot of kids who are on the street so we're going to need more of this kind of alternative housing.

Have you got any kind of a blueprint to suggest to us for, you know, what the level of need is? You know we've got the safe house right now in the city of Saskatoon. So presumably we're going to have a number of people coming out of that safe house and needing other kind of residential support. And we may have some kids who don't spend very much time in a safe house but nevertheless are ready for some kind of alternative residential support.

Some of them may be taking . . . some of them may be going back to school, some of them may be getting addictions treatment — there may be a whole bunch of things that they're doing. But whatever it is that they're doing and where they are

in their healing and journey, while some of them may be able to return home and some may be able to do it in a foster home setting, some are going to need to do it in an alternative residential setting.

And I guess I'm wondering if you've been able to assess you know how many such spaces we're going to need. And Heather, I don't know if you've got any additional thoughts in this regard. Like you are mentioning right now that . . . you know, your house is obviously not going to be full, but are you finding at times that you're having to turn people away?

So I'd be grateful for . . . I'm trying to get a handle, I guess, on how many spaces like this do we need for children who have been sexually exploited and can't live at home and are not going to be able to live in a foster home. Do you have any sense of that?

Ms. Colson: — I don't . . . I don't have a blueprint for you. I don't have a set number, but there are a lot. One of the reasons why My Home does not always have young people in it is just the makeup of the home itself. Although Heather is very open to working with anyone who comes to her door, she has two young children. So . . . and because it's not a staff facility, one always has to consider the issues of each young woman and is she able to manage there. It's generally youth over 16 because it's not a, you know, approved sort of formalized setting.

So we need a lot more of the homes that are going to look different. I mean I think that's the key — they need to look different. And we need to ask those young people what they need to look like and I think, not here today knowing someone else is waiting, can I tell you that. But yes, I certainly have thoughts about that, and if you have a day I'll tell you about them.

How we need to make them look different so that kids feel comfortable, because they can't stay at the safe house forever but clearly they're saying yes, that's a place I feel comfortable. So how do we create that comfort level to move into another resource? And I think probably the most important thing is kid-friendly. How do you . . . different words you use, different focuses you use so kids aren't thinking about rules and yet, they need to be there. I mean, if you don't have a sense of security and support, you have chaos. Because these are young people who may not have the skills to manage themselves, but the way you manage them needs to be very, very supportive.

And currently we need a large . . . on the continuum we're over here, you know; secure custody is over here. We need a variety of spots. And foster homes, frankly, are over here. Where is that gap in between where kids who are labelled . . . because kids get labels, not so much for their day-to-day behaviour but for what we see of them and so then they become . . . oh, they're too violent for this home or they're too, you know . . . and yet frankly, they might do fine because it's a different environment.

So I think we need to be able to give kids more opportunities and we do need more resources, without question. I mean when we started on this focus it was only kids over 16 because that's sort of where I guess, I had some sense of control, knowing that at 16 they can make that choice. It doesn't have to be an approved foster or residential resource.

But the reality is there are young people everywhere, all walks of life and all ages, who literally don't have options. Where do you go and stay? We talked to a young man who was at a high school . . . in a high school, living at the Barry Hotel because he couldn't find a room and board spot in the city of Saskatoon. He wasn't asking for money but he needed a place to stay. He's living here. That's not a good option, necessarily a great supportive place for him to stay at 17 or, I don't know how old he was. But that was the option he had.

You know, this city doesn't have lots of supports. The YWCA is a support. It helps. We use the YW a lot. And yet, is there the supervision and the immediate connection to counselling support these kids need, when they need it? No there isn't. So those things have to be there.

When Mr. Yates mentioned, you know, sort of that networking and the need to co-operate, kids are tired. As the one young man mentioned, if you go . . . and a kid comes to me and I can meet some of those needs, but then I need to send him somewhere else, and send him somewhere else, and send him somewhere else; kids are not going to get to place number two. Or maybe, maybe they'll get to number two; they're not going to get to number three because: I've already told people this, you know.

So we need to provide that integration, that it's very easy for us to facilitate their activity into the next option for them without having to go and go through a new referral process, knock at a new unfriendly or scary door. It might be the friendliest door in the world but if you're 14 and you haven't been there before, it's not somewhere you're going to feel comfortable at going. So, numbers? Lots.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you both very much. Thank you. We want to say thank you to each one of you who were involved in this presentation. It was very, very interesting and very helpful for us. And thanks for answering my question, Doris.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you for coming. I can assure you there's a lot more discussion that could go on but we have time constraints. Thank you very much, ladies.

We're going to take about a five-, six-minute break and then we will resume. And our next presenter is from Building a Nation, Maurice Bear. And Maurice, we'll be happy to have you come forward.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — We're going to resume our hearings and we have with us Maurice Bear from an organization called Building a Nation. It's a counselling service located here in Saskatoon. And we'd like to welcome you, Maurice, and it's really a great pleasure to have you with us here today to present to the committee some of your findings and some of your knowledge and understanding of the situation of young people on the streets.

Maurice, we just want to take a moment to introduce ourselves as a committee, and then we'll ask you to give us a little bit about your background and then to go ahead with your presentation. So if we could start just at this end of the table.

Ms. Draude: — Good morning. I'm June Draude and I'm the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Toth: — Don Toth, the MLA from Moosomin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And I think you know me, Maurice, Arlene Julé, MLA, Humboldt.

Mr. Yates: — I'm Kevin Yates, the MLA for Regina Dewdney.

Ms. Jones: — Carolyn Jones, MLA, Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Harper: — Ron Harper, MLA, Regina Northeast.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And, Maurice, sitting with us at this table are some support staff from the legislature. And we have, sitting to the right of me . . .

Ms. Woods: — Margaret Woods, the committee Clerk.

Mr. Pritchard: — Randy Pritchard. I'm the technical adviser to the committee. Hi, Maurice.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, Maurice. Well, Maurice, just feel free to go ahead and if you would give us a bit of your background and let us know about the work you're doing.

Mr. Bear: — I'm Maurice Bear. I'm originally from northern Saskatchewan, a community called Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan. My occupation was a teacher before I became a counsellor here in Building a Nation. I am the traditional therapist for Building a Nation, and just another word of saying that I'm an elder there for Building a Nation and an elder for Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation.

I'm an educator and I've been on the wagon for 14 years and I married a lady here from Saskatoon. She's non-Aboriginal. We've been together for 25 years and I've actually lived here for 14 years and I've seen a lot of things going on within our city as a community member.

First of all I would like to say that Building a Nation has been in existence for three years. We started in '98 and our mandate is a counselling service. But as we grew, we looked at all aspects of life in terms of counselling and in life itself. Whatever it may be, a person, their issues may be, whether it's residential schools or post-secondary or family or prostitution or jail term or apprehensions of kids — we look after that.

Anyways, getting down to the main topic here about child prostitution and exploitation, one of the things that we do in Building a Nation is when you're an individual, when you are put in this earth as an individual — yes, we all go through, like Arlene said, we all go through these ups and downs in life and with our parents and whatnot — but what needs to be built with our children in the beginning is that we care for these kids. We care for our family.

We have to build confidence building with our kids right from the beginning. If you don't have that, within five years of age you'll start seeing situations with your child. But if you start real early to begin that confidence building that you care and you have belonging, show belonging and love with your family then as the years go by you will not see kids in streets. You will not see kids taking drugs. You will not see kids do this and do that as much as we see today, in the past 30 years that I can remember. Maybe more than that.

But I've seen it a lot even in our community, indirectly. There's kids and young women, you know, that are exploiting their life. We have to build confidence building and we have to have . . . As parents, it starts at the home.

I hear a lot of . . . as I was sitting in the back there, the people that were here doing their presentation, they talk about community involvement. We have to do that. We have to take the responsibility, as community organizations to work together to be able to help one another, like the Family Healing Lodge on Avenue Q there. There's a lot of things going on over there with the young kids there, young adults or young teenagers walking around that area.

And a lot of times, you know, we hear the odd report from them or whatever organizations are out there. We need to work together and take that responsibility. And take that personal responsibility as an individual to be able to work together and say, well, I'm going to go off my way to help these young people. And we need to do that.

We need community responsibility like those ladies were talking about. We need community responsibility and we need to work together. We need to help one another. And because there's a lot of people coming to our place and there's a lot of racism going around, there's a lot of prejudice going around, and it's not . . . I don't believe in prejudice and racism because I married a non-Aboriginal. I've been with her for 25 years and she's a good woman. She's white. She was born in the white environment. But because I care for her and respect her, not for the colour she is and . . . yet, people on my . . . from my perspective, my Indian culture, they said I wouldn't be with her for two years. I've been with her for 25 years. And that's where, again, it comes down to this, as an individual, I had to put confidence building with myself. I had to take responsibility as a family member. I had to get involved with community support. I had to know my cultural content is a very important thing.

As you know, Saskatoon has about 30,000 Aboriginal people living. Most of those people that are in crisis are Aboriginal people, that are in the streets, that are alcoholics, that are drug addicts; they're pill addicts, methadone addicts, Librium, Valium, you name it. We got 300 clients and most of those people are First Nation people that come to us.

So I ask myself, we ask ourselves well, how are we going to help these other people that are out there? Their children are out there in the streets selling their bodies. There's children out there selling drugs for their bodies. There's children out there

leaving at 12, 13, 14 years old. What are we going to do? What's the answer?

And this is where we come in as the cultural content for those Aboriginal people. One of the main things we do is we have men's healing circles where we get the men together to hear each and every one of them out. And they tell their stories, what's happening at home and then we have family healing circles and the families get together. Just a family itself — if they want it that way, we have it that way and each family talk to one another.

And I've conducted quite a few of them and it's very . . . something to see when you see a family together actually talking to one another. What they don't like and what they don't know about each other. Oh I didn't know that. Or you shouldn't do that. And you hear all that and that's communication. That's where it's got to start is at home.

And I don't believe, as an individual, in my opinion, is that it's because of my parents why I'm in the streets. It's because I don't have a job. It's because Social Services don't give us enough money to do this. I don't believe in that because you as a person, as a young person and you have parents, there's some teachings that have to be done within the family so our kids won't . . . so they won't go in the streets.

And it's us, us parents have to take that responsibility to teach our kids. If we don't do that, this will never stop. Twenty years from now you'll still see kids there at 10 years old, 12 years old.

So we have these healing circles and we have men's, family healing circles, women's healing circles, and we have a program co-ordinator that conducts those. We use the medicine wheel concept. Each and one of you here as you sit here, as I was in the back there, the four steps of . . . the four gifts that we had have been used here today and each and one of you have those. And we use that on each individual to understand. That's a cultural thing that we use as Aboriginal people.

And you all have it too, and that's our body . . . we have a body, we have a mind, and we have a spirit, and we have emotions — those what we teach at Building a Nation for people to, as an individual, to understand that, because a government doesn't control your mind. Your parents don't control your mind. Even the Creator don't control your mind.

And a lot of kids don't . . . they're not taught in school to understand to be independent once they leave grade 12. That's missing because I know a lot of kids today that when they leave home or even today there's kids that still live with their family. My kids still live with me and my boy is 22 years old. And as a parent you know I've really tried hard for him to leave at 18 but it didn't happen.

So, you know, I have work to do and I'm not ashamed to say that here because I want to walk the talk. You know, I believe if I'm honest, very honest, I give my respect and as an elder, I'm earning that in Building a Nation. A lot of people have walked out of our organization laughing, feeling good about themselves. Now they got to go to work and do that at home so their kids can be off the streets.

So the medicine wheel concept is very important because it teaches all races. It teaches the white people, the black people, the Asian people, and the red people, which are us, to work together. That's why we use the medicine wheel.

And a lot of it we deal with foster kids that have been in foster places, years and years. Over and over they've been transferred from foster home from foster home. That causes dysfunctional families. When the kid comes home after 10 years and two or three of the families have been living together they . . . it's very hard to accept their immediate family back into their families because you know after 10 years somebody comes home . . . We deal with those kinds of people too. We have one that came from England, and he lived there for 17 years, and today he goes home and he feels that he's not accepted. And we show . . . we've been teaching him, supporting him the best way we can to get back into the family. And it's working. We're progressing.

But even that, you know, plays a major role why some kids are out there. You know that dysfunctional about foster; they lost their family. They've been taken away and they, they . . . there's no self-esteem some of those kids that are out there. You know they just don't care. And we need to bring back and it's got to start at home.

And the other thing is residential. I'm affected by residential. My dad was in a residential school and he never dealt with it. And I grew up in a physical, physical abuse from my parent — my dad. Even if I never had wood ready in the morning, I would get a licking before my dad went to work. If I did something wrong at school, I would get a licking at school. I'd get strapped at school. I would get a licking at home too.

So the way he was brought up in a residential school, he brought that home with him. And a lot of that has to be taken care of and most of the Aboriginal people that are out there, Aboriginal kids, they've been affected by that. And because they have never been . . . They're not taught. When my parents came home they weren't taught the medicine wheel. They weren't taught, you know, the importance of showing belonging and love and family. It wasn't there because of the alcohol and the residential thing and stuff like that that had been happening.

So with all that, putting those all together, that's the reason why we have prostitution — because of that dysfunctional thing that's been going on for years and years. It's time that we get together not only as parents, but as a community and as a government and as educators and the educational system — to be able to start now, to start teaching our children.

I have a little one after 17 years. He's five-months-old, my boy. None of my other boys know how to talk Cree but this one's going to learn how to talk Cree. I guarantee you. And I'm going to show him real good stuff too so I don't have to worry about him taking drugs or alcohol or being out there with children that are in . . . My kids you know they're like counsellors out there in the streets. They have friends that are prostitutes. They have friends that are selling drugs. They have friends that want to get them into drugs. A couple of them don't take drugs; my oldest one does.

But that's how honest I am. I'm not here to lie to anybody. I'm here to help. Building a Nation is here to help in the best way we can and that's what our organization does.

So with that, I'd like to thank you for listening to me.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much, Maurice, and thank you for your openness and your frankness. We do appreciate that.

Maurice, I'm just going to allow the committee members to ask questions if they should wish to do so.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Maurice. It was wonderful to hear what you had to say.

I have to comment that when you talked about being in trouble at home, if you got into trouble at school and you'd get a licking at home — I remember that same feeling. I was always more scared of what was going to happen to me when I got home than what would happen to me at school.

But I think the part that you talked about that really intrigued me was that when you talked about your cultural content and were willing to work with organizations. And I know you were in the room earlier when we heard from the ladies that talked about Pleasant Hill Place and my place, and they are dealing with young people who are troubled because of all kinds of life experiences they have.

Have you been called in or do you meet with those people? Do you think there is some way you can work with those organizations so that we can start building on other organizations and integrating all these needs that people are talking about so that we don't have to reinvent the wheel every time we turn around?

Mr. Bear: — Yes, we have been working with community organizations like I said. We've gone to Pleasant Hills, we've been to Nutana, we've been to Bedford Road, we've been to Mount Royal explaining the importance of people working together — the non-Aboriginal and the Aboriginal — to understand where things lie as in terms like experiences, issues, and problems. And we have explained to them that we're open in Building a Nation to work with people and work together and respect one another, whatever beliefs they have too. And we're utilizing our support with Building a Nation with other organizations.

Ms. Draude: — It's so wonderful to hear those words.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Good. Carolyn, do you have questions?

Ms. Jones: — No, I . . . kind of but it's almost insignificant. But I do want to thank you for coming and for expressing your willingness to work with other organizations. Too often we find some turf building and it makes it very difficult to coordinate all of the good things that are happening in the community, and your organization being one of them.

I do . . . I just have a curiosity about your opinion on something. We heard at another presentation that Aboriginal children take longer to mature than other children. And I chuckled when you said your son was still at home and you'd hoped to get him out by 18 but he was still there. And we've all gone through that.

And I just . . . I wondered, is that your opinion as well? Do you believe that First Nations children mature at a slower rate than other children?

Mr. Bear: — I don't think so. I don't believe in that. I've talked to a lot of elders in my time and some elders have said in fact, Aboriginal people mature as adults when they take the role of responsibility at home like when a father has died or a mother has died. The first oldest, like some of them are 10, 11 years old, they take the responsibility.

I was there one time and when the father died, the oldest would take over the responsibility to make sure that the, you know, the kids were . . . Like my sister looked after us when she was 12 years old. And she matured really fast as an adult to be able to learn all that, some of the responsibility that had to take place within the home.

And I believe that we're all the same. And when you show a kid or a child at an early age to be able to be a kid until they're 13, 14 years old, whatever, to be able to take that role instead of being a parent at 12 years old, like the parents are still there living, then the parents should take that responsibility, let their kids enjoy life.

You know, 12, 13, 14, 15. You know, there's a level playing field for the kids to enjoy life with their parents. And it's a different story if we lose a loved one, or we lose our parents, and then, yeah, there's got to be a community of responsibility as a family to be able to accommodate, to keep that family belonging and togetherness.

I can honestly say here a lot of that's been lost in the Aboriginal — a lot of it. You go to Sandy Bay, you go to Pinehouse, you go to Ile-a-la-Crosse; you spend one, a couple of nights. If the family are open you'll see the verbal abuse that goes on within families. Because it's not there. There's missing pieces there that we need to get back together and understand the cultural content of our people, the way we were, and how to respect one another.

So with your question, no, it's not Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. I don't see it.

Ms. Jones: — I'm glad to hear you say that because I found the reverse a little hard to believe.

One of the things that we heard though this morning was that some children are forced to take the parental role at a very early age and that that in turn causes them, you know, when they kind of break away from that, to act inappropriately because they've had to grow up so soon. So I guess there's a bit of a balance between forcing children into responsible positions and allowing them to assume them when they're ready.

So thank you for your answer.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Are there any other committee members with questions? Kevin? No. Okay.

Maurice, I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions. It sounds to me like primarily we have or we're lucky enough to have Building a Nation providing counselling services and that encompasses counselling services for the whole family. Have you been able to determine who you can link with as far as helping the people that you see move into the work world, into attaining job skills?

You indicated that you talked with Nutana Collegiate, and certainly they have a pretty comprehensive program there and assistance to young people that need to, you know, move on to the next step in their life.

But I know that there is a high rate of unemployment and that would be very, very stressful to people who are, you know, finally feeling secure in themselves and have nowhere from there on to kind of move into a work world where they can be self-reliant and enjoy the pride that comes with that.

So have you been able to link with anybody in Saskatoon that will work with you as far as helping some of the youth you see or the families you see move into an employment situation?

Mr. Bear: — With the youth, last year, in the beginning when we first got our Aboriginal Healing Foundation dollars, we got together with Kenneth Charlette, who's actually from back home, from Sandy Bay, and he did some acting in Toronto. He was situated in Toronto. And in fact he was one of the actors for Big Bear. So he came to our organization to start a youth . . . Saskatchewan youth program to get kids off the streets and work with the kids. And it's been going on . . . It was very successful the first year. There was a total of 28 students that graduated. Now they're taking 30 students this year. That's one way we work with organizations to get the kids off the streets and getting into the schools.

And not only that, we . . . obviously we would like to work with the government with the . . . to be able to report to them what needs to be done and the issues that have been misled for so many years. And like I said, you know governments play a big role too to be able to support what's going on out there and there's a lot of things that need to be done to work with the governments, you know, the next . . . whoever the next government may be, you know. And to have that community involvement, to be able to help one another, you know, and we like to work with them too as much as we can.

And the other thing is we build, like I said, confidence building, to be able to talk to somebody one on one. And after five, ten years . . . Some of them have been in jail for 10, 15 years and have actually found themselves, who they are. And they actually go out to the community and look for jobs to build that; to be able to say, well, oh the government this or the white man this, or whatever they have, whatever opinion, whatever they have to ventilate out. After seeing us, they go out there and take . . . they take that responsibility.

But we would like to — the community — to work together whatever little work that they can give; that someone that needs to work, you know washing dishes. Or you know, casual labour out there. You know, be able to say, look, Building a Nation, or whatever, do you have five guys ready to go out? We need work here. We need a gas pumper, instead of . . . work like that and be able to say, look, can we place somebody here for five months, can we place somebody here for two weeks? That's got to happen to.

We've taken students where . . . I've, like I've evaluated seven, eight students already from SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College). We don't get paid for that; we do it as a volunteer basis. And it's a lot of administration work, you know, to be able to evaluate this and show them the ropes and everything. We've done that. And that needs to be done in Saskatoon too, where they can say to somebody well this guy's only got grade three education, where can we use him to build up confidence building so that he's a contributor to society. We need to do that.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So it sounds like you have the vision in mind but it's not completely linked yet in order to make it happen?

Mr. Bear: — Yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, thank you very much, Maurice. I'll be talking with you further, I'm sure, in the days ahead.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Maurice, I want to thank you as well. Thank you for a really good presentation.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much, Maurice.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Okay. Well we're ready to hear from our next group of presenters. Sarah and Maggie and Sandi, if you'd like to come forward please. As many people come forward as would like to.

Welcome. Very nice to have you back with us. I think most of you know the members of the committee but we'll . . . we'll maybe just run quickly through introductions in case . . . I'm sorry but I don't know your name . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Kylie? Welcome Kylie, nice to have you here.

We'll introduce ourselves and then give you a chance to do the same. Ron, why don't we start with you.

Mr. Harper: — Ron Harper, MLA for Regina Northeast.

Ms. Jones: — Carolyn Jones, MLA Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Yates: — I'm Kevin Yates, the MLA for Regina Dewdney.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'm Peter Prebble, I'm the . . . one of the two co-chairs of this committee and I represent Saskatoon Greystone constituency.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Arlene Julé, MLA Humboldt and welcome back to most of you, and certainly a great big welcome to the new person that we have with us today. Kylie, is it?

Mr. Toth: — Don Toth, MLA Moosomin.

Ms. Draude: — And June Draude, MLA Kelvington-Wadena.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — So welcome and just take your time and proceed with your presentation in any way you'd like to.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — It would be I think, beneficial if you could just give us a bit of your background before you get started.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — My name is Sandi LeBoeuf. I'm the director of the Saskatoon Tribal Council Family Centre. I am also the Chair of the working group to stop the sexual exploitation of children.

Ms. Beacon: — I'm Margarite Beacon. I work with Communities for Children. I'm a street survivor.

Ms. Ninnie: — My name is Sarah and I work for Save the Children Canada and I work for Communities for Children. And I work with street youth, and a survivor myself.

Ms. Danbrook: — My name's Kylie Danbrook and I'm a survivor and I'm just trying to I guess put back in the community what I can. I'm not really in any of these groups. I'm just trying to help as much as I can.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — The reason I am here is that the young women that are sitting here are also part of the long-term healing subgroup for the working group to stop the sexual exploitation of children. The subgroup was developed to explore different ways of helping youth involved in the street trade to exit street life.

We recognize that a primary obstacle that hinders children to leaving the streets is that they feel that they have no safe place to go nor are there services provided for them to exit safely. And when I talk about services I include treatment centres, safe houses, transition houses, longer term healing centres, and counselling that's specific to children involved in the sex trade.

Initially we focused our efforts on children under the age of 16. Since then, through Communities for Children, we were able to help to develop the safe house in Saskatoon and that's been established and has been very useful. However, we recognize that children between the ages of 16 and 18 also require safety and services.

Since the safe house has been established, the children who access this service benefit by obtaining regular meals, they return to normal sleeping patterns, are able to access clean clothing, have a shower, simple things like hygiene, and are also able to interact with caring adults. When they stay longer, they are able to interact positively with the adults who work at the safe house.

Initially one of the recommendations of the working group was to encourage the establishment of satellite homes within the city of Saskatoon. At that time we were looking at the possibility of establishing eight satellite homes and the satellite homes were intended to provide longer-term care for the youth who were exiting the street. The intention was to provide safe, loving homes by caregivers who were trained specifically to help children deal with the issues around child sexual exploitation.

Unfortunately, to date only one satellite home has been established. There are various reasons for that. Currently the STC Urban First Nations Services Inc. are negotiating with Social Services regarding the details pertaining to payment as well as classification of the home. And unfortunately one satellite home does not meet the needs of the high numbers of children that we have on the streets in Saskatoon.

As a working group we've met with many young, formerly street-involved youth. We made contact so that we might learn from them what we need to do in order to better serve their needs. We have encouraged and welcomed participation by many of these young people.

Today you'll hear some ideas and stories from Maggie, Sarah, and Chasity . . . or pardon me, Kylie. These young women have been involved with the sex trade and have firsthand knowledge of what it takes to get off the streets and to make different and perhaps very difficult lifestyle choices. And we do have Chasity.

The stories they are about to share is a glimpse of what young people deal with on a daily basis. And actually I'll have Chasity take a deep breath and introduce herself as well.

Ms. Scott: — I'm Chasity.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — The ideas that they bring forward need to be heard and hopefully acted upon.

Ms. Beacon: — Good morning, everyone. I'm a little nervous so bear with me.

I'm a former street-involved youth. I am a survivor. I'm not much of a youth any more. I'm now a leader. I know for sure that there is a purpose and a plan for my life; otherwise I would not have made it out alive. And I wouldn't have went through the abuse and the torture in my young life if it wasn't meant to help and bring other people and youth through the tragedies in their lives.

I'm an expert in street life, sexually abused youth, and the perpetrators who stalk these children, because for many years I was one of those children. I have taken steps to put my expertise in action. Two other women and myself have started to create a home of healing. Over a process of interviewing youth we have realized that there is a gap in effective services for youth from 16 to 18 to 25.

A woman working to help us, J.C., has begun researching different organizations such as My Home, Tamara's House, and the Safe Refuge that provide existing services. My Home doesn't offer any proper healing in the home environment. Youth have to leave the premises for these services. The Safe Refuge's mandate works for youth up to 15 years old.

There is a gap in services for these youth. They are virtually

forgotten, and if we want to be successful at curbing the child sex trade, we must target this age group. These are the ones that these children base their rules of life on.

We conducted about 50 interviews. Most of those interviewed, with a few exceptions, were between the ages of 12 to 27. We realized that the youth over 15 have very low self-esteem and several wanted to die.

I have some of the interviews that I conducted with them. This is a young male of 19. He doesn't like living like this but he says he would feel better about himself because he feels like a loser and wants to die.

She said that she has problems in relationships because they don't know she works. And when they find out, they leave her. She said she wants to have a normal life, to get married and have kids. People don't know me; I'm really a nice person, and they don't realize it.

Doesn't have dreams yet. She doesn't know where her life is going. She wants to pay rent and not to feel so ugly.

Those are just some of the interviews that I had done. And from what I found in the interviews, I can't stress more that if we don't do something now, there's going to be a higher suicide rate to do with children from the ages of 12 to 25. It's something that we have to put hard concern into.

We realize that the youth over 15 have very low self-esteem and wanted to die. They knew about the services and still felt that they weren't for them. They expressed a need for a place that had everything. For example, peer counselling and mental and health services.

I remember when I was that age and I remember the hopelessness and the craving to die. I was helpless, hopeless, and dying. I had nowhere to go. While I won't let this pain continue because all of us — we, all of us — can change this. I'm asking for your support so we can stop someone else's pain and begin saving lives.

I want to stress that this home is a home for healing and growing, not to punish youth and to create more hatred in their little hearts. This home will under no circumstances be used as a 72-hour lockdown.

Many people along with me disagree with the 72-hour lock down. It is no different than jail. As a former drug user, I am an expert in drug abuse, withdrawal and recovery. Recovery doesn't begin until the body and the mind are straight and drug free. That time frame at its shortest length is three months.

I can't expect people to understand the damage these people suffer. A lot of people have never been in the life we have experienced. If you have, then you would never agree to punish children for abuse and poverty.

I need to stress again that this home will not support the 72-hour lockdown. Thank you.

Ms. Ninnie: — My name is Sarah. I've been, I don't know. I'm sorry, I just came kind of unprepared and I've been really busy lately. I put my whole heart and soul into working on this project for a couple of years now.

And you know, like I don't think me, Chasity, Maggie and Kylie and Sandi and Jacqui, we shouldn't be alone doing this project on ourselves, because you know, we should be involved, like the whole community themselves, like organizations, the government, community level people should be involved, you know, making a plan — how to help street youth, sexually exploited youth, you know, who are out there on the streets.

Because they face like a lot of barriers. And these barriers, they have no one to talk to, they have no support whatsoever, you know. And they're so caught up into it. And that's what I see every day. And I want to help youth on the streets because I've been there myself. And I didn't have no support or no help whatsoever. And I know it's hard too, to make that change.

I want to say, like . . . I'm sorry. When I was involved with Save the Children, like we had a meeting in Montreal last year, last summer, in August '99. And it was called for capital building, like how to go in your community and how to put more awareness about sexual exploitation of children, and how to have youth involvement process with community service people.

And we talked about the barriers we have and how to break through those barriers and how to be involved in a more positive way, and how to get youth involved in a positive way.

So we talked about it and, like, we came from different areas, like Vancouver, Whitehorse, Toronto, across Canada. And there was about 20 of us. And it's kind of like a network I guess, and they hired a new coordinator. Like I spoke to the coordinator and his name was Roy. And they just hired him; they got their funding through.

And it's going to be like . . . it's called SEYSO (sexually exploited youth speak out). And from them, he's going to come to each community. Like he said he's going to come to Prince Albert and Saskatoon in March and he's going to find out the resources and stuff like that, like in each community, what they offer.

And he's going to put it on the web site and stuff to make example what other communities are doing. And he said he's going to . . . like he wants to meet like other sexually exploited youth who are formerly involved or who are still involved, to make this network, right?

And that's like the thing we want to do, is like each person that we're doing, we have this little project going on. Like for example one of my friends, her name is Penny Sinclair, and she lives in Winnipeg and she's making a safe house called Freedom's Door. And in six weeks she's going to be open and it's a 10-bed facility. Five beds is for emergency, six beds is for long-term, and you can stay up to six months to a year. And they're taught, they're given a safe place to stay and live. It's not a locked facility and they're there for, to get counselling, to get off addictions. They're there for life-skills training. They're there like to receive . . . to find employment opportunities,

resume writing. Also they're there for . . . and receive counselling, peer counselling.

And also too they can volunteer after leaving the house. They volunteer working at the house too. And also there is experimental youth on staff too to offer that peer counselling. So this is what she told me. It's happening right now and the thing about it, like she got all organizations to help with it.

Let's say for example, she said this one organization offers counselling. They can refer them to there so we have referrals to all over and they work with each other. One of the reasons why this has a . . . for the safe house, like one of our ideals is that, you know, like I know, like, in one of your parts you're concerning the 72-hour lockdown like that law, but there's not enough like places like they can go to for that 72 hours I noticed, and they just go back to jail, you know, to Kilburn Hall.

And there should be more places for long-term healing, for healing. If you want to help them, you know, just like putting them in jail and thinking that will help, it's not going to help at all for the youth. You know, they need that chance to heal. They need a chance to recover, because it's so damaging being out there on the street. And just to face it alone. I don't think no one has to go through that alone, all that pain and suffering.

Because it's like, it affected me and it affected my whole family, you know. Like my sister like, she tried to commit suicide twice last year and she's only 13 years old, you know. She tried to strangle herself with a cord or even ODing (overdose) herself with pills, you know. There should be enough help and intervention, helping youth on the street, you know. No matter what their age is, you know, that's why they're still out there on the street because no one helps them.

That's why one of our ideals is a safe house. That's about it. I'm sorry.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you, Sarah, it's helped very much.

Ms. Danbrook: — I came just really unprepared. I'm just really new with all this, so I don't really know what to say. I'm just kind of up here for support but I just appreciate you guys listening to our voices and hope that I'll be able to speak to you guys in the near future.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Just tell us a little bit about your experience. I don't know if you're prepared to do that but if you feel comfortable with it, it would be very helpful.

Ms. Danbrook: — I'm not really prepared for anything but I can maybe answer a few questions if you want.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Chasity, did you have anything you wanted to say?

Ms. Scott: — I forgot my papers. I want to apologize for being late. This home is going to bring a lot of sanctuary for the girls, like. I interviewed a lot of the girls that are having problems at home and other places. I interviewed a couple of boys that were really messed up. Right now what these youth really need is a home like Sarah and Maggie are working on. That's about it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much, Chasity.

We're going to open up some questioning to committee members. And just feel really kind of down home, comfortable in conversing with us. It's just always unfortunate that the tables are set up like this, because many of the committee members feel that we should be just sitting in a circle on the floor or just on couches or something and talking because we're all pretty basic and we're all pretty human. But it is set up like this, but we want you to know that gee whiz we hope you feel that you can approach us and we feel that we can approach you too and just engage in some honest-to-goodness heartfelt talks.

So if there are committee members that would like to talk with any one of these ladies or all of them, feel free.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you very much for coming and sharing with us this morning. Certainly we've . . . the stories you're sharing are not different than a lot of what we've already heard and we appreciate that. It's just that you're carrying it from a little more of a personal perspective and what you have felt.

As I was listening to Margarite . . . and I'm going to be a little personal — I hope you don't mind this — because of the fact that I am trying to understand a little bit of what each and every one of you have faced. And you're right — I've never been there. In fact I don't have a clue of what you've been going through so it's hard for me to really identify and come up with some solutions, and that's why I guess as committee members we're here trying to hear the voices, as we're probably going to hear from the Child Advocate this afternoon.

But a question I have . . . actually there's three and they're kind of quick hitters. First of all, when I hear you saying you're building a . . . or looking at creating a home environment so that there are places for these street children to come off the street, giving them that safe place — I commend you for that — but I have to ask you, first of all how old were you when you ended up on the streets and for what reason and how old are you today? That's quite a challenge to be providing . . .

Ms. Beacon: — I can do it short, I've done it really short before. I grew up in an abusive home. I was abused severely, physically and mentally. I witnessed sexual abuse through my sisters in the home. I left the home around 13 years old and from there I went to the streets. I never looked back from that time on.

I went through several abusive relationships, abuse on the street, abusing myself, drug abuse, suicide, overdoses. Just about anything you can imagine, I've been through it. But I'm now through it. I am 27 years old and I've been clean and off the streets for about four years.

Mr. Toth: — The reason I ask that, because I have a hard time comprehending that. And unfortunately, in our society today we . . . earlier on, one of the earlier presentations, we had a tape and voices of different ones on the street and one person made the comment about, it sure would be nice to wake up in the

morning and have some one greet you with a smile and a hug.

And I think of that. You know, when I am at home and I'm able to get up and call our daughter, it is time to get up and go to school, and when she comes out to the kitchen — it doesn't happen every day — but just to reach out and give her a hug just to let her know how much I appreciate that. Sometimes I would love to wrap my arms around people and just give them a hug to let them know how we appreciate them. But it's almost taboo today. Yes, unfortunately.

So I guess we're going to have to count on you having been there to reach out and give that hug to that other individual who's been facing what you faced and what you've worked yourself out of. And I want to thank you for taking that leadership because I guess you can be a stronger voice than I ever will be and even than I think laws will be in helping some of these children realize that there is someone who cares and loves, and reach out and show them love. So having said that, I just want to wish you well and hope that you really are, can provide that impact into reaching out to many hurting kids that are on the street today.

Ms. Beacon: — Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. Other committee members?

Mr. Harper: — Thank you for your very fine presentation this morning. Thank you all very much for coming in.

You feel the need obviously to create this home, this house, to establish this house. Is it because you feel that presently the organizations and agencies out there that are attempting to address the problem aren't doing it in an adequate manner? They're not being able to hit the nail on the head so to speak.

Ms. Beacon: — The problem with most of the services that are provided in Saskatoon are all over the city. We intend to have these services all in the home environment. To heal, you need to be in a home environment where you're comfortable. You need traditional values followed by, following a tradition of culture. That is the basis of the home is to heal through Aboriginal traditions and through different things like sweats and stuff. But the services come to the house.

Mr. Harper: — Do you believe there would be an advantage in providing these services if all the organizations and agencies were integrated and operated under one umbrella rather than being fragmented into various groups?

Ms. Beacon: — Definitely. I mean everybody's grabbing for money. We all know that. There's so many different services out there that provide all the same things but the point of it is it needs to be in one central location. People that are trying to heal from the streets and recover from drug abuse aren't very good at going to appointments. I know I wasn't. By the time I got to an appointment, I was already high, you know, and then I didn't even go in the door.

It needs to be healing and the services need to be provided while the person is exiting and leaving drug abuse.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — I think one of the things that has happened too is — or one of the things that's happening as well — is that there are very little, very few services for people who are exiting the streets or people who are involved on the streets.

We conducted, a couple of summers ago . . . We ended up looking into see what kind of resources were available for youth and found that there are only two beds available at Calder for people who want to get off the streets but also who are dealing with addictions. Now when you're looking at the province of Saskatchewan and there's only two beds for youth, that's nothing when you have, you know, 300 kids on the streets in Regina and another almost 300 here in Saskatoon. So when you have 600 kids who are on the street in those two cities, and two beds to serve those needs, it's just not possible.

We don't have the resources available, and what resources are available are very small. Both of our outreach programs operate only part-time. They only go out specific evenings so they're not there all the time when they're needed.

When we're looking at counselling services, you're looking at waiting for six months for someone to be able to get into counselling. And as Maggie mentioned, you know kids who are having difficulty coming off the streets, it's not important enough for them to go for the 1 o'clock appointment because they're dealing with issues like where do I get my next meal. You know if they haven't eaten for three days, to go for a 1 o'clock appointment is not going to be very important to them.

So the house that they're looking at providing or looking at setting up would have those services coming into the home and it would be offered in a home environment. But as well because Communities for Children or because the working group is also helping them and giving them the support, then all of the organizations that are involved with the working group are also supportive of what's happening or their ideas. So there would be the linkage there to provide those services and to help to provide that support.

Mr. Harper: — So in other words the service would be there whenever the individual is looking for it, whether it be at 1 o'clock . . .

Ms. Beacon: — It will be . . .

Mr. Harper: — There would be no such thing as an appointment. It would simply be the service would be there when somebody is looking for it. Yes?

Ms. Beacon: — No, there will be no such thing as an appointment. It will be there, yes. We will have people on call. It will be accessible 24 hours a day, things like that. Stuff, that . . . so you don't have to run around and do everything; it's right there. So when you want to heal, you can begin that healing without having to disrupt it by running around for appointments.

Mr. Harper: — All right. Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Kevin, did you have any questions?

Mr. Yates: — Yes, I do. When I look at the concept of the home you're designing and talking about, the types of services you're talking about for youth exiting the street could be considered very similar services to other children who may not be involved in the sexual exploitation on the street, but high-risk, at-need children in the community.

I guess what I'm trying to come to terms with, with all the different agencies and groups and the needs in the community, if we wouldn't be — as we look at recommendations and where we go with this, we wouldn't be perhaps better — position ourselves better for the future looking at perhaps a larger facility with those needs in it for a multitude of high-risk children, with an element for perhaps sexually exploited children.

I'd like some feedback on that particular issue, because you have competition for the dollars and the needs. And could that fit into a larger, say a 10- or 12-bed, say for example, an old school converted to individual rooms with, you know, drug and alcohol services, those type of things available on site or do you think it has to be exclusive just for children involved in the sex trade? Because, there's many kids out there with many needs and I want some feedback from your perspective.

Ms. Beacon: — I think I understand what you're saying. Yes, we do need to work on prevention. Prevention is the key to stopping this problem, education and stuff. Our focus, yes, is prevention. And by working with these youth and bringing them off the street, we're working on prevention. They won't be in the school area in a residential area. These children won't be basing their ideals of life on women that are being abused on the street.

They don't know that they're being abused. The life is very glamorous to young children.

Yes, we do want to go bigger. I mean, right now, like you said, funds are going to be very scarce and we're going to have to start out small.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — I think that what . . . When you're looking at services to children who are on the street, I think that it's important that we try to serve as many children as possible and I think that's very important. I think that if there was funding available to serve a wider range of children and to be able to help to deal specifically with the issues that are surrounding the children who are being sexually exploited on the street, and if that can work in partnership then that would be fantastic, and I really wish that something like that would happen.

The one difficulty that I would foresee is that people fail to recognize that when children are being sexually exploited on the street they are being sexually abused. So they need very specific counselling and very specific services around sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

I think that we need to offer specific services for that. If it's in a larger facility where you're helping to deal with 50 other individuals, that's fine, as long as we recognize that there are some very specific needs for those children that are being sexually abused or being sexually exploited.

Ms. Ninnie: — Like, for example, like you know, if you talk to somebody who's been in the trade, you know, they would be more understanding. They wouldn't be judgmental. If you just talk to a normal person they wouldn't understand it, because there's a lot of — you know, when you get off the trade — you know, there's a lot of feelings and confusion you have. Like I had confusion a lot when I came off. I didn't know it was normal. If I did talk to somebody about it, they just put me down about it and it's, like, it's hard.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Kylie and Sandi, and all of you, whoever would like to answer this or offer some thought: you just brought up the fact that — and I believe this, that there needs to be specific, a specific sort of counselling and counsellors available to deal with the trauma surrounding sexual abuse and all that goes with it — but the very fact is we don't have a lot of people trained in that area in this province, or in fact even in the country. There hasn't been a recognition of the necessity for this and so there hasn't been any specific training.

I don't even know where we could get instructors for that but I think it's one thing that we need to search out and maybe develop some sort of training programs for counsellors for that. I think a lot of people are empathetic with it. They feel for you. And a lot of counsellors may base some of the basic human needs . . . do their counselling based on that and so on and based on the fact that every human being needs to come to a point where they're feeling success and they're feeling like they're conducting every action in their own life with pride and so on. But we don't have that — that's the facts.

So in your long-term healing vision here, you know that that's a component that needs to be addressed and that you need. Have you given this any further thought as to how we can make this happen?

Ms. LeBoeuf: — Well one of the components, and Maggie really wants to answer this, but I just want to mention that one of the components in — one of the key components about the long-term healing house is that there would be peer counselling. And, in essence, it's similar to what happens within 12-step programs, AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) programs, that sort of thing, you know where people who are coming off the street or getting out of the trade are able to recognize what the other person is going through. And so that's why it's so important to have the peer counselling that's available.

We do recognize that there isn't the more specific counselling for people who have been sexually exploited or the sexual abuse counselling. There aren't quite as many people that would be available, but the peer counselling is definitely a key issue.

Ms. Beacon: — Yes, I want to . . . I believe I'm an expert in dealing with and counselling people on coming off of the streets, drug abuse, sexual abuse — because that's where I've been.

I'm a very firm believer in you can't learn it out of a book to be an effective person to help these people. I mean you will have definitely a part in it but to effectively help somebody that

comes from a certain part in life, the only way to truly help that person is if you have already been there and have come through it and have recovered. To effectively reach these children and youth, I really don't feel that there's any other constructive way to do it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And I would have to kind of agree with you from what I've heard from people that have been through AA. The basis of the success of that organization is that very thing; that you have people who know exactly what it's like. I've had some of my families go through that program and when there was a struggle going on . . . you know, I could tell that as well-meaning as I was, I was not the person that they needed to talk to or that . . . And the heart was there on both sides. We both knew and understood that we loved each other but they needed something from people who had been through this. So I can really appreciate where you're coming from with that.

We've had some discussion in Prince Albert with some of the women there surrounding this very issue, and some of the subsequent problems that might come up when you know you are sort of taking a public position of giving any kind of counselling that you might have to have credentials behind your name and that kind of thing. So you know maybe we have to view everything in a different way, and maybe the kind of credentials that are needed have to be a little bit more substantially human. And I don't know how that's going to work out, but I know there could be a little bit of an uproar from the community and from in fact the educational facilities and so on.

But we'll cross that path when we come to it as they say.

But I just have another question. Kylie, I'm just wondering if you would, if you could tell me why you ended up on the streets in the first place?

Ms. Danbrook: — Yes. Well me and Maggie have a lot of the same story in a way. I grew up in an abusive house and my parents split up when I was really young and I became the mother of my younger sisters.

And I don't know, she gave me up when I was 13 into foster care. I was on the streets and stuff. I didn't start working until I was 15. And, I don't know I just . . . Yes, she kicked me out when I was 13 and I just . . . I've never been back and I just . . . that's how my life was.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Where did you live during the time that you were on . . . Like you were 15 when you started working the streets. Where did you live?

Ms. Danbrook: — I was just bouncing around. Like from 13 to 16 they had moved me around like 36 times. I was in foster home to foster home and even that screwed me up even more. Like I got sexually abused in foster homes. So I didn't want to stay. The safe house was about the only one actually that I really liked, and the My Home project.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Kylie, how did you hear about the safe house and My Home? Was it just from the street?

Ms. Danbrook: — Don Meikle.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Was it just from the street?

Ms. Danbrook: — No, Don Meikle. I can't even remember why I went there. I had nowhere to stay and I don't know, he picked me up and took me there. The My Home was the same; through Don Meikle too.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, that's helpful to us. Thank you for speaking with us today. I'm sure that your life story up to now entails a great deal more than what you're able to tell us today but I appreciate what you have shared with us today. Thank you.

Ms. Danbrook: — No problem.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — There's so much that I would like to discuss and the clock you know it keeps kind of bugging us here but . . . Yes, I'm just going to turn it . . . I'm sorry. Oh yes, June hasn't had a chance yet.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — June you've got questions. Carolyn's got questions, then it can come back to us.

Ms. Jones: — I realize that your presentation deals with older youth, but one of the things that we're grappling with and one of the things that you speak very loudly about is the . . . in this case the 72-hour lockdown. But you go on to say that the time frame for recovery at its shortest length is three months. And of course, we're concerned with all ages of street youth and exploited children.

I'm wondering what your feeling is if a child is in danger on the street — and I mean I believe all people are in danger on the street but particularly young children, many people are 12 and 13 — what is your sense of a secure facility? Not 72 hours obviously because that in their case, I mean that doesn't give them enough time to even think about it. You said yourself, Margarite, that by the time you got to an appointment you were often high.

What do we do for at risk children, many of whom will be on the street who are not in a position to make their own judgement about the best thing for them? Should there be a secure facility to put youth in when they're not in a position to make a good judgement about their safety, if they're addicted to clean them out, dry them out, keep them safe in spite of themselves? But not a jail facility or, you know, not just the fact that it has locked doors but it has the services that you talk about, hopefully the loving home environment with the things that are necessary to heal them.

How do you feel about locked facilities in those circumstances?

Ms. Beacon: — I feel it's absolutely insane, sorry. To lock somebody up because of abuse and poverty is absolutely ridiculous. It goes back to the residential schools. And taking a child that is so full of hatred already and placing them in a situation of where they have an authority watching over them, where they can't go where they want, and when they want to is . . . when you're in that situation, authority figures are the worst

people in your life. And that stems back to your childhood because every authority figure in your childhood has either abused you mentally, physically, or sexually.

For you to take a child and put them under a rule of an authority figure of that status and then tell them that they have to recover and they have to become drug free and street free and you're going to be locked up until you do is absolutely ridiculous, even if it's for 72-hours. It's ridiculous. I mean how could somebody . . .

Ms. Jones: — Even if they're 10?

Ms. Beacon: — Ten-years-old, it doesn't matter what age they are. At 10-years-old you should be more concerned about not creating more hatred in this little heart than is already is there. And by locking them down creates more hatred, more hatred for authority, more hatred for society.

Ms. Jones: — You have to let them live their life. Like, you can't put them back in their own homes because their home is usually the reason they're on the street. You put them in foster homes and they continue to run, you know, they run away, the child in 30 foster homes in a few years. I mean that's obviously not a healthy situation.

You're saying that there's no way we can help these children who are not in a position to make their own judgements except to let them go through what you had to go through?

Ms. Beacon: — I think the way to help them is to create safe havens for them to be at, whether it be for a long term or whether they come in the door just for the day or for a cup of coffee. It's a process. When you're on a road to recovery, you need a process. You need healthy and supportive people in your life. When I was going through it, I had Egadz, I had the outreach van. I really didn't have any family members and stuff other than my sister to rely on.

But you need that support and there needs to be — which there isn't now — safe havens for children and youth. There is the safe house but the capacity of the safe house . . . it needs to be larger, it needs more funding. It's struggling constantly to keep going. I mean you know it's something that's desperately needed and it doesn't seem to be a big priority on the list. We all talk about wanting to save their lives, but when it comes down to putting the funding in to save their lives it's not there.

I don't understand it. I don't know if you guys understand it. We seem to be talking in circles. We want to do it but when it comes to putting the funding in to do it, it's not there. But to lock somebody down for any amount of time by force is ridiculous.

How would you feel as an adult, you know, well, excuse me, you write differently than I do. I'm sorry you're going to have be locked down until you learn how to write this way. And that's the way it is. We can't take people and conform them into our own little, you know, society's way of doing things.

We have to let them be their own person of course. And by locking them down and telling them what they have to do, like I said, goes back to the residential schools. It didn't work then; it's not going to work now.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, girls, for coming here again. I think I've seen three out of four — well I've seen Sandi before — three out of four of you before and it's great to see you.

You have been great, Margarite. Whatever you're doing must be great because you're looking good.

I have two things to ask you and don't think that I'm being difficult; I'm being inquisitive, okay? When we talk about, most of the time, young people have to leave home, they're on the street because they have an abusive home, and you talk about the importance of them knowing what a loving, caring, traditional home is. And yet at the same time you know that the only people who can really relate to you, like you've been saying, is the people who have been through what you've been through. But most of them aren't in loving, caring, traditional homes. So how am I going to get . . . how are you going to take the young people that need to know what it's like on the other side if they can't help them?

Ms. Beacon: — The reason why we're starting this home is because we are young people that have become healthy again. We live in, you know, our home environment which is nurturing to my children. You know, I feel I'm a pretty good mother. I mean I'm not perfect. Chasity's a great mother. She's young but she's taken steps to improve her life and do the things that she needs to do to be a perfect mother to her children.

I kind of got off track . . . I can't remember.

Ms. Draude: — Okay, I feel better. Now I'm not the only one who loses mine.

Ms. Beacon: — Okay, it was something about peer . . . The whole basis for . . . we're starting the home as healthy people that have come through the trade and the abuse and stuff. We plan this to be, you know, long-term spaces. Just in general — I'm not saying that this is the amount of time — but from, you know, six months to three years. After so long of being clean and sober in a healthy environment, you're now able to do . . . and help somebody else. So you're now able to come back into the home and work with the home to help other people, and it's a process that keeps overlapping itself.

Ms. Draude: — So then . . . (inaudible) . . . you're saying is the people that will be running the homes are people like yourself who have left the street and you know how to counsel and . . .

Ms. Beacon: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — But my next step is . . . I know that you can't take somebody who is a professional whatever and give him street knowledge so that they can help people. So in the reverse we're going to have to take people like you. And I know you have all kinds of knowledge that we'll never have, but you also admitted that you got help from Egadz and people that had some counselling and some training in areas. Even though

you've been on the street there's some things you don't . . . you just don't know what the next step is. We do that all our lives. All of us are learning all the time and sometimes we need some kind of organized programming to help us figure out where our thoughts are going to.

So then are you thinking that there is a spot needed within universities, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), whatever, to help you be a better counsellor with the knowledge that you have?

Ms. Beacon: — Definitely. I mean I can always improve. I'm very rough around the edges. I still sometimes talk like I've just walked off the corner, you know, and I do.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Street talk.

Ms. Beacon: — Yes, yes. It's really hard to leave behind. Yes, I could use some more training and I am going to school now but I mean, you know, going to school and finding funding to do everything that I need to do is almost impossible. I go from being on Social Services on to student loan and I still don't have enough to pay my bills, you know. So I mean, yes, I would like to do more but it's not always there.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — I think one of the things that this home would also do is to help residents gain the life skills and employment skills that they need, not necessarily through the peer counselling, but through more professional people. Having them be a part of the home in terms of bringing in some training, that sort of thing.

Ms. Draude: — I think that you know there's always the danger people will come to you and respect you because you've been there, and as soon as you take some training then you're sort of separate from them so then they're going to be scared to come and see you again.

Ms. Beacon: — No, I will never leave my street life behind. I mean like I've left it behind but I mean in my mind and in my body and in my soul it's always going to be there and that's what makes me the . . .

Ms. Draude: — So then you can't get all your rough edges smoothed or they won't relate.

Ms. Beacon: — Exactly. But still with the house, like we don't intend to go into this by ourselves. We will be looking to other agencies for support like the city centre project, you know, and Egadz are . . . you know, different organizations like that. Those are examples.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — All right. Peter, why don't you go ahead with your questions.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Well I'm going to ask a question I guess that follows from Carolyn's. And I think as you know I've not been a big fan of the idea of lock-up facilities, and I'm just speaking personally, not on behalf of the committee.

We've got to make a decision on this. We've heard very different testimony on this and again we had it this morning. You know, big divisions, deep philosophical divisions on this issue.

I know when we went to the street conference together in Edmonton, and you heard a lot of the testimony about why, you know, Alberta had decided to go with the 72-hour lock-up, and then I met with a number of people in the Aboriginal community who were at the conference and there was very strong opposition to the lock-up idea in the Aboriginal community.

When we've had hearings in Regina we've had a very . . . Maybe I should just talk about my own perceptions. My own perceptions have been that there has been a very different attitude among people in outreach work in Regina and in the Aboriginal community in Regina and in tribal councils like File Hills on the 72-hour lock-up issue. Much, to be honest, a lot more — I'm not trying to generalize here because there's differences of opinion in the Regina region as well — but a lot more support for the idea than I ever expected to find and like I say, not just in the non-Aboriginal community but in the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal witnesses, First Nations witnesses coming forward and saying that, you know, this idea has merit.

So I think, you know . . . so the committee is struggling with this question and we can't ignore all the witnesses who come forward and said this is a good idea. Nor can we ignore all the witnesses like yourselves who have come forward and said we find this to be a scary idea.

So you know the arguments against the lock-up idea and, Maggie, you've just articulated them very clearly and, Sandi, you articulated them clearly yesterday. Let me just put . . . Because this is what we have to grapple with so I want you to respond to these arguments that are being put to us in favour of the — not necessarily in favour of — a 72-hour lock-up. First of all, let me put it this way.

Let's make the assumption for a minute because I want to sort of set the stage for this in terms of the arguments on the other side. And I want to say, by laying out these arguments don't take it that I'm persuaded by these arguments but I'm listening to these arguments. And as a Co-Chair of the committee I have to take these arguments seriously.

But if the context is: that we would upgrade the services; that there would be resources in place to help youth exit the street that are much more substantial than there are now; that we don't want to jail or imprison youth — you know, no more sending youth who have been sexually abused on the street to Kilburn Hall or to any other kind of jail-like facility; and opportunities for youth to get off the . . . to leave street life in terms of education and employment that don't exist now. So that's the context of those on the other side of this debate. Are, you know . . . Let's make those assumptions.

And let's also make the assumption that the people removing children from the street would not be the police. It would be people who care. I mean, I'm not implying here that the police don't care about children, but people whose role . . . it might be

the outreach workers themselves who would be doing the removal. It wouldn't be police. Jacqui's throwing up her hands here.

But I just want to frame this in terms of the other side and as I say don't take it from this that I'm therefore, you know, saying that we should go out with lock-up facilities. But I just . . . Let's look at the arguments that the other, that many, many other witnesses have made because I want you to have a chance to respond to these arguments before we make a decision on them.

So assuming there's not going to be any jail for youth and that the services are in place, the arguments that are being made by those who don't share this view are that, first of all, the closed custody arrangement is an alternative to making sure that youth don't go to jail. That's one argument that's being made. In other words if we're not going to have jail, you know, then there has to be some other kind of closed custody arrangement. And so this is a way of avoiding what we do now. In other words it's a way of avoiding putting young people who have been sexually abused on the street in jail. That's one argument that's being made.

A second argument that's being made is that youth, when they're facing addictions, can't possibly make wise decisions for themselves in a deeply addicted state and are at risk of ongoing abuse and death if they aren't removed from the street at least sufficiently long enough to be able to make sound decisions again. And that's a sort of a second argument that's being made.

A third argument that some people have made is that there's such a lot of youth out there on the street that we are going to miss . . . there's no way we can monitor any more on the basis of simply youth making their own decisions about when they access services, who's out there, unless we actually pick them up, find out who they are, and try to offer them help before we . . . instead of waiting for months or maybe years before they come in and ask for help. That's another argument that's being made.

You know, if we were in a little community with 15 or 20 youth that were in this circumstance, it would be . . . we'd know who they were and we wouldn't have to run around worrying about who they were. But in a big community with 250, 300 kids out on the street and being sexually exploited, you know, we need a mechanism to find out who these young people are long before they might come and ask for help.

A fourth argument that's being made is if we have this kind of arrangement where youth are picked up, that will nip it in the bud. In other words a youth will be out on the street and we'll pick him up the second or third time that they've been out there so maybe this isn't a solution for young people who've been out on the street for a long time. But it may stop other young people getting out on the street and staying out on the street because they'll be picked up in a week, instead of, you know, a year later.

And a lot of people are concerned that youth won't access the services that do exist and that years can go by before they will, and that, therefore, we need to intervene a lot earlier.

Now those are all arguments that are being made on the other side and I don't expect you to rebut all those arguments. I think you very articulately spoke to why you don't think that this option is a viable one, but I'd be interested in any of you making comments about why you don't agree with some of the arguments that the other side is making. You might want to pick a particular point and sort of say why, you know, you don't think that we should go this direction.

Those are the arguments that the other side is making and that we, as legislators, I think have to weigh and listen to. And if you've got any advice for us about why these arguments aren't the right path, I think it's very important that we hear them at this point in time because we're going to have to make a decision on all this in the next few months. Actually, this is the last day of formal public hearings.

So I did want to raise this because I've been, you know, struggling with it and I'm very conscious of the large amount of opposition that there is here in our own community to this idea. But anyway, I'd be very interested in your thoughts on the case that's being put by those who fervently believe that we should go this way.

Ms. LeBoeuf: — Okay. I'll start. I think that when we take a look at the youth that are out there right now and all of the options that you had just mentioned, I think that one of my biggest questions would be what ages are you looking at? You know, services provided for children who are 8, 9, and 10 are going to be far different than services that are provided for youth who are 16, 17, and 18. So what ages are you looking at?

What services are you looking at providing perhaps to make available to these youth if that's what you're going to do, is if you're going to go with, you know, legislation that's similar to Alberta? What kinds of services are you going to have in place? What are the supports for those children that are going to be going or that you are going to have that you're going to be taking off the streets?

What kinds of supports are you going to be setting up for those families? Because you're not going to be looking at the youth in isolation or the child in isolation. You also have to look at everything else that's going around that child. And when you take a look at what you're doing for the good for one child, you also need to recognize that there's a whole family involved here and what are we going to do in order to help that family. Because, as in Sarah's case, Sarah has been lucky enough that she's off the street now. But she's also got a younger sister now who is also affected.

What kinds of supports are we going to give families like Sarah's to help them to get off the street? Is it going to help that we take her sister out of the home without dealing with all of the other issues that are happening within the family? What about Sarah's sister who is doing drugs? You know, how do we deal with those kinds of issues? What are the services there? What are the supports there?

And those are things we really have to take a good hard look at, and I really firmly believe that we need to have those services in place before we can even take a look at taking the child and

doing what with him? If you have 400 kids in the province of Saskatchewan that are going to need some sort of help, what are you going to do with them?

When you take a look at closed custody, one of the things that I think about immediately is often when you take a look at children who are charged through the court system for whatever reason, you put them in a closed custody situation. And often there's all kinds of rules and regulations that that child has to follow in order to be successful. And whether that be coming in at 9:30, 10 o'clock, or a certain time at night — those kinds of things — often we end up setting up that child for failure.

And we need to take a look at those kinds of issues. Are we going to be setting up the child for failure if we offer a closed custody situation? When you take a look at perhaps the intent of a home where you're offering all of these services, but it's locked. All we have to do is take a look at the children's shelter to see how, as much as we have some really good intentions, that often when you have particular . . . specifically locked arrangements like that, that often things don't work out. It ends up becoming extremely difficult to handle and there's a lot of . . . there's just a lot of issues that end up having to be dealt with.

And I don't want to go into what's happening at the children's shelter but I know that they're facing a great many difficulties there. And it's around lock-up, and it's around charges, and children are being charged constantly because they may be angry at somebody, they may swear at somebody, and you get charged. And there's charges upon charges that these children are facing. And so when we're looking at facilities where there is lock-up, then we have to really take a good, hard look at what's happening there and see, you know, if that is an option.

When we're looking at facilities do we have . . . or are you looking at building a facility that is going to be large enough to deal with the number of children that are out there now? So addictions . . . what are some of the services that are being offered in terms of addictions?

Like there's not a whole lot out there, and we need to be able to set up those kinds of services and supports in order to deal with any of those issues before we can even take a look at what . . . at any kind of legislation.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you, Sandi. Did you want to make any comments on that?

Ms. Beacon: — Yes.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I know you feel very strongly about this so I'd value your advice.

Ms. Beacon: — Yes, very. When you take a child off the street because of what they're doing, what you're saying to them is you're bad. You may not be saying it from your mouth, but every authority figure in their life . . . when you've done something wrong you're punished in some way. When you take somebody and lock them down for 72 hours, you're telling them what you're doing is bad; you're bad. And that is what they're going to think. And by doing this you're victimizing the victim.

I think when you do this, you're not setting them on a perfect path. What you're doing is sending them into hell. What I mean by this is by locking them up for 72 hours you install subconsciously or whatever into their head that they're bad, which means that you're setting them on a longer path to recovery if they make it out alive.

And as we all know, our children are dropping like flies. They're dying. They're being killed. They're being raped and murdered. And by locking somebody down against their will for 72 hours you're setting them on this path even deeper than where they had begun.

But if you do it in an outreach kind of way, through a home similar to, you know, the safe house or the home that we're creating, you're actually reaching them on a level which says I love you, I care about you, and you know I'm here and this home's here so when you're ready to come, you can come. And if you're just ready to come for the night, that's okay. That is the step to recovery.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — That we would set youth back even further by going through this lock-up arrangement, no matter how well intended it was?

Ms. Beacon: — Definitely. You know, by picking them up and locking them up for 72 hours, no matter what you said to them in those 72 hours, they're going to throw it away and they're going to go deeper into a hole that they already can't see the light at the top of.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Sarah, did you have anything you wanted to add on this?

Ms. Ninnie: — I wanted to say, like, when you're recovering you're always going to go back into drugs . . . not always go back on drugs. There's going to be some point that you know you'll do it like for one time. You know, like it's very hard to break that.

So when we have our house we know that they're going to . . . they're not always going to be sober and we're going to be there for them like when they are, you know, when you want to quit and everything. Because quitting is like, it's hard but sometimes you . . . how do you say it . . . What I'm trying to say is like it's so hard to quit — the craving and everything — you might go back. Even working on the streets is like a craving too, to go back out there. And it's really hard to quit that too — the craving.

And another thing too I wanted to say is about locking up children or youth or taking them away from their families. Like, they need support with their families, you know, because it's . . . the only people that ever loved them is their families. No matter . . . like there's little kids that they love their mom and dad. They may be addictive or they may be drunk but they still love their mom, they still love their dad.

And I still love my mom, you know, no matter what she did. And I'm still going to love her until the day she dies and

probably until she's gone. You know, I try not to condemn them or the way they are because like the life that they had before when they were children was pretty awful too and cruel.

And like, for example, I know somebody. She's young, like she's only 16 years old and she has a child and they're trying to take her child away because they found out she was doing intravenous drugs. And you know they're trying to take her away from her family too, but her family helps her to raise her child and teach her how to be a parent.

And right now she's learning how to be a parent, like, she's trying her best and she's just a child herself, you know. Like just taking her away from her family, because her family is addictive, you know, is not the best plan. Like just to put her into a foster home away from her family and taking her away from her child, you know, probably . . . She told me, like, when she was 13 years old, she was going to die, like on her birthday, like commit suicide. And she said if I didn't have my baby or I didn't have my boyfriend, you know, they're the ones that I live for each day, you know, despite the drugs and stuff. I live for them, you know. I live for my baby. That's what she told me.

So yes, like, there should be more help for young mothers too, yes.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you, Sarah. Thank you all very much for answering a very tough question. I really appreciate it. I think the committee members really appreciate it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I just wanted to thank you also, a great deal. I just kind of have grown to love you guys. It's kind of wonderful. I just want to say though that I regret the whole implication around and the perpetuation of the word lock-up, because I know the connotations that has for people that have gone through residential schools. I know that.

It's so unfortunate that this term was even brought out to be used in the first place, because I know for a fact that in Alberta the woman that put forward the legislation recognized a few things. She recognized, first of all, that she was a woman also, and she, you know, she's very cognizant of the kind of things that have been very detrimental to primarily woman as far as sexual abuse historically.

She also knew that the services were not all in place in Alberta, but unless you table the legislation, there was not going to be a chance that all those services would come to be, would come to pass. It was like she had to make people aware of the need but because no one was listening, the table . . . the legislation hit the table.

What the whole intent was . . . And I ask you to put this in the perspective of your . . . of the place that you are trying to create, your long-term comprehensive healing services coming into . . . under the umbrella of the place that you are trying to create. It's a protective, secure, safe place for people to begin to renew their lives. And we know, and everyone knows, that that doesn't just happen overnight. It's a process where . . . somewhat like you said, that you end up falling back a little bit and moving ahead and so on, but all the time moving towards becoming exactly the beautiful person that you know you are and can always be for the rest of your life.

If in fact your place was the place that if I was an authority and I saw . . . and I heard from a young man or a woman on the streets that said, you know . . . I mean, people cry out in different ways for help. They don't always verbalize it. They don't always say I need help. But if I can detect from some training that this person is crying out for help, and basically they're saying that if someone doesn't help me, I'm going to commit suicide. And we've talked about that today, about suicides that happened.

So if a person can discern and understand that that person needs help and that they have tried time and time again on their own and they can't get help, and we brought them to your place and . . . you know, you recognize that if there isn't a security there for them that they will go out and most likely the next time you'll see them is in the morgue.

And I say this because we've spoken with mothers, one . . . a couple of them from Regina that have talked about the identification of their children consistently self-harming and being harmed by others and not recognizing, not being aware of the situation they're in, not really knowing.

We've talked to an ex-street worker that lives in rural Saskatchewan that was on the streets of Prince Albert, and she's 23 now with two children. And she's moved out of the street life. Very difficult, as you have mentioned, to try to get off the drugs and so on. But she did indicate to us very clearly, that I thought that when I was on the streets that I knew everything. I thought I was the smartest person in the world. And she said, I was street smart. But she said, now when I look back I realize that in that context I was also the stupidest because I was dying and I didn't know it and I didn't know how to take care of myself. So she had wished that someone would have intervened at some point to place her in a loving environment, yes, where there could be the beginning of healing.

And so when we refer to a secure, safe place and when other people tell us that in some situations there is a necessity for that — for people who consistently self-harm to the point where their lives are in great danger — that is why the legislation in Alberta came to pass. That it was in consideration and thoughtful concern for people.

It's like my child going through some of the teen years when, you know, you get a little rebellious and stuff and he says, I'm going to jump off the cliff mom. Well as much as I know that he needs to make his own decisions eventually and grow up in life, I cannot stand by and let him jump off that cliff, just because he's seen it on TV that you can fly. I mean, sometimes the thinking is not correct for what is happening.

And I think it's difficult for a young person who has been abused and who has self-harmed through a lot of drugs and everything else to be able to clearly think about making the best judgement for themselves. And sometimes people are able to . . . some other young people might be able to, but there are situations where people are crying out for help like that already and we've heard them.

And so that's the intent when we . . . and I'm sure the intent of many other people that talk about protective, secure, safe places. If your place could provide, or had the request to do that because someone was in danger of self-harming to the point of suicide, do you think you would be willing to expand your place to provide a secure sort of — not custody-type place, not place where persons are made to feel bad — but where they know that other people there that are providing the services are doing it out of genuine love and concern?

Do you think that you might be able to say yes, I love you enough that I'm just going to make sure that you're secure so that nothing further can happen to you at this point?

Ms. Beacon: — No. I don't agree with locking somebody down, but I do agree with going out to the street. And if you have those skills to recognize the problems, then you can mention that problem to the person. By you identifying somebody's problem and identifying that you know that they have pain acknowledges their feelings, which makes them more apt to be listening to what you are saying.

By doing an outreach you let these people know that you understand their pain, that you're there when they need you, that it's not helpless, it's not hopeless, and that you do have a safe haven for them to be at and then they will make the choice to come to you. And it may not be when they're sober, it may be when they're drugged up, but they do come and that's the whole point of it.

You have to reach out to get response back and it has to be a . . . it has to be something that's in place so you can reach out from.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate your comments today and thanks a million for coming. I hope you don't freeze up when you go outside. It's awfully cold today. Thank you very much.

I guess we're going to be breaking for a little while.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, we'll break until 1:30 and thank you for a wonderful presentation and an excellent job of responding to questions.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We're going to resume our hearings. We don't have the entire committee with us right now. Apparently they were late leaving for lunch and I'm sure that they'll be returning very shortly. But because we have a few time constraints we're going to proceed with the committee hearings at this time.

If we could have Bev Benson come forward please. Bev is a concerned parent and she has done a presentation for the committee before this day and she presented here with her daughter. But we welcome you back today, Bev, and I'm just going to let the committee members that are with us introduce themselves one more time to you.

Ms. Draude: — Hi, I'm June Draude. I'm the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Toth: — I'm Don Toth, the MLA from Moosomin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And Arlene Julé, MLA, Humboldt. And we have with us, Margaret Woods, she's the committee Clerk, as well as Randy Pritchard who's the technical adviser.

So welcome, Bev, and it's good to see you again. I'm glad you could be here to discuss things with us again. So if you'd like to just go ahead, that would be great. If you want to maybe . . . would you like to give the committee a little bit about your background?

Ms. Benson: — Okay. Well my name is Bev. I'm a mother of one of the children out there. She started out on the street as a child; today she's a young adult.

In April my daughter and I presented at the Centennial. At that time she had been off the street and had gone through treatment, and since then she has returned to the street and her little . . . the baby that she had with her is in care.

I guess what I see is, you know, like just the constant falling apart of the systems. It just continuously fails these kids. You know there's just such a really lack of resources available for when the kids need it. And that in Joylene's instance it was that resources weren't available immediately when she needed.

I think a lot of times we need to have those resources on hand rather than waiting for, you know . . . a referral waiting period is often the case. Money is always an issue, you know, to pay for these resources, to pay for childcare so she could have attended different programs you know to benefit her you know. We found that was always an issue.

Yesterday I heard a couple of people presenting and you know some of the things they said just really, really appalled me, and it just really broke my heart at the ignorance of people.

My daughter doesn't stand on that street corner liking what she does. My daughter has a severe addiction to drugs, and she's really hurt and she's really addicted. And by no means does that mean she doesn't love her children. I have sat and talked with her. I have chased and rescued her and dragged her off that street and always come back crying, you know, with me holding her.

Not ever did she say . . . And that's a question I asked her myself: do you like what you do? Is it a sex thing? And it was never a sex thing — not ever. It was just that you know she has a severe addiction. She's got severe hurt, childhood hurt that I probably inflicted on her and I parented her. Because I was hurt as a child by the system. At nine-years-old I was raised in the foster care system, sexually abused by caregivers, physically and emotionally abused, culturally deprived you know.

What happened in the residential school was the same thing that happened in foster care and those are the kind of parenting skills I inherited and practised on my children, on my daughter, who in turn you know who has turned up on the street.

It's been a real battle for me like to get back from there to here.

Yesterday you know there was discussion about rent increases in the Social Services system. That matters. The only way that I've been able to clean up my own life and my own act is to pull myself out of the inner city and pay the extra $300 out of my food money to pay for adequate, appropriate housing to save the rest of my children because I knew I had lost Joylene to the street.

You know, it's so unfortunate for myself and for my kids that it took Joylene to demonstrate those kind of behaviours when Social Services could have offered that so, you know, we didn't have to like fall in that way.

You know, just a few months ago Joylene was on her road to recovery but because of, you know, financial restrictions that that department refused to lower, it drove her back to desperation and back to where she is today, you know. It's sad. It makes me just really incredibly sad that we continue to do this to these kids.

I hope that the next time around you guys come around I'm not sitting before you telling you that I just buried my child because there wasn't resources available for her, because in my reality that could be it. Each night I go to bed and I don't know if the police are going to come knocking on my door and telling me my daughter has OD'd. I don't know that. It's really difficult for me to go to sleep at nights knowing I have a child out there that I can't help because there's nothing I can do for her. Not because I don't want to but because I don't know where to turn.

It's my belief that as parents of these children that parents need to begin to heal. That resources have to be available for those parents. We can't just put band-aids on our kids and think that they're going to be okay because ultimately, you know, like they can go into a program and get all the skills they need but unless they come home back to that stable surrounding where they were born into, you know it's going to fail.

One day, because I'm strong, I would like to believe that Joylene will one day get it together and be able to return home and know that she has a mom that's strong, that's sober, and that's really willing to reconcile and validate the pain I caused that child because I did not know better. And I can truly say that I did not deliberately hurt my child, that I truly love her, but this is what happens out there.

Yesterday when the two presenters said you know they offered a child $10,000, I wish the system would offer me $10,000 so I could find a treatment centre for my daughter to go to for long term. Does anybody know what that term 28 days in treatment means? Do you know where that comes from? Back when treatment centres opened, 28 days meant that's the length of time that medical services could pay for an individual to go. That's how much money was allowed at 28 days.

I've been sober five years. Everyday it's a struggle for me to remain where I'm at. It never ends and for those that are addicted to chemicals, you know that battle is twice as hard. I can just only imagine, you know, where my daughter's struggle is at. And I have several friends that are ex-junkies, I'll say, you know, and they share that battle with me. I see their successes and I really draw on that and believe that maybe, one day, Joylene will come out of it. But unless those resources and that money is available, at hand, it's not ever going to happen.

I hope next year, next fall, you know, we're not sitting here doing another little case study, and I hope my daughter is not laying somewhere in the ground somewhere. I hope that, you know, help will be there.

During the length of time that it took this to happen, to unfold, we could have probably developed two or three programs to last a year at Egadz that would help kids off the street. And it just kind of amazes me, you know, where money goes, you know.

We have moms out there just really wanting to make a better life for their kids. And you know many of us are in positions that, you know, could make the wheels turn faster. I had hoped something would have been available in the fall for Joy, but it didn't happen last fall. I know it's the same thing, you know.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well Bev, it's not the same thing. Today you have brought us further along in understanding that sometimes we have to recognize that there is something wrong with the system. I mean there is something wrong here. You presented to the committee before with your daughter and your hope was great there. Your intention is good. The love in your heart is real.

But you've spoken to us about some of the things that happened basically that weren't in place, things that weren't in place to assist your daughter on an ongoing basis, in a timely fashion, and she ended up on the streets.

So if you would like to continue a little bit more with your presentation, I didn't mean to kind of cut you off or anything, but I wanted to assure you that what you're saying is not just a repetition. It's something you . . .

Ms. Benson: — I don't know. I guess, like, just my story is so not unique is the point I'm trying to make. It is so not unique. It's a story I hear as being a part of that community out there, you know, that we share, you know. We're just moms wishing good things for our kids, trying to find ways, you know.

We can't walk into Family Service Centre on Avenue M there and discuss, you know, child prostitution and support each other as parents, you know. We just don't sit around and discuss child sexual abuse and you know, how we're going to get our kids to recover from chemical dependencies when they're busy talking about potty training, diaper rash, teething. It's so far from our reality.

I'm just saying, you know, also as parents, you know, we need those resources in place to help us vent in a healthy way, you know, to . . . for somebody we could reach out to. There's a lot of women out there that don't . . . they can't even begin to express the hurt and the anger and the guilt that they feel. In the five years of my recovery I've been fortunate, I've had, I've, you know, come across many good people that have held me up and assisted me and have cared for me and validated me.

There's lots of moms out there that don't have that. They just listen. You know, your child is just a little whore, she likes what

she does. It's not true. I don't . . . I've never yet to come across one woman that brought a child into this world and labelled that child, you know, to be sexually abused. I don't think, as women, you know, we're made that way. I think we bring children into the world with all good intentions, just in really bad circumstances.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, thanks. Thanks for having the courage to come forward and I'm sorry the news you have to share with us has been real difficult and very sad. Anyway we really appreciate you coming back. I think the new . . . you know, what you've shared with us is really important.

So I don't know whether members of the committee have questions, but . . .

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Don, do you have a question?

Mr. Toth: — Yes, one. Thank you for your presentation. I believe . . . I think I believe I missed the last opportunity that you were here. I missed a couple of meetings.

Yesterday, and you again mentioned it today, the allowance for housing. And, the reason I'm asking the question is because when the comment was made yesterday, I happened to have *The StarPhoenix* in front of me and that's what I've got in front of me right now. As soon as you made that comment, I've got . . . dig it out. Either I'm not understanding it properly, or the rates we've got here aren't . . . really aren't being . . . we're not getting an upfront rate here. And the reason I ask this is to find out exactly what you're finding when it comes to affordable housing.

For example, there's a number of apartments listed here and every one of them looks like single or double for $350 a month. Now I think Social Services . . . what's their rate? Is it just under 400 . . . just 400, I forget exactly what it is. But when we talk about housing, and that just happens to be some apartments here and then there's . . . and they're throughout the city, Carlton Towers on 5th Avenue North. This is . . . I'm not exactly sure where they're located.

So I guess what I'd like to ask of you, when we're talking of the allowance and what's available, it seems to me that some of these are fairly close to what Social Services presents for housing or accommodation. And I'd like to find out from you exactly what you're experiencing in regards to the lack of affordable housing.

Ms. Benson: — First of all, like you know, probably those apartments are . . . I'm assuming it's the apartments on 3rd Avenue for 350. There's several apartments in this downtown area, you know, that are fit to be burned. You know, they're cockroach and rat and mice infested.

I've yet to come across accommodations that really . . . that meet the needs of families. And also the other thing if, you know, when there is affordable, decent housing available, as First Nations people we have racism just basically really slammed in our face. Not only racism, being a single parent is another obstacle that, you know, we fight to overcome. You know, we . . .

Mr. Toth: — Well I guess that's what I'm looking for. These are Boardwalk properties, and they're on Edmund park, Russell Road, 10th Street, Charles Avenue. So I don't assume that they're all the downtown area. I think they'd be . . . I happen to be renting one right now in Regina, a Boardwalk property, and it's actually a fairly nice suite, but it's twice the amount that this is.

Ms. Benson: — Yes. I don't know. I just find that somewhat . . .

Mr. Toth: — And so I'm not sure. That's what I'm trying to get a bit of an understanding. Is it coming down to, like you just mentioned, is it really a fact that where there is racism comes in and First Nations people are not given the opportunity to rent? I don't know.

And I'm concerned when we hear that we don't have adequate funding and the costs are too high and yet I see these numbers. Now these may . . . I may not be getting the right numbers here, but that's what seems to be coming up off of the page here.

Ms. Benson: — I would I guess maybe challenge you to visit our inner city. And visit just as a concerned person, just as a concerned member of the government, to go in and visit and just look at the living conditions our children, you know, are forced up against. You know, like I said, I lived off the inner city not a few . . . just a few blocks off on the other side of the tracks, you know, and I was paying an extra 300. I was paying $800 for a decent place to live.

It was by no means a Chateau. But, you know, it was clean. The landlord, you know, would fix things and that. But, you know, like in our inner cities, where our girls and our kids are at, you know . . .

Mr. Toth: — Well I'd just like to respond to that.

Ms. Benson: — . . . it doesn't even begin, like it doesn't even begin to match. Like when you have a family, you know, of four and five kids, even three or four kids, you know, you can't coop them up in a two-bedroom apartment and not have the kind of . . . you know, there's no boundaries set. You know, people need, you know, healthy space, you know, to develop in healthy ways to be able to establish healthy boundaries. Just because there's a two-bedroom apartment available at X amount of dollars that fit in with the Social Services guidelines doesn't mean that's appropriate.

You know, we need to meet the needs of the people, the needs of those families. If there's a child having been sexually abused, is it appropriate to put a child in with another child or are we going to like just allow that child some space, you know, to heal and grow. Or are we just going to like fit them in just because Social Services . . .

Mr. Toth: — Yes, I just want to respond to the one thing, that Arlene and a few of us through Building a Nation did actually do a fair bit of a tour of the inner city. And we've got some of an idea of some of the residences that people are in, so a number of us have had that privilege; we understand that.

I'm just trying to get the understanding on the other side because one of the presenters, I believe yesterday, indicated that having to leave the inner core to actually find . . . get away from the problems of the inner core and yes, it cost them a little more to do that but that was the only way they could leave that type of lifestyle behind them, so . . .

Ms. Benson: — And that's exactly what I've said today. I've had to leave that so that my other children can have a chance. I've had to leave that area and, you know, move to the east side just to take a break from . . . And it's really hard because like I . . . just because I live on the east side doesn't mean like, you know, I've left that behind because the rest of my family lives in that . . . as First Nations people, you know, we're so extended-family bound, and that.

So just because I've physically removed myself from there doesn't mean that my heart is not still in that place. We're just . . . as First Nations people we're not made that way. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Mr. Toth: — Well I realize there's differences in the cultures; there's no doubt about that. But we certainly have to find ways in which we can somewhat be accommodating and yet address the problems facing us, like in the situation with your daughter. And I realize as a mother you can do so much but eventually in the case, your daughter's case, you've made a significant effort to assist her off of the street.

I'm not sure, you've probably reached the end of your rope and she'll have to reach the end of her rope to leave that environment if she chooses. You've done everything you can. Somehow I'm not exactly sure how society addresses those types of situations.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Are there any other members that have questions? Peter, would you like to talk with her and I'm going to wrap it up after.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — No, I think you've very articulately stated what needs to be done and I'm very grateful to you for doing that.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Bev, I'd like to just talk with you about your comments stating that the resources were not immediately and readily available when Joylene would have needed them.

Could you be very specific with that and take us through this step by step just . . . I don't mean to make you go through the whole story again, but what resources were needed that would have helped her to stay off of the streets that were not there and that you could not find or get anybody leading you to existing resources if they are there?

Ms. Benson: — One of them was that Joylene really needed to consistently do a follow-up because of her addiction and, you know, she is severely addicted. She just constantly needed that support and to have child care available for her. That process couldn't be followed through because she needed to make an appointment with her financial worker. Either that or there was too many social workers involved and not enough contact back and forth. You know that was always an issue.

Who do you turn to you know like for that financial aid? Another problem was like the referral systems. You know to get into a treatment facility, you know, often takes weeks when that individual needs help like within a few days. You don't tell a drug addict, oh hold off for three weeks here because it's just during those really, really sensitive times, where they're really calling for help, that they need help like right now. Addiction has no time limit and it knows no sense of hanging on, you know. And so many times Joylene came and said, like you know, this is what I need, I need a break. You know just different things. I need to get out of this city.

You know my battle has always been with Social Services because I just hold so many things responsible to them. I just think that they lack accountability. I just have major problems with the Aboriginal unit. It's really my belief that those people were hired just for the colour of their skin because they sure follow the same policies as the non-Aboriginal system.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So when you talk about the need for follow-up, when it was identified, I mean Joylene had a social worker?

Ms. Benson: — She had a social worker and a family worker. She had a worker at Egadz and this and that.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Who all knew about her addictions. And so — and that she would need ongoing continuum of care — so from what you're telling me, Joylene was the one that had to always be sort of reaching to that phone trying to get a hold of any of those workers, and she had difficulty in being able to access any of those workers when she needed them.

Ms. Benson: — Yes, and even for her to get a parent aid and a contract worker took time, took referral. You know for them . . . First she had to phone them, they had to phone her back. And they had to come and do a visit and then refer her. You know like that whole process just took such an incredible amount of time. You know aside of having to deal with triggers that were continuously coming up.

And as a parent you know I just like, I didn't have the skills to deal with it. She needed professional help. All I could be there was, you know, supportive and to encourage her. I did not have the professional skills to help her deal with those triggers. And that was the whole frustration.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — How old is Joylene right now?

Ms. Benson: — She's 19.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Nineteen. If you were asked as a parent now, knowing what you have tried to do to effect some help for Joylene — all of the initiatives that you took to try to keep her safe and to try to help her on the road to healing — would you feel that it would be beneficial to her if she was put in a protective secure place for long-term treatment so that she could be sure to have the kind of services she needed on a continual basis without, you know, maybe taking the chance

that she would go out and possibly not be able to contact the help when she felt she needed again, or end up back into drugs and feel, you know, amiss at being able to try to get in touch with the system again for help?

Ms. Benson: — Like forcibly?

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well I'm saying if there was a protective place, if there was a place that was protective, secure, where the focus was on providing her for a continuum of services that she needed so that she could go through a longer period, a long-term treatment that could help her to stabilize finally and maybe move into a healthier life?

Ms. Benson: — It would be nice for a place for Joylene to be able to go to like a treatment, a long-term treatment centre. Like I said like the 28 days just barely gives time for a person that's addicted to morphine and coke barely, you know, that enough time to even come off of that let alone to be begin to deal with the issues. They put them in like in a protective . . . it kind of sounds like it's forcible and I don't know, I'm just not . . .

Joylene is institutionalized. Joylene has grown up in the institution. She was 15 and she was being convicted of attempted murder. Joylene has, you know, like severe problems that you know she seriously needs to address and those resources need to be available and available when she needs them, not when the society decides that they make themselves available to her. That's just the way; that's just the way sick people are.

Like I really believe that's the way kids are. They know no time, and it's my belief that Joylene still is in a really childlike mental state because of the extent of her drug use. You know, it's really hindered her ability to think as an adult.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well certainly in the past I know that there have been some institutionalized lock-up kind of situations where there wasn't . . . the focus wasn't on healing and long-term treatment. It was focused on locking up and basically keeping these people away from the rest of society.

But I'm not talking about that. I'm talking if you could imagine that there might be a system that would change where there would be long-term healing treatment in a protective place, where that person could genuinely get the kind of healing and services that they need leading them to a life where they're happier and better off.

Ms. Benson: — When that gets built I'll be there with all my kids and grandchildren. But just seriously, but, you know, I think that we need family treatment facilities. Again it's my belief that an individual cannot heal. You just don't, you just cannot heal. Joylene, without having to deal . . . like she's got two daughters, one whom I have custody of, and the other one is in care with the other grandmother.

And see, the way this system continuously failed is that in the Social Services policies it clearly states that extended families need to maintain that connection. That has already failed both of my grandchildren, both of Joylene's children, because Social Services refuses or doesn't even want to call me. And I've asked like, can I have a gas voucher so I could take the one granddaughter I have and take her to go visit the other one. Without again playing telephone tag with them. That resource should be available for my grandchildren because that's not their fault, you know, what their mom's going through.

My granddaughter should have, you know, that opportunity to be together so that already we can catch, you know, that hurtful disease of family break-ups there. Maybe I'll never come to a place in my life where I can mend that between Joylene and myself, and Joylene and her girls, but you know what, I could start here. And that system continues to fail to do that.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. Well, thank you very much, Bev, for coming forward today and sharing with us your difficulties and your struggle, and we appreciate it so much. And we are trying, we're hearing, you know, where the system in the past hasn't been the best way all the time, and that's why we're here. I mean we're here to try to make the changes that will help families like yours. So thank you very much.

Ms. Benson: — I came here, not, not in search for pity but to talk for other women that don't have that strength. I don't need the pity, like, oh poor her, you know, and all that. I really don't, because I know I'm strong and I know I've taken the steps to acknowledge who I am and begin to validate the interruptions that have been made in my life.

But I come here for my fellow sisters that don't have that; that their spirits are broken, that their children's spirits are so broken that they can't even begin to speak up for themselves. That's who I come for. Because like I said, my story is not unique, not unique by a long shot. We just have women's spirits out there that are just so broken by the systems that, you know, they can't come here.

And so I just want to take this time to thank you for listening to me.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well, I commend you on your courage in doing that very thing, and coming here to voice these concerns on your behalf and on behalf of the many families.

Ms. Benson: — Okay, thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you, Bev.

Ms. Benson: — Yes, thanks.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Deborah and Roxane, if you'd be ready, we . . . I think rather than having a break — we're just conferring here — but I think we'll just keep on going if that's okay with you.

Thank you very much for coming and just make yourself comfortable. Have you had an opportunity to meet all the MLAs that are here? I know we all know who you are. But is there anybody you haven't met? Good. Welcome, Roxane.

Ms. Schury: — Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — It's very nice to have you

both here.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Good afternoon, Deborah and Roxane. I'd like to also welcome you, and go ahead, Peter.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Sure. Well listen, why don't you just take your time and launch into your presentation in whatever way you'd like to.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you very much. And good afternoon.

I have prepared a written submission which you received in advance of this presentation today, so my intention here is just to make a brief statement only and then to welcome your questions and discussion.

I'm really honoured to have an opportunity to present to you the perspective of the Children's Advocate office on this very important topic. I also want to say that I think the creation of this special committee was a bold and courageous step of the Legislative Assembly, and I want to congratulate you on making these deliberations and this issue a priority of the Assembly. I think it's very important what you're doing.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — . . . for a second. I'm just speaking personally, but we got, I know we got this yesterday, but we sat late into the evening and, to be honest, I haven't had a chance to read it and I suspect most members of the committee haven't yet either, although I don't want to speak for everybody. Maybe somebody was very ambitious and stayed up late.

But feel free to make your presentation a little longer because I think you're speaking to a group of committee members, many of whom haven't had a chance to read it. I certainly haven't yet and I apologize for that, but there just wasn't time.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Okay. What I'll do is speak briefly to the points that are in there and the written submission has more detail with regards to legislation, various other documents and reports that I've referenced completely in the full submission. And I could answer any questions you wish about that, or I can provide you with copies of any of the documents that I've referenced as well, if you would find that of assistance.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — So maybe I'll just speak to the main points, because I'm sure much of it is already familiar territory for you.

What I've decided to do is talk about the issue of abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade in relation to children's rights. And it's because I know you've already heard from a number of well-informed and very passionate witnesses, I wanted to put to this issue a context on children's rights because I think that's an important element from the perspective of the Children's Advocate.

As a society, as members of our community and as elected officials, I think we all have a responsibility to protect the rights of children. One of the rights children have, which you well know, is to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Ensuring that children's rights, in that regard, are protected is complex and I know you know that too. And it's a difficult task. We can't protect the rights of children from sexual exploitation and abuse without also paying attention to all of the other rights to which they're entitled because, in many ways, the abuse of children through sexual exploitation is a symptom of us not protecting their rights in other regards. This is my view.

So ensuring that this right and all the rights of children are protected has to be recognized, in my view, as inherent to the human dignity of every child. And we have to ensure that when we implement one right, that we are also ensuring the interdependence of that on respecting all rights.

I'm really emphasizing this because I think it's critical when you're looking at recommending action, that children are treated in accordance with their fundamental rights across a spectrum of issues.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Saskatchewan endorsed this convention. What that means is that state parties like Canada and Saskatchewan have a responsibility — we have a basic and fundamental responsibility — to ensure that children's rights are protected legislatively and through public policies and practices that affect children and families. This is a commitment that you as a government and Canada have made internationally.

I want to emphasize four specific rights today in relation to this particular issue and then I'll just summarize some of the key actions that our office would support in this regard.

The first right that I want to talk about is the right to survival. The fundamental to protecting a child's right to survival and the right to life is protecting their rights to adequate standard of living, to adequate nutrition and clean water, to the highest attainable standard of health care, and to adequate shelter.

And I know you've heard portions of that right to survival and provision really —it's a right to survival and a right to provision in terms of — from the various witnesses. This is fundamental to ensuring children's rights.

When child poverty is examined closely, it's clear that in Saskatchewan it's young, single-parent mothers, their young children, First Nations and Metis people that are the most profoundly affected by poverty here in our province. And I can't say enough. And this isn't meant as a . . . this isn't meant lightly, but eliminating poverty has to continue to be a primary focus of social policy and social programs. And that continues to be a basis for many of the issues that children who are being exploited through the sex trade are faced with every day.

In addition to protecting right to survival and provision, I think we can also look at . . . in order to protect children whose development is at serious risk, we have to give support to children and their families in the prenatal, neonatal, and early childhood period. Saskatchewan action plan has made a

commitment to articulating an early childhood strategy.

And I think creating a clearly articulated plan for supporting early childhood development and then taking immediate and sustained action toward implementing that plan is critical. And I think we're still hoping to see a comprehensive plan in the area of early childhood and support to young children and their families as a part of protecting the child's right to survival and provision.

The second right I wanted to highlight this afternoon is the right to protection. Children have a right to be protected and safeguarded. I don't think we would dispute that. It's clear to me, and I'm sure to you, that it's really parents and families that are in the strongest position to safeguard their children, and we have to therefore provide support for parents to do that. Parents need to be supported in their responsibility to safeguard their own children, and many parents want to — and we just heard from a parent who said that to you — want to protect and safeguard their children and feel that they haven't got the resources to do that adequately.

Children have a right to be directed and guided by their parents, and that's clearly stated in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. They need to have parents supported in their primary responsibilities to them as their children.

The convention states, and I'll just quote here that:

> . . . States Parties (that means Saskatchewan) shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities, and services for the care of children.

So as a province, as a country, we have a responsibility to provide appropriate assistance to parents so that they can perform their child-rearing responsibilities properly and carefully and in a way that will safeguard their own children.

I know you've reviewed the Out of the Shadows agenda for action which was created by youth delegates at an international summit of sex-exploited youth. I was really privileged to be one of very few adults invited to participate at that summit. Those young people have clearly stated that governments are obligated to create laws which reflect the principle of zero tolerance of all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and youth.

Young people themselves think that we have to have laws that reflect the principle of zero tolerance, which I know is one of the principles of this committee. These young people want to be protected. They don't want to be punished as criminals. They want to be protected also in environments that are respectful, dignified, and absolutely safe for them.

The third right I want to talk about is the right to fair treatment. So children have a right to be safeguarded and protected not only from child abuse and sexual exploitation, they also have a right to be protected from any form of further harm or mistreatment by those same authorities that are aiming to protect them.

So we have to not only protect children from child abuse and exploitation, but they also a right to be treated fairly and to be protected from any further harm that the system might generate towards them. Because that's a challenge and a problem, and I know you've heard that too.

Children who have been placed by authorities for the purpose of their care have to be further protected by regulations and by programs and services for them. It's not enough just to protect the children from the abuse itself; we have to safeguard them beyond that.

Children have a right to regulations that include high standards for the child's treatment and care to . . . that include rights of the child to fair treatment including the right to be heard in decisions. Basically the rights of natural justice which I have elaborated on in the long paper.

Balancing a child's right to protection from harm with a child's right to fair treatment is a complex issue, and I know you've been struggling with that one. I would argue that a right to fair treatment includes the right to more than just procedural fairness, so their treatment is a part of the right to fair treatment. Procedural fairness, I mean, is a part of the right to fair treatment.

But in addition to that we have to ensure the child's right to maximum development. This to me means that we, as a province, have an obligation to provide appropriate supports to children and their families to protect children from violence and any other form of maltreatment. So we have an obligation to protect children from violence and to protect children from maltreatment in any form.

Fair treatment to me means directing our energy at preventing child maltreatment in all forms, and then giving children and their families real and sustained support when maltreatment has occurred.

And I know that you've heard from various witnesses what real and sustained support might look like for them and again I've elaborated on that more in the document.

I want to say that it's been my experience these last six years as Children's Advocate that children in Saskatchewan are not consistently afforded these protections and rights. Their right to protection and the right to fair treatment are not consistently provided to them.

Providing children with timely access to appropriate treatment services such as alcohol and drug treatment or mental health services is a challenge in our province, particularly in more remote or rural areas. These children are not able to access those kinds of treatments in the way that they need to.

In addition, Aboriginal children or children who aren't in the main cultural stream, whatever that might look like, but in particular in our province Aboriginal children need special cultural considerations in treatment and in the other support programs that they require. Culturally specific services that are available in our province are insufficient to meet the needs of all of these Aboriginal children.

Children must be assured in law and in practice that they receive treatment that is provided with the utmost respect in an environment that is truly conducive to their healing and recovery. And I've heard . . . I know that that's a concern to you, that any kind of treatment or care provided to children has to be conducive to their healing and recovery.

I want to raise for your serious consideration a caution, that any residential services for children requires strict safeguards and significant resources. And this is particularly so if you decide to hold children involuntarily.

In Saskatchewan we have a very long way to go to ensure that the children we are now caring for in the child welfare system and in the young offenders system are treated with the respect and dignity to which they're entitled. We're falling short already in the services we're providing to children in foster care and children in the young offenders system.

As you know, last year alone, I tabled an annual report with you where I raised concerns about the care, the standards of care for children in young offender facilities. This has been a concern of mine for the last six years.

I also tabled a special report with you on the needs of children in foster care. You know that we're falling short in those areas. I know it from my own experiences. So I want to repeat: we have a long way to go to ensure that the children we're now caring for in the child welfare system and in the young offenders system have the safeguards that we know they need in order to have an environment that's conducive to their healing and recovery.

I want to caution you that any . . . And if you decide to introduce further residential care for children, that you look very carefully at what we're already doing. And how with all good intention, with well-meaning, caring folks, we're still failing to meet that safeguard for children on a daily basis.

The last right I want to raise with you is the right to empowerment. I decided to include two elements to the right to empowerment because I think they're both important to ensuring that children are . . . have the opportunity to be fully included in our society, have the opportunity to sit here with us and contribute to our society as they continue to grow up.

One of the areas of empowerment, from my perspective, is the right of a child to an education. I think the right to an education is a form of a way that we can support and encourage young people's participation in our society in a very meaningful and very powerful way. The right to an education must be implemented on the basis of equal opportunity for all children — every single child in our province needs a right to school and a right to education. We know that's not happening.

We just had an interim report on the task force on the role of public schools who have told us that there are many hidden children in our society who are not attending school. We also know that many of these young people who are being sexually exploited through the sex trade are not attending school. This is an obvious gap. We have to find a way to ensure that education meets the needs of all of these children. Even if mainstream education doesn't work for them, we need to find other alternatives.

We cannot afford to underestimate the importance of an education, and our societal responsibilities to find a way for all children to benefit fully from this right — this is their right. And it's our responsibility to find a way for them to access that right.

So I urge you to make the right to an education for all children, including those disconnected — our hidden youth — one of the priorities of your final report.

The participation rights of children are also part of the right to empowerment. Children want to be, young people want to be included in any successful strategy to end sexual abuse and exploitation.

Last week a very powerful report — I'm sure you've seen it — *Sacred Lives* was released. A very compelling report based on consultations with Aboriginal youth across Canada who have themselves experience in the sex trade. Those young people who courageously came forward for the *Sacred Lives* report gave us a gift.

We have to listen to what those young people and other young people have said. And they have identified a number of very specific actions that they'd like to see us take: round tables of young people; opportunities to influence policy; sitting at the table over the long haul; working as peer helpers, peer to peer helpers; and helping others . . . helping themselves as experiential youth to bring other youth off the streets, out of the sex trade, even if it isn't on the streets.

Those young people have given us a gift. And I think it becomes our sacred responsibility to listen to what they've said to us. Their courage — we need to have our courage too. And we need to work with them to take the action that they as young people believe will make a difference.

It's not that easy to really listen to young people and then take forward what they say. It's easy to say that in a kind of tokenistic way that we want to do that. But to really do that we have to be willing to adjust ourselves. These young people may not fit into the kind of way that we want to have action taken — a kind of classic paper trail with policies. That may not work. And in order to really take their gift, we have to be willing to come to where they are and work with them in a meaningful way.

The fifth point I want to make is around a national agenda for action, which I know you can influence and not decide about. The ECPAT report of November 20, 2000, was very critical of Canada's lack of action in regards to a national agenda for action to end sexual exploitation of children. This comes out of the world summit commitment that Canada made to create a national agenda for action and then the *End Child Prostitution* report from last month was very critical of Canada not taking any national action in this regard. And I think we have to take that perspective very seriously.

I urge you as Saskatchewan legislators to work with your

federal counterparts to create the national vision and agenda for action that is so urgently required. This has to do with Criminal Code. This has to do with national and federal legislation, federal programming as well. I realize a lot of it has a provincial jurisdiction. Canada's made a commitment to work on a national, national action in this regard.

I know that I haven't gone into all the detail that's in my written submission, but just in conclusion I'll summarize what I think are some of the key actions and that I would invite you to consider as you prepare your final report and recommendations.

One is I would urge you to continue to focus social policy and programs on eliminating child poverty in Saskatchewan. That's absolutely critical in my view.

I urge you to create and immediately implement a long-term plan for supporting early childhood development and supporting children to develop within the context of their family. I urge you to assist parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities, and there are a number of ways you can do that.

I urge you to ensure that community-based initiatives on behalf of and with children are given priority in resource allocations.

I urge you to evaluate the impact of the 1999 amendments that were made already to The Child and Family Services Act and how those amendments . . . if they are making any difference. We don't really know and so making further amendments at this point when we don't know the impact of those amendments from last year seems to be something that you might want to look at.

I urge you to ensure that the legislation and policies that we now have in place to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour are utilized to their full potential. And I know you've heard other witnesses raise that issue with you.

I urge you to protect child victims of child abuse from being blamed or criminalized for being victims of child abuse. To consider how you can implement recommendations that have been made in previous, very well thought through reports. Like the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution report from December of 1998. There's some very significant recommendations in there with regards to Criminal Code amendments, with regards to witness protection programs to protect children so that they can come forward and make statements against perpetrators and pimps in a safe way. There's good recommendations in there.

And I urge you to safeguard all of the rights of children in any actions you recommend, including a child's right to procedural fairness and a right to high standards of care. I urge you to make the right to an education a reality for all Saskatchewan children, and to take the recommendations from experiential youth very seriously.

In closing I just want to quote from the *Sacred Lives* report a couple of quotes that I think are quite eloquent from my perspective.

I know you met one of the authors, Cherry Kingsley. Cherry Kingsley and Melanie Mark stated:

> Having nowhere to go, most youth who find themselves in this situation (referring to being involved in the sex trade) are also lacking integral life skills and have few, if any, chances for meaningful employment. Their situation becomes one of survival, and deprivation of the basic necessities of life ensures that sex for money . . .

I think I've got it misquoted here.

> Their situation becomes one of survival, and (that they involve themselves in) sex for money (in order to get) food, shelter, drugs, or clothing . . . (this) is a decision for them about day-to-day existence . . . commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth (need safe places to frequent) . . . (They need) tailored life skills, education and employment programs (and) financial support. (Without these) commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth have few alternatives for physical and economic survival, and little opportunity to reintegrate themselves into the larger (communities).

And just a final statement in closing. One of the youth who was interviewed said a lot of our issues are the same all the way across the country. Whether we want to see it or not, it all comes back to that same thing, the abuse in our families and our communities.

And the voices of the kids are not even heard and that's so unfortunate because we have young kids who are dying in our communities at very young ages because they're taking their lives. They think nobody is listening to them and that they don't have a voice.

I know throughout your deliberations you've learned a great deal about how we have to work together to protect children. I'm looking forward to your final report and to your recommendations, and most importantly, I'm looking forward to actions that will be taken as the recommendations are implemented. Thank you for this opportunity and I welcome your questions.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Deborah, thank you very much for a very articulate presentation. And I know there'll be questions so I'm going to turn it over to whichever committee member would like to go first.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Deborah. Certainly your report about listening to the voices I think is very important, and it's a pleasure to meet with a group of foster parents. And . . . (inaudible) . . . and the challenges they face because many of them have FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) and FAE (fetal alcohol effects) in the children under their care.

I think one of the biggest problems we're facing and will be facing as we sit down to write our final report, is really the lack of support or consideration given from leadership of our First Nations community. This committee has endeavoured to invite the leadership of First Nations, the First Nations community to come before it to discuss the issue. We certainly heard from . . .

probably the majority of representatives have come from the First Nations background; and as we heard just a moment ago, a mother who . . . with a heart that was just bleeding for her daughter.

And I'm not exactly sure how we, at the end of the day, are going to arrive at a conclusion to some of the problems we face in regards to child prostitution, especially in regards to the numbers of First Nations children on the street, unless we can arrive at some kind of consensus amongst the leadership in the First Nations community.

And I think the average First Nations person is like the average white person. They find it very frustrating sometimes when the leadership may not really be listening. I'm wondering, in your deliberations, your discussions, if you've got any suggestions or any things that you would suggest that we could maybe explore in regards to addressing this major problem that we face.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I can only speak from my own experience. The review we did last year on the needs of children in foster care, we know that about 60 per cent of children in foster care in Saskatchewan are a member of a First Nation, about another 10 per cent are either Metis or non-status Indian children. So we're talking about 70 per cent of children in care in Saskatchewan are Aboriginal children.

My experience was that many First Nations people came forward during that whole process. That we had a panel of key stakeholders, over half of whom are First Nations or Metis people. And that it took time to help develop trust and to go into communities, and being in the community and talking with the people and really believing that they're going to make the difference in their own communities in a way that will be successful for their children.

I guess my own experience is that it's going to take a lot of time and a lot of respect, and a lot of willingness on the part of non-Aboriginal people to support how Aboriginal people believe the healing is going to happen in their own communities. There's a long history of difficulties and division that still needs to be healed.

And so, I don't personally think there's an easy answer to your question, Don.

Mr. Toth: — I have to agree with you. And having had the privilege of visiting with the leadership of Building a Nation, Metis, First Nations and a white person, certainly that was brought to our attention as well. That when we're dealing with the First Nations community there is a . . . and I just chatted with a presenter this morning, Maurice, who is an elder. The fact that many of the First Nations community have lost that spiritual heritage that they, that they used to have then. I'm not saying the white community hasn't lost it neither.

But the sense I got there that there is a healing that goes just beyond that physical; there's an inner healing that needs to take place.

And you talk about the trust. I guess that's probably the greatest hurdle that we're going to have to overcome, is building that trust. And certainly when you build that trust, for that mother who was here earlier, having had someone there at the time when her daughter was maybe making the attempts to move from the street and her mother was trying to help her and yet without putting her in a situation that she would feel that she was being basically looked down upon again — what I mean by that is maybe some sort of confined situation.

And yet if we're going to protect some of these very vulnerable young children, I don't like using the word confined but we need to put them in . . . we need to probably create an environment where they have the support of parents but maybe not necessarily in the parent's home because some of the abuses really come from the parent's home.

So I guess where do we go from here? And the question that they've asked of a number of groups over the last days is, how do we coordinate our efforts? Because I think I would have to say that we have about 20 or 30 organizations each reaching out in a separate form and yet trying to do the same thing. And so do you have an answer for us, Deborah?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I don't. But you know the *Sacred Lives* report that we all just received last week, that was Aboriginal young people — Cherry is 26 now — reaching out to other Aboriginal young people, bringing First Nations and Metis leaders to the release of the report, to making public commitments to support the recommendations in there.

And those recommendations talk about bringing young people together in round tables and having the young people direct the process in some way. And I think we're going to have to find a way to humble ourselves and listen to what these young people are telling us.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. Are there other committee members that have questions?

Well, Deborah, what you've offered us is of course very valuable, there's no doubt. When you see a situation that has basically such a great magnitude of pain for our children in the province, it is very difficult to sort of know where to start and what responsibility lies with governments. And we're trying to sort out what responsibility lies with community, and communities are bringing forward to us many examples of where they have taken responsibility.

And I think there are a number of very admirable efforts being put forward in cities like Saskatoon. But it appears that they are disjointed. And so that tells me that if there's a genuine intent to focus on the healing of children and the rights of children, then we must focus on that.

Because when you're disjointed and not co-operating and not collaborating, it means that you're protecting your own turf, and that's never going to be able to result in using the financial resources that we have in assisting the children. The focus is not on the children.

So that's one thing that certainly has to be looked at and corrected.

Deborah, I wanted to just for a moment reiterate one of the things that you have said. You said that we have a responsibility to protect children from violence, so those of us that are adults and those of us in society must be very aware of that responsibility.

Now I've had mothers come to me that say they're trying to protect their children from violence on the streets, from being gang raped, from being groomed for the sex trade, from being beaten up, all of those things. But these children happen to be over the age of 16 and so they have . . . it is stated that they have the right to either accept help or services or to refuse them.

And so that kind of a frustration for a parent when they look at the laws in Saskatchewan and they say, because my daughter or my son is over 16 and really they're messed up with drugs, with alcohol, with a lot of confused thoughts and they're dying, we see them slowly dying and we're afraid they're going to end up in the morgue, but we don't have the right to insist that they continue with treatment and so on because they're over 16, you know.

You know, this, when I hear this, for me it's a great dilemma because there are people trying to take their adult responsibility to protect their children from violence and still the way the system is set up . . . and it's set up because of, quote, "the rights of the child," to make their own determination or to refuse wholesome treatment that would help them to live really fruitful and happy lives. And because they are allowed to make that determination in spite of their illness, they could end up in the morgue.

And I'm really struggling with this point so I need you to comment on that. Because when parents come for help and they say, well you know, I would like to see my child in some protected, secure, safe environment that genuinely has the components in place to assist the child to come to some good determinations and to respect themselves and go on from there. And still, you know, this parent is grappling with what to do when they want the best for their child and still their child is saying no, I would rather continue in a harmful situation. And as a society, we have put in a law that says, well, because that child is 16 years old or over 16, they have the right to kill themselves.

So I need your comment on that and what you think — if you think that that should be changed or how do you . . . how does one justify talking about protecting children from violence and asking for adults to assume that responsibility; and then when adults are trying to assume it, they are being told that we understand you have the responsibility and we know that you have it, but we're not giving you the right to take the authority to help bring that responsibility to fruition.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well that's a lot of different pieces there, but I'll just . . . First of all, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* speaks to a definition of child as a person under the age of 18.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Right.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And we have confusing legislation in Saskatchewan with regards to what we call a child. The Child and Family Services Act says you're a child up to the age of 16. Under the Young Offenders Act you're treated as a young person up to the age of 18 under . . . except for certain circumstances.

In Saskatchewan you have to be 18 to sign for your own medical surgery in a hospital. However, if you're a 16-year-old you can sign for your child's surgery. But you couldn't sign for your own; you'd have to have your parent or guardian's consent.

We have very confusing legislation in our province about how we define a child and I would urge you to seriously look at that and ask yourself: is our definition in Saskatchewan of a child consistent with the international standard of a person under the age of 18, first of all, because you're not giving a clear message about that.

And if we want to treat a person under the age of 18 as a person who needs continued support from society, which we do in many circumstances, we need to give young people a consistent message about that. That's my particular view but it's not inconsistent with other jurisdictions throughout the world who are grappling with the issue of age and how we define a child legislatively.

We need to then give young people consistent messages about that too. If you believe that a child is a person who's 17, then if they're 17 and commit a serious crime, are you going to treat them as a child or an adult? You need to give them a consistent message.

You can't be telling them you're going to treat them as a child in one place but in another place you're going to hold them responsible as an adult and not give them choices. You need to find a way to give these same children who are under the age of 18, in my view, a consistent and fair message about how you're defining their level of maturity.

We have, in Canada, decided that at 18 for many purposes — you have the right to vote, you have the right to do many other things — but at 19, you have to be 19 to purchase alcohol. You know, so we're not giving a clear message to these young people. You have to be 18 in Saskatchewan to sit on a board of a non-profit society and actually vote.

So I would just urge you as a Legislative Assembly to think about, you know, to introduce legislation or regulations around age. You need to give a clear message about what that means.

You can't treat a 17-year-old as a child in one circumstance and then hold them accountable as an adult somewhere else. It just doesn't make sense. And these kids find that extremely confusing. You're bumping kids of 16 and 17 into adult sentencing in adult courts, you're sending them to adult corrections, and yet you're wanting to hold a 17-year-old like a child in a place of security or care. It's just too confusing.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I concur with you on that. It is confusing and I think that there needs to be some consistency.

I just have one more question in that regard. Deborah, do you know if Saskatchewan is the only province that has an inconsistency as far as reference to age? And do you know of any other province that gives the age of consent to a child at 16 or do you know if other provinces are consistent in it being 18 or what is the situation throughout Canada?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well we're not sure. Neither Roxane or I know the answer to your question.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — All right. Thank you.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We think it's inconsistent though because I know it's 18 in British Columbia for example.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Do you know if that was 18 in British Columbia for a long time now or did that just come about since they had major tragedy there a few years back?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No, it's been that way for quite a while.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — For a long time? Okay, thank you. And we need to do some research on that, but thank you very much.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — It's a good question. Sorry I don't have the answer.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Deborah. I really appreciated your words. I have a couple of issues.

I know that you've written the report on foster homes which I understand must have been very difficult to do, and we talked about all the testimony and witnesses you listened to. And when we talked . . . you talked earlier about one of the . . . our obligations under signing the Act with the United Nations, and we have to have a . . . we have a responsibility to make sure if we take on the responsibility of the child's care, that we don't put them in a situation where the care is providing more abuse, or whatever the circumstance might be.

We've learned through a lot of our testimony that there's . . . that the reason why a number of children or a large percentage of the children go on the street is because of a breakdown of family or dysfunction in the family or of some sort. So then we put them in a foster home, and then we've heard many of them . . . much testimony that says they were continued to be abused.

I know that with your report when you talked about . . . when you went to many witnesses, do you have any sense that perhaps this problem is lessening? That perhaps we are getting a handle on it so that we aren't continuing to abuse our child by taking from one situation and putting them into another.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We heard a lot of concern about the child welfare system. Not only children in foster care, but the issues that lead into families having their children separated from them, in care. So the issues of parental challenges around their own parents — the parent's alcoholism, the parent's own vulnerabilities, poverty, housing issues — we heard a lot of that. And I think there's . . . and we heard some change around that, some of those earlier issues that lead to children coming into care. However, the numbers in our province are such that there are still increasing numbers of children coming into care, even last year after I released that report.

And I know there's been a lot of work done in the area of improving child welfare. There's still higher numbers of children coming into care. Once they're in care, either better treatments for those children. How we define abuse is an interesting question. You know, the things we heard were around not having good contact between the child and his or her family or extended family, siblings. The child feeling that they're being moved from one foster home situation to another. Could be something in the child, could be something in the home, could be a breakdown somewhere. But some of these children having 10 and 15 moves through four or five or six years of their lives. So many moves is . . . in my view, it's a form of abuse to disrupt attachments for children in that kind of way and not find a way to keep them connected to their family's origin. So, how we define abuse is an interesting question.

We didn't find a reduction in those things in our . . . in our review. There's still large numbers of children who are being moved from one home to another. Where the policies that the department has in place are still not being practiced consistently, such as lots of visits, contact with extended family, those kinds of things. So, in terms of reports of . . . allegations of actual abuse in foster homes, there are relatively few of those coming forward, but the broader issue of how are we safeguarding children, how are we protecting them in the big sense in terms of their development.

Those are huge questions and I think we still have a long ways to go. And so I still am cautioning you about adding more residential programming for children without keeping these elements in mind, because these kids are being disconnected from their families when they come into some kind of residential care.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one other question. I was really pleased to see that one of your recommendations was talking about education. And in my view, and I think the view of probably many people, education is not just for children between the ages of five and whatever; it starts pre-kindergarten and goes for the rest of our lives. So the pre-kindergarten programs that are so necessary to maybe start. We can't solve all of the problems perhaps today with my age and younger. But perhaps we can start lessening the number of problems if we start dealing with the younger children more immediately.

And I'm looking at some of the solutions that so very many of the agencies have put forward that have came and talked to us because everybody cares about our children. They do. I'm just amazed and heartened because that's probably the one thing we've learned is that everybody cares about the children. And there seems to be so many caring people that we've got a mishmash of programs all over. And I would, myself I'd hate to have to sit down and write a list of what all of them do because I don't know.

But I am looking at things like when you talked about the role

of the school, they talked about a model that would perhaps resemble something like a community school — not necessarily but based on something like that — that included more than just in a textbook learning, in a box learning. It looked at the family and using the building after hours and that type of thing.

Do you see that, with your knowledge with children, integrating some of these services that we've got and the well-meaning people? Can it be done within a system like a community school?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well that's certainly what the role of the school task force has suggested — I agree. I think in many communities a school is a reasonable and logical place to house some of that.

But programs aren't just in buildings and they need to be driven, in my view, by community and by stakeholders to a large extent. We need to find a way to engage families and engage these young people meaningfully so that they don't feel like these decisions are being put on them by somebody outside of their world.

So I think the community school model can be helpful when in fact it engages the people from that community.

Just in regards to early preschool programming, you know, we're one of few places that don't have universal four-year-old programs, and in some places even three-year-old programs. Ontario has had universal four-year-old programs for many years. And the recent research around the importance of those early years is . . . clearly supports adding increased early programming for all children voluntarily. And just like kindergarten is still a voluntary program, but many parents see the value of that for their children.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Deborah, I have some questions as well. And, Roxane, please add your comments if you'd like to.

I'm going to ask first, I guess, a question about the areas. First I want to say, Deborah — I'm just speaking personally — that I really appreciate the broad framework in which you've put the issue of child sexual abuse. I think it's a useful framework for us to examine when we're preparing our report. And so I very much appreciate that. And this rights-based framework links the larger . . . you know, the issue of child sexual abuse to a lot of other key issues that impinge on that issue. So I just want to express my appreciation for that.

I'm just wondering if you could identify for us in your view — and I invite you both to comment on this — are there areas in which you think Saskatchewan is . . . I realize this is somewhat subjective, but are there areas where you think that Saskatchewan is in violation of the UN (United Nations) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* from your vantage point as our Child Advocate in the province?

And if we are, could you identify for our committee which areas you think we are most clearly in violation. And if you want to give that some thought and provide the answer to us later in writing, that would be . . . you know, that would be fine.

But I think implicit in some of your comments is the fact that we're in . . . you know that we're not in full compliance with the treaty or the convention, and if there are areas where we're not in compliance, what would you identify those as being?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I'll just speak to the things that I've raised today.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, sure.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And that I've also raised publicly in the past.

One is article 12 of the convention says that children should have a right to participate and have a voice in decisions. That isn't exactly what it says, but that's the gist of it.

In Saskatchewan for example, The Child and Family Services Act does not provide children with that right in care planning around . . . if they're in the care of government. We're the only province or territory in Canada where that right doesn't exist in legislation.

And I have raised that issue already. And that's of great concern to me when we look at the participation rights of children. Most other provinces have some . . . well they all have some provision for the child to be — as a right — included in their care planning. Most of them have age 12, the child must consent or participate in the planning and sign the . . . sign an order, for example.

Just like we do have in Saskatchewan that a child, 12 years of age or older, has to sign an adoption order. Similar to that for care, particularly permanent and long-term wards. We have a provision but it's a may clause.

So that's an area where I think we're clearly not meeting the article 12 of the convention. I have raised with government, repeatedly, my concerns about standards of care for children in residential programs, particularly young offender facilities. There are international rules with regards to care of juveniles in detention, and the convention also speaks to the need for those plans of care.

One particular issue is an administration appeal process which we still don't have in place clearly defined in young offender facilities in Saskatchewan.

So there are clearly areas, you know, that are fairly straightforward. And then you get into what would be grey areas. The last report that Canada made to the convention . . . to the committee in Geneva, Canada was rebuked for a number of issues. One being the high levels of poverty amongst Aboriginal children and that we're not, as a nation, dealing with that. Well is Saskatchewan in violation? Clearly. We still have high numbers of Aboriginal children living in poverty so, you know, how do you define that and where does that begin and end is a huge question?

We still permit the use of corporal punishment with children in our province and in our nation. That's in violation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. So there are numerous

different areas where we, as a province and as a nation, still need to improve. We need to remember that the convention is a visionary document, it's not domestic law, it's meant as a visionary document, and we're meant to strive to meet those articles in that convention. And we're meant to work towards that as an ideal state.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you for that clarification at the end too, which I appreciate. And thank you for that answer and I think that's very helpful.

I wanted secondly, to ask you a question with respect to your caution to us with respect to . . . well you say here:

> If, as a Committee, you are considering recommending a period of involuntary confinement for children who are already victims of the most heinous form of child abuse, it's imperative that you also ensure that the most stringent safeguards are in place.

And I'm just wondering if you'd like to elaborate on what you think some of those safeguards might be. What sort of safeguards would you like to see us put in place if we did this? And I'm not implying, by that comment, that we're necessarily going to or not. We're obviously going to struggle with that question. But if we do, what sort of safeguards would you see being paramount in this kind of an initiative?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I would refer you to the report in British Columbia — it was a public report on secure care — which outlines very clearly a comprehensive review of the needs of children in secure care and some of the safeguards that would need to be in place in order for that kind of secure care to happen in a caring and fair and reasonable environment. So I would refer you to that document which we could provide to you if you wish.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — That would be great. We will undertake to look at that, Deborah. I think that's very useful advice. And we have not, to the best of my knowledge, we've not examined . . . well I know we haven't as a committee examined that document. I haven't personally. So I will do so.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I would also invite you to consider that we have provisions in Saskatchewan under The Mental Health Act to involuntarily hold a citizen irrespective of age — this isn't . . . I'm not talking about a child or an adult — if they're at risk of harming themselves or harming another person. And there are huge safeguards built in to The Mental Health Act.

The Mental Health Act was created many years ago. And I don't know if you know but before I became Children's Advocate, I was director of a mental health region and before that a director of a children and youth mental health service.

And The Mental Health Act in Saskatchewan has provisions for involuntary care of individuals, irrespective of age, where they're at risk of harming themselves or harming someone else.

That Act hasn't, in my view, been looked at in terms of children's needs. It was developed many years ago, and I think it could be considered in terms of how we provide care to children or adults who are at risk of harming themselves or harming someone else. And there are many safeguards built into that legislation, which of course have evolved over many years in terms of some of the abuses of people with mental illness.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Deborah, this is something I haven't thought about before. So are you thinking that maybe the mental . . . the provisions . . . You know, sometimes we have laws and we don't use them, as we all know. Is it your view that the provisions of The Mental Health Act would actually give us a vehicle for protecting children on an involuntary basis who, it's believed are, you know, at risk of being killed or who are at risk of self-harming themselves, committing suicide, all those kind of things?

In other words, could we apply The Mental Health Act to kids on the street?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well, I guess that would be something . . .

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Or is it not the appropriate vehicle?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — . . . worth exploring, because I'm not sure it has been.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Right.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Children or adults who are at risk of self-harm can be held for very specified periods of time, under very careful conditions, under The Mental Health Act.

Children who are at risk of being killed, I don't know. I don't know the answer to that, Peter.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — So it would be self-harm situations that this would be directed to.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Or harming others.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Right. Yes.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And that hasn't got anything to do with being a child and I think we need to keep that in mind, that that kind of legislation is very protective of any citizen — you, me, any one of us — who is at risk of self-harm or harming another person.

And it's got restrictions too, and it may not answer some of the very serious concerns you have here. I think holding any individual involuntarily is a violation of their basic human rights and we have to do that under very, very strict and very careful circumstances and only as a very, very last resort. And I'm not recommending that.

I'm just saying I think we have provisions in Saskatchewan that under very dire circumstances we can protect individuals — children and adults — from harming themselves. I'm just not sure we have the resources to do it.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Right. And your point being that if we do it, we better make sure that we have adequate resources in place. That without adequate resources it's very difficult to have the safeguards.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And that you don't just re-victimize these young people who already feel disenfranchised and who don't trust the system and who've been harmed in many other ways and who certainly aren't going to easily come into . . . they're not going to typically voluntarily come into an involuntary care situation.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Right. I just have one other question and I'm not sure if you have an answer for it. We've actually had remarkably little testimony on the question of whether the new amendments of The Child and Family Services Act are working or not and that's something that I'd, you know, I'd like to ask Social Services at some point, what their assessment of that is.

I'm wondering if you have any comments on that yourself? Have you observed . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No. In fact in preparing to come today, we wanted to know that. You know, how the amendments that were introduced last year have been working; has it made any difference, what kind of difference did it make.

They were just proclaimed in January, as you know because you were involved in that, and so we're only a year old. And so, I think there needs to be an evaluation of that.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thanks very much, Deborah.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Deborah, if I could just comment on that. If you don't mind, Peter, just for a moment.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes. No. Please, Arlene, go ahead.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — It's all well-intentioned and very well to put things on paper. But if you don't have the resources — financial and human resources — and a plan in place to make those things happen that are on paper, you know, then they're going to be ineffective. So I think that we have to make sure that the plan is there and that all the pieces are in place.

The intention of those pieces of legislation, I think, was good. The intention is not enough. It's quite simple.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well, I think we need to make sure that our practices in this province are consistent with the policies we have and the legislation we have. And I've certainly seen, in the work that I've done, a gap between practice and policy.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Well, Deborah, thank you. Thank you, Roxane. Thank you both very much. It was a very significant presentation.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much, ladies. It was good having you here. And, Roxane, we didn't hear just too much from you today but I'm taking it that your views concur with Deborah's. Okay, thank you very much.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — We'll take a break and then we'll resume with a presentation from Melissa. Okay, great.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — We have with us today and we're fortunate to have with us today, Melissa Kelsey. Melissa is a board member at AIDS Saskatoon. And we also have with us Emmanuelle Morin and she is the executive director of AIDS Saskatoon. So we welcome both of you ladies today. And we're just going to take a quick moment for you to get to know who the committee members are here and then we'll ask you to just go ahead with your presentation. Start over here on my right.

Ms. Draude: — June Draude, MLA from Kelvington-Wadena. Welcome.

Mr. Toth: — I'm Don Toth, MLA from Moosomin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Arlene Julé, MLA, Humboldt, co-chairing the committee.

Ms. Jones: — Carolyn Jones, MLA, Saskatoon Meewasin.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And there are other committee members that I think . . . one or two that have had to leave and the others will be back with us in a moment. But I think we'd better get started because we are hearing some reports that there are weather disturbances out there and there are people that have to be on the road yet.

So we'd just like to ask you to please go ahead with your presentation, feel comfortable, and we're eager to hear from you.

Ms. Morin: — As you said, I'm Emmanuelle Morin and I'm the executive coordinator of AIDS Saskatoon, and we're going to broaden this issue yet again and even further.

I'm here today to bring forth the issue of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) to this discussion.

Health Canada has just released their stats for 2000 and they state that conservatively there are 15 to 20,000 people in Canada right now who are walking around positive, HIV positive, and don't even know it. Obviously our prevention initiatives are not working.

This means that all the lobbying for safety in our communities is failing and there's definitely a clear link with child prostitution and HIV transmission rates. Children, as we know, are easily manipulated — as I'm sure you've heard already some really gruesome horror stories — and they are at increased risk for contracting not only HIV but other STDs (sexually transmitted disease) as well.

Prevention initiatives have failed in our communities because we are working reactively rather than proactively.

The province of Saskatchewan, and more specifically the city of Saskatoon, needs to work together to increase access to the existing street outreach programs, to increase access to needle exchange and condom distribution, and ultimately to increase education — as we've heard already — and resources for those most at risk for living on the streets, trading sex, and contracting STDs such as HIV.

The stats for child HIV rates are not available; stats for HIV at the best of times are inaccurate. The way it goes is that Saskatchewan releases their stats to Health Canada and they release the national stats based on the information they get from the provinces. But the stats that the province has is completely inaccurate and not very reflective of what's actually happening out there.

The Saskatchewan Aids Network is a coalition of member groups who are interested in issues concerned with HIV, and they are working to advocate on behalf of all people living with and at risk for HIV and AIDS. And they're trying to bring this issue of the statistical inaccuracies to the table. So I ask you definitely to keep that in mind when we're looking at these such issues. And children definitely are misrepresented in all stats, not only HIV.

Almost a year ago a provincial HIV advisory committee was developed in Saskatchewan to address the needs that I have presented here. To date they have not met. This is inappropriate and a direct reflection of how we, as a community, need to start looking at serious issues in a proactive way.

We need to have better access to health care and safety. We need to keep the issues that affect all of us, including those which have ripple effects such as HIV, to the forefront. Using the terminology of Health Canada, we need to address the determinants of health. Being HIV positive or having to trade sex for money is a determinant for health and we need to let this be heard to government and ultimately back to our communities.

Thank you, and I'm going to pass it to Melissa.

Ms. Kelsey: — Thank you, Emmanuelle. The reason why I invited Emmanuelle here today on such short notice, must I add, is because I've been sitting on the working group to stop child sexual abuse by perpetrators and pimps for I don't know how many years — several years — and my most recent hat that I've been wearing in that group has been a board member of AIDS Saskatoon.

However, I first was introduced to the group as a street outreach worker for Saskatoon District Health which one of the components in that program was needle exchange, condom distribution, and education for the prevention of HIV. So I'm very pleased that Emmanuelle could come today and to just once again remind you of the significance of keeping HIV on the agenda under this whole issue.

I also see so many links with health determinants in regards to HIV and STDs. And one of them is just the increase of risks involved with children not in school or children on the street, and basically the street culture.

Recently I just finished a project with the Future Search Steering Committee which is a steering committee that hosted a conference that had 80 different representatives from 15 different stakeholders from our community involved in basically a two-and-a-half-day think tank of coming up with some recommendations and solutions. One of the themes for action is addressing the needs of street-involved children.

I have that report. You will all be expecting one in the mail very shortly. Randy, if this is . . . I guess I could distribute this for you to take today if you'd like to photocopy this before people leave. This is kind of a short version of that executive summary. And here is — for the visual folk — just sort of a graphic of all the links of the issues concerning the children here who I dis-invited or basically just sent home from school for all sorts of reasons, and how all of these harms are linked together. One of them of course being HIV, and of course street culture and street activity.

There's so many things to discuss. I was invited to speak just spontaneously this morning so I'm not as prepared as I could have been. But there's two issues that I'd really like to raise. One of them is the whole idea of representation on working with this issue at hand.

I'm not sure who all your speakers were in the last couple of days, however, I know that my experience with working with the Future Search committee and how important it was to invite the various stakeholders really taught me a lot of how other people can contribute to solutions.

For example, when we look at this issue, you know, who are our stakeholders and who are the strategy contact setters? The stakeholders, I think, should involve the whole community including the private sector, the Crown corporations, and the business.

I think we really need to look at our approach in that because not only do they have, you know, a future stake in children growing up undereducated or not educated, growing up damaged for life because of sexual abuse, but also I guess just the whole community awareness of where our perpetrators/johns are coming from. They are coming . . . We don't really have enough research in that area, and what are their profiles and how can a multisectoral representation approach those issues.

The second thing I'd like to really talk about is more community awareness on all levels, the playing field. Not just, you know, educating people on the street and targeting in particular, in our community, we really target the female sex trade workers. They're much more visible, and of course through Communities for Children we're targeting children.

But, you know, what about the rest of the title of our working group? Perpetrators and pimps? You know, who are the pimps? Where are they learning to be the pimps? What kind of services do we have for these young men? How are we engaging them? How are we preventing them from becoming involved in something that they may not even consider being defined as pimping?

Basically what we've been doing to strategize to do that is we're criminalizing them. We have a high percentage of young Aboriginal males in custody — one of the highest in the nation. What kind of things are they learning there?

You know one of the recent trends that is a major concern concerning street culture is the impact of gangs. Gangs are really operated, maintained, and structured in correctional facilities that we have. And this is being filtered down into, you know, juvenile correctional facilities.

So that we talk a lot about the issue of the 72-hour lock-up, the issue of who should be you know, caring for these youth, but I think we also really have to examine the existing facilities and what they have to offer at that time right now.

Getting strayed off a little bit off topic but, I just want to kind of open it up for dialogue, but before I do that I could just explain a little bit of my background so you could ask me some questions if need be.

I started off . . . basically I'm from here, from Saskatoon, from the west side. I started off travelling to, you know, see the other side of the world and came back and realized that I wanted to re-invest in my community. I come from an educated background, so to speak, had my grade 12 after several years of trying and all the labels that came with that.

I was fortunate to be a Canada World Youth participant and the federal government sponsored me to travel and see, you know, the unfortunate on the other side of the world. I came back here and I worked at Egadz Youth Centre in the beginning years — I see that Bill and Don are here today — and I realized that some of the Third World conditions or developing world conditions that I saw in Indonesia as a young person, I saw growing up on the west side; I saw on our very own streets.

And so this is why I'm here today from, you know, frontline worker, working as a street outreach worker for years, and getting now involved in community development and consulting, policy and planning setting, and strategizing of what we're going to do about that.

I think we really need to start, you know, thinking globally, thinking of Saskatoon as being able to be a really good model, a good location for pilot projects such as tracking systems to track children involved in sex trade and child sexual abuse; a tracking system for children not in school. And I think we should be lobbying for us being kind of an innovative community, at a very good size to establish some of these models, because we do have so much collaboration here. We do have so many different players involved. So those are one of the strategies.

I'd also like to say, in my overseas travels I have visited and lived in places where they have what they would call . . . for example, in Edinburgh, Scotland one of the strategies they used was a more tolerant zone. Not so much a red-light district, but a more tolerant zone for adult prostitution. And some of the impacts there were very positive. If we could revisit our past of what we used to have in this city as the natural surrogate street family, taking care of each other, and ensuring that there's no kids working the street out there.

I don't know if that's possible to go back to those days, but perhaps we can interview some of the people who used to be on the street. Some of our First Nation leaders, you know, I talk to them and their histories are there. Most of them have been connected at one time on the street and have some really good concrete examples of how you can really implement and strategize with those people.

We talk about lockdowns, but we are thinking in our box of human service delivery. We're not thinking about parent patrols, we're not thinking of families getting involved and maybe perhaps their peers being the ones that would say, look you have to sit here for 72 hours. We're just kind of looking at it from where we're coming at now.

I don't think we have enough . . . we have lots of discussions through Communities for Children, we're paying honorariums for people to come in and discuss all these issues, but are we having enough dialogue. Dialogue is very much different than discussion. Discussion is you tell people and you know, you take it away and you take those perceptions from where you're at. I don't think we have enough of that.

So I could ramble on for a while but I'd like to just open it up for a few questions so Emmanuelle and I can respond. I realize that you're all pressed for time though.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — We'll take a couple of questions and then I think, unfortunately, we will have to . . . forgive me Melissa and Emmanuelle that we're cutting it short on the questions side because we could productively talk for . . . visit for an hour. But Carolyn, go ahead.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you. In addition to your experience or your study of more tolerant zones, have you had an opportunity to study actual legalized prostitution such as Scandinavian countries?

Ms. Kelsey: — Yes.

Ms. Jones: — You have?

Ms. Kelsey: — I have, in the past, done some research on that.

But quite frankly, when you sit on committees that deal with child sexual abuse, they look at it as extremely different from adult prostitution. So putting the two research, I guess, outcomes together are two different things. Because when you're talking about child sex trade, you're talking about non-consensual usually and we're talking about child abuse.

So a lot of the models that are overseas or, you know, red-light districts or tolerant zones are focused on the adults. And they usually do it through organizations, which we have some organizations here in Canada. Have you talked to Maggie's in Toronto? They have a prostitution co-op.

Have you talked to P.E.E.R.S. (Prostitutes Empowerment Education Resources Society) where Sherry, I believe, was originally from or that some of the, you know, funding or under

the umbrella appears where she started a lot of her, you know, process in dealing with the prevention of child sexual abuse. But P.E.E.R.S. stands for prostitutes empowering each other for recovery. There's those type of models.

But once again, I think where we're kind of gapping, making some links is not really focusing on adult prostitution. I think we have to look at this as a bigger picture. We can't just focus on prevention for children out there. We have to focus on all the isms involved. And in Scandinavian countries, one thing that's unique for them is sometimes they have a more homogeneous society. There might be some immigrant issues.

But right now we're very unique and complex in the issue of Aboriginal First Nations. The whole . . . when I say isms, I think of the racism, the discrimination, the ageism, and most of all, the sexism involved. And when I say sexism, it's not just so much the power in relation and control of the victim of child abuse, but it's also sexism in service provision for both males and females.

Ms. Jones: — Just so I can explain. I know we're very crushed for time. I was just wondering if there was any correlation that you could draw from societies who have legalized outlets, if you will, for predators and johns, where sex trade workers are in a safe, controlled environment. Is there any relationship to . . . you know, can you say then that there's no child prostitution in the same country?

And that was the focus of my question; not so much, you know, having anything to do with the adult sex trade. But would that . . . is there anything to show that that would help protect our children?

Because part of what we hear is johns are in search of younger people with the hope that they will be disease-free, and that that's part of the driving force as well, you know. I know that some people are pedophiles, but the other side of the coin is that they're trying to stay away from disease, sexually transmitted disease.

So I mustn't take any more time, I'm sure, but if you want to briefly respond to that.

Ms. Kelsey: — Well one of the things that stands out in my mind is one time we were doing some research on tolerant zones or red-light districts and one of the advertisements that popped up on the web page — and this goes to the whole issue of kiddie porn on the Internet — but I was horrified to see this advert that said, why go to Thailand for little brown girls when you can go to Saskatoon? And we had our city map, you know, on the web.

So it brings me to look at okay, I plugged in prostitution so what I'm saying is the link between prostitution and child sexual abuse is very strong. Some of the, you know, the challenges of proposing a tolerant zone is that you drive child sexual abuse more underground, that sure they're not out there as visible, so that makes it more difficult for outreach workers to, you know, grasp, you know . . . well I guess to do their work, but . . . and it also provides a whole other realm of pimping and perpetrating.

However, I don't know if we have enough concrete research to say that in Saskatoon our johns actively go out there and get little girls. I don't know how much research we have of what the difference of a perpetrator is and of our traditional sense of men trading money for sex. That's a very controversial issue.

But what I'd like to see the committee look at is the links between the two, and to not just kind of narrowly look at the issue of child sexual abuse without looking at the greater issue of the isms involved and of prostitution.

So those models I think are . . . I mean each model works uniquely in each community and country.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you.

Ms. Kelsey: — It's a difficult question to answer.

Mr. Toth: — Just one quick question. First of all with a comment. I heard that same announcement about, was it 15 to 20,000 people actually identified with AIDS and how many who aren't.

And it would seem to me, when I heard that, I thought to myself, well if anybody's really paying attention and there are people preying on or going and looking for sex, they better . . . You'd think that that would drive them away and they'd begin to start thinking a little more seriously. However, we're probably dealing with a lot of people who actually are fairly sick mentally and that won't even stop them.

I do have a question regarding though your comment about better access to health care and safety. What exactly do you mean or what are you talking about when you say that?

Ms. Morin:— Well I mean there's certainly realm. I'm going to talk more about adults and health care in terms of HIV because that's what we're more familiar with. Because we often don't see the kids. What happens is they sort of get whisked away into the system and we are an advocacy. We offer advocacy and support services.

But in terms of health care, home care for HIV-positive people right now, adult or not, is very difficult to deal with. We have with the drug therapies, people going in and needing 24-hour care for three months, getting much better, being able to lead very healthy lives and then needing it again.

And home care will only provide short interim visits throughout the day. If you need 24-hour care, you'd have to be admitted into a personal care home. And that's just not possible because the waiting lists for personal care homes are six months sometimes to a year.

So what happens is that they end up coming to us for financial assistance to hire private care.

Safety — definitely talking about having access to clean needles and condoms, that's a safety issue; not only talking about the question of the actual sexual abuse, which is a safety issue that we have to be looking at, but if we had the education to go with the condoms and the clean needles then that would

be, you know, a question of improving our health and safety.

And that sort of . . . Looking more on very basic levels that we are not addressing, we're not addressing the awareness issues to the point that we need to be. We are doing the same thing that we've done 10 years ago with the issue of HIV and AIDS and prevention of STDs and things are changing. It's not working and the stats that we do have are proving that.

Mr. Toth: — Just one final comment, and that is in regards to the safety feature when we're talking about AIDS. I think it's a whole education factor that we need to discuss and talk about.

Ms. Morin: — Definitely.

Mr. Toth: — Because you can advertise and you can send out pamphlets but I don't know if people really read them. And we need some kind of an educational procedure that really raises the significant problems that you are going to face if you happen to attract any of these diseases.

Ms. Morin: — Which goes into standardization of curriculums in the school system because right now what's happening is, is that we have curriculums and each school division is able to pick and choose which they feel is important from that developed curriculum.

So for instance in HIV, when we're discussing that, certainly condom use if . . . a lot of Roman Catholic school systems have decided to take that aspect out. While abstinence is definitely the best way to protect yourself but is not always the reality out there for youth who are exposing themselves to HIV, and yet these school systems, they're not standardized so they can pick and choose. And then they don't educate their teachers who most often are not comfortable teaching that curriculum to some teenagers who are . . . or youth.

So definitely standardization in the education system is another key element that we have to look at.

Ms. Kelsey: — And just to answer your question more from the street perspective, Don, would be you know educating through the school system is one way but many of our street involved children are out of the school system. So who would you rather educate? The people who wear the condom or the people who, you know, are 14, 11 years old that have very little negotiating skills in talking to an old . . . usually, you know, a man twice their age to wear a condom.

So this is why HIV is very important to put on this agenda because it's linked to so many community awareness approaches to the power division: the sexism, discrimination, ageism, and racism issues out there.

Ms. Morin: — And we do have existing, like I said, outreach programs, etc. So we just need to up them. The one little van in Saskatoon can't do it all. And that's what we're really relying on. We've got enough money to have one van from SDH (Saskatoon District Health) go out there and do this outreach. Well . . .

Ms. Kelsey: — And Egadz, but . . .

Ms. Morin: — And Egadz. But realistically can they do it all? No. They can't be in all places at all times. They can't be where the johns are coming from.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — June, did you have a question?

Ms. Draude: — Yes. I've got two questions but they should be short because they're both numbers. I heard you say that you didn't . . . that Saskatchewan stats on HIV are inaccurate. So what are the accurate figures?

Ms. Morin: — I don't know. We don't have . . . I've never seen accurate figures. And actually I just called . . . recently I called Saskatchewan Health to see if we could get the newly released ones because obviously Health Canada has had them provided to them to release their national stats, and they can't find them.

I mean we're going circles constantly with stats. And we are at the point, as an agency, that when we go out to do public speaks that we say listen, here are the stats but we don't trust them, which is really very difficult to say.

Ms. Draude: — And then for the number of children that don't attend school, that absenteeism is something that's getting to be a huge issue when it comes to not only this, what we're talking about here today, but in the education system. And we've heard numbers ranging . . .

A Member: — From 1,000 to 3,000.

Ms. Draude: — Yes, that's what I'm wondering. Do you have any kind of a clue? Did you have a . . .

Ms. Kelsey: — No. Basically where the number 1,000 arrived from is from some very preliminary research of just a few front-line workers getting together with Kearney Healy, barrister and solicitor of Legal Aid a few years back, consulting with front-line workers and getting together and name sharing. That's how sophisticated that research was at this time.

But by all means I don't want to, you know, undervalue that, and it's not a discreditor. But it's a very conservative amount because they came up with, in the elementary school system, about 400 names. Well we do know that children that leave school, that usually happens between the grades of grade 8 and grade 10. If they've made it up to grade 10 they usually stay. So that figure didn't even involve those grades. So they just sort of times it by two, added on a couple more hundred, and made 1,000, you know, as a number that will be remembered in our heads.

But more recent research, and once again very preliminary, and I can't even . . . I don't think I'd even want to quote the researcher because that may not be the best strategy at this time, but looking at far, far greater numbers — you know, up to possibly 3,000 kids. But that research and that data hasn't been polished off.

So where are those children? They're coming in and out of the city. They're very transient. They're coming from rural, urban, other centres. And many of them, you know, become involved in the street culture whether . . . if we were a larger city there'd

be more resources for them — perhaps they could panhandle or push drugs. But here it's kind of like, if you're on the street, you're either going to be a pimp, you're going to do some tricks yourself — male or female — or you're going to work, you're going to, you know, sell your body for money. There's very few other resources to do on our streets here in Saskatchewan. We're too small.

Ms. Draude: — In Saskatoon or the whole province, you're talking about up to 3,000?

Ms. Kelsey: — The 1,000 is for Saskatoon. Three thousand — I hate to be on record here — but we're looking at, you know, in Saskatoon. So if you times . . . how many cities do we have in Saskatchewan, and times that number say even by 1,000, you know, you'd have enough people for . . . we could have a whole city of people not in school. And is that, you know, the community that we want to be known for? No.

Right now I just had a meeting with Leadership Saskatoon where Deneen Gudjonson — I'm sure she would like to respond to this — but she was . . . but I hate to speak on her behalf but I started anyway.

But she had indicated that she was at a conference out of province — I think it was actually in the States — and in her introduction she said, hi, I'm Deneen Gudjonson. You know I'm with the business district of Riversdale and I come from Saskatoon. And someone piped up and laughed and said, oh, kiddie porn of Canada, you know, kiddie porn central of Canada. And those are some of the reputations that we're getting out there so why not really tap into this and make our community a pilot project on how we're dealing with these models because the energy is here. The collaboration is there. It's just the implementation of the plan that we've got to get on.

Don, you asked once how do we coordinate our efforts? I think there needs to be a little bit of building trust with all stakeholders that need to be involved, both male and female from all levels of that, and to become together, I guess, get together on a shared vision. We all know that we want the kids off the streets but where do we want to put them, and provide those strategies . . . provide facilities for the strategies that we have in place. We don't need to examine the issues any more.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I just wanted to provide an incidental here. When you were talking about the need for more needles and more condoms and that kind of thing, I recognize where you're coming from with that. But we have had one witness in Regina tell us that there are 60,000 needles in Regina through the Regina Health District that are distributed each year. That seems like an awful lot of needles.

The other thing is that that person mentioned that there's no such a thing as needle exchange. Oftentimes people come for clean needles but they've thrown their dirty needles all over the lawns within the residential areas. And speaking of a safety issue, there's many children out there that are picking up those dirty needles and God knows what's in them, as well as condoms that may be infected with all kinds of disease and contamination.

So I'm just wondering what you think about having an absolute policy in place where there would be a requirement to at least exchange the needles. And whether . . . what number of needles you think that, you know, we have to end up having out there because we have had needle distribution. We have had condoms being passed out. We have had all of that, and the incidence of disease, as you have mentioned, as well as child abuse, as well as violence, and all of that, is escalating in spite of those endeavours.

So I'm just wondering if in fact we are taking the right approach, when you're repeating the same thing, only doing more of it and it's not working. What is wrong here?

Ms. Morin: — Well I think part of the problem is is that of course the mentality when you're using is that safety and HIV is probably very secondary. You need your fix and that's your priority at that time. So certainly looking at, you know, safe injection sites and those sort of things, bringing the scope even broader, but what does that mean? We work in a harm reduction model which is very difficult which means that we can't turn away somebody from giving them a clean needle if they don't have one to exchange because that means that they're probably going to go out there and use a dirty one.

So we work on the philosophy that we have to give them a clean needle if they're asking for it even if they don't have one to exchange, which is very difficult because, as you say, I know there are needles all over the place that are being found. I'm on the needle safe committee and we are looking at that, but it's such a slow process. You're trying to get community on board, police on board, the firemen on board, all of this thing. It's a very slow process. I don't have the answer for you. I don't know.

All I know is that we're sort of at a point where nothing that we have done is working and we have to take some really . . . a really close look and do some really innovative cutting-edge stuff because the same old stuff that we've been doing is not working.

Ms. Kelsey: — I have a bit to add to that. I've been out quite . . . for some time removed from the needle exchange program which can be in some ways a good thing because I'm sort of the outsider looking in now. But I have three questions. Not answers, by any means, but three questions to approach that issue.

And ask yourself, who is using the needles? Most importantly, who is using the needles that are being found? Who uses the condoms? Men. And once again, who uses the exchange program?

The exchange program is a lot different than who uses needles. What I'm getting at is, yes, there's lots of needles out on our streets. Yes, there's lots of risk, but the people that are mostly intact with the existing needles exchanges in our province is, if you talk to the front-line workers, there is a good exchange rate with that core group of people. But that's why you need more outreach and more staff and more hours. And more, I guess, aggressive approaches in dealing with a client-driven solution to needles found on the street.

I know as a past street outreach worker with the needle exchange that the reason why we hand out anywhere from 60,000 to 100,000, or however many needles, is because of various drugs and drug trends that come out on the streets. If you're addicted to cocaine or Ritalin, which is a common one in our streets in Saskatchewan, you can use a needle up to 20 times a day.

We have policies that every time you fix, you use a new needle because if you're sitting around a table with several people you're going to lose track of your needle and your risk and chances of using another needle that 20th time that you fix that day are a lot higher.

But I guess going back to that, I think it's a slow process because there is so much emphasis on collaboration of that. But perhaps we need to put government back in kind of the position of a roll . . . and someone does need to take the bull by the horns on that.

I get quite appalled at some of the practices that we have, existing practices, of needle exchange; appalled in the way that they are not being supported. Harm reduction can work if it's fully supported from all components of the program, which is education.

And once again I encourage the community to . . . or the committee — and the community — to put a gender lens on this issue. I mean a lot of the exchange that goes on is between the sex trade workers, which are usually female. They're being busted quickly. If a cop is coming at them, the first thing that they want to do is get rid of the evidence. Evidence can be a used needle. They throw it out of their purse.

We are not tapping into the male issue of this problem. We're not . . . we do go into the . . . or we used to go into the homes — I'm not with that role any more — but very, very seldom would I do contacts with males. But those are the guys that are sending the girls out to work the streets and do the drug exchanges and we're not even close to hitting the middlemen in this solution.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, thank you very much ladies. Peter has indicated that he's forfeiting his opportunity to question simply because of time constraints and, as I mentioned before, the impending storm, so thank you so much for coming and being with us today.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thanks, Melissa. Thanks, Emmanuelle.

Sylvia, are you ready to present? I don't think we'll break. I think we'll just kind of keep going if that's okay? And, Elvina, are you able to come forward too? That'd be great.

Sylvia, I know you'll be presenting on behalf of Riversdale Community and School Association. Elvina, are you representing the community and school association too?

Ms. Coté: — I'm just getting involved with the community.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I see here you're a volunteer at the Gathering Place so that's great. Anyway we are really looking forward to your presentation and forgive us that afterwards I think we'll just limit the questioning to a couple of questions and then move on because of our time constraints and the weather brewing in the south. Anyway, please go ahead. We're really looking forward to what you have to say.

Ms. Obrigewitsch: — Thank you. Well my name is Sylvia Obrigewitsch and I've lived in Riversdale for the past seven years. I've been an active member on the Riversdale Community and School Association which represents the residents. Currently I'm the director of the Gathering Place which is an inner-city initiative that has programs for people to be involved in sewing circles, ceramics, and some second-hand clothing and other kinds of advocacy and referral.

I'm also a Sister of Zion, a Roman Catholic order that works at eliminating anti-Semitism and prejudice and racism of any kind mainly through education and work for justice. So this is really my lifelong kind of formation.

My education, my career background is an educator. I did adult literacy for the past 15 years, working with people in the Edmonton John Howard Society — fellows and their families coming and going who need basic literacy work.

And currently I teach contract upgrading jobs at the community schools in Riversdale neighbourhood. Another important part of my social justice connection is a member of the Multi-Faith Social Justice Circle. So that's kind of who I am at the moment.

The activities that I want to talk to you about today are related around the education and awareness issue of child sexual abuse so it's like a bigger picture, not specifically the direct the day-to-day involvement with children.

So my first area would be the activities that we do in the Multi-Faith Social Justice Circle. There is a subcommittee there called the child sexual awareness committee. We use the video that's been prepared called *It's Not Prostitution, It's Child Sexual Abuse*. And there are eight of us from a variety of faith groups so we're beyond the Christian mainline churches. So we invite ourselves out to any faith group who wants to have the courage to deal with this subject.

And so there are eight of us that have formed ourselves by many ways being involved in the Communities for Children, etc. And so we've been invited out to both equal number east side, west side, and it seems the church people are quite hesitant to even ask us or to even attend to these kinds of awareness sessions. But for those who do, we do some pretty powerful work and actions.

And one of our recent ones is we invited Police Superintendent Bill Hargarten, and Jacqui Barclay, who helped us to move forward on actions that their faith community (this was a Catholic and United Church group), that they would be willing to work on. And one of the directions was to work for changing of the laws, the legislation, so that the police would be able to more effectively deal with predators that are repeat, so that it's not just a summary conviction. And so that police would be able to track these predators across the provinces and so even things like getting fingerprints and mug shots; so signing

petitions and this kind of thing is what we're asking people to be more involved in.

And the second angle is that we're asking for an increased strength and number of kinds of healing programs and initiatives so that the restoring and the healing of those who are damaged and hurt through this can be more deeply effective. And it's tough going, doing this kind of education awareness because people are afraid to talk about the issue. The question of what does your faith ask of you to do about this, like, is really the question that inspires people to come out. But then how to really get involved and do the stuff is . . . it's, I guess, it's part of the slow process of forming . . . reforming and . . . because we're dealing with sexism, etc.

The other part of my education work is teaching the alternative grade 12, which is called the GED (General Educational Development), to adults in the community school, in particular Princess Alexandra which is here in Riversdale. We have created a very successful program called Community Learning for Success and we received some very good government funding with a variety of agencies working together. And we had 10 sessions, 10-weeks long — seven schools were involved.

It lasted for one year and it was very popular. People, many First Nations people came out. As soon as there was a dropout, there was a new person waiting in line at the door. It was offered in . . . they are offered in the neighbourhood schools where their kids are going and people have the confidence to come there. The barriers are reduced, child care is provided for those under four and so . . . and the graduations are really, they are a celebration. The people who come out, who are in their 30s, 40s, and even 50s, they are my students.

The pride of coming out, and getting their certificate of attendance or certificate of participation is just, it's a wonderful family event because this grade 12 means a lot. And even though it's just a small step, it's the beginning of a reformation of their whole attitude towards self-empowerment.

And the other good thing is that the modelling that these parents are doing for their kids who are in the school, in the elementary school, and the pride that these kids have in their parents that this change is going on.

So what happens? Okay, the program was cut in half this past year. So, like, a good thing. That's my point. Local successful initiatives that really work that are user-friendly and empower people to take the first step have short-term funding, and that's not good enough. Funding has to be guaranteed for a long term and not just the length of a politician's time in office. I say that this has to be as long term as elementary education.

And having these programs happen in the neighbourhood versus at the SIAST campuses, like that provides another barrier. The people who are in poverty and who have these different histories of — well you know the history — they're not going to go there to enable themselves to get moving along. They'll come to a place that's safe for them.

The kind of things that I've learned through the essay writing that they do is like there's a lot of disclosure that comes through their stories. And so the power to change the parenting patterns in education in a holistic, safe environment where the poverty barriers are eliminated is really important.

And added on to that are elder programs in the elementary schools where — and in particular I'm talking about the public school — I would say that those elder programs are essential. The strength of having the elder in there is that the family and the kids see the elder and the family as being part of their education, that it makes sense to the kids. But the policy makers in the school boards don't create conditions for community schools or grassroots organizations to do what they really want to do and what they really can do for themselves.

So the rules that are there prohibit and retard what the elders can and can't do. They've got to check out their spirituality credentials at the door before they're allowed to even come in and be an elder in the place.

So in particular I've seen this happen at Princess Alexandra School where there's money for an elder on and off. So the kids get attached, it's really good, the elder serves a very important need and then she's gone. So like the continuity, the healing, that stuff ends.

So I'm asking you as a committee here, in your position, to fund the kinds of holistic ways of healing, building families, culture, spirituality that fits each unique community. And I know school boards have the right to make their own policies but it seems to me that there's got to be an inclusiveness that happens there that fits the local level and the uniqueness of each school community. There's a lot of . . . I've seen a lot of good energy and willingness of people when they are enabled and they are empowered.

Another example is the reiki healing touch program was active at Princess Alexandra School. Parents were trained off-site and then they ran it in the school. I don't need to explain what reiki, is do I?

The public school board closed it down because it was labelled as a religious practice and so it's ended. And what . . . the thing is there were 50 or 60 kids lined up; they would come during school hours, and look this is a wholesome, healthy, body touch. I mean I see this connection to the healing of the child's sexual abuse to what Doug McKay was talking about yesterday. So this kind of thing stops because the policies are prohibiting it.

Another thing we were talking about as preparation for this thing is okay, addictions options for people have increased greatly since the expansion of casinos and gambling. Not only are all the other addictions available but this one is growing by leaps and bounds. In our province, in our country, we're creating another problem that we did way back in history with the alcohol thing.

And I would see that as part of local initiatives — and I see this as some kind of a funding, whether it's from the education domain or I don't know where the funding would come from — but like a community school that wants to create this kind of a

healing environment where addictions programs would be part of what is offered within that safe environment.

My third point is regarding prejudice, racism, and attitudes education. Our mainstream society needs education and attitude changes as much as the First Nations people need to advance their own education because of the multi-faith social justice circle experience that we have and well just all the gender issues that even the group before me was talking about. We are all in this together. We have created our history in this country and in this province creating ghettos/reserves; First Nations people not being allowed to get an education or leave the reserve, etc. So there's a ghettoization on both sides. And then there's the blaming and the whole bit.

And so I see that the history . . . we need to learn each other's history, like the true history in a curriculum for Saskatchewan that is inclusive. We need to know the First Nations history as they know it, as they experience it, and as they tell it. And so this is like a knowledge level. My point is, okay knowledge changes people's attitudes and prejudices, so curriculum changes at all levels.

And secondly, the attitude changes. People getting to know people, know each other as real families, as real people, persons to persons. An example of something that I think works is the family-to-family ties which is run by the Catholic Family Services here in Saskatoon. The mentoring of families who have skills — wholesome, healthy family skills — with those who are growing and struggling. And so it's real people connecting and building strength and so like it works both ways is basically my point.

So more funding for healing and mentoring and educational attitudinal changes. So that's my main point.

But I guess it's really . . . the thing about the adult education in the community schools, I've actually donated a lot of my time without salary just to make this thing happen, and continued to do so because it works. And the people are there, they want it. And pretty soon they'll be teaching it themselves. And that's really what we want to have happen.

Elvina, do you want to add?

Ms. Coté: — Thanks, Sylvia. You touched on a lot of issues. And I'd like to give a bit of my background.

I come from the Cote First Nation. I grew up in the system at a time when my great-grandfather was one of the leaders. He was just a spokesperson at the treaties, and he resisted but he was starved out, so. And I don't know even though if he actually put his X on the treaty. So this is a history of how I see it and how I've come to learn it. And this is where I'm coming from.

I'm a treaty Indian. Today now I'm called an Aboriginal but I choose to use the word Indian because that's what . . . that was a problem for me at one time. Growing up, I was ashamed of being an Indian. I was taught to be ashamed of my ancestors. I grew up in residential school.

And you hear a lot about residential school today. I choose not to talk about it. But I can talk about it in the context of the genocide of a nation. Because Hitler, for example, studied the reserve system and that's how he designed his concentration camps.

The only thing . . . I have a treaty number, it's one thing the government failed to do was to brand us with the numbers, my ancestors. But I do carry a treaty number, a treaty card, and, you know, with my treaty number. But today now I find that it's obsolete. I never did really use it. I had one for years and I lost my ID (identification) at one time.

And I grew up with a history that wasn't mine. I was taught history the way the Europeans wrote it and saw us as a conquered people. We were never conquered. We chose to negotiate and that's the reason we signed treaties.

As a result of the coming of the Europeans, okay, the treaties, the reserves were introduced. And then from there the residential schools. And from there I did lose my language for a while but I always retained it. But I never did speak it. But I can. Let's just say I remember my language and I speak it with pride today. And that was part of my education was to learn the English language. I also learned Latin, French, English. But that is something I can honestly say today I did lose a lot. I lost the pride I had as an Indian woman — Anishinabe. And I'm also learning to rebuild.

I heard a lot of input here and you know, I was wondering, what am I doing here? Is this just for a committee or is just for Saskatoon people — the white people if you don't mind me saying that. But you know, but I also know there is a lot of caring community members and I also know there is a lot of prejudiced people out there.

And what I wanted to say as an Indian person is the social disintegration. I didn't come upon that paper. I have some . . . I do some writing on my own, but what is happening is the social disintegration of a nation, and in order . . . As a result of that we have developed a lot of subcultures. I heard street culture mentioned here.

Within the street culture there are other little subgroups also. You know, and I also heard about Third World conditions. We don't need to go to other countries to see the Third World conditions. It's right here in Saskatoon.

I'm not working but I do spend a lot of time walking, talking to people. I do a lot of observations. I'm on assistance. I have an income of less than 5,000 a year. I forgot to bring that along. But I also have a lot of stubbornness in me. I'm a fighter. I'm not a survivor, I'm a fighter.

And I'm struggling yet. I had a breakdown over a year ago. As a result of that, I was picked up. I was charged with all kinds of charges, and I'm still going to trial on that because I refused. I plead not guilty because I was not drunk. As just an example . . . I don't want to use the whole Aboriginal people. I'm using myself as a example for some of the things we face. And it's been over a year; I'm still going to trial. It will be in May, but I didn't break. I came back and I'm really seriously trying to help myself.

And a lot of this I understand that, you know, a lot of my people go through these things and I think that's why a lot of them get lost in the woodwork, I'd like to say, and they give up.

But to me, okay, my education background. I have a grade 8. I failed math. I'm self-taught. I walked in off the street in '70 and took a GED exam, thinking, well, I'll get a grade 10. Maybe I'll get a trade of some sort. I got a grade 12. That was that.

I've always worked but always met . . . I didn't know I was so different when I went out there and worked. Oh, you're not an Indian, are you? You know, and . . . you can't be, you know. Like, I didn't have the right to look presentable is very mildly putting it.

And I took university classes in the early '80s and now I dropped out. I was always a dropout whenever I tried something. And now I, I need one class to get certification in social work so I'm going for that. I don't know where I'm going to get the funding but I will try. I will get it somehow.

And so, the thing I see a lot, like you know, being an Indian woman, you know . . . oh, also I failed to mention, as Indian women — well, as governments call us treaty status Metis — in '70 I lived in Regina, and I and a group of other women from the three groups, we organized Saskatchewan Native Women. Even back then, we cared. We cared what was happening to us as a nation.

And I sit on a review committee right now and I got sick of it. Finally at one meeting I just said, you know, 30 years ago we still had the same issues but the terminology has changed, you know. What are, you know, what are we doing, you know. So I often wonder, you know, what action, what can we do, you know. We talk about the children, the abused children, the youth, but what about the families that are dysfunctional?

To me, I would, I would sooner work with the family. Something, some program developed for family. You know it's not clear in my mind but I know it has to do with family. To get them healthy.

I don't know what else, what else can be, can be, can be said. You know, like, to me, I just want to ask, you know, the word that used to be used at one time was target group, you know, and now I think it's . . . the word is focus. You know, that's what I mean. You know like . . . you know, I'm a middle-aged woman and like I suffered but I always was a fighter.

I have one son. He's married. He's working, you know, and I'm a grandmother. I'm going to be a grandmother again. And you know like we always talk about our children, our youth, like in the Indian communities and reserves. And I was a councillor on my reserve when it was very troubled. We were quite known, you know — Cote First Nation — within governments. You know not only the street people but also . . . where I don't know. But it's kind of interesting to know you know.

But also I'd also like to close off with saying that I became a citizen of Canada in 1962 so what do we do? You know there was always policy on Indian people you know. Why can't the governments start taking Aboriginal people seriously and start developing policies that are going to be put in place to help, not to band-aid the program, you know.

We know the problems, talk about the problems over and over and over and over you know. But okay, what solutions do we have? What can we do as a community to address these problems because like it or not the Aboriginal people are in Saskatoon. And it would be so nice to work together, you know, the treaty, the non-status, and the Metis even. You know if they could unite. Okay, thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Thank you. Thank you, Sylvia. I think because of our time constraints, I hope you'll understand if we don't ask questions. And I want to apologize to you both for that but I'm looking at the time and it's about 20 to 5, and I'm recognizing that you know like Don's got five hours of drive ahead of him. So I think . . . Thank you. I want to thank you both very, very much for your presentations. We very much appreciate them and please don't take the lack of questions as intended to be disrespectful. We very much appreciate your presentation.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you for coming.

Ms. Coté: — There's a lot of work ahead.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — A lot of work. Thank you, Elvina.

Our last presenters of the afternoon are going to be Bill and Don and do you want to come forward now? Bill, just yourself? Okay. Welcome back to our hearings, Bill.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Welcome, Bill. It's good to see you again.

Mr. Thibodeau: — Thank you. I know this was last minute and I appreciate the time. I will be very brief.

I guess I'll start off by introducing myself. My name's Bill Thibodeau and I'm the executive director of Egadz Youth Centre. I've been employed with Egadz Youth Centre now for nine and a half years. I have wore a variety of hats at Egadz in my stay there and currently, for the past four years, I've been the executive director.

For a large portion of my career at Egadz, I was one of the people who was instrumental in starting our street outreach program that deals a lot with children and youth who are being sexually exploited out in the street.

A little prelude to that was our program went out initially just to connect with youth that were on our streets. This whole issue of what most people termed as child prostitution was something that hit us smack dab in the face when we got out there. So it wasn't something we readily went out looking for.

However, I would just like to read a little bit of what I've written here so that I stay on track. I would venture to guess at this point in time, this panel feels that it would have heard just about everything with respect to this issue. I say just about because until you've actually experienced what these young

people have endured, or have had to sit by and watch what they've endured as a result of either limited or no resources to address their issues and needs, such as waiting lists, indecision as to whose responsibility or area they fit in or under, with respect again to their issues and needs, i.e. Social Services, Justice, Health, etc., you can never really truly know what, how or why these young people are so scared and untrusting.

I'd initially decided not to come and speak to this panel today. However, in rethinking this, I've chosen to come here today to reaffirm some of my previous comments with respect to the issues and needs of children and youth exploited and abused through prostitution. In addition, remind this committee of what I perceive would be a tremendous disservice to the whole issue, and most specifically the young people whose lives it affects, that being any consideration or recommendation of legislation which has been issued in Alberta.

Quite frankly, this is not the solution to this issue. In fact, it would be even more of a hindrance to these young people as well as those who work front line day in and day out with these young people. I would, however, like to offer this to the committee here today.

Since September 17, 1993, the Egadz street outreach program has been front and centre in terms of working with countless numbers of children and youth, both male and, most prominently, female. Throughout our experience, consistency, relentlessness and advocating to ensure that many of these young people are given the opportunities to exit their nightmares.

This is a reality of what it does and will take to be effective in reaching and assisting these young people to move forward to more healthy, productive and safer lives. There must be adequate services that include addictions treatment, access to adequate housing for families, better co-ordination of government in the areas of Social Services, Justice and Health, with respect again to this whole issue.

I feel that while there have been a number of presenters to this committee who have talked about the problem and their perception of what might be some of the solutions, I do agree with many who have presented and what they have presented on. For example, alternative education, housing, etc., however, many of these things often come into play once and only after the immediate issues and needs of these children and youth are addressed.

I would truly be remiss if I did not speak to what some might perceive to be, I guess, self-serving; however, the reality of this issue is that many, if not all, of these children and youth will take a number of attempts to make a lifestyle change and they will fail. When this happens, Egadz street outreach workers are their first contact, time and time again, when they end up back in the streets, guaranteed.

I'd like to provide this committee with a few examples of what often hinders working with these young people from a front-line worker's perspective. And I can only speak to Egadz and our street outreach program.

Our outreach workers staff earn the average wage of $9.78 an hour. They do court work, they do addictions treatment, they transport kids to and from treatment centres, they do home visits, custody visits, they work all hours of the day and night. Think about what you've heard throughout your process. These people live . . . deal and live with it daily. It also lends towards . . . (inaudible) . . . burnout and turnover. Better paying jobs become a factor. Less stress. This takes away from consistency in establishing and maintaining trusting relations with these kids.

Our program constantly struggles for supplies, hygiene products, what we need for kids to go to treatment, food for sandwiches out in the van at night. Fuel for our outreach van. Condoms.

I heard the comment of condoms being an issue in terms of being thrown around, and I really have to say this. I wasn't going to; that's part of why I avoided coming and sitting and listening because it sometimes gets my fuel burning.

Let's be realistic. These guys are out there picking these girls up, turning tricks. They're not driving back down in the stroll in the neighbourhoods and firing a fully loaded condom out the window on the street. They're tossing them in the ditch; they're tossing them in other places where they're pulling these tricks.

So I mean that is quite honestly a farce and I disagree with the comments and statements that have been made to date in regards to that.

Another issue with the condoms. I think it's a pretty sad statement. Our outreach program has been going for seven years. I have yet to be able to access dollar one in this province to supply our outreach program with condoms. Not one dollar from this province from any government agency or any private agency. Our condoms have been supplied to our street outreach program and it's actually very embarrassing, I feel, to this province.

But we have had to go to our neighbours to the west and an outreach program in Edmonton has supplied us with condoms for years. Once the bottom fell out in that, we now have a foundation out of Edmonton that has, up to date, provided us with funding to provide condoms to these people out in the street. And I truly believe that's a sad statement. The condoms do work to a large extent.

Resources. Seeking out and dealing with a large amount of bureaucratic red tape is frustrating to a professional. Imagine somebody with a problem trying to access information or services being told, no, wait, oh, there's a waiting list. Come on back tomorrow. Oh, can't deal with your solution today — or your issue — sorry.

Guaranteed, what they're living and what they're going through. The last time we presented, we talked about a window of opportunity that's very small in these people's lives. And if they're told to come back tomorrow, you know what? We just closed that window. And when it opens again is anybody's guess, if ever at all.

In closing, I would like to ask this committee, while considering what it will be recommended . . . Sorry. In closing, I would ask that this committee, while considering what will be recommended, will reflect a balance of prevention and intervention. Let's not write off those struggling to survive and exist on a daily basis.

I would further ask this committee to recommend adequate funding be allocated specifically towards front-line street outreach work for proper salaries and operating needs so that the hands-on work that is required and necessary can be done.

I again thank you for your time, your interest in this presentation, and the issue as a whole. I wish you well in your deliberations and would welcome any questions or comments with respect to this presentation. Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, Bill. Bill, I just want to comment because I was the one that brought the issue forward about the condoms. I want to just mention to you to make it very clear that this was information that was given to our committee when we were in Regina. That isn't something, you know, that I have brought up just from my own, but it did pose the question.

And so I just wanted to say, you know, being that this is what has been brought to the committee now, how do we address it?

Mr. Thibodeau: — No, and it's not isolated to Regina or I think any other city. I mean we're heard the complaints here before. I've done the work and know the realities of it, and it's just not a reality. Our streets are realistically, in the stroll areas, more littered with garbage from 7 Eleven, Robin's Donuts, and every other business entity within 22nd Street as opposed to our street outreach program.

Again I thank you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Committee members, would you like to ask any questions?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Bill, I do want to ask you just one question and that is if you could elaborate on why you think the PCHIP (Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act) legislation is a bad idea in this province?

What would it mean in terms of . . . I know you've talked before about how it would break your trust relationship with children on the street, but list for us — because obviously this is a decision that we're going to have to make — list for us all the arguments against the application of PCHIP . . . (inaudible) . . . from your experience. And you've got a huge amount of experience.

Mr. Thibodeau: — Well we have kids now that we apprehend and we detain them for often breaches and other really trivial charges and we hold them for periods of time without really doing anything with them. What are we offering them? The kid has an addictions issue.

A number of years ago we dealt with . . . I mean we do a lot of work in addictions. It wasn't part of our mandate at Egadz, but we kept running into all the stumbling blocks and the barriers of getting kids into treatment to the point where addiction services . . . and I was the person doing it then and I got told from a staff person at addiction services if you don't like it do it yourself. So we started doing that.

Once we started doing that, quite frankly, we had addiction services calling us and saying why are you guys doing this? You're not really qualified to do this. However, we have a number of treatment centres in this province I guess that would say different. They're taking these kids in. They recognize the need.

The trust issue is a huge issue. The people who are out on the front line, night in, night out have no safety net. They are out on the street turf . Our biggest, probably, safety factor is pimps. When we first started our program we were a godsend to these guys because, man, we're giving condoms to the girls and we're feeding them and we're helping them with their legal issues, until the first time we yank the girl away from them. Now we're public enemy no. 1. So that's always an issue out there. We will drive this underground. Count on it.

I've been around this city for a long time. My experience before Egadz is, once upon a time I was much like one of these kids. I hanged and banged on these streets when I was 13 years old. I have known lots of girls that have worked. I've known lots of pimps, drug dealers, you name it. And in my time, there were no kids involved in prostitution. Even the street people took care of that.

This has systemically happened over a number of years for economic reasons, because it didn't look good when the prostitution happened downtown, right here on Spadina Crescent, 20-odd years ago. So it got pushed further and further to where it's into a residential area that is poverty stricken and has less of a voice, you know. And if it starts bringing up the numbers, it takes time. We have a number of people over the years that we've always suspected of being involved in prostitution; 12, 13, 14, 15 years old. This isn't a *Pretty Woman* syndrome. They don't walk around in high heels and skirts. So it's really anybody's guess, any day you drive down along the stroll, as to who's working and who's not. I really just don't see a whole lot of different merits.

And one of the biggest ones, we're back to resources. We have them for 72 hours. What do we do with them? Where do we send them to afterwards?

We just dealt with a young woman who is now an adult, but has two children. One of the biggest stumbling blocks for her is she's court ordered not to be within a specified area, i.e., the stroll. Well, that's where she can afford to live. So because she can't afford to live there now, she's forced to live somewhere else, but her social assistance doesn't cover the rent costs in other areas of the city. We probably expelled and spent probably $2,000 worth of man hours to advocate for this woman to get $65 extra a month on her cheque so she can afford to live in an area where she's not being subjected to this or her children, hopefully, will not be subjected to this.

And we talk about cost savers; $65 a month, if not, if that didn't

come through, she lives back in the area where she's at. She withstands ending up with more system-generated charges. And if she ends up with a fine, where do you think she's going to get the money to pay for that fine?

Yes. I mean, there is . . . there is examples and we've been . . . Don's just reminded me of something here. Edmonton was a real good example a number of years ago. They have a large number of Asian trick pads as they are known as. These are businesses or just homes somewhere in the city where some of these young women are placed and they service 10 to 15 to 40 men a day. They're doped up. They have no idea what's going on. Some of these women remain . . . some of these young women remain and become unidentified bodies at some point in time. That's the reality of it. And I guess my biggest scare is we'll start pushing that body count up because if it's out of sight and out of mind, everyone believes it's not a problem any more.

I don't know if that's fully answered your question or not, Peter, but I mean, there's . . . there really is a number of reasons as to why this thing is just not going to work. I guess my simplistic answer to it could be we're putting the cart before the horse here.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — In other words, services first is what you're saying.

Mr. Thibodeau: — Exactly. I mean, and again it sounds self-serving, but I've got four outreach staff and I had to be the bad guy the other day because of some funding that just didn't come through — I had to reduce eight hours out of the street outreach program. You know, part of my job I realize that, but it's not a part I enjoy because I know the value of this program. And it's just even a hard time even though I know the realities of the dollars and the cents. It's so hard to come to this realization that I've got to go into their office and say, you know what you guys are doing some phenomenal work in here, but I've got to cut out eight hours.

So somebody's now without eight hours. How do I maintain staff levels at that because the first minute that . . . I've got people in this program that have degrees. I've got people in this program that have life degrees and both. But I mean the reality of it is everyone's got to live.

And I guess I just throw it out to a number of people. I think it takes some real special people to do this job. I've had a conversation with a member of your committee just in brief about just trying to absorb some of what you folks have been hearing, and I'm back to the statement that I made earlier in this presentation: think about what that's like night after night. And I know it.

We talk about it as staff and the fact, I guess, we question our humanness. How do we watch this garbage and then go home and sit with your children and play nice and, you know, have a normally type functioning life without these thoughts coming back into your head every day?

You know, and again I'll share it to you, because I think that it needs to be heard. Nine and a half years of knowing 12 kids to die, direct and indirectly related to prostitution. That's 12 kids. I'm not trying to play God again here, but these were preventable in my mind.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Bill, thank you very, very much.

Mr. Thibodeau: — Again thank you for your time.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — We're very grateful to you.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you for coming, Bill.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — . . . had a busy week so it's quite special that you made time to come here.

Members of the committee, in terms of the formal hearing process we stand adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 5:03 p.m.