

MINUTES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

03 OCTOBER 1996

1:30 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair: M. Meilleur

Members: M. Bellemare, R. Cantin, L. Davis, D. Holmes, A. Loney, B. McGarry,
A. Munter, D. Pratt

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**That the Community Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of
19 September 1996.**

CARRIED

INQUIRIES

Update on Welfare Fraud, Smart-Card Technology

Councillor D. Pratt asked whether staff could report back, on an annual basis, on the number of claims, the claimants involved, whether charges are laid and whether overpayments are recovered, in cases of welfare fraud. He also requested an update on Smart Card technology. He asked whether it was possible to obtain copies of reports on this subject from Metro Toronto. Councillor R. Cantin asked for a progress report on benefit cheques being changed into American currency.

PRESENTATIONS

1. PRESENTATION BY THE ACTION CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
- Committee Co-ordinator report dated 20 September 1996

Ms. Aline Akeson, Executive Director, Action Centre for Social Justice, introduced Ms. Dorothy O'Connell, President, Board of Directors, ACSJ. Ms. Akeson spoke about an event scheduled for Thursday 17 October 1996, at 7:00 p.m. Plans are for a silent, candlelit March from LeBreton Flats to Parliament Hill for a gathering in solidarity with 45 municipalities in the Province of Québec. The intent is to symbolize the silence of the poor and to signify the intent to restore their voices by this gesture.

Ms. O'Connell added the March has been organized to ensure others can manifest how they care about the poor. She asked that as many members of the Committee as possible come out for this event. Ms. Akeson provided copies of material directed at school children and getting them involved in "Saying No to Poverty".

That the Community Services Committee receive this verbal presentation for information.

RECEIVED

REGULAR ITEMS

2. GRANTS REQUEST OUTSIDE REGULAR GRANTS PROCESS -
CONFERENCE ON CANADA'S CHILDREN ... CANADA'S FUTURE
- Regional Clerk report dated 17 September 1996

That the Community Services Committee recommend Regional Council approve a grant request of \$5,000 to the Conference on Canada's Children...Canada's Future. Funds are to be provided from the Provision For Unforeseen.

CARRIED

3. PRESENTATION BY THE ACTING MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
TO THE HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION
- Committee Co-ordinator report dated 20 September 1996

Dr. Geoff Dunkley, Acting Medical Officer of Health, began by saying his initial impression had been that the Commission would focus on, and visit, hospitals. However, he has been encouraged by the fact commission members “cast a wider net” by meeting with the Regional Chair, who presented Council’s position and with both himself and the Director, Home Care Program. Dr. Dunkley said he had stressed the importance of reinvestment and reallocation, expressing a real concern that the commission is making recommendations about hospital beds at the same time as the Ministry is saying that all decisions about reinvestment and reallocation will be part of a separate process at the provincial level. He re-emphasized that these approaches have to be considered as a whole as opposed to focusing only on reducing costs.

Dr. Dunkley expressed his belief that Commission members were sympathetic to this approach and would reinforce it in their report. He noted that, in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, a formula has been proposed whereby, for each hospital day taken out of the system, there is an increase of .8 home care visits: in Sudbury, this translates into a \$1.2 million increase in the home care budget and will mitigate the effect of the loss of hospital services.

Dr. Dunkley said the second aspect of his presentation to the Commission focused on the fact the health care system has been historically driven by treatment goals as opposed to focusing on where health care resources could be invested to contribute to the health of the population. He posited that, until this change in approach is made, the health care system will never be really restructured.

Dr. Dunkley also spoke about the off-loading of costs. He noted there has been a 61% increase in home care in general and an 80% increase in home care infusion over last year. He said these increases are because hospitals are saving costs through earlier discharges and does not save money for the system. Dr. Dunkley indicated this speaks to the fact an overall governance model is needed to make decisions. He spoke about the dramatic changes in the complexity of cases being looked after in the community, the duration of stay on home care programs and the types of services being delivered as a result of hospital downsizing. He re-emphasized the need for a system-wide evaluation of where services can best be delivered.

Dr. Dunkley told Commission members there should be local decision making about reallocation, expressing the view these cannot be made provincially and recommending strongly that the reallocations recommended by the District Health Council be considered regardless of provincial direction. He suggested there be joint planning and implementation between the hospitals, the home care program and other community services, to ensure system changes are affected with minimum impact on health.

Dr. Dunkley concluded his presentation by highlighting three areas where there is good evidence that implementing programs in the community would have a rapid impact, from the Commission's point of view, on health care savings: these are low birth weight prevention, increased breast cancer screening in the community and prevention of falls in the elderly. He added his impression of the Commission was that members had genuine concern about the health care system as a whole and about community impacts, but it was unclear whether they would be able to address these concerns.

In response to a question from Committee Chair M. Meilleur, the Director, Home Care Program, Catherine Danbrook, confirmed the Health Department returned approximately \$3 million to the Province from the home care program in 1995. She clarified this surplus at the end of 1995 was partly because \$700,000 was received from the Ministry in early January after some efficiencies in service delivery had been made. In addition, savings were effected as a consequence of a reserve anticipated for Pay Equity not being used in 1995. Ms. Danbrook noted that, this year, staff have identified gaps in service delivery and, based on the multi-year plan of the DHC, there have been increases in respite care to the elderly and the physically disabled, some mental health programs for seniors have been created and there are plans to extend the hours of operation. Dr. Dunkley added that major savings had been realised by changing the way services were delivered and in some cases by changing the service provider. He posited there had not been much client dissatisfaction and the savings were being applied in other areas.

Chair Meilleur asked whether staff felt returning \$3 million to the Province will jeopardize the Region's position. Ms. Danbrook replied she did not believe it should, noting that over \$50 million was returned, province-wide, as a result of programs individually undertaking cost-saving exercises to meet priority needs. She added that budgetary approvals came three-quarters into the fiscal year therefore many programs were given additional funds; this means the Region will be able to absorb a predicted 9% growth in admissions from acute care hospitals and 4% in other types because of changes made in 1995.

Councillor A. Munter expressed concern about comments from the Ministry that Ottawa-Carleton has more home care, more long term care and more public health than most other areas. He said the fact is the Region is under-average in Ontario and the DHC will be addressing the Commission on this matter. He asked that the Medical Officer of Health write to both the Ministry and to the Commission to dispell this erroneous perception which may harm the Region's case. He noted that the DHC will be asking for a reinvestment of two-thirds of savings as opposed to the one-third recommended by the Commission for Sudbury.

Councillor Munter asked for an update report on the home care program, specifically in terms of budget and demand, and in view of concerns about cutting service in order to return money to the Province. He suggested it would be useful to report that there has been a 60% increase in the home care caseload and that this increase is current, not projected.

Councillor R. Cantin spoke to the issue of the "formula" applied in Sudbury re: hospital bed closures. He suggested the Ministry be asked to fund the full cost of the beds and not cut back on basic home care outside of hospitals.

Councillor A. Loney said a report on home care is essential, as he had also heard from a number of sources that Ottawa-Carleton does not need more home care since it does not spend the money it currently receives. He put forward the view the Pay Equity issue has to be part of the report; it must be carefully explained how a surplus situation resulted to refute the notion the Region does not need more funds. He spoke about the Commission, noting it is only empowered to make cuts; the recommendation must be made to the Minister that more home care is required. The Councillor informed Committee members there is apparently a rift between the Ministry and the Commission because the former is unhappy with the latter recommending as much as it has for reinvestment. He asked that the report on home care be made available as quickly as possible.

Councillor Loney clarified that provincial rules relating to capital expenditures have been modified and that 50% of the cost of renovations must come from the local community. He suggested the Region take the strong position with the Province that, where it is requiring capital investment for the purpose of restructuring and moving existing services, it fund 100% of the costs and not throw it back to the community for fundraising and raising local property taxes.

Councillor Loney expressed the view many are convinced the health care system can be changed considerably, that hospital expenses can be cut but funds must be provided for alternate services. He noted the Minister of Health has recently reaffirmed his position that health dollars are not to be diminished: as long as this position is maintained, there will be funds for reallocation and the community is saying health care services must be maintained.

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

CARRIED

4. ACCREDITATION PILOT SURVEY

- Acting Medical Officer of Health report dated 18 September 1996

That Councillor Al Loney be the Community Services Committee representative in the pilot testing of the draft national Home Care standards and related accreditation process.

CARRIED

INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED

1. HEPATITIS B IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM UPDATE

- Acting Medical Officer of Health report dated 5 September 1996

2. PROVINCIAL OFFENCE CONVICTIONS IN FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS AND TOBACCO VENDORS

- Acting Medical Officer of Health report dated 4 September 1996

3. REVIEW OF HEALTHY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROVINCIAL MANDATORY PROGRAMS

- Acting Medical Officer of Health report dated 20 September 1996

4. SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TOBACCO OR HEALTH - OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 2, 1996, CHATEAU LAURIER HOTEL, OTTAWA

- Acting Medical Officer of Health memorandum dated 13 Sep 96

5. GUIDELINES FOR ONTARIO WORKS
- Commissioner, Social Services Department memorandum dated 3 Sep 96

OTHER BUSINESS

Presentation re: Nelson House

In his preliminary comments, the Social Services Commissioner, Dick Stewart, indicated the department and the Area Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) have been aware of the Nelson House situation for several weeks. Mr. Stewart added this is not simply a dispute between the Board of Directors and agency staff; it is clear there have been long-standing differences of opinion over the past few years and in spite of collective best efforts, the difficulties have not abated. In reply to questions from Committee Chair M. Meilleur, Mr. Stewart confirmed beds were available within the family violence network for each resident of Nelson House when it closed, and no resident had to return to abusive situations because of this event.

Councillor R. Cantin noted the presence of Mrs. Beryl Gaffney, former Nepean and Regional Councillor and currently Member of Parliament for Nepean.

Lee Farnworth, Councillor, City of Nepean

Ms. Farnworth, a Member of Nepean City Council, and a former member of the Board of Directors of Nelson House, stated her commitment to providing services for women and children fleeing family violence. She said she had been relieved to hear that Harmony House had taken over interim management but she expressed the view this was only a band-aid solution. She requested that the shelter be closed temporarily and that regional staff work with the Ministry to resolve problems at Nelson House to ensure the safety of women and children currently residing there and that of persons needing to use this facility in the future.

In reply to a question from Councillor D. Holmes, Ms. Farnworth said she felt the problems at Nelson House have deep roots and providing only surface governance (Harmony House interim management) is not the proper vehicle. She added Harmony House is designed to provide second-stage service and it does not have the same mandate as Nelson House.

Councillor A. Munter asked whether it would be possible to let residents who wish to remain at Nelson House do so, no take in any new residents and take the time required to resolve the situation. Ms. Farnworth replied this was almost the situation last Friday, when about half the residents had left the premises and interested parties were hoping for a cooling-down period. She expressed the belief the court injunction obtained by Nelson House residents pre-empted this taking place.

Ms. Farnworth indicated, in reply to a question from Councillor D. Pratt, her belief that the community will exists to reconstitute the Board and get back on the right track. She noted she has had calls from individuals volunteering to serve on a new Board, but she re-emphasized a new Board would only inherit the problems and would be taking on a considerable challenge: she reiterated the best approach would be to close the shelter temporarily.

Leighann Burns-Campagna, Harmony House

The speaker noted Harmony House became involved as a result of residents requesting a meeting to discuss the situation at Nelson House and asking for whatever help it could provide. She added it was clear residents did not want to leave the shelter and have it lost to other women that might come after them. Ms. Burns-Campagna noted her involvement has been to provide guidance to women living in the house and being accountable to those women. She expressed the hope the situation could be resolved by all parties working together.

Responding to questions from Councillor Holmes about the court injunction, Ms. Burns-Campagna said management control was given to Harmony House simply to ensure a structure is in place until issues are resolved. She went on to say there are plans to call a meeting of the Membership of Nelson House to install a new Board to resolve issues, simply because the beds must continue to exist. The speaker added it was her understanding a 14-days' notice is required to call a General Meeting and this is being worked on at the present time.

Pauline Van Lammers, Executive Director, Nepean Community Resource Centre

Ms. Van Lammers spoke as a representative of the following service providers: Interval House, Family Services Centre, Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services, Maison d'amitié and Goulbourn, Kanata, West-Carleton CRC; the Catholic Family Service are ready to assist.

Ms. Van Lammers raised the following points:

- from the time of the announcement on 24 September that Nelson House was closing, plans were in place to move women and children to safe places; other shelters cooperated, supportive visits were arranged, extra counselling was provided for women and children; the trauma of clients having to move from a safe and known environment was not underestimated by the agencies involved, and all parties had in mind that the beds should not be lost, that outreach and children's services are vital to the west end;
- there are concerns about the lack of process used to oust a duly-constituted Board and management and about the lack of consultation with service providers;
- efforts were made over the past years to put structures in place to make services at Nelson House responsive and accountable;
- there are serious concerns about the integrity and stability of services currently in place;
- a serious breach of trust occurred when the location of the house was made known to the media, when women in crisis were not protected in their conversations with the media and when it was stated there were no safe places for women to go when there were options;

Ms. Van Lammers said it is recommended no further placements be accepted at Nelson House until the situation has been clarified, that assurances be given funds will remain for the provision of those services, that there be a review by the funders of the circumstances leading to the decision to close the facility and that it be ascertained what is required for a stable set of services, and, that there be an open Call for Proposals to address the newly-identified service and organizational needs.

Patricia Pepper, Former Board Member, Nelson House

Ms. Pepper said she has been associated with Nelson House since 1989 when, along with Beryl Gaffney, then Nepean and Regional Councillor and currently Member of Parliament for Nepean, a steering committee was formed to look into services for women. The speaker spoke in support of the approach recommended by Councillor Farnworth and Ms. Van Lammers, namely temporarily closing the facility for a cooling-off period. Ms. Pepper said she believed the will does exist to reconstitute the service.

Moved by D. Holmes

That the Community Services Committee move In-Camera to discuss the situation at Nelson House, pursuant to Section 11(1) (e) (f) of By-law 112 of 1994 (as amended), Council Procedure.

CARRIED

Moved by A. Munter

That the Community Services Committee meeting resume in Open Session.

CARRIED

Moved by D. Holmes

That the RMOC continue to fund Nelson House on a day-to-day basis; that there be no new admissions; and that RMOC staff be directed, in consultation with the Province, to prepare, for the next meeting of the Community Services Committee, a plan to protect the investment of these essential services in an appropriate manner.

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

17 October 1996