



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 012

Tuesday, January 26, 2021



Chair: Mr. Sean Casey

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

I'd like to begin by welcoming our new clerk, Danielle Widmer. Welcome, also, to Mr. Melillo and to all of the witnesses.

This is meeting number 12 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of yesterday, January 25. Proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

In order to ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow. Members and witnesses can speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice, on the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French audio.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name, and if you are participating by video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. When you are done speaking, please put your mike on mute to minimize any interference. Should any technical challenges arise, please notify me if you can. We'll pay close attention. If that happens, of course, it may be necessary to suspend for a few minutes to make sure all members are able to participate fully.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Friday, October 9, 2020, the committee resumes its study of urban, rural and northern indigenous housing.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses to begin our discussion with five minutes of opening remarks followed by questions. From the Aboriginal Housing Management Association we have Margaret Pfoh, chief executive officer, and from the Kenora District Services Board we have Henry Wall, chief administrative officer.

We're going to start with Ms. Pfoh, please, for five minutes. Welcome to the committee. You have the floor.

Ms. Margaret Pfoh (Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Management Association): In the language of my ancestors, *'niit*. Hello, everyone, and thank you for having us here. *Toyaaxsiim*. Thank you all.

I'd like to start off by talking a little bit about our organization. As Canada's first indigenous grassroots housing authority, the Abo-

iginal Housing Management Association—AHMA—was created for indigenous people, by indigenous people. In addition to providing families with affordable and culturally appropriate housing, AHMA's members offer many support services through 35 different programs, including homelessness prevention, transition homes, parenting skills, mental health programs, substance use support and more. As an indigenous organization, AHMA always brings cultural components to its relationship with its members. We recognize the dispossession of indigenous peoples caused by the Canadian government through a history of residential schools, the sixties scoop and the general consequences of colonization.

I want to take a brief moment to clarify the distinction of what we mean when we say "indigenous". As you already titled your witnessing here, you've heard the term "urban, rural and northern". We are the dispossessed, the disenfranchised from our sense of belonging to the three distinctions-based groups, having founded our own sense of community and belonging in the urban, rural and northern environments. We are the non-status, the status unknown, the migrating and the immigrant of the spectrums you refer to as distinctions-based groups. We know that in any given community of ours within B.C., our providers' clients comprise about 30% local nations, which means their communities are largely outside the scope of those three distinctions-based groups.

AHMA continues to work with its communities to reclaim self-determination through culturally appropriate housing that honours indigenous traditions in meaningful ways.

Following the 2019 federal election, the indigenous housing sector in B.C. and across Canada heaved a sigh of relief to see that Minister Hussen was mandated to create a national urban indigenous housing strategy. However, a year later, we are disheartened to see no tangible progress on this file. Considering the significant time and effort that has to be invested in this initiative and the wide consultation process that has to take place, we see the delay in initiating this project as a significant threat to its conception, notably in a minority government environment.

For this reason, AHMA's board of directors has decided to invest our own funding to create a B.C. urban and rural indigenous housing strategy with the hope that, once completed, it will be considered for funding by our federal government, perhaps under a tripartite strategy that could be replicated in other provinces, such as Ontario, which has such a strong provincial indigenous leader in the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services with its leader Justin Marchand, along with many others across the country.

An advisory committee composed of many internal and external stakeholders will oversee this progress and the development of the strategy and ensure that a vast and meaningful consultation is a crucial component of it.

The B.C. urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy will achieve multiple things, including defining and understanding who the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing and service providers are, and measuring their social and economic impact in supporting indigenous peoples. It will define current challenges in the delivery of urban, rural and northern indigenous housing, and propose solutions to bridge the gaps. It will assess B.C.'s indigenous urban, rural and northern housing needs and develop a 10-year plan to respond to the needs, not only fixing existing stock and building new units but also creating new and culturally appropriate housing programs. It will also develop an implementation and delivery plan that identifies the role of AHMA, member organizations, funders and partners; assess and build capacities for AHMA membership in housing-related domains; and finally, identify key partners to support the implementation of the strategy, which will be specific municipalities, MLAs, MPs, other indigenous organizations, and so on.

Only through meaningful engagement with AHMA and indigenous housing and service partners across Canada can the social, economic and indigenous rights of urban, rural and northern indigenous peoples in Canada be claimed and protected.

Toxaxsiim. Thank you all for having me. I'll leave it there.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Pfoh.

Now we're going to hear from Mr. Wall for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Henry Wall (Chief Administrative Officer, Kenora District Services Board): Good afternoon.

Thank you to the chair and the members of the standing committee for the opportunity to speak to you today. I join you today from the community of Dryden in northwestern Ontario, which sits on the lands of the Anishinabe nation in Treaty No. 3. We also sit on the traditional territory of Wabigoon first nation and Eagle Lake First Nation.

I want to do an acknowledgement of our elders, who have been and are praying that at the meeting today our words will be clear and well understood so that this can actually result in meaningful action.

My name is Henry Wall, and I serve as the chief administrative officer for the Kenora District Services Board, or KDSB, as I will

keep referring to it. KDSB is responsible for the delivery of paramedic land ambulance services across the district. We are responsible for social assistance, which includes poverty reduction programs, employment readiness and life stabilization programs, and financial assistance; for child care and early years development programs across the district; and, last but not least, housing and homelessness prevention across the district of Kenora, which I have to say covers 407,000 square kilometres. You can fit most of Europe into our district and our area of our responsibility when it comes to housing and homelessness.

I want to say *meegwetch* to the members of this committee, who I know really supported us and helped us from all sides of the House to finally have KDSB and our district designated under the Reaching Home program. That just happened in March. Thank you so much for that. *Meegwetch*. It couldn't have come at a better time, given the pandemic.

Having such a broad mandate certainly gives us a very interesting perspective in terms of the realities that families face in our region. I will tell you that it's not by accident or coincidence that of all 338 federal ridings in Canada, in the district of Kenora we have the seventh-highest rate of families with children living in poverty. Our wait-list for affordable housing has increased by 257% since 2011. As of August 2020, we had over 1,363 households and families who were approved and waiting for affordable housing. These are just the families who have not given up on the hope of finally attaining housing.

I also want to say that on an annual basis, in our three emergency shelters in the district that KDSB supports and funds, we support over 2,100 unique individuals each and every single year. Over 2,000 of those individuals every year are first nations, so when you look at it from a context of a rural standpoint, it's 2,000 people. That's the size of many communities across Canada's rural parts.

Pre-COVID, we estimate that we had approximately 393 individuals off reserve who were homeless at any given time. That represents about 1.08% of our overall population. Now we have the pandemic, and I can tell you that it is much worse, just with the sheer number of individuals that have been displaced out of their communities, displaced out of the correctional system, displaced out of the health care system and displaced out of the child welfare system.

I say those things, and in 2018 when we did our homeless enumeration study, we found that 18% of our homeless population was incarcerated at the time of the study. In other words, one in five of our homeless is in jail at any given time. In fact, that year, we also found that Canada and Ontario combined spend more money on housing indigenous homeless people in the Kenora jail than they do in providing funding to KDSB when it comes to housing and homelessness prevention. When we talk about financial sustainability, I can tell you that the path that existing systems are on in our region is not sustainable, and it's not doing us any favours, which is why a strategy is needed.

I also want to say that not having safe, attainable and affordable housing in our district.... “Attainable” is really important, especially when it comes to indigenous people, because it matters if you're indigenous or not if you can attain housing very often. I want to say that, because of that, what we're seeing is that our housing continuum has expanded to include the jails, the child welfare system, our health care system and our streets. That is not just inappropriate, but as a country we shouldn't stand for it.

I want to applaud the work that's taking place on the committee. I want to say we need a housing strategy that will commit a long-term, stable flow of financial resources so that our communities can develop, on our own terms, our capacity to build and create homes for our families.

We need a housing strategy that allows for flexibility in order for communities to build homes that meet the cultural needs of the families that live in our communities, both on and off reserve. We need a housing strategy that supports and empowers partnerships between municipalities and first nation communities so that we can come together to build homes where they're needed, not where it's convenient for government to place them, or where jurisdictional limitations of existing programs dictate they should be.

• (1545)

In closing, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity today. I also want to state that if Canada is serious about making progress on reconciliation, then we cannot forget that we need to have a housing strategy that is inclusive to all, that is specific, that is progressive and aggressive, and that ensures that all families have a home and a place to be.

With that, I think it's imperative that we recognize that not much else matters to families unless they have a safe, attainable and affordable home of their own. There's a difference between having a house and a home, especially when we're talking from an indigenous perspective.

Thank you very much. *Chi-meegwetch.*

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Wall.

We'll now begin our rounds of questions, starting with the Conservatives.

Mr. Vis, go ahead for six minutes, please.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): First off, I'd like to begin by thanking Ms. Pfoh and Mr. Wall for appearing today.

I really appreciated the intensity of both your opening statements and the amount of information you covered. That's very, very helpful and very well presented.

Let me begin by saying that I have a lot to learn on this file. I admit that, because I want to be able to do my best to get some things right for indigenous people. I have a lot of work to do, and the Conservative Party has a lot of work to do, to get things right.

Ms. Pfoh, I'm assuming that you believe, and we all agree here, I think, that the Government of Canada is not meeting its housing requirement to urban indigenous people. Would you be able to pro-

vide any context in terms of what would be adequate housing for urban indigenous Canadians?

• (1550)

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: *T'oyaxsut nüün*, Brad. Thank you.

You know, for us it really comes down to the old cliché of nothing about us without us. To be clear, from my perspective and from that of the many organizations I work with...not just AHMA but the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association and their indigenous caucus. I have also sat with Leilani Farha as the previous UN special rapporteur on housing and her ad hoc coalition and the OFIFC. We've all had conversations about what that really looks like and what that means. It really means that we have an opportunity as urban indigenous people to sit at the design table and to actually speak with government as an equal partner in the creation of what that looks like.

Housing, as Henry spoke to, is more than just bricks and mortar. It's about giving a sense of home. It's about giving a sense of belonging. For the dispossessed and disenfranchised people who have been living in urban areas for a long, long time, that looks different from just your standard bricks and mortar.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you.

Just to understand the unique governance model that does exist in British Columbia, AHMA was formed in approximately 2012-13, when CMHC devolved its responsibility to B.C. Housing and subsequently to your organization. What's your relationship with CMHC today?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: It's interesting; Minister Duclos and I had a good conversation prior to him being succeeded by Minister Hussen. Our organization dates back to the 1990s. The grassroots foundation started with devolution of the housing programs across the country from the federal government to the provinces. We were fortunate here that the Province of B.C. agreed that “for indigenous, by indigenous” should exist even back then and had a strong commitment to allow us to be at the table to negotiate how that transfer would happen.

The CMHC of the day said they didn't care what we did with this program as long as poor Indians got housed. The Province of B.C. was fortunate enough to say that they actually wanted us to decide for ourselves how that looks. That is the current iteration of AHMA.

Evan Siddall is a breath of fresh air. I have to say that we've seen a lot of genuine interest in their processes and in their communication strategies to interact with us and have conversations. When the rapid housing initiative was released, I reached out to Evan and asked him to treat AHMA as a municipality because of our broad representation. If they're going to make allocations to municipalities, we would like to get a lump sum allocation for our programs. He said no, but he said he's not opposed to that idea. We continue to work with him today on what that could look like, going forward.

So I'd say it's good. It's better than it was.

Mr. Brad Vis: That's really good to hear. In previous testimony, CMHC informed the committee that they have 75 dedicated workers on indigenous housing issues across Canada. From what I'm hearing from you, you would say that dedicated staff working in partnership on an equal basis, either with housing organizations such as yours or directly with first nations, has been an improvement from CMHC.

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: Yes, to be clear, the wheels of change take time, and I think there are a lot of good people—and there have been a lot of good people—in government and in government organizations like CMHC. However, I think it's very easy to fall back into the old systems of colonialism, which means saying, “Yes, I hear you” and then doing it the way the government thinks they should do it, rather than actually allowing the indigenous representation to help truly drive the solution.

I would say, based on my last conversation with Evan Siddall and Romy Bowers, that it seems that there is a genuine interest. They phrased it as, “We'd like to hear how you think things should be done, and then we will support you.” That sounds a little bit different.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you.

I'm very enthused to hear that you guys have just gone ahead and taken control of your own destiny. You're building your own strategy, not only for British Columbia but possibly as a model for the entire country.

Do you have any preliminary financial numbers you would be able to share with this committee in terms of what you would expect from the Government of Canada to meet its constitutional requirement to provide adequate housing to urban indigenous Canadians—in British Columbia in your context?

• (1555)

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: We've done a number of research documents leading up to the onset of our current strategy. We have a study that was done in partnership with UBC—the University of British Columbia—and a number of other housing-focused entities here in B.C. that talks about the municipality lens of housing and what needs to happen within the municipalities to garner the support needed to actually effect change.

It's great if the federal government gives out all sorts of money through funding streams and programs, but if municipalities and provincial governments aren't coming to the table as equal partners, we often see that there are huge gaps, especially in the indigenous housing sector, in responding effectively to some of these calls to action.

I'm happy to share with this committee the Cleo Breton report, which shows how there are massive gaps between what municipalities say they are trying to do and what they're actually doing in terms of the housing commitment.

We also did a study with Urban Matters that did an economic analysis on the impact of urban indigenous housing programs to the community and to the levels of government. We discovered a number of things. Again, I'm happy to share those reports with this committee afterwards. I apologize—I should have thought to send it to you with our briefing documents.

We certainly have discovered that here in British Columbia, since our inception in the 1990s, for every dollar that's invested in urban indigenous housing, we spin off 230% back to the community. Again, I'm happy to share that so you can see the data and the analysis. I can't speak to an actual dollar amount, but we have eight key findings that speak to a number of target populations—including youth aging out of care, elders aging into care and women and girls fleeing domestic violence or violence within their community—as some of the growing cases as a consequence of COVID.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to stop you there. We're about two minutes over time.

We would be happy to receive the reports you suggested, at your convenience after the meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Vis.

We're going to move now to Mr. Long.

Go ahead, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

Thank you very much, witnesses, for your testimony this afternoon.

I am speaking to you on the unceded land of the Wolastoqey peoples. I'm entering my sixth year on HUMA. I don't know of a more important study.

Ms. Pfoh, my initial questions are for you. Again, I want to thank you for sharing your perspective and for the incredible work you and AHMA are doing in B.C.

I want to ask you for your thoughts on the Vancouver community entity under the designated community stream of Reaching Home being changed from Vancity to Lu'ma in the past year. How has the transition to an indigenous-led entity affected the delivery supports for those experiencing homelessness in your area, particularly for indigenous folks experiencing homelessness there?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: Thank you for that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): I am very sorry, but our esteemed interpreters were not able to provide French interpretation of what the member said. I would like him to repeat his question, please.

I know it's not your fault, dear interpreters.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

Madam Clerk, I wonder if you can help us out here.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer): Could you put the microphone a little closer to your mouth? Could you give it a test again?

• (1600)

Mr. Wayne Long: How is that?

The Clerk: That's good. Thank you, Mr. Long.

The Chair: Mr. Long, I think Madam Chabot was unable to hear your question.

I know there was a lengthy preamble, but we'll restart the clock if you could please rephrase the question. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Long: Sure.

Good afternoon to everybody. Ms. Pfoh, again, thanks for your passion. It comes through in your presentation, and I appreciate everything you do for housing in your community. I wanted to get your thoughts on Vancouver's community entity under the designated community stream of Reaching Home being changed from Vancity to Lu'ma in the past year.

How has the transition to an indigenous-led entity affected delivery supports for those experiencing homelessness in the area and particularly indigenous folks who are experiencing homelessness there?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: Thank you for that question.

The answer lies within the question itself. The transition to an indigenous-led organization is one less barrier to the people who are experiencing homelessness on the streets of Vancouver. I happen to have had the privilege, when it was transferred over to Lu'ma, to go and do some consultation processes. One of the critical things is their ability to see the lens of need for the community from an indigenous perspective. I would say it's been fantastic and I would highly recommend it. As I said in my opening presentation, anything about indigenous peoples should be led for and by indigenous peoples, so I think it's been fantastic.

Mr. Wayne Long: Can you give me specific examples of how it is better? I absolutely agree with you that it is better, but can you just give us, as a committee, examples of things you've seen where you're more responsive?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: Yes, for sure.

Probably the first one is economic. When we started doing the analysis with Lu'ma, we saw...and they know the numbers better than I do. What they did was they took a look at the allocation of dollars for homelessness in the province of British Columbia and they took a look at the statistical representation of indigenous peoples in British Columbia. They said, "Let's go back to the drawing board with the Government of Canada and say, if we represent 30% of all and it's \$100 million that's coming through...". Again, they know the numbers better than I do. I'm trying to stretch my memory on how it went. They then take a redistribution of those dollars and allocate the 30% to urban indigenous homelessness, which means that people like our housing providers that maybe never had access

before could actually gain access to meet the needs of their urban indigenous homeless people.

From a more tangible perspective, just walking and talking the streets in downtown Vancouver, we hear a level of comfort about approaching and reaching out for support services because there are indigenous people leading those solutions.

Mr. Wayne Long: If you could make a recommendation... Like MP Vis said, I'm here to learn too. Certainly I'm learning more and more every day about this important file, but if you could give a recommendation to the federal government, what lessons should our federal government take from this experience when it comes to crafting a strategy for indigenous, and particularly urban indigenous housing? What would you recommend we do moving forward?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: I believe the government has already received a document from the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association called the "For Indigenous By Indigenous" strategy. It looks at assisting the urban indigenous organizations that have been working together over the decades to come together in a more formal process. I think about what CMHC did recently with the Community Housing Transformation Centre. It was a quick turnaround solution that brought together an organization that can create transformative change for the housing sector.

I think we could do something quite similar in terms of an urban indigenous-led national organization, but have us at the table to help draw up the solutions, rather than doing these interviews and then coming back and giving us the solution you think you heard. Our providers have been on the ground for 50 years. They know what their communities need and they know what didn't work.

Mr. Wayne Long: Ms. Pfoh, thank you very much for that.

My next question is for Mr. Wall. Hello from Saint John, New Brunswick, and thank you for your presentation. It was very informative.

I'd like to ask you how the expansion of the list of designated communities under the Reaching Home program to include three new communities in northern Ontario, including Kenora, has impacted your region. Can you just expand on that a bit?

• (1605)

Mr. Henry Wall: Given that it just started in the middle of the pandemic, I will say this. Symbolically it meant that for the first time, the federal government is a partner with us when it comes to ending homelessness. That is very meaningful to us, and it has taken us since 2007 to get to that. In the absence of that, we had to look at entering into MOUs with nations to see how we could pool our resources to address those who are experiencing homelessness in the urban setting.

From that standpoint, having the federal government as a partner actually means that you're with us finally, once and for all, as a government.

Mr. Wayne Long: Just quickly, can you explain how an indigenous lens in leadership may make your new designation more successful?

Mr. Henry Wall: Absolutely. It really matters in terms of who's asking the question, as well, in terms of programming.

If I could give an example, just over two years ago the Province of Ontario changed who was responsible for overseeing EarlyON centres, which are responsible for providing families and children with access to community programs and so forth. There was a very indigenous-specific stream for that. We worked with our urban indigenous providers, including first nations communities.

In gearing up to it, we did surveys and whatnot, and the results were not reflective of what we were expecting. Our off-reserve communities are over half first nations, so we should expect that at least half the respondents from the survey would be first nations. In some of our elementary schools, the student populations were 80% to 90% first nations, but when we got the surveys back, there was very little representation from first nations families. We had to go back to the drawing board and ask what we had done wrong.

Who's asking the question is just as important as the question itself, so when we worked with our first nations communities and urban indigenous communities like friendship centres, all of a sudden we were hearing back from the families we wanted to hear from. It fundamentally changed how we were rolling out the programs.

With that, I'm really happy to say that while we're still early on in this, we now have in our communities at least six indigenous-led child care programs. Generations overdue, indigenous families are looking after indigenous families, and program delivery is happening the way it should be.

We've been able to play a role in levelling the playing field, because the other piece that needs to be recognized is that, even if there's an indigenous housing strategy, we're approaching this from the beginning with an imbalance of power. That has to be recognized. There's an imbalance of power for indigenous people but also indigenous communities in terms of land ownership. As you're rolling out programs, if ownership of land isn't part of it, indigenous organizations and communities will continue to be left behind even though on the surface it looks like we have an indigenous strategy.

With that example, I just want to say that it's so important who's asking the question. From a technical standpoint, let's keep it simple. This is about housing. Let's make sure it results in homes being created and that we don't put all our energy into the bureaucracy of getting housing to happen.

I can give you a couple examples of where we—

The Chair: Mr. Wall, I'm going to have to cut you off there. We're a couple of minutes over.

Mr. Wayne Long: Maybe somebody else can follow up, but thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wall. Thank you, Mr. Long.

[Translation]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I welcome the witnesses and wish to thank them for their participation.

Ms. Pfoh, thank you for your testimony. If I understood you correctly, you were enthusiastic about the federal government's plans to put in place a national indigenous strategy. But when you didn't see the first signs of such a strategy or its implementation, you decided in your province to make your own national strategy, designed by and for indigenous people. According to your testimony, this appears to have been a success.

Do you think the solution is for every province to have such a strategy? If so, what support could the federal government provide?

• (1610)

[English]

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: *Toyaxsiim*. Thank you for that.

We are going ahead with our own provincial urban indigenous housing strategy, largely because we anticipated that the national housing strategy would eventually include an urban indigenous housing strategy, and we wanted to hit the ground running and be ready for it.

Because I sit on not only a provincial organization but also on national organizations, I have had the privilege of having meetings with the previous minister, Minister Duclos, as well as Minister Hussen, Adam Vaughan and Evan Siddall. We knew that we were going to eventually get to a position where there would likely be some sort of an investment in urban indigenous housing, so here in British Columbia we took it upon ourselves to get the ball rolling so that when or if there is an opportunity for us to feed into that we would be ready to be partners with the federal government.

I think it is important to be abundantly clear that when I speak about the dispossession of urban indigenous people, we never ceded our rights as indigenous peoples because of colonization, and so we never ceded the right and responsibility to sit as equals with the federal government. That's why we're preparing.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Do you think the federal government should establish a national indigenous housing council?

[English]

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: No. When I speak about a national housing leadership, I'm speaking about the government supporting us through some form of a partnership in the creation. We can't create it out of nothing.

As you know, Henry talked about that whole “who's asking the question?” I mean, most of us have no equity to bring to the table. For us to be able to actually sit as equals, we need to have the federal government recognize that we need a funding stream to help us do that. I believe the CHRA outlined some of those needs in their “For Indigenous By Indigenous” document, but we want to do it ourselves. You guys can fund it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: It's very clear.

Since the beginning of our work, many witnesses have emphasized the importance of “by and for indigenous people”. I think that will be taken into account.

Do I still have time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have just under two minutes left.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Fine.

Good afternoon, Mr. Wall. You talked about preventing homelessness. You said there are long waiting lists and that there is a 257% increase in waiting lists since 2011. These are pretty disturbing numbers. It is my understanding that your organization has also seen a migration of indigenous community members from reserves to urban centres.

What are the challenges for housing? Does it increase the prevalence of homelessness?

[*English*]

Mr. Henry Wall: *Meegwetch* for the question.

There are not many places in Canada where, when you want your child to attend high school, you have to send that child away to another community. That's a reality for many of the 40-some first nation communities that are in the district known as Kenora. If you want to seek access to primary care or you need to seek medical attention, not many of us have to get into a plane, fly a couple of hours, and then you visit a strange community to access the hospital medical care for that reason. Not many of us are living in a home where we're sharing it with 15 or 20 other members of our family. We're talking about a two-bedroom home that has mould issues and hasn't been invested in. We have many families that are in that situation. We're hearing very often that it is better to be homeless in Kenora or Sioux Lookout than it is to be back home, because of the shortage of housing.

We're very involved in health transformation and getting an all-nations health system in our region. I'm happy to say we're making good progress, working in partnership with ANHP.

Something that is quite disturbing for me and that we hear very often is that our elders are not accessing medical care very often. They're afraid of losing their spot in the home in their community, because there's just not enough homes in that community. We have a situation where families are not choosing to live in an urban setting. Families are forced to move to an urban setting. That has a direct impact on our homeless population. It also has a direct impact on, as I mentioned, the number of people who end up getting stuck in the justice system. From an investment standpoint, it just makes

pure economic sense to start investing in homes, and maybe a little less on our judicial systems.

Here's what I mean by that. We did a project in Sioux Lookout, in partnership with the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services. It was really a one-of-a-kind project in the Ontario context. The goal was to take those who were chronically homeless, provide them with a home, no conditions but all supported. It was housing first through an indigenous lens. We found that the transformation in the 20 individuals who were provided housing was incredible. We're talking about individuals who have lived on the streets for decades, who communities have written off, but are now looking at being enrolled in employment programs and are looking at access to jobs.

On the financial piece, with regard to the return on investment, the project will have broken even in four and a half years. In other words, the capital investment that went into that building will have repaid itself through other savings in four and a half years. Providing culturally appropriate housing for 20 individuals resulted in almost \$300,000 in policing savings in the first year.

That's just one project. It's one example I wanted to give to you, but the thing I really want to talk about is that—

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wall.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

We're going to go to Ms. Gazan, for six minutes.

Mr. Henry Wall: —when we talk about the high percentage of indigenous people living off reserve—

The Chair: Mr. Wall, please.

Mr. Henry Wall: —we also need to recognize that it's not a choice. Families are forced to move. When we talk about creating homes and where those homes are created, our programs need to be flexible enough so that families and organizations who know this stuff, and they're in the business of making this happen, can choose where it's best to support those families and where that infrastructure should go.

The Chair: Mr. Wall, it's going to be impossible for all members to be able to pose questions if you don't respect the chair and the timeline. I would ask you, please, to pay attention when I attempt to interrupt so that we can try to maintain some sort of order here.

Ms. Gazan, please go ahead, for six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair.

I feel very privileged to have both Henry Wall and Margaret Pfoh here today. I really appreciate their expertise in this area.

My first question is for Margaret Pfoh.

This was my morning: I represent the third-poorest riding in the country. It's -39°C. We're dealing with trench fever, a disease we haven't seen since the First World War. It's a disease of extreme poverty. I've been on the phone, because we have a housing crisis in our community, 70% of whom are indigenous. We are worried about losing lives here.

The government continues to promise to release an urban, rural and northern distinctions-based indigenous housing strategy, but we have yet to see the strategy. In your opinion, how critical is it to ensure this strategy is released in order to address the current housing crisis we are seeing?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: It's absolutely essential. *T'oyaxsut nūiin* for raising that.

You are not alone. We see this across the country. We see this here in British Columbia. We see that COVID-19 has only exacerbated that very real risk to life. In any given community here in B.C., the statistics are that anywhere from 30% to 65% of the homeless population are indigenous, and I know, based on my conversations with my partners across the country, that it can be as high as 99%, given some of the remote communities. If an urban, rural and northern housing strategy is not put in place, you will only continue to see those numbers climb.

We're outpacing population growth by 4:1. It makes sense that this is not going to go away without an adequate strategy in place. In fact, our language has been that there is no national housing strategy without an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy, and that is distinct from the three distinctions-based groups.

• (1620)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much. It is a pleasure to listen to you today.

My next question is for Henry Wall.

One thing I have been pushing for is a guaranteed livable basic income, and one of the things I've been discussing is the high cost of poverty, including the direct correlation between rates of poverty and incarceration rates. Can you imagine if we invested the \$115,000 a year in federal government funding into human rights? This is something that I've been saying, unfortunately, to deaf ears by Trudeau, who says that is off his radar. In any case, that's another frustration.

We have heard from previous witnesses that in comparison to the patchwork of funding currently being offered by the federal government, massive and sustainable investments are required to ensure indigenous peoples' right to housing.

Do you agree with this? What types of funding would be required in order for your organization to meet the needs of the communities you serve? I'm talking specifically about wraparound supports for people in need of supportive housing.

Mr. Henry Wall: Thank you for the question.

First, my apologies to the chair. I had the interpretation button on and I was not able to hear you, so please accept my apologies for earlier.

Having stable funding—and that's more than just one or two years—is incredibly important, especially when we are talking from a rural, remote and northern perspective, because government has not, in a meaningful way, invested in housing. Because of that we've lost our capacity to develop, build and create housing. When there are programs that come along, we have to spend a lot of resources on bringing in consultants from across the country to tell us how to do this and how to build it.

From that standpoint, having a more permanent structure as to how resources flow through a strategy like a national housing strategy, especially an indigenous housing strategy, allows our community to start planning for it. We can start aligning our labour force with it, and if we had it for a couple of years, suddenly the creation of housing is also an employment program. It becomes an income program.

We're not just building housing and shipping the resources out to other companies coming in to build in our community. It really is by us, for us. That is where longer-term funding would be a game-changer when it comes to creating housing.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Going back to Margaret Pfoh, one of the things we fought really hard for in Winnipeg Centre was a 24-7 safe space for women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA. I worked very closely with Adam Vaughan on it and the city, and I'm glad, after nine years, that they finally funded it.

How critical are low-barrier safe spaces, particularly for women, in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: It's absolutely essential. It's another missing piece in the national housing strategy. There is enough information to stand on its own, but the national housing strategy sure has a role to play in that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Pfoh and Ms. Gazan.

Mr. Melillo, please, you have five minutes.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank both of our witnesses for joining us today and for being part of the discussion.

Mr. Wall, I want to thank you for your work for the people in our district. It does not go unnoticed, and I want to thank you for that. I will direct my questions to you.

One of the things you mentioned already—you were sort of getting into it and ran out of time—was the bureaucracy and making sure that housing programs are about housing. I'm curious as to whether you could speak more from your experience about some of the bureaucracy and red tape that has made it difficult for some of these important projects to move forward.

Mr. Henry Wall: I think this is where it's really important. Generally, strategies are very aspirational. It's motherhood and apple pie, but then we get to the actual nuts and bolts of it and the financing. Something that is a challenge, especially for smaller rural and northern communities, is the measurement of affordability from CMHC's standpoint. I think it's really important when we determine medium market rents—on which the affordability component is measured—that they are actually truly reflective of the community.

We've actually had to undertake our own studies just so that our housing is affordable under the programs. That actually took about a year to do, which really set us back. I'd say that's another piece: really ensuring, when we determine what affordability is, that the government has good data and that the hard work is done in collecting that data.

The other piece, too, is that, if it's about housing, then let's be a little less strenuous on the financing and the financial performance. I realize they are really important, but we also have banks that do that. If it really is a housing funding program, really consider what the unique costs of construction are in remote, rural and northern communities. They are very different from large urban centres.

The other piece that's missing is that when we talk about affordable housing, we just focus on the unit that can be rented out, ignoring cultural space, ignoring the fact that for indigenous families there's not just one child per family. In our area, our fastest-growing household demographic is single, lone parents with three or more children. Our housing has to fit that need. It's really difficult, from an affordability standpoint, if the resources don't quite match the building reality in our communities.

• (1625)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you. Those are some good points. I think the construction is one that often, I would say, the government does not do a good enough job of accounting for. There are higher construction costs, obviously, in rural and northern regions, as you mentioned.

I also want to ask about Reaching Home. Obviously, that's a program that your organization was able to utilize. Unfortunately, many other northern and rural regions were not, as I understand.

Could you talk a bit more, with the couple of minutes remaining, about some of the barriers to entry for rural and remote northern regions in trying to access a lot of these federal government programs?

Mr. Henry Wall: I want to say, too, that, working with the staff at CMHC and also at the ministry with respect to the Reaching Home program, we're certainly working through a lot of the details. I would say that we're making good progress. The staff are very open to listening and making changes.

What we find is that programs, whether they're provincial or federal, are very much either on or off reserve. In our region, you can

walk 100 metres and you're in a first nation community, between a municipality and a first nation community. If I could make any recommendation, it would be that it would be really good to have programs, say with Reaching Home, where if individuals, as part of a homelessness prevention plan, are better supported in their communities, in their first nation communities, we can support said first nation communities in helping create those supports and those homes in those communities rather than.... Because we can't use our Reaching Home dollars in a first nation, we have to find a way of supporting individuals in communities that are not their homes, and they feel disconnected.

The idea is that the program should really foster and encourage inclusion and a sense of belonging. My advice to any federal program is to give as much flexibility at the local level as needed to address the need, from our perspective.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wall and Mr. Melillo.

We're going to go now to Mr. Dong, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wall and Ms. Pfoh, thank you very much for coming today. I'm certainly learning a lot from your presentations and from your answers to my colleagues' questions.

Mr. Wall, earlier on in response to my colleague MP Long's question, you were in the process of giving examples of some of the practical solutions. I would like to offer an opportunity for you to finish those examples. They were good. Again, I think they're going to be helpful to the committee.

Mr. Henry Wall: We find it really important, as we're looking at programs and creating new programs.... We're a unique organization in that we're one of 10 DSBs in northern Ontario. We're neither municipal government nor non-profit, so CMHC actually had a really hard time classifying what these ten organizations in northern Ontario really were. For the purposes of housing, we're deemed to be a municipality.

What we're finding is that, when we're really serious about what we need from a housing program, we actually need to listen to and understand the families we're trying to serve. If I could use the example in Sioux Lookout with the 20-unit supportive housing project that we did in partnership with the friendship centre and Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, we had an idea going into it what the intent was. The intent was to end chronic homelessness. As we were meeting individuals who would fit, as part of the tenant selection process, and the project construction was still happening, we quickly realized that this wasn't just about ending homelessness. This was about family reunification as well.

Suddenly, we had to switch gears. I'm glad we did. In that particular example, of the first 20 residents who moved in—at least that we know of—they had at least 30 or more children who were wards of the Crown or in the foster care system. As much as it was about ending homelessness, this was about bringing families together.

I could share a number of examples, but that really was an eye-opener for us when it came to program design.

• (1630)

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

We know that indigenous people are overrepresented among those who experience homelessness. You mentioned that you saw correctional services as part of the housing continuum. Could you expand a little bit on that? What do you see as a major factor contributing to this reality? How could an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy help to address that?

Mr. Henry Wall: Basically it is just by adding more homes. That's what we need across Canada. We just need to have more housing, period.

What we see quite often, in particular with respect to young indigenous men, is that if the economic opportunity isn't there or they've lost hope, there's a high likelihood that they'll end up in the justice system. They'll be a victim of organized crime in terms of being recruited. It's fairly easy if individuals have lost hope. Once in the system, a young man might be brought to Kenora with one or two charges. He's processed through the justice system through the courts and then he's released on promise to appear, but he's not going back home. He's actually staying in Kenora, off reserve.

We looked at 3,060 breach cases in Kenora over a period of five years to see what the commonalities were. I can tell you that when individuals are brought to an urban centre, released and told to stay there, and then they're told that their condition is to just not drink or to not do drugs—if it was an addiction that brought them there—but they're sent on their way without supports, within hours or within a couple of days they're back in the justice system.

We might have a young man coming to Kenora with one or two charges. By the time he leaves, it's probably 20 to 30 charges. The likelihood of that young person not getting employment because of their criminal record.... It's incredibly difficult. That's what we're seeing.

As one of the police detachment commanders put it, in our region we have a charge factory when it comes to indigenous young men.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you. I have only a minute left.

I know my colleague, MP Vaughan, is always a big advocate for indigenous homelessness issues, and he consults many with regard to the Reaching Home program.

Do you have any thoughts on what improvements are needed? This question will go to Ms. Pfoh first.

The Chair: Please give a short answer if you could, please, Ms. Pfoh.

Ms. Margaret Pfoh: To pick up a little bit from Henry's comments, I think the biggest thing is around the need for these subsidy dollars for support services. Bricks and mortar are fantastic. We do need more units for sure, but we have to recognize that the needs in our community are so substantial that we need subsidy dollars for support services, wraparound services, as well, if we're going to effect real change.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Dong.

We're going to do the two and a half minute rounds with the Bloc and the NDP, so we're going to go a little longer on this panel, which will shorten up the next one a little bit.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for you, Mr. Wall. I'd like you to give us more details. The situation is worrying—

The Chair: Ms. Chabot, I think your microphone is too far away from you.

Ms. Louise Chabot: All these problems will one day be part of the committee's annals.

Mr. Wall, my question is about the lack of housing for seniors that you talked about. It's a pretty serious situation.

What approach do you recommend to address the housing needs of seniors who want to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible? What would be the solution? Seniors are vulnerable. They need housing that is affordable but also safe. What would be the best approach to address this issue?

• (1635)

[English]

Mr. Henry Wall: I'll say from our experience that we've done a couple of senior home developments. These are new, and it gets really tricky when it comes to infrastructure funding. We need to have space to allow elders and seniors to age in place, and that requires programming space. If those costs aren't associated with a new development, that is very difficult from an affordability standpoint, especially around seniors housing.

In any housing programs specific for seniors and elders, the funding piece should also account for programming space that can be developed so that elders and seniors can age in place where the supports come to them. In a northern context, our elders and seniors are being shipped all over the province and Canada to access services. We're really looking at that and asking how can we reduce that and bring the services and the supports on site so they can age in place.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wall.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Are you talking about social services, food assistance, care, accompaniment? Are these the types of services that are normally offered by health services? Should there be a better linkage of these services?

[English]

The Chair: Give a brief answer, please.

Mr. Henry Wall: It is a mixture. It could be a bathing service or basic primary care, or it could be to help with food preparation or getting supplies.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wall.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

Finally, we have Ms. Gazan, please, for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Henry Wall, we know the federal government has and continues to systematically and wilfully underfund indigenous services and programs, and frankly, human rights. You spoke about the fact that many people, young kids, have to leave reserves to go to school. We know certainly through the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling, which clearly stated it, that the federal government wilfully discriminates against first nations kids living on reserve. We also know that it has resulted in many kids who become at risk, leaving communities, having to go to school in urban centres.

I was wondering if you could expand on that and how funding these kinds of basic human rights would make a difference in the lives of young people coming from reserve.

Mr. Henry Wall: I have a really simple and basic solution that's going to make a huge difference in our region, I think, and in many other rural and remote regions. It is that we need to have access to high-speed Internet. By having that, our young people will be able

to be in their community and participate in the education system virtually. That is not an option for many of our families, so that is an easy fix in my opinion, and it would go a long way in ensuring that our young people are connected.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Because I have very little time, are you saying if we had access to high-speed Internet in communities, for example, then kids would be able to stay in their homes to get their education and not have to leave their families at a young age to go to school without supports?

Mr. Henry Wall: It would be an option. If there's anything the pandemic is currently teaching us, I think it's that we should not look at going back to the way things were pre-pandemic. I think this is something that can be acted on very quickly while the infrastructure catches up, but at least it's going to start levelling the playing field by giving access to education to our young indigenous people.

• (1640)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Am I out of time, Chair?

The Chair: Yes. Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

Thank you, Mr. Wall.

That concludes this panel.

I want to say, Mr. Wall and Ms. Pfoh, thank you so much. Your passion and your expertise are evident and are greatly appreciated by all. This will aid the committee greatly as we approach the end of this study. Thank you for your comprehensive answers and for what you do.

We are now going to suspend for three minutes to allow Mr. Wall and Ms. Pfoh to be on their way and to do a sound test for the next couple of witnesses.

• (1640)

(Pause)

• (1645)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We are continuing our study on urban, rural and northern indigenous housing.

I'd like to make a couple of comments for the benefit of the witnesses. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you're ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Interpretation in the video conference will work very much like a regular committee meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. When speaking, for the benefit of the interpreters, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

With that, I'd like to welcome our witnesses to continue our discussion.

We have with us from Atlohsa Family Healing Services, Raymond Deleary, the executive director, and Andrea Jibb, director of community planning. From Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, we have Tina Stevens, the president.

Ms. Stevens, we're going to start with you for your opening remarks for five minutes.

Welcome to the committee. You have the floor.

Ms. Tina Stevens (President, Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada): Good afternoon.

I would like to welcome you in my own language, the Ojibwa language. *Ainiin.Boozhoo.*

Thank you to the chair and the members of the standing committee. I would like to acknowledge the other strong housing organizations that appeared this afternoon before you.

My name is Tina Stevens. I am the president of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I am an Algonquin and Ojibwa woman from both Kitigan Zibi in Quebec, and Kettle and Stony Point in Ontario. I have resided in London, Ontario, for many years.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I join you from the traditional lands of the Anishinabe, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, Huron-Wendat and Lenape peoples. This is territory that is covered by the Upper Canada treaties.

CHF Canada is a national voice of co-operative housing. We represent over 2,000 housing co-ops, which are home to a quarter of a million people in every province and territory. For over 50 years, co-ops have provided good quality affordable housing, owned and managed by the community members who live there.

There are three indigenous housing co-ops that were started under the urban indigenous assistance program, and many more indigenous families living in co-ops across the country are valued members of CHF Canada. I believe that housing co-ops provide a safe family environment for members, especially women, to embrace their culture and community, develop and maintain self-respect, respect and fulfill their land stewardship responsibilities for Mother Earth, find employment, access higher education and nurture the seeds for future generations.

CHF Canada and its members are being consistently educated through the expressed truths and reconciliation with indigenous peoples. I'm so very proud of CHF Canada. We're helping make reconciliation possible for co-ops across Canada.

I'm humbled in my capacity to speak to you today about the housing needs of indigenous people. More than 20% of urban indigenous people live in core housing need. For 43% of those who do have housing, that housing is unsuitable or in need of major repair. CHF Canada has made a commitment to meet those needs.

We have two recommendations for the committee. First, we recommend the government reaffirm adequate funding for indigenous co-op housing. As indigenous co-ops mature out of their operating agreements, no program has replaced the rental assistance provided to low-income members. Indigenous co-ops have been forced to sell off units to the market. I know this goes against the goals of all housing providers here today. We cannot address the lack of affordable housing and its long-term goals if we continue to lose units. We collectively can stop any loss by reaffirming adequate funding for indigenous co-ops and non-profits.

Our second recommendation is to support the "For Indigenous By Indigenous" housing strategy. The national housing strategy still does not include an indigenous housing strategy. Again, CHF Canada supports the "For Indigenous By Indigenous" housing strategy released by the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. Let's ensure indigenous housing plans are finally a part of the national housing strategy. CHF Canada's indigenous communities already directly participate in the self-determination in the decision-making process of their housing co-operatives.

Inside my lived experiences as a 12-year-old girl—when my mother moved our family into a housing co-op—through to today as an emerging leader, I have increased my decolonization just by living in a co-op, which is why I give back. We can make this a country where indigenous mothers have the option of safe and affordable housing for their families too. The healing of indigenous people is pivotal. Affordable co-operative housing must be maintained so that families can maintain their connection, and so that the genocide of our peoples is terminated.

Thank you for this time to be able to address you and to share the hope and strength of housing co-ops across Canada that are working to make reconciliation possible.

Meegwetch, meegwetch, meegwetch and meegwetch, in all four directions.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Stevens.

Next we're going to hear from Atlohsa.

Mr. Deleary, are you good to go, or is it Ms. Jibb?

Ms. Andrea Jibb (Director, Community Planning, Atlohsa Family Healing Services): I think Mr. Deleary may be having issues with his devices.

I'm going to introduce myself in the Ojibwa language to start.

[Witness spoke in Ojibwa as follows:]

Zhaawnong nimkiikwe n'dizhnikaaz. Nimkii binessii ndodem michif anishnaabekwe ndi yaaw. Miskwo zibii ndo njibaa.

[Ojibwa text translated as follows:]

My name is South Thunderwoman. My clan is Thunderbird. I am a michif indigenous woman. I am from Red River.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Hi, my name is Andrea Jibb and I am a member of the Métis Nation. I live in London, Ontario, where I am the director of community planning at Atlohsa Family Healing Services. I am very pleased to speak to you today.

[English]

As mentioned earlier, we represent Atlohsa Family Healing Services. We are an indigenous-led, not-for-profit organization with over 30 years' experience working with the urban first nations, Métis and Inuit population in southwestern Ontario. We provide emergency shelter and a variety of services to the FNMI population.

We've operated Zhaawanong Shelter, which is a violence-against-women-focused shelter for indigenous women and their children, since 1989. Since 2019, we have operated the Alaaximwiing Atlohsa resting space, which is a low-barrier shelter for indigenous people experiencing homelessness in London, Ontario. Since 2017, Atlohsa has led the Giwetashkad indigenous homelessness initiative, which is a strategic planning process to address the overrepresentation of indigenous homelessness in our community of London.

The most recent point-in-time count conducted by the City of London showed that we have indigenous people making up 29% of the people experiencing homelessness in our community while making up 2% of the general population.

Atlohsa is located in London, Ontario, in the heart of southwestern Ontario, in close proximity to 10 first nations and in very close proximity to three first nations. It's about 20 minutes away from three distinct first nations communities. Historically, London, Ontario, has always been a hub for indigenous people, so we have a lot of migration in and out of the community.

In October 2020, Atlohsa launched the Giwetashkad indigenous homelessness plan, a strategic plan for addressing indigenous homelessness in our community from 2020 to 2023. It's based on the definition of indigenous homelessness done by Jesse Thistle and on the lived experience of indigenous people experiencing homelessness. We conducted a culture-based and indigenous-led community engagement with over 70 indigenous people with lived experience of homelessness.

The plan is a comprehensive strategy offering suggestions for front-line services, from community capacity building for culturally safe services to systems advocacy. At the core of the plan is the commitment to indigenous-led programs, services and initiatives, as we believe that indigenous people have the knowledge, strength and resiliency to alleviate homelessness for the indigenous community.

However, as we have mobilized at a community level with the creation of the Giwetashkad plan, we've done the groundwork in our community. In attempting to achieve the strategies, we've repeatedly come up against barriers to accessing resources.

In London, despite having numbers on par with many designated indigenous communities under the Reaching Home funding stream, we do not have an indigenous community designation. This means we must compete with mainstream service providers to serve the indigenous population in our community. Today our primary recommendation is to expand the indigenous community designation to include London, Ontario, and other communities. This would make it easier, because we are the sole service provider in London for indigenous homelessness but we receive a fraction of the fund-

ing to serve 30% of the population. Until we achieve more equitable levels of funding and discretion over levels of funding, we're going to continue to be underfunded and indigenous people will continue to be overrepresented on the streets.

Indigenous agencies need discretion over funding and consistent funding.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Jibb.

I understand that we're still having problems connecting with your colleague, but it seems to me your organization is in excellent hands.

We're going to begin with Ms. Falk, please, for six minutes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Stevens and Ms. Jibb, for your testimony.

Ms. Jibb, one of the questions that I thought out in my head and wanted to ask you about is on some of the barriers when it comes to funding. You've listed one already.

I'm wondering if you would care to explain in a little more detail how that's directly affecting your organization, whether it's that people are not able to access services or you're not able to access the service, or it's people getting to you and that type of thing. Also, because you are in an urban centre and you have people coming in to your area—and I don't know if you know the answer to this—would you experience the same hurdles that a rural, northern or remote organization maybe would experience? Is there a difference?

• (1700)

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Thank you for that question. It's an excellent question.

It brings up something really interesting, which is the jurisdictional piece. We live in extremely close proximity to three communities, and we see that migration to and from the communities. The on-reserve community that Atlohsa ends up serving in the urban centre would fall under a rural designation, but then we see a mixture of folks who end up coming in and we have to serve them in the urban setting.

One of the barriers to funding for us as an organization is continuously having to reapply for time-limited funding. That takes a lot of work. As an agency, it takes staff resources to do the work in applying to competitive processes towards achieving these time-limited projects.

With the projects being time-limited, we're not able to do long-range work with folks. For example, on housing stability for someone who's experiencing homelessness, a lot of programs run for up to three years, and when we have staff on sometimes.... Right now, some of my staff are on three-month contract by three-month contract. That makes it really difficult for the participants to have some long-term stability in terms of who their supports are and the relationships they build with people. It also puts pressure on our staff base, because three-month contracts are very stressful for staff.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Yes, absolutely, and very precarious.

What types of services would staff be supplying?

Ms. Andrea Jibb: We offer a variety of programs, very small starting. We have street outreach. We have rapid rehousing programs. We have two housing support workers, and one of them works out of a supportive housing unit. We also offer the resting space. When I say "resting space", it's a concept that London has pioneered. It's meant for folks with more in-the-moment behaviour, for people who can't access traditional shelter settings, whether it's due to restrictions, behaviours or substance use—whatever it might be.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: What does your street outreach look like?

Ms. Andrea Jibb: We've had one street outreach worker. We have the one indigenous street outreach worker in London. Sometimes the street outreach worker might pair up with another worker just for safety so that we have two people on at all times.

Ultimately, the goal of that worker is to go out and build connections with people who are unsheltered and who may not access traditional services or mainstream outreach teams. That's something that we see a lot. A lot of indigenous people in our community do not want to speak to mainstream outreach workers. Sometimes they'll see our outreach workers and ask whether we're such-and-such, referring to the mainstream agency. When we say, no, that we're Atlohsa, they'll say, "Great, we'll talk to you".

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Wow. That's really interesting. I think that's so important too. I think it speaks to building a rapport, especially within the community. Before we can really do anything to help somebody, we need to have that rapport and that relationship. Too, I think that with colonization, situations, issues and bad decisions that have happened throughout history, there is that distrust. It's difficult, especially when you have a social worker, for example, who comes in and who works for the province or the government. They're more unlikely to have that trust. Walls go up, and it's difficult to have a conversation.

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Absolutely, and especially because street outreach is where so much of the data gathering happens in the community. In London, we use the HIFIS system. We use a shared database called HIFIS, in which indigenous status is tracked. We've had many conversations in the community about how to get accurate data on indigenous homelessness in our community. A lot of that happens through outreach interaction, such as when an outreach worker goes and interacts with a community member who might be unsheltered.

What we hear particularly often is that people are being asked about their identity in a way that may not be culturally safe. We're

not going to get good data on indigenous homelessness unless it's coming from that relationship-focused approach in which somebody feels safe to talk about their identity with an outreach worker.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: That's perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jibb.

Next we're going to go to Ms. Young.

Go ahead, please, for six minutes.

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As the MP for London West, I am so pleased that we were able to get witnesses today from London to talk specifically about some of the issues that we face in our city.

I want to start with Tina Stevens. Tina, we've had a number of conversations. Not only are you president of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada but also you're a board member of the Native Inter-Tribal Housing Co-operative.

We've discussed some of the challenges that you're facing. One of them, which you were underscoring in your opening statement, is with seniors and the elders and how they're impacted by aging into care and what happens to them when your co-ops can't continue. Can you go on and explain some of the challenges that the elders face?

Ms. Tina Stevens: Thank you very much for that question. I appreciate being able to answer that, in the London West area specifically, we do have a number of housing members, specifically in the Native Inter-Tribal Housing Co-operative along with Four Feathers Housing in the city of London. The direct connection between those was that Native Inter-Tribal had families as its mandate. We had to start dealing with the pressures being organized and being impacted by our students and our young children and grandchildren being able to go off to get higher education, leaving the housing unit as basically an empty nest.

As a result of that, Native Inter-Tribal Housing Co-operative was able to take the reins going forward, which involved the organization Four Feathers. Through that, we obtained the federal, provincial and municipal funding to be able to establish that particular housing co-operative, which housed mainly seniors and people over the age of 40. Therefore, a lot of that was then able to benefit the elders and the seniors in our community.

As with all other housing co-operatives and specifically in terms of indigenous needs, there is definitely more of a need, and more housing assistance and more housing need to be created and developed for our seniors, specifically for our elders. We know from the statistics that 85% are living off reserve, in terms of the members from the different communities, and that they're in urban settings. Given that we are dealing with an aging population and trying to deal with their needs, we definitely need to develop more seniors housing and be able to continue to support Four Feathers Housing Co-operative to meet those needs and address the assistance that is directly needed under accessibility and meet other needs in terms of affordability. We also need to maintain their traditions and their ceremonies and have space to do that.

Ms. Kate Young: How do you think an indigenous housing strategy would help co-operatives in Canada, and specifically in London?

Ms. Tina Stevens: The indigenous housing strategy specifically would have more of a focus placed [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] diverse. They are quite different from non-indigenous housing communities. To be able to benefit us most, not only to look at the deep, core need of housing that is currently being impacted and felt by many indigenous communities, specifically in urban settings, but also in terms of the services such as Atlohsa, the services by our friendship centres or services like Nokee Kwe.

There are a number of different indigenous organizations in the city of London. They would be able to provide other services. People would be able to connect in a more pivotal fashion, being able to not only service just the indigenous communities but also benefit them as well as their children and future generations in securing affordable housing as well as the safety of having that housing going forward so they can obtain future needs, such as education, future employment or being able to be connected to their own communities located outside the city of London.

• (1710)

Ms. Kate Young: Thank you so much, Tina.

I will go to Andrea Jibb for a moment and ask how COVID has impacted the services offered. I know that hotels have been used, and I know this is a concern. Long term, are hotels an answer for indigenous housing?

The Chair: Give a brief answer, Ms. Jibb, please.

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Yes, we have relocated our resting space into hotels. We've been able to completely change the model. Out of hotels, we're able to offer a transitional support model, which long term, is much more effective than emergency shelters for housing stability.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Young.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to point out that my microphone is well positioned.

Thank you both for your statements.

Ms. Stevens, I have a question for you about co-ops. As you mentioned, co-operatives are important, both for seniors and for indigenous people. You talked about funding for co-ops. Could you tell us more about that? As far as we know, housing co-ops are different from low-rent social housing, both in terms of self-sufficiency and management.

Do you have concrete examples of indigenous-specific housing co-operatives?

[*English*]

Ms. Tina Stevens: Overall within CHF Canada, we service all housing co-ops across Canada. Five of the housing co-ops within Canada are located in Manitoba, and four are located in Ontario. Specifically, we are a member-driven organization that respects the voices, the needs and the decision-making [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] done by the members who actually live and have lived experiences in the housing co-operatives.

As well as having our own boards that oversee the daily business operations of a housing co-op, we also try to meet the needs of the indigenous members we have, by making sure they are comfortable in being able to live within their own confines, to have the respect and dignity of living within their own confines. That is a result of the principles we live by, which are voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; members' economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; co-operation among co-operatives; and specifically the concern for community. With all of that, we take care of the business. We are driven by our housing charges. Specifically, those housing charges are communally shared, collectively shared, to be able to meet all the needs of the members specific to each individual housing co-operative.

With indigenous co-ops, we absolutely looked at the seven grandfather teachings and specifically the way that we live inherently. Those mirrored a lot of the values that indigenous people hold in regard to being able to have self-determination and to be in control of the processes and policies within their housing co-operatives.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: So I understand that when it comes to housing, you favour the co-operative model. Is that right?

Ms. Tina Stevens: Absolutely.

[*English*]

I lived in a housing co-op as a young child. After I ventured out to receive a higher education, I came back to gain proper employment and to have a family. My first choice, absolutely, was to return to the housing co-op environment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Jibb.

Thank you for your testimony on homelessness, Ms. Jibb. I understand that your organization is the only one that specializes in this issue. You have also developed a plan to address homelessness, and you say that the federal government has a role to play in this regard.

Of course, funding is important, but what specific role do you expect the federal government to play?

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Thank you for your question, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

In terms of the systems advocacy piece and what we envision with our indigenous homelessness plan, the question is “how can we affect the system so that so many indigenous peoples do not experience homelessness in the first place?”

We know there are factors at work. From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the child welfare system is probably the number one producer of indigenous homelessness. How can we advocate not only for financial resources but also to change the systems that produce indigenous homelessness in the first place?

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

Thank you, Ms. Jibb.

We're going to move to Ms. Gazan, for six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank both of the witnesses, Tina Stevens and Andrea Jibb, for being here.

My first question is a follow-up to you, Andrea, and your comments about the child welfare system.

In my riding, many of the individuals who are experiencing homelessness are from the child welfare system. They are aging directly out of care into poverty and homelessness. We have almost 11,000 kids in care right now, mostly indigenous. My numbers could be wrong; it may be even higher than that.

We've certainly reached a crisis during COVID. We know there are a number of kids in care who received the CERB, and who are now mobilizing together to ask for CERB amnesty. I support them in those efforts.

Do you believe a guaranteed livable basic income would prevent homelessness for kids aging out of care, particularly, if they were provided with housing where they could choose between greater independence or housing with more supports?

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Yes, a livable income is crucial to ensuring that indigenous homelessness for youth aging out of care does not reach epidemic proportions.

In our team, we often talk about Jordan's principle, and everyone, I'm sure, knows Jordan's principle. It's to address the inequities faced by indigenous children on reserve. We need something like Jordan's principle to truly address indigenous homelessness. We need funding, so that people can have first and last month's rent.

In a community like London, we face levels of housing insecurity and rent costs that are similar to Toronto and Vancouver. It is just not sustainable for people, let alone youth who are aging out of care, to get their own apartment in a way that feels safe for them. We know indigenous youth may not feel safe in a rooming house, or in certain styles of apartments in certain locations in the city where they would be able to afford it.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Let me add to that, and then I will move on to Tina Stevens.

You're talking about youth aging out of care. Another demographic group that is certainly very much part of this is individuals with severe mental health and trauma issues often related to systems such as residential school, the sixties scoop or kids aging out of child welfare.

Why is it critical to have wraparound supports attached to housing? We have heard many comments about its being great to have bricks and mortar, but if you don't provide support, you aren't setting up systems for success. I see this time and time again. I want to hear more of your thoughts on that subject.

• (1720)

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Wraparound supports are key to housing and stability, because individuals who have been homeless long term often do not have the skill sets or the relationships in place to navigate having and keeping a home. If you have been out on the streets for five, 10 or 20 years, like some of the folks we work with, you don't know about budgeting or how to pay your rent or how to even go to the grocery store. Our staff literally have to go to the grocery store with someone because they have experienced so much trauma that they don't even feel safe going out into the community alone.

Wraparound supports that build life skills are absolutely crucial, especially when considering the definition of indigenous homelessness. For indigenous people, homelessness is not just being without a home; it's being without a community. The history of colonization has displaced indigenous peoples from the land and from our communities, and wraparound supports thus provide the relationships and the trust to keep people feeling safe in their homes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Do you feel that when a housing project is funded, wraparound supports need to be included, yes or no?

Ms. Andrea Jibb: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you.

I'll move on to Tina Stevens.

I appreciate your contributions around co-op housing. I'm a big fan of co-ops in general, but certainly of co-op housing.

I want to focus specifically on people living with disabilities. As we know, indigenous people living in Canada experience much higher rates of disabilities than the rest of the Canadian population.

Can you speak about the importance of ensuring that the rights of indigenous people living with disabilities are upheld, in housing and otherwise?

Ms. Tina Stevens: I'm sorry. I'm not hearing anything.

Ms. Leah Gazan: You didn't hear anything. I'm sorry.

Ms. Tina Stevens: I'm going to leave the meeting, and hopefully you will accept me back in, please.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay.

Ms. Tina Stevens: I can hear you now.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Perfect.

What I was saying is that I appreciated your contributions around co-op housing. I'm a big fan of co-ops in general, I said, but certainly of co-op housing.

I want to focus specifically on this question around persons living with a disability. We know that indigenous people experience higher rates of disability than the rest of the Canadian population. I wanted you to speak about the importance of ensuring that the rights of indigenous people living with disabilities are upheld in housing and otherwise.

The Chair: Reply briefly, if possible, Ms. Stevens.

Go ahead.

Ms. Tina Stevens: Thank you for that question.

As with many other rights of peoples and Canadians all across Canada as well as of indigenous populations, in order to have the dignity and respect of being able to live in their housing unit, to flourish and be able to connect with their communities as well as to participate in a good way in regard to the community that surrounds them, addressing disabilities is a high priority to make sure that they are able to function and continue to be active in the world and their society and their communities.

In terms of for indigenous communities, under the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, we specifically look at those assistive devices and equipment as high priorities for making sure that they can continue to live their lives as close to normal as possible, as well as to sit with their families, to reconnect with their communities and to function normally on a daily basis as well as possible.

Thank you.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Stevens.

Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

Colleagues, we're about five minutes from the appointed hour and we have a bit of committee business to deal with. I regret having to cut the questions so short, but if we're going to stay on time, that's what we need to do. My apologies to Mr. Kent, Mr. Turnbull and the others who were in the queue. We did have some technical difficulties and your chair is a bit rusty in terms of keeping people on schedule, so I bear some of the responsibility for this.

To our witnesses, thank you so much. As you can tell, there's a great deal of interest and probably appetite for further questions and conversation, and we're grateful to you for being with us.

Ms. Jibb, you've done an admirable job in carrying the load of two.

Once again, thanks for what you do. Thank you for being with us. Your testimony will be of great assistance to us as we wrap up this study. I wish you a good evening.

Colleagues, please stand by. There are a couple of things in terms of the upcoming meetings. I don't think they're going to take very long.

For Thursday, we will have another full panel of witnesses in connection with the study we're doing now, but you will recall that one of the things we did at the outset of this study was to invite the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We accepted or moved certain terms of reference for the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Regarding the timeline we set for the PBO to submit a report, the PBO has asked for an extension. The extension they've asked for is until February 11. They will be able to come before the committee on February 16, which is the first meeting after the break week. They're going to provide the committee with an embargoed version of their report on February 10, and they want to have permission to hold a briefing on February 11 with the departments that provided data for the report.

I think what I require off the hop is a motion from someone to extend the time for receipt of the report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer to February 10, and that the PBO appear on February 16. Would someone please bring forward that motion? Then we'll open the floor for discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Vaughan.

Is there any discussion?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): I'm sorry. I just wanted to discuss that.

I'm a little concerned. The PBO offered to do this report for us, and now they're slowing down our report. One of the things the PBO says they calculate quite often is the speed at which we get funding out the door, yet they're the cause of the slowdown now as we try to get this report finished.

Therefore, I'm just a little concerned that the PBO offered and talked us into receiving a report and is now talking us into a delay of the report. I just wonder what that does to the rest of the studies that are backed up behind us, as well as how we get things such as the rapid housing initiative update that Member Vis asked for. It just seems a bit odd that the PBO can't make a report on time or on schedule, even though it was their idea.

The Chair: It's a fair comment.

Just with respect to the rapid housing initiative, as long as we can—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Chair, before you continue, I can see on the screen that some witnesses are still with us.

The Chair: Yes. We are not in camera.

[*English*]

Ms. Jibb and Ms. Stevens, I again want to thank you for being with us. You are welcome to stay, but you're free to leave. I don't anticipate there will be any further questions for you. Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Ms. Tina Stevens: Mr. Chair, may I speak, please, just for one second?

• (1730)

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Tina Stevens: I just want to make sure. Because of the fact that there was a decrease in the allotment of time for the last two panellists, is it possible, then, to respond to the questions in a more detailed fashion, to be able to follow up and send that to your committee?

The Chair: Yes, 100%, and we would very much appreciate receiving any additional information you wish to provide.

Ms. Tina Stevens: Okay.

Again, thank you very much for my time here today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thanks for your interest in providing us with more information. It's greatly appreciated.

All right, Mr. Vaughan, your comments are well taken with respect to how this might impact the update on the rapid housing. We have two meetings next week, one of which could be dedicated to the rapid housing update if we have a witness. The fact that the PBO is coming on the 16th shouldn't impact that at all. It's the availability of the witnesses that is the issue on the rapid housing update.

Did I see somebody else with a hand up?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Just to finish my point, it delays the drafting instructions, which means it delays the report coming back. We have a budget coming up, and the goal since last year has always been to get this report into the hands of the minister and to get it in the hands of the parliamentarians so that we can assess whether or not the budget meets the aspirations of the indigenous housing providers across the country.

I'm a little concerned that the PBO is slowing us down as we try to achieve on this file. That's the only concern I'm raising. I'm wondering if it's possible for them to submit their report as opposed to our having.... I'm just trying to figure out the timetabling on this.

Maybe what you can do is sort of back-time us from when you think we're going to have drafting instructions issued to the staff,

and then figure out how we fill in between that and the PBO appearance. I know that the RHI is one issue, but there may be other issues.

The Chair: Okay. My anticipation is that if we have the PBO on the 16th, as they suggest, the back half of that meeting would be drafting instructions. I don't think it's right to prepare the drafting instructions until we've heard from the last witness. If the PBO can come on the 16th, they would be the last witness.

I recognize Mr. Kent, please.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): I take your counsel, Chair, if that is the case. I share to a certain extent Mr. Vaughan's frustration that the PBO, on making the offer, is late in providing the report. I wonder if it's possible to request that the PBO submit at least a summary sooner than the delay that has been requested for the full report.

The Chair: Yes, I don't think there would be any harm in asking for that. They indicate that it's going to be ready on the 10th, so you would think that a summary would be possible before that. I think that's reasonable.

Are there any further interventions?

Even though Mr. Vaughan spoke to the motion, I'm not sure that there has been a motion moved.

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Let me just block out the next three weeks and where this all fits in, so that we can sort of understand how it's being composed and what we have left to do on this file, what we have to do on rapid housing and then what other gaps there are, to see if we can either start another study or fill those gaps more productively.

The Chair: Okay. Let me map out the thinking on the timeline.

The next meeting will be another panel on this study. Then we have one more week before a break week. One of those meetings will be dedicated to an update on rapid housing, subject to the availability of witnesses. I do believe that it would be appropriate for the subcommittee to meet to plan what studies we will be commencing on February 18, after hearing from the PBO, given that we do have a long list of motions for study. The subcommittee would meet at one of those meetings, and that report would need to be ratified by the full committee, probably at the second of those meetings next week.

We're talking February 2 for the subcommittee. February 4, we go in camera to adopt the subcommittee report and any other committee business. Then we have a break week. February 16 is the PBO and the drafting instructions, and February 18 will be the commencement of the next study. All of that is on the understanding that if witnesses become available on the second or the fourth, for the path of those meetings, half of one of those meetings would be dedicated to the rapid housing initiative.

That's the rough plan, subject to discussion and adoption by the subcommittee and the full committee.

I recognize Mr. Turnbull, please.

• (1735)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to make a plea to the committee to consider one more witness, whose name I put forward quite a while ago. I understand it was lost, maybe potentially in the changeover between our clerks.

His name is Jesse Thistle. Ms. Jibb mentioned him in her testimony. He's a Métis gentleman who spent the better part of a decade homeless across different cities in Canada. He wrote the bestselling book called *From the Ashes*. He is now a lead scholar in history at York University, who has written about intergenerational trauma. He has lived experience and has rewritten the definition of indigenous homelessness. He's written a bestselling book and has healed himself over many years to come back from chronic homelessness and to overcome much of his intergenerational trauma.

I think he would be a great witness. I've put his name forward and I'm hoping we can find a way to include him in this study.

Mr. Vaughan and I had a little discussion. We wondered if this solution would be amenable to the committee. I think half the meeting in the future is dedicated to the rapid housing initiative. Could we potentially have another panel of witnesses for a part of that meeting, where we could have Jesse Thistle appear? I think it would really benefit the study.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

I'm going to suggest that this be moved to the subcommittee for a fulsome discussion to deal with these things, and then come back to us.

I'd like to get back to having somebody move a motion as to whether we're going to accept the PBO's request.

I see Ms. Gazan and Mr. Vaughan.

Ms. Gazan, you have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you very much, Chair.

I agree with Mr. Vaughan. I think this study is timely.

After spending such a great time in the study, it really concerns me that it's being stalled. I think the information, particularly right now in a pandemic.... I need to get this out in my riding so we can move forward in a way that's going to save lives. I share the very urgent concern that we don't allow this study to be stalled.

I'll leave it at that. It is a very deep concern for me.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: To try to resolve this, it looks like we have a meeting on the 26th and 28th of January, and on the second, fourth, 16th and 18th of February, if I have that right. We have one more slate of witnesses to go on the 28th, and nothing is going to change that.

The question then becomes on which date the rapid housing initiative update happens. I should have an answer by Thursday afternoon. We're pretty certain we'll have the minister plus CMHC officials to share an update and provide information.

That leaves a gap on either the second or the fourth, based on when the minister can come. I would propose to get an answer on Thursday as to whether it's the second or the fourth. At that time we can decide how we slot in Jesse Thistle as a last witness on this study and get the rapid housing initiative, which if we're lucky will give us a gap day that we could probably do the committee business on.

I believe a Conservative study and a Bloc study are lined up next. Lining up what that looks like will give us the ability on the 18th to hit the Bloc's, running with witnesses, instead of starting our study on the 18th. It would allow us to take advantage of the PBO delay and speed up one of the opposition's studies, which is already in the queue, for more evaluation. I think there's an EI study with the Conservatives that we talked about, that would be apropos at this time, as we move towards the budget.

The motion would be to hear the PBO on the 16th and do our drafting instructions on that date, and to use either the second or the fourth—based on the minister's availability—for rapid housing and a Jesse Thistle invitation. Then, use the other remaining date—either the second or the fourth—to effectively schedule and start the next study, so that on the 18th we take witnesses and get the study under way.

• (1740)

Mr. Brad Vis: This is getting into subcommittee business, or is that a motion?

The Chair: I think we finally have a motion.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Brad, the attempt here is to be respectful of the decision we made to get to a new study going quickly and to get this one done. The PBO has to let us restructure when those dates start. Rather than initiating the start of the study on the 18th, we'd do that on either the second or the fourth, so we can hit the ground running on the 18th with one of the studies that's in the queue.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure I followed the motion that was just proposed verbally, with a type of schedule. I'd like to get it in writing so that it's clear, and we can make a decision on Thursday, if you agree.

This is what I retained from our work in subcommittee. We adopted three motions to establish our priorities. The first is our current study on indigenous housing; we will finish hearing from witnesses this week. The second motion deals with rapid housing, and the third motion deals with employment insurance reform.

I'm trying to see what the plan is; I'm not sure I understand.

We already have the witnesses for Thursday. I'd like the motion and the schedule you're proposing to be clearly stated. I agree that the studies referred to in these three motions should not be delayed.

The Chair: Yes.

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Mr. Vaughan, please go ahead.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: That seems reasonable.

I'll draft a proposed schedule and present it on Thursday. In the meantime, I move that we hear from the PBO and schedule drafting for February 16, because we know those dates are set in stone. On Thursday, we'll also have the minister's date locked down for that week.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: On a point of order; I can't hear any interpretation at all, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I think the translation is on the wrong channel, because I'm getting English in my ear, simultaneously.

The Chair: Go ahead. Propose the motion again.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: The motion would be that I'll return with a proposed schedule for Thursday, so that it's written down, but in the interim, we schedule for February 16 both a drafting session as well as a report from the PBO. I will also return on Thursday with a date for the minister and RHI for either the second or the fourth. We'll have it all locked down for Thursday, with the variables that we discussed.

We can deal with it between now and Thursday, and I'll reach out to colleagues to make sure I have consensus on the motion presented.

The Chair: All right. We're about to be kicked out of the meeting room.

Are there any further interventions?

Excellent. Do we require a vote on the motion? Do we have consensus to proceed with the invitation to the PBO on the 18th and further discussion on future business on Thursday?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Do we have consensus to adjourn? We have consensus again.

Thank you very much, colleagues. I hope we didn't get anyone in trouble for overstaying our welcome. We'll see you Thursday. Have a good evening.

The meeting is adjourned.

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