

to great lengths to keep up the facade." (14:18) Farmers must learn not to feel individual failure if things do not go well or if they experience financial difficulties; certainly, in these difficult times, they are not alone.

Peer counselling is based on the belief that sharing a concern or problem with peers often leads to a solution as a greater number of individuals think about, and provide personal insights into, the possible solutions for particular problems. Farmers need to relate to farmers who share their daily experience. As stated by Ms. Lunn, "(t)he phrase 'spring is coming' has a very different meaning to a farming person than to an urban person." (13:42) For the latter, it may signal the prelude to summer, while for the former it may lead to thoughts of cash flow, crop projections, or meetings with the banker. It was emphasized that: "Collectively, farmers are able to find original solutions to help themselves cope with the intense stress they must live with daily." (13:23)

For groups within the farm community who have special needs, peer counselling is particularly important. Disabled farmers and their families need a forum for sharing ideas on equipment and facility modification, as well as for providing support and encouragement. Parents with dependent children need assistance to compare experiences on finding services and on feelings of guilt and inadequacy. Farm women need confirmation that they are an integral part of the farm community.

Community-based services were advocated by witnesses. The idea is to provide farm families with access to support networks within their community, rather than to require them to travel vast distances to access services in a traditional clinic environment with which they may be less comfortable. Dr. Gerrard commented that "(i)n part due to vast geographical distances, the focus of efforts must be away from a one-on-one type to service to something that communities and people can do for themselves." (14:10)

One model that incorporates this approach is the Rural Quality of Life Program, a mental health program in Saskatchewan that addresses stress symptoms and stressors using a community development approach based on grass roots organizing, community ownership and empowerment. According to Dr. Gerrard, the aim is to "give people the skills to eat for a lifetime, rather than an intervention that will feed them for a day." (14:10)