

N.S. protesters vow to keep women's issues front and centre *interest* *should*

By Sara Holland

Demonstrators opposing the \$1.6 million in cuts to women's programs nationwide, who were forced by police to end a sit-in Friday at the Halifax office of the Secretary of State, will take up the fight again today.

A demonstration is planned for noon today at the Grand Parade in Halifax, followed by a march to the Secretary of State office, outside which participants plan to hold a wiener roast.

On Friday, 10 demonstrators stormed the Secretary of State office, following a move by women in St. John's who had been occupying the Secretary of State building there since Monday.

The Halifax group vowed to occupy the building until funding was restored, but were forced to leave when police threatened to arrest them.

Demonstrator Lorene Dobbie, a Mount Saint Vincent University women's studies student, said she was surprised by the police intervention, but added the group will not give up the fight.

"We're not going to be silenced," she said.

She added that bringing in the police was just another attempt to keep women silent.

Women in British Columbia are now taking action, she said,

and she hopes more groups will follow suit to make the movement stronger.

While Friday's police intervention was a big blow to the movement, she said, there is power in numbers.

She said the group will continue to rally against the funding cuts, which may force the closure of two women's centres in Nova Scotia.

Second Story in Bridgewater faces closure after federal funding was slashed. The centre's \$48,000 allocation was eliminated in the federal budget.

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre has also lost its funding and representatives from the centre participated in Friday's sit-in.

"These centres are crucial to Nova Scotian women as a meeting place, a place to turn to ... it's just not acceptable," Ms. Dobbie said.

She said the group plans to get as many people involved in the protest as possible and decide the next move then.

She said women across Canada are not going to stop protesting now. The demonstrators on Friday discussed the possibility of continuing the sit-in despite the fact they faced being arrested, Ms. Dobbie said.

However she said they decided it was too early in the fight to take that serious a step.