

**Town Hall Meeting
Halifax Shambhala Centre
Sunday, October 19, 2003**

The following is a lightly edited transcript of a recent Town Hall Meeting in Halifax. The Town Hall Meeting (“the Meeting”) is a form of community consultation that the Halifax community has been experimenting with over the last year. At the first one, last April, President Reoch read the Sakyong’s *Treatise on Society and Organization*, which was followed by some remarks by the President and an open microphone discussion. At the latest meeting, the community was invited to inform our Shambhala Congress representatives on the issues that the community members wanted them to address during the Congress.

The general vision is that the Halifax community could hold Town Hall Meetings at least twice a year—potentially around Shambhala Day and around the Harvest of Peace, and that they would discuss the issues at hand at those times, or just serve as a check-in on how the community and its administration are doing. There could be other Meetings during the year, when issues arise that need the community’s consideration.

The Meeting format is very simple and is intended to offer the maximum opportunity and invitation for members to express themselves, within a gentle and perky framework of awareness and mutual respect.

In order that participants come to the Meetings informed and prepared to express cogent opinions, we formulate general questions or topics that are broadcast in good time to the community via email and through the delegs. We also distribute any written materials on the matters to be considered. (For the Meeting below, we strongly encouraged members to read the materials on the Congress website.) The delegs then meet locally to discuss the issue(s) at hand. Through this process, the members come to the Meeting already somewhat informed and having contemplated the subject matter.

At the Meeting, the leader spells out the issue(s) and members come to the microphones to speak their minds. The format could be simple input and listening, as the last meeting was, or it could be centred on debate and decision.

The Meeting is followed by a cash bar reception with food.

The Meeting tapes are transcribed and distributed to the local community as a record of what transpired and for follow-up.

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Halifax Town Hall Meeting October 19, 2003

Meeting purpose: To gather the community's questions, ideas and issues that we wish our representatives to take to the Shambhala Congress in November 2003.

Organizing question: "What is your vision of an international Shambhala mandala that you can feel wholeheartedly committed to?"

RJ: (Centre Director, Richard John) President Reoch, dekyongs, warriors of Shambhala, welcome everyone. It's wonderful to see such a full house, so this is excellent. This is going to be a somewhat spontaneous and creative process, which started this morning (with neighbourhood deleg meetings) and has been continuing minute by minute up until now, and will continue as we're here together.

I'd like to set a very simple and brief context for what we're doing here today, and then turn this over to David Quinn, who is the Chairman of the Dekyong Council, for a minute or two. And then we'll turn it over to you. The purpose of this gathering, as Richard (Reoch) called it, is a kind of test drive for the Shambhala Congress that's happening in two weeks. We have an extremely unique and valuable situation here, with so many committed people with such a close connection with the centre of the mandala, that this is an ideal situation for us to come together as a local community, as a kind of prototype, and to work with questions and ideas and issues that can then be brought to the Shambhala Congress and taken further.

I would like to say just one thing personal about my own relationship to this process. I'm here as the Centre Director of Halifax, and so my interest is mostly in what is going on with our membership and what is of benefit to us in relationship to the whole mandala. But what's become apparent—it's always been apparent, but sometimes we forget it—is that we are really blessed here. We are in the Kingdom of Shambhala, and most of us have gone through quite a bit of hardship in order to be here, in order to fulfill the wishes of our teachers. And I think we're extremely fortunate to be here, and I truly believe that. I really felt it listening to our deleg conversation this morning, which means we also have a little extra responsibility and obligation, because I think we have a lot to offer in a prototypical or model way for the rest of the mandala. So I would just like to put that forward.

David, why don't I ask you at this point to just say a little bit about the process that's brought us right up to this very minute with the delegs?

DQ: Sure. As Richard said, the purpose of the Town Hall today, or one of the purposes of the Town Hall today, is to gather feedback from the community. Through the deleg system, and also through other forms of communication—e-mail and telephone and so on—a question has gone out to you about how you envision Shambhala and how you can see yourself relating to that wholeheartedly. And the question that went out was, "What is your vision of an international Shambhala mandala that you can feel wholeheartedly committed to?" At the deleg meetings today—which happened in every deleg as far as I'm aware—that was the organizing question. People were invited to share their thoughts about how that question related to them personally, and at two o'clock this afternoon, all of the dekyongs gathered upstairs and we had a meeting, just to debrief basically about what was discussed at the various deleg meetings and to try and arrive at some of the recurring

themes and some of the hot issues or hot topics that were coming up at the various deleg meetings, as a way of trying to structure the organization of this Town Hall Meeting.

So we've identified six or seven topics, I think, for discussion, that seemed to come up at most meetings. And what we're proposing that we do now is to divide up our time—the next hour, hour and a half or so—to provide an opportunity to speak on each issue. And we'll time it so that there's a little bit of clarity there and that the topics don't just kind of go on. So we'll have something like 10 minutes—Pam Gaines has offered to time the discussion. So she'll put up her hand at 10 minutes, and if the discussion seems to be going really well at that point, we'll let it go for another couple of minutes, say 15 minutes, but we'll have an announcement at 10 minutes.

RJ: Thank you. The context here is not to try to resolve anything. There's nobody who's sitting here who's going to be answering any questions, probably, today. This is really a matter of listening to each other, and all of this is going to be recorded and then transcribed, and then we'll sort out the topics and the sense of priority and the sense of passion that is connected with these various things. And also ideas, constructive ideas that might come up.

There was a sort of twofold model that was presented, that the first thing we need to discuss is Becoming Whole, in and of ourselves, in the Shambhala mandala, and then there's the whole idea of Turning The Flower Outward. And it became clear as we were looking at these today that today we're really talking about becoming whole. It has to be the starting point. There's so much that can be and needs to be looked at that it seems pretty clear that this is where we should begin. And in terms of guidelines, just practicality-wise, I'm going to look at the six topics—turning the flower outward was the seventh one—and we're going to leave some time at the end for anything that you'd like to talk about that doesn't correspond to any of the categories. But we came up with six. Richard wanted five, but we came up with six.

While you're speaking I'm going to be noting, trying to consolidate the notes that just came up at our meeting. But, just to give this some shape, I'd like to read off the topics in order for us to work with it. The headlines are so big, they could be almost anything, but what I'll try to do as we come to each topic, I'll give a very brief synopsis of some of the subtopics or the ideas that came up under each one. Anyway, this is completely an open forum. I would ask you to do two things: to listen as much as you can to what other people are saying with the intention of understanding, as well as you can; and then to be fearless about speaking your mind. Concisely. (laughter) Like a minute or two. Okay? I hope that makes sense. Anyway, this is the way we'll have to do it.

The first one is very straightforward, and hopefully will be refreshing. We realized as we were talking about all of the innumerable aspects and angles and things that could be discussed, that there's one area that would be very good to start with, which we called "Appreciation," which is, "What's working?" Let's look at the things that inspire you, that make you already feel proud to feel part of the community or you have observed that are well done or that are good models for something we could do—anything like that, anything that's worthy of appreciation, just as a starting point. So it's not just a matter of a lot of problem-solving of things that aren't working, but there's a lot that *is* working. So that's our first topic. What do you appreciate? What inspires you? What would you like to see go forward? And what would you like to say about that? (question from the audience about whether the discussion is about the local or international level) This is all

internationally oriented; it's for the benefit of the international mandala. If your example is local, that's fine, you know, from any experience that you have. Yeah, that's fine. The experiences need to be concrete.

Audience: Are you going to list them first?

RJ: Am I going to list them all? Oh, I am going to do that. Is that what I said? (laughter) Appreciation, No. 1 is appreciation. No. 2 is the area of community-building and membership, and as I said, when we get to it I'll list some subtopics. No. 3 is leadership, which includes the Sakyong. No. 4 is communication, which is such a big word, but it includes accountability, transparency, all the flow back and forth, inner and outer. No. 5 is organizational structure, ideas for how we would actually like to see the centre and the outlying centres and practice centres, what is the relationship? How is the centre defined? And No. 6 is financial. As I say, I'll give some subtopics, but I won't take time for that now. So those are the six we came up with. So, I'd like to hear from you, what you appreciate, what makes you proud to be a Shambhala warrior and a member of this community. Or what have you seen specifically that is working well?

DQ: Also, if there are dekyongs who would like to say anything about things that happened at their meetings.

JS: My name is Janet Shotwell. I appreciate a lot over the past 30 years that I've been involved. But the one thing stands out in my mind is that I really appreciated that my oldest daughter had the opportunity to engage in Shambhala Training when she was in high school and then continue with Buddhist studies and go to Seminary and receive abhisheka. When she did Seminary, which was about six years ago, I felt like maybe that was the last Seminary that was going to happen and that she should go then, because it may never happen again. And so I really appreciate that things have managed to continue in spite of the financial difficulties that we've had, in particular for new people coming in as well as our children.

KC: I'm Kay Crinean. There are two things I really appreciate. One is the enormous amount of volunteer activity. When you look at all the things that are happening, there's a vast amount of things happening, and it's all largely volunteer effort. And that's not to say I don't appreciate the paid staff, I think they're absolutely incredible, but we accomplish a huge amount, both here and in all the other Shambhala Centres, and I think that's a very rare balance of volunteer activity. So that makes the whole scene feel so rich. And then the other specific thing that I really appreciate is my experiences being involved in Sun Camps over the years and seeing how these young people have come through the Camps and have become the staff of the Camps and have become the leadership and running the leadership committee, and how they have a transmission to pass on to the younger ones; how impeccable they are in the way they teach the younger ones what they've learned. And we now have three Sun Camps happening every year, one in France, one in Nova Scotia and one in Colorado. It's entirely volunteer run, and people give up their vacation times and staff the camps, and there's this whole thing happening that's a little model of what I think we need to be doing, what we are doing and we need to do more of. We each have a transmission that we can pass on to other people. We have to recognize what we have and take responsibility for manifesting it as fully as possible and passing it on to as many people as possible. I see that happening, but I'm particularly inspired about seeing it happening in Sun Camp context.

- CJ: Carol Johnstone. First, I truly appreciate having actually met a root guru, a realized siddha, in this actual lifetime and him accepting me as a student, number one. Number two, the actual authentic dharma being available to me and me being able to hear it and transmit it as much or as well or poorly or however as I can. Number 3, the sangha, these people, you people, actually an amazing number of people that I can consider my family, that are actually really cool, intelligent, compassionate—most of the time. Those are my three real appreciations, but I have a more mundane immediate one that I would like to say. Thank you to President Reoch and Wendy Layton-Munro for organizing this Shambhala Congress the way they have. And I really encourage everybody to actually read that website. I actually read all those papers myself; it was really quite the task, but totally worth it, because it's not just looking anymore. So I really encourage people to respond and work with it and also take advantage of your direct question you can ask the Sakyong, if you write to president@shambhala.org and pose your question. Evidently, he will actually read them all and respond during the Congress. So anyway, those are my appreciations. Thank you.
- ML: My name is Martin Lajoie, and I'd just like to say how much I appreciate the centre itself for providing the space and the openness for people to come to the centre. Speaking from my own personal experience in the Open Houses on Wednesday nights, it's a great opportunity that we just open our door to the streets. Anyone that wants to come in to the space is welcome, and there's no charge, it's just "come in and see what's being offered here." And with that, also there's a sense of appreciation for the senior students of the Vidyadhara that are here and offering their wisdom at these Open Houses. It's something that attracted me. This is how I got involved, and I appreciate that very much, and I would encourage all of the senior students to get more involved in the centres. You're what keeps the teachings alive and creates the wisdom that is Shambhala.
- SS: My name is Steve Seeley, and I just wanted to offer an observation, having recently gone to a conference in New York, which was a conference bringing together dharma centre leaders from all over North and South America from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. President Reoch was there, along with a few other of our sangha, Judy Leif and Julia Sagebien. And it really struck me there how incredibly well trained we are. It was amazing and, personally, I saw how much I take it for granted myself. When people there were talking about how many students there are in the Americas that are practicing Vajrayana practices without knowing what they're doing, where there are people who feel that you're not really a Buddhist unless you're a monastic, where there are people who cannot practice without learning Tibetan first and cannot study without learning Tibetan first. You know, we've been given an incredible legacy from the Vidyadhara and the Sakyong, and the capper was when Geleg Rinpoche said "Well, you know, I've noticed that some people are really scared of Buddhism, so maybe we have to have a secular door (laughter) for people to walk into." Hmmm! (laughter) I mean, we're already doing a lot of things that people there were saying "How are we going to do it?" or "Maybe we should do it?" We're already doing it! And I'm not saying we're better or anything like that, but we just have a lot already, and it's all quite professional actually.
- RJ: Good. Thank you everyone. The next topic is what we called in a very broad sense community and membership. You could say the guiding question here is, "What does it mean to be a member of Shambhala, or a member of a Shambhala Centre." And just some of the many pieces that have been acknowledged in relation to this topic are: to what

degree it should be more open and inclusive; to what degree do we have to be clear and not embarrassed about setting the boundaries; how we bring together older people and younger people; how do we bring together senior people and new students; how do we put more emphasis on education for young people, children and teenagers; to what degree membership might be local and to what degree it might be international; how we might extend further to other ethnic groups since we're still awfully homogeneous; economic groups; how we include—how we actually truly include all the segments, all the sort of practice and special interest segments of the mandala, from the fact that we have members who are students of other teachers, who are Zen practitioners, whose main practice is kyudo or ikebana or tea and so forth. How do we actually enrich all that? And just the whole idea of how we—there's a repeated expression of the feeling that we take each other for granted really a lot. And how do we go about appreciating each other? So any of those things or anything that you would like to bring up under the topic of "What does it mean to be a member of this community?" And what do we want? What are we encouraging? What needs to be done? What needs to be changed?

MB: We discussed in our deleg –

RJ: The idea of saying your name first is really excellent, so please –

MB: Oh yes, sorry, Maya Braun, and this morning in the deleg meeting we came up with this point which we called Swiss cheese. And it came from the older students of the Vidyadhara that actually miss him a lot, and they miss the personal relationship they had with him. And what they miss specifically was that he could see right through them and sort of make them into Swiss cheese, you know, within three minutes. And they feel like the sangha is missing that element, to really be seen, and we were wondering how we could recreate this quality or this energy and how we could do it for each other. And also, I know just personally that I find—because I'm new to this sangha but I've been to a different sangha before which emphasized friendship more—I find that although people are very friendly, I still find that they're very private so that there's not very much meeting for tea and meeting one-to-one or really befriending each other.

Audience: Where were you before?

MB: I was with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in Europe. And so I was wondering whether it would be possible—we have the deleg system—to also have smaller groups where people really talk more about their spiritual life. But also to make friendship a practice within the sangha, where you really know a lot about two or three people and what they're doing.

ES: My name is Eric Slone. I think we have to perhaps appreciate—not to go back to the first topic—but appreciate what I think is that we're in an unprecedented enterprise here. From beginnings that resembled a lot of other sanghas—a teacher and a fairly committed group of his students—we've really become something entirely different, and there is no, as far as I know, historical model that we can follow. So I think it helps to recognize that we're on an adventure to create something that doesn't exist in a model that we can just copy or follow. And maybe that realization would allow us to be a little more forgiving of some of the wrong turns we take or some of the things that don't work. But I think it's a very exciting possibility, but not an easy one.

DM: (Diane Metzger) As soon as I stood up and started walking I kind of started to roll back again because I realized what I—the reason I stood up was out of an intense longing and passion for something, and then I realized this has been said and it's been attempted and,

including myself, having attempted, not made it. Which is practicing together, just sitting. And I just want to describe almost a memory, because I don't go to nyinthuns very much these days, and they're only on Sunday. I mean, the sitting together is very limited. Maybe I shouldn't say it so negatively, but it used to be that we had a lot more sitting and walking meditation, and during walking meditation—my memory is having sat with sangha, friends, a group of people for several hours, as you're doing walking meditation, interspersed with that you sometimes look up and you catch someone's eye, and it's like this tremendous openness and one mind. And for me that's where the longing is and passion, and yeah, so I think it would be the ground for whatever else.

VB: My name is Victoria Bell, and I have two things to say that are related to the topic of membership. The first is financial. I think it's really important that everyone in the mandala feels connected to the centre of the mandala. It's easier for those of us in Halifax actually to feel connected to that because it's right here. But I get the impression that lot of people don't quite feel that connection, and money as a form of energy can kind of make us accountable to it and make it accountable to us, and I think it would be really wonderful if there was a way that everyone in the mandala was connected in that way to the centre. It doesn't have to be a set amount or anything like that, but, you know, by making a small donation that I can to Shambhala International, that does make me feel more connected to it in a way and make me feel like it's a little bit more accountable to me. I think that that could be a really helpful way of, as being a part of membership, to actually pull it together a little bit.

The other thing I have to say about membership has to do with this idea of inclusion and reaching out and making us a little bit more accessible to other social classes, other ethnicities. I think that if we're actually going to do that, if we actually really want to do that and don't just say that we want to do that, that we need to let go of what we think this whole thing needs to look like a little bit. We need to allow it to change if we really want working class people to be involved, if we really want young people to get involved, if we really want other races and ethnicities to be involved, then we have to allow things to change and just let go a little bit of our idea of how it has to be.

NW: My name is Nick Wright. Following on what Victoria just said and what Eric said, it seems that without us particularly realizing it or planning it, we've become a Shambhala society—or a Shambhala kingdom, to be more direct. And that means to me that the model of membership we should be using is: participants in a society, which in simple terms is citizenship. We should be thinking in terms of immigration and citizenship as our model for including people, rather than membership in some kind of religious organization. That is automatically inclusive of everyone who shares our vision in whatever form it takes, regardless of their religion, their profession, their social status or anything else. What we talk about are basic human qualities and their potential, and how to work with those and develop them, or bring them out, not create them.

Those principles, I think, resonate with really large numbers of people on some level or another, and what we're finding is that people come in—not so much as they used to, looking for enlightenment or transcendence or getting off the wheel of existence or anything else along those lines—they just want to live good human lives, for the most part, and to be able to work with their ordinary domestic situation and to realize the potential that they intuit that they already have. Shambhala resonates with that, and they like us for the most part. They feel that the possibility exists here for developing that.

The funny thing is that a lot of the people who come in through that very large and open Shambhala gate often end up going to Seminary, because they become exposed to the buddhadharma when they come in. That may not have been their intention, but without anyone manipulating the situation or conning anybody, something happens. That doesn't mean to say that people exclusively should become Buddhist: there's no requirement actually, there's just a spontaneous connection. That openness includes people who connect with our vision, there's no requirement to be anything other than that.

So, professionals, business people, mothers and fathers, young people, anyone who understands what we're doing, could become included and make a relationship as a citizen on that basis. And the path for that: I think we should take a lot of the things that we save for our later programs like Kalapa Assembly, Warrior Assembly and so on, and push them up to the front, so that when people come in the door they learn things they can apply to their lives, like Court principle, natural hierarchy, finding one's seat—all of those things are completely intuitive and can be applied. So I think that we could make a lot of what we do—the real heart and core stuff—available up front, just as the Vidyadhara did when he first started teaching Buddhism. If you look at the 1973 Seminary transcripts, they're the thickest, and it was the first Seminary.

Audience: But that was Seminarians, it wasn't (inaud.).

NW: Yes, but as a comparison between presenting the buddhadharma and the Shambhala dharma, the Shambhala dharma could be presented just as early. I think I've said enough.

DQ: So it's 10 minutes, but there are a couple of other people.

RJ: Yeah, we'll have two more.

BS: Okay. I just wanted to say . . . (laughter). Yeah, I think membership has to do with money actually, I do. I think it has to do with feeling committed enough that you actually want to spend some money, you know, contribute to the place, whatever it is, on a regular basis: not a large amount but whatever that is, and I actually think that might—I'm from New York, I'm Barbara Stewart, incidentally. And I think that might—I know in New York we've come to realize we could make it—people kind of want to be members, and the idea of contributing something isn't necessarily badly met. We found that people—we haven't instituted it yet properly, but we found that people actually kind of want it to be their place, too, rather than a place made for them, created by others for them.

And I guess another question I've got is, as a visitor to Halifax, I'm wondering: in New York we have a lot of people coming in all the time. It's a very different city, but still, we've got— (laughter) I know, I know, I know—but we've still got like 20,000 or 30,000 (university) students here (in Halifax) and they don't seem to be here very much. I mean, in New York there's poetry readings and there's plays in the shrine room, and there's stuff going on, and I'm kind of wondering why that's not happening here. There are a lot of people who would be interested in doing that, I think, if they were invited. The university culture doesn't seem to permeate here very much.

AT: My name is Anna Taylor, and what I want to say is actually following up on what Victoria said. I think what we need is more inclusiveness, so that there can be various kinds of memberships. For old students, for instance, who are practitioners of Vajrayana, but also that membership should include going out and meeting people where they're at. Because I think what happens is that we want people to be members but on our terms, strictly on our terms, rather than being strong enough or brave enough to meet them halfway and, as Victoria said, be prepared to be changed in the process. So it could be very simple things,

like making sure that the environment is healthy for people with environmental problems, for example, which may mean less incense or possibly not having flowers on the shrine, things that we value very much, but also people are I think somewhat scared off. I'm talking now from my experience in Lunenburg. They're scared off because they think that everything that goes on in the centre they are required to do, including what seems like very academic studies that they are not prepared to do, so that there's some kind of sense of hospitality and inclusion. And I think that a huge step towards that was the Sunday gatherings, where anyone can come and for \$5 have a very good meal and hear a talk and nothing much else is required of them. So more of that, that we are willing to go out and meet people on their own ground instead of always requiring them to come in and accept this, however wonderful it is. Thank you.

DQ: That's 15 (minutes).

RJ: Okay, thank you. The next topic is leadership, which is very broad, as are the others. And quite honestly, one of the things that came up as a very heartfelt expression, as much as anything else in these conversations, was our access to the Sakyong. In this sense I think it mostly took the form of personal access to him as a teacher. So that's a question. There was actually some desire to know more about what his vision is for us and also what President Reoch's got in mind. Which of course he'll tell us in due time. Taking a—or not, right? (laughter). To be fair to Richard, the conversation went from "It's so good that he's just listening" now to "Why doesn't he just tell us what he wants?" We have to re-look at the whole idea of our hierarchy. We're not talking about necessarily the principles of heaven, earth and man as much as just about what is the actual hierarchical structure of the mandala? How is Central organized? How does it relate to all the rest of us, our other centres? There was a lot of interest in a need for much better and further training in both administrative leadership and in teaching and meditation instruction, the feeling that the demand for this is rapidly exceeding the supply. Accountability came up quite a bit, not so much in terms of blame for who made certain mistakes, but just how can we learn from all the things that we've kind of misfired on, and how we can take that forward? And finally, an idea of what is our personal responsibility as individuals? How much does all this really depend on our taking our personal, our own, leadership within ourselves, as opposed to always wanting the Sakyong to tell us what to do or the president or the dekyong or somebody to decide that? So these are some of the things that have been discussed; so that's the topic for this period. So please feel free. Leadership. And this is a very safe environment to speak freely in. (laughter) I mean, every iteration we go through just brings that out further and further, that sometimes you have to go through this a number of times before you finally are ready to say what's on your mind, and that's good, that's what we've seen Richard encouraging. So please don't hold back. (laughter) He wants to know what you think!

JR: Hi, I'm Jean Riordan. The only thing about leadership that I'm very interested in, concerned about, is that if someone has a desire to see something particular happen in the sangha that is very relevant perhaps to the entire sangha, one doesn't have a way to kind of make sure that that happens. I'm thinking about the relics of the Vidyadhara. They are in storage and have been there for years in a damp, musty place, and I happen to know that there's mould growing on his desk. And these are things that were brought out of his bedroom and out of his sitting room, and they're very precious to the entire sangha, and they are also our power objects. They really are. If anyone has ever been in the room

where they used to be, upstairs, knows just walking into that room exuded a definite sense of power, but we haven't really taken care of them, and I'd like to contribute some time and energy to do that and I don't know how to do anything about it.

LM: I'm Landy Mallory, and I think one thing at this Congress that we need to look at is thinking about—in regards to leadership—is that some of the old things that we've been doing in the past may be obsolete, or they may not be the best way to proceed as we have in the past. The Vidyadhara always talked about enlightened monarchy, for example. Well, possibly that's not the way that we need to go anymore; I'm not sure. But it's something that we need to explore, primarily because the Sakyong doesn't want to approach it that way, is my feeling. I don't have any particular problem in terms of how he wants to go about it. He has a lot of other responsibilities. He has other organizations that he is looking towards or at in regards to Mipham Rinpoche—a number of different things, and really we have to stand on our own, just as some of those other organizations and things that he's connected with are going to have to stand on their own as well. So we have to really look at how is our leadership (*tape turned over*), how are going to rebuild that and what is the best way of doing that? And I hope that we can really get involved in that at this Congress. I mean, what is it? Is it a democracy? Yes? No? I don't know exactly if that's the right way to go, but possibly there's the Queen of England and the relationship to the parliament, maybe that's something to look at. Or we can create something totally new or totally different, but hopefully we can really get into that, because I think leadership—once the leadership situation gets worked out, once you have a strong leadership structure, that's going to help with the other centres, the Shambhala Centres on financial issues and everything else are going to come back. I think that's what part of the response is, that at the top it's not as strong. In our deleg meeting we were talking about how—someone had mentioned when the Vidyadhara said, “This is what we're going to do,” everybody did it. Well that's not the Sakyong's style. And so that worked; it was enlightened monarchy, and if you didn't quite go along with it, well maybe you shouldn't be part of the community. Well that is not the Sakyong's style. So we have to look at redefining that. And once we get some of those things worked out, a lot of these financial issues and things will start to come, we'll start building up a strong financial base again. Thank you.

RH: I'm Rebecca Hazell, and actually I have two requests. The first one is in relationship to the Sakyong. You mentioned, Richard, that there are questions about how we could have a relationship with him, and I think that an excellent way would be for him to answer questions after he gives a talk. I remember when the Vidyadhara used to give talks, he always answered questions. It was terrifying, absolutely terrifying to get up and ask one, and he was so personal in his response that you felt like you had had an entire teaching just in that one question, and I know that the Sakyong is exactly the same in that kind of power in his being. So that's number one question or request. And the second one is in terms of our leadership as individuals. This is a pitch for volunteerism, I guess you could say, and nobody asked me to give it, but I know that Shambhala Training right now is hurting in terms of people coming to staff, people being willing to coordinate, people being willing to do the work. And I think it would be tremendous if people were willing to come back, even if they've done the program many, many years ago, and participate in it again, because that is how new people feel the warmth and the connection that we felt when we first started. And that is leadership. So between that and the Shambhala Buddhist Centre itself, the Shambhala Centre where there's lots and lots to do, it doesn't take that much. It

could be once a year, twice a year, and it would make a huge difference. So that's it.
Thank you.

JL: I'm Joe Litven. As we talk about leadership and this Congress approaches altogether, one thing strikes me more and more, and it's so obvious what kind of transition this community has gone through since the Vidyadhara died. Being a student of the Vidyadhara, when he was around he was our leader, teacher—he had a particular style of leader and of a teacher, and that was just the way it was. I really resonated with the Swiss cheese comment. As Becky just said, when you asked a question of the Vidyadhara, you felt like the Swiss cheese was happening right there, and I really long for that. It's very strange to long for holes in your system, but I realize I long for that, so I was just wondering, well, what's replaced that? And . . .

Audience: Cheddar.

JL: What?

Audience: Cheddar cheese.

JL: Cheddar? Aged cheddar. (laughter) Well, we could get into a whole cheese discussion here; but actually, I realized that it's not that I'm not still being made Swiss cheese of, but it's coming from a different place right now, which I think has more to do with practice and the community and life, you could say. So I think the Vidyadhara carried a lot of that, and I really appreciate that he did that. But now it's somehow carried by other things and, in terms of leadership, like it or not, the Sakyong has a different style of leadership and of teaching. And it's clearly much more up to us. And we, whether it's being made Swiss cheese of or compassion or anything that we might talk about, it's really the sangha. And the fact that there's this Congress happening altogether is a sign of the times. So this is where we're at, and I have a lot of longing for the so-called, I was going to say "good old days," but actually the Vidyadhara always said that these are the good old days, so maybe that's the point.

CD: My name's Cecilia Driscoll, and I was thinking about this yesterday. All of a sudden I thought "Gee, Halifax is so rich with all the Acharyas we have here and dapons and various forms of leadership," and I was thinking of calling everyone and asking them to do some volunteer work. (laughter) But I was really thinking of that potency and power that we have in Halifax, and this is my first call. So I would really like to encourage all of us to encourage the wonderful people we have who we've already entrusted to please continue to travel and teach, and this includes the three-year retreatants as well, but also please teach in Halifax and let us know what you can do, and anything is appreciated.

LK: I'm Linda Kreger, and I have three points. One is, I feel strongly that the leadership of Shambhala should be trained in leadership principles, in basic human resources principles. There are wonderful people who step into a lot of responsibility and virtually have no training. In organizations smaller than this one, there is quite a lot of attention paid to how people are related to, and people are chosen for human relations positions for certain qualities. I think we need to do that, and I think that we need to prioritize what the leadership needs to do. One of the very basic ones is support as a major focus on the volunteer work, because I know that there's so much volunteerism going on and there's actually a lot of people with a lot of even further really good ideas. If there was a very strong support system of, for example, public relations materials or community contacts of people who want speakers . . . We used to have a speakers' bureau here in Halifax at one point, I believe. Anyway, there's a lot of things that a very strong central focus could help

with in the outlying areas. And the third thing is what other people have said today, which has to do with doing, that we all are truly meant to be leaders of Shambhala, and it is up to us to step forward and do things and be curious. In your community, go further, see if somebody wants to hear, or be willing to teach at your local whatever.

ML: I'm Madeline Leibling, and I've been listening, just what Linda said: that we're all leaders and we do train to be leaders through our practice and our association with the community in many different facets. I think there are many facets of leadership. For myself, sometimes I go, "Oh, I don't—all this organizational stuff, I just want to go on retreat. I don't want to deal with this at all. It's too much, it's overwhelming, I don't have the skills," and I think there's a whole bunch of people that aren't here. On the website there's a whole bunch of people that aren't there. There's like 250 people looking at that website out of our community. So there will always be a lot of people that say, "I just want to go on retreat" or "I don't want to get involved with this," and all of us are going to go back and forth in that way. But I think when people say a strong centre, I feel like it needs to be kind of strong but fluid like bamboo so that the people on the outside can always come in, in their facet, say, as artists or practitioners or whatever kind of way they can tune in. But there can always be that sense of openness and feedback to the centre and feedback back out again. In some ways, when someone says "a strong centre," it makes me a little nervous. Yeah, there needs to be a strong structure and a good structure that can hold together what we need to hold together, but I think it always has to have fluidity and ability to move and take in and go out like that. So that's just what came to me out of all this discussion.

LM: I just wanted to talk a little bit about my path and connection with the Centre, which—oh, my name is Laurie Mallory—which has been really pretty rocky and distant for many years. And a lot of that has to do with my life; I mean, my own personal life. I work, I have a really demanding job and I have three children. And I feel like the whole thing of volunteerism doesn't really allow me to connect, and that for me, personally, what I needed was much more of a child-friendly centre that not only was child-friendly but also had a focus on that aspect of community. And frankly, that's been a struggle for many years here, in terms of how we do that. I would just like to say that I think we need more resources devoted to that, because really, volunteerism doesn't work a lot. One thing that happens is everyone has many different ideas about how things should be done, and then you spend your time fighting about what the right way is to do it. And then the volunteers get really upset, and then nothing happens. So I think we need a very strong structure to support families and the dharma, and that means financial resources and also it means a leader who is able to really have a vision and really to go forward with that vision, instead of letting things rock back and forth as they have been. I was really glad to go to Kalapa Assembly because it rekindled my whole connection to this place and to the practice of Buddhism, but it was fairly bleak in terms of how the children's program ran and what was available to them. And so I think we should have just even a lower limit of acceptability of how we're going to deal with the children and the parents in these kinds of settings.

RJ: The next topic we have is communication, which we're obviously engaged in right now. There's been a feeling expressed many, many times in many ways that many of us feel that we're expected to understand certain things and represent certain things, and that it's not particularly welcome to speak on alternative points of view or to be too vulnerable or to be too confused or to be too contrary. So this points to a tremendous need to be open to

listening to each other. Another issue of communication is flow: what are the constituent parts of how we communicate. The delegs are an obvious one, but that's just one example. There could be things that are more informal, things that are more formal. The Congress is obviously going to be a big one. But how that actually flows, how communication can flow from an individual to the centre . . . Transparency has come up a great deal, the need for much less secrecy and much more transparency in *all* areas of communication, having to do with finance, who's doing what, what the plans are, hiring and firing people, all the rest of it; lots of need for that. And a very interesting one, I suppose, which is almost a separate area but could be considered part of the communication, is decision-making, how we actually make decisions at any level, whether it's a board or whether it's a deleg or whether it's a task force—collaboration, top-down, consensus, how we actually look at this. And in particular the ability to include opposing views in a sane and functional way, which is something we admittedly definitely need to work on. And one side that keeps on popping up is electronic communication. We've had "Yes! Use the web more!" and "No! Use the web less!" So communication. And decision-making.

MS: I'd like to say—I'm Madeline Schreiber—I'd like to say something which I think might be a little old-fashioned and terribly simple, but I think it goes a very, very long way, which is about the way we speak to each other in intimate settings, one-on-one, or two or three people together, or on sangha-talk, which is the other extreme, or in our meetings—any of our interactions. It's terribly easy to just fall into the cultural patterns of being too casual or too shallow or sometimes too rushed or maybe somewhat callous. And I believe that we as a sangha pay an enormous price for relaxing the mindfulness of speech that we have as part of our legacy, and I think that we all understand. And the reason I think that that is such a high cost in our situation is because what we share is unique, special, beyond words, I really won't attempt to define it. I think everyone knows what I'm talking about, what it is we share, and that's vulnerable and delicate, and if we don't treat it with the appropriate care, respect, of a truly precious, living substance, then it's very quickly destroyed; trust goes down the drain *immediately*, people are afraid to open their mouth, they're afraid to speak even to their friend. People get frightened of what's going to come back at them, jump out of a dark corner. The dark corner isn't even there, but that's how we feel. Within our sangha there cannot be really any bad consequences that can come to anybody for opening their mouth. We're not going to get kicked out, we're not going to be put in prison, we're not going to get a ticket, we're not going to be tortured, nothing will happen. We just can truly speak. But we don't. We've managed to somehow intimidate ourselves, and I think that the source of that intimidation is just carelessness in terms of really good manners and delicacy and being careful when we speak to each other.

So the extension of that that I want to address, and I won't go on too long, is about sangha-talk. The basic technology is such a gift. I mean, it's tailor-made for our needs. We're spread out all around the world and now, within the last few years, we can talk to each other instantly at no cost. This is great. And the whole thing is ruined. It's just fallen into a kind of a very below mediocre level of—I don't want to put an adjective on it, it's just a pretty low level of communication, and it's not anybody's fault, it's by default. It's that we're not really using it well, we're not using it creatively. So those people who don't really use it very well and are not using it creatively take up all the space; there's very few of them. There are hundreds of us lurkers in the background, reading this and deleting that and crying and lamenting what an awful mess this is. But I think, and I'd like to try this as

an experiment, if more people just get a good idea . . . Good ideas cross our minds many times each day. You have a good idea, post it. Don't be afraid of the flames that will take you later in the day. Fear not. Just post intelligent, creative, inspired stuff, and it will flush away all that . . . (laughter)—I've seen this happen, actually, it's very, very easy to do. So if we will just simply use sangha-talk in a better use, put a better use into it, then I think we'll have just a fantastic medium that we can really profit from. So let's speak nicely and speak nicely on the computer. Thank you.

IW: My name is Irene Wauchope, and what I really like since Richard Reoch has taken over, so to speak (laughter), is the openness in communication and trying out different ways to communicate worldwide. I love the idea of having these open phone calls, that people can ask the Sakyong direct questions, and I would like to encourage you, us, to maintain that on some level, maybe not all the time, but now and then to do that again over the years. Because we have a very big organization now and we need to reach everybody.

MI: My name is Mina Inacio. I would like to say a word about communication. I'd like to say, starting by myself, it would be really good that I take more time to sit. I get really busy working day and night and not taking time for the sitting. I would like to invite our fellow practitioners to please practice more, and especially who are now in position of doing Shambhala Training or when teachers visit the centre, and you are in position of talking to someone who comes from different ethnic groups, that please open our hearts. There are people who come to this place, and they are so attracted to come and special reason to hear teachers, they pass by but sometimes they are turned off because they come from different kind of backgrounds, they are not just white like many of us. And the money questions again includes the financial thing here. I think being a member doesn't have to be always member. I think our hearts—now I say it—being a member that is paying or not paying, it's the same to me anyway, and I think to Rinpoche would be saying there's many ways that you can give in the world. And so there's people sometimes is turned off from doing, listening to a teacher that they want to because they don't have the money, you know. It can be like the really impoverished street thing, that I don't have the money. It could be in Boulder that someone has lots of money and wants to just have that centre, that cabin to sit, has to be that way. So we need altogether to see how we include everyone being part of this community. And so we open our hearts and not just say, well, if you don't have the money you need to stay for cleanup or do whatever, other things. Sometimes on the spot we need just in the moment to invite people coming in. And I'm saying that because I meet with many people that come from many other communities. So there are things that happen to me here too, but I'm not talking about me, I'm talking about people come to me and I thought of offering that. I'd love to see many more people come and be part of our community that come from different ethnic groups. And I'm very thankful for what's happening already in South America, Europe, whatever, teachers that you give. Thank you.

NG: I'm Nerissa Gailey. There's two things I wanted to mention. One is, I have a thought on e-mail as a communication form in our community. I think that e-mail is a very tricky medium in and of itself, because it is actually the written, not the spoken word, but we compose it as if we were speaking and much is lost in the transition. You don't have tone of voice, facial expression and so forth to clarify the speaker's meaning. And I have been reading the discussion papers for the Congress and trying to make myself as informed as

possible and discovering that I have a lot of opinions, but I'm completely unwilling to commit them to a written format, because I think there's just too many pitfalls.

So that's one thought, and the other thought regarding communication is that it actually relates to issues of care and conduct and the somewhat baby-step attempts that we are making to take a role in mediating between community members in conflicts, and I don't know how to say this without being extremely stupid about it, but I have concerns about how some of these situations evolve. I understand that there's a necessity for confidentiality in these situations, but I think sometimes people are instructed not to talk about their experience who are directly involved, and they are cut off from their sources of personal support, and you know . . . something's missing in our approach and certain things smack to me of secrecy rather than confidentiality, and so it's another thing to ponder. Thank you.

JG: My name is Jason Gavras, and first of all, I appreciate the Shambhala Open. That's my appreciation (laughter). And on the topic of communication, I wanted to pick up where Nerissa left off, and I feel the same way about e-mail and electronic communications, that it is very impersonal and it doesn't really fulfill the function that at least I feel that I need. And I think that Town Hall meetings would be good on a more regular basis. It doesn't mean that everything that we say or what I have to say is going to be incorporated into anything, but at least it allows everybody to say their piece and it could formulate or spin off into further discussions, and at least it's out there and everybody knows immediately what the concerns are. And since we don't have a representative democracy, which is one way people make their feelings heard, I think it would be very, very useful, and it's very simple. And I think there was somebody at the Dekyong Council who mentioned that they grew up in a small town where they had Town Hall meetings, I think once a month, and they actually conducted business at the Town Hall meeting, and that's where decisions were made. And if people wanted to participate, that's actually how things evolved on a very grassroots level. So I think that would help communication. Thank you.

RJ: This will be our last one.

NW: Nick Wright again. And I'm speaking on behalf of a delegpa, one of my deleg members—I'm a dekyong, by the way. The issue that was brought up was how we deal with—and this is not to rehash the pas, but how we deal with residual problems that have come to us from the past. Old issues. There are a lot of community members going around who have been wounded or are nursing hurt and resentment because of past treatment or issues that remain essentially unresolved. And that has become an impediment to how the community goes forward, because we often have these types of meetings, and these issues somehow come to the fore, and we don't go any further. So it's actually a frustrating factor. And the person with the problem is not having any satisfaction, so to speak, or sense of accommodation. So it would be good to have some, perhaps formal structure, or body of people, who help community members deal with unresolved issues from the past. This would free the ground for the rest of the community as a whole to move forward. There are the obvious issues, such as the Regent issue, there are old organizational problems, where there were huge conflicts in which people were disenfranchised or disempowered, or whatever. I think it's important that we find some way of bringing unresolved issues into the present and cutting the knot. And not just leaving it up to the individuals.

RJ: Good, thank you. I think this could be our last topic. We actually had organizational structure and finances, but I think we can perhaps put those together so we don't run out of

steam. One of the ideas having to do with the organizational structure of International is: to what degree is it a business and to what degree is it a heart-based community? And what does that mean in terms of the language you use and the models we follow. One was to not lose sight of the fact that our number one business product is teaching the dharma. An important aspect here is the whole relationship between the centre and the fringe and the whole. For those of you read some of the position papers, the partnership model is being put forward, as opposed to completely top-down or completely anarchic, that there is definitely a central structure but there's a strong sense of partnership. The need to bring more energy back into the centre. It was noted that we're a little bit like the downtown that's sort of dying and moving out to the suburbs and we need to rejuvenate the downtown. Not just with money but with energy. Another interesting idea was the more literal use of practice and ritual in the way we conduct business, like when we have meetings or when we have transactions, that we actually bring in the practices and rituals that we've been taught. And then the financial aspect of that: there's a very recurring idea of how to begin to support Central from revenues of dues and donations from local centres. A lot of people are very concerned about how we ended up being over \$6 million in debt and what that means. Perhaps that's more important: what does that mean? Not just how it happened. And then, finally, the need to create wealth, which we obviously have to do and also be able to accommodate people of any means or no means. So these are all having to do with our organizational vision and finances. If you had something to say, you can put it under this heading (laughter). It's a pretty flexible boundary. At the end we'll take a few minutes for anything that you'd still like to say about any of these topics, so please don't worry too much. So, Charles.

CM: (Charles Marrow) My remark on communications is easy to re-frame in the context of organization and finances. It's actually maybe a statement that puts a bit of an unfair burden on the leadership, but I think intrinsic within leadership itself is the awareness that a person having a role of responsibility in some leadership capacity is viewed by their constituency as responsible to solve a problem. And to the degree the leadership can address the concerns of the constituency is the degree to which that leadership is perceived to be relevant, and it doesn't take a much greater step further to realize that if the leadership is perceived to be relevant, then the financial resources are probably going to be there to a significant degree. Now, going back—I can't remember whose remark—but in the last five, seven years or so, there's been my personal experience of being involved in a volunteer way, proposing what for me were pretty significant and heartfelt things via various channels of communications and feeling like they were kind of brushed off, or it wasn't clear what channel to use. As we know, for some significant period of time there's been kind of a revolving door quality in the administration, so that you might be presenting something to somebody and maybe have a little hint of getting an opening there, and then a month or two later everybody's busy, and then they don't have the same position anymore, they don't have the job (laughter). So the consequences, in my case, of this happening in a repetitious way is that you get kind of tired or it becomes not relevant. Then old-fashioned ego comes in and it's time for planned annual giving, so you sort of ask yourself, well, what are you paying for? What's the response? How relevant is this to me?

So that's a general overview of a certain process and a reminder to leadership past, present and future that what you might brush off in a busy two-and-a-half-minute phone

call can have a lot of ramifications for that individual and their sense of connection, and may result in financial consequences. Thank you.

RJ: We have a number of people wishing to speak, so I'd just like to remind you to try to keep your comments to a minute or two if you can. Thanks.

JH: I'm James Hoagland. First of all, I want to thank Madeline for her wonderful reminder of kindness in the way we speak and the influence when we forget our kindness and allow our emotions to cause harm without realizing it, so thank you. I think it's very important as we begin to look at the organization, that we remember view of where we start from, and if we start from a point of view of "what do I get out of it?" or "my local centre as opposed to central" or "them," the leadership or Shambhala Training against Buddhism, we often tend to fall into dualistic thoughts, which is dividing us into centre and fringe, Buddhist-Shambhala, ethnic-non-ethnic, and I think as soon as we take that dualistic view, we miss the point. And if we can hold the view that we have one community, and, to go back to what Mr. Wright said, we're all citizens of Shambhala with our own styles and presentations, but if we can remember that we're talking about one organism, one entity and how we can all work together and not get caught in the dualistic traps of "them," I think that'll be very helpful in forming an organization that can truly represent our practice. So thank you.

RJ: You know what's been said: that we only have one "them" (laughter—looking at Richard Reoch).

JH: And that's us!

RJ: And he's us too, right?

AH: My name's Alice Haspray. I wasn't really intending to say anything, but I felt really passionate about this and I thought maybe this is a forum to say it—that, financially, I would like all the Shambhala Centres everywhere to have a stated policy that no one will be kept out of programs or practice opportunities because of money. So that then we begin to work with that, with the person, and how it proceeds from there. Obviously, it's going to happen at the first program they come to, and then we try to work something out from that, but that the door is completely open that way so that money is not a barrier; and I don't think we'll lose money. We just won't lose money. And the second thing is about the practices. For example, in this meeting, we're all at different levels of practice, but someone could explain what it means to rouse your confidence or lungta or windhorse in a way that is not giving away any secrets but is talking about what being a human being is, and we could do that practice together here in this context. People have said that in many ways, but how we share the teachings will bring about further generosity. One last thing is that when you said that the main business product we have is teaching, that kind of bothers me, because I think the main business product we have, if you're going to call it that, is what does anybody have to offer? What have we realized? What have we practiced? How have we actually changed? How have our actions really changed? So everybody wants to be a teacher in some way, and I find that maybe a little suspicious. Anyway, if you listen to Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, the role of the teacher is to be an assassin, so . . . (laughter)

BB: My name is Barbara Blouin, and this is a financial matter. It's about the role of the Shambhala Trust. My guess is that most of us don't know very much about what it does. I had the privilege of being a visitor at part of a meeting about 13 months ago. So I have a hazy idea about what they do, but only partial. Collectively, the members of the Trust

contribute a very large portion of financial resources to the mandala, the organization. But it's not visible, and I think there's an accountability issue here. What I came to understand from visiting that meeting is, presentations are made: "We would like money for X, Y or Z," and then individual members decide whether they're going to give some of their money to that and how much. So it's totally up to the individual; and of course that's the way the world works: people only give money to what they feel like giving money to. I just think at a time like, when the whole organization is in a financial crisis and there's this huge debt, I would like to see the Trust be more visible in how they're working with that situation.

MK: Hi, my name is mark Koenig. (*new tape*) . . . as to what he (the Sakyong) feels his role is currently. Is it different from his father's role? Is it not as an enlightened monarch? What is his role in the mandala? And I would actually like to hear him address that; and in that sense, I would like to hear more from him in other contexts as well. What does he feel about our past? How would he like to address that? How does he feel about Kagyu lineage? Are we still part of that? Are we part of the Trungpa lineage or Kagyu lineage? Are we setting up another lineage? I would like to have those kind of questions addressed by the Sakyong and possibly by Mr. Reoch as well. We had a (Town Hall) meeting a couple of months ago where there was some sense that certain issues would be addressed. And it's great to have generous listening. But I think there also has to be some kind of repartee, there has to be some discussion. The way this meeting is set up is not lending to a certain dialogue; it's really more a generous listening, and that's fine, but there has to be something more at some point. Thank you.

JH: Hi, I'm Jane Holden. I would like to share an exploration that I started doing today when I read Alex Halpern's paper on the two truths of our group, the first being that the Sakyong is the centre of our mandala. And I thought about that and I asked myself "Is that true for me? And if it's not true, what might the centre be?" or "Could there be multiple centres to my mandala?" And I think what's come out of it for me is trying to envision a really vast picture of where we might be going. I don't know that the Buddha did this, but we're the pioneers in the West, and as we create thoughts they create forms and we create a society. And if the centre of our mandala was the Vidyadhara and now is the Sakyong, is that a 2,000-year vision that will stand up over 2,000 years? Or is it part of our envisioning the structure, do we need to have a different vision of our centre, of our nucleus?—something like the Three Jewels or sentient beings. Thank you.

AS: My name's Andrew Safer, and I wanted to share a few thoughts about financial responsibility. What Ms Holden was saying was quite relevant, asking the question of who or what is at the centre. I feel that if we have a \$6.5 million problem, we definitely have a lot of work to do in the area of financial responsibility and how decisions are made to commit funds. I don't know about most of what's going on in the sangha, and there are probably lots of examples, but there's one that did come to mind that I'd like to cite. I read the summer issue of the Dot, in the letters to editor section, I believe, where Mr. Reoch outlined a snapshot of the finances of the sangha. And when I saw there that under the category of the Kalapa Court the amount of money per month that is being spent, in Canadian dollars, is \$9,000 a month, it really struck me as excessive, and I looked into it a bit. I found out that the land that was purchased for the Sakyong as a birthday gift, and that the down payment had been donated, but all of the monthly payments are our problem, there's a mortgage that we're paying.

I talked to several people about that issue and everyone kind of assumed that most or all of that money had been donated for that land. So I'm not really picking on this as a huge example of a terrible problem, it's just one that I happened to look into. I'm curious about how was the decision made to commit the organization's funds to something that we basically didn't have the money to buy.

So if we're serious about, number one, doing something about dealing with our financial crisis, I think we have to look at how those decisions are made, and I think they have to do with how we feel about devotion and that we're willing to do anything for our teacher and so on. There has to be a model or guidelines for the different centres in terms of committing funds. And then, number two, when we talk about raising funds from within the community or from outside the community, if we see that we're spending \$9,000 a month on the Kalapa Court, it might be easier for us to understand the rationale, but to people outside the community, I doubt it would make that much sense. And I think that when we're laying off 12 or 15 people from Shambhala International, the perspective is way off. So that's what I wanted to share.

PB: Hi, my name is Paul Boutilier, and I have a totally different perspective on this, because I'm ignorant (laughter). I'm brand new here. I've only been in this building maybe a dozen times. I just got finished Level I (laughter). Thank you. It was mentioned that maybe a core of the existence here is teaching the dharma, and although I have been in this building a dozen times, I don't know what that means. I don't know what a mandala is. I don't know what a sangha is; and as a new person, I would love to be able to come in and volunteer, because what draws me back here is the people, and where I see these people are is where I would like to be. And I think this is really cool, and that's what draws me back. But the language is . . . (laughter) I look in the chant book and there's all these words I can't pronounce. So in the methods of communication and being able to know what the structure of this place is and how it's organized so that I can fit myself into a piece of that—I have talents but I don't know where to put them. So that's my view. (laughter, applause)

JH: James Hoagland again. I just want to respond to the questions about the Trust. I'm not prepared to make any presentation, but I will be available afterwards as a member of the Trust to discuss questions people have, to help answer them. So I'll stand around for anybody who wants to know more. Thank you.

RJ: Yes, last few, for any of these topics would be welcome.

MM: That's good timing. This is more about—I don't even know if this was a topic, leadership? I guess it was. And accountability, which I guess . . .

RJ: (whispering) Who are you?

MM: Oh, my name is Mindy Moore. Sorry, I almost forgot. I was speaking to a member of the Board of Directors yesterday who lives here in Halifax, and I mentioned something about coming today, and their response was, "Why would I want to do that?" (booing, laughter)

Audience: Names, names! (laughter)

MM: But in looking around the room—and I have to admit that I'm not even quite sure who's even on the Board of Directors at this point—but in looking around the room, I don't believe that there is anyone here who is a member of the Board of Directors, and I find that very interesting—especially when it comes to accountability. I'm not placing blame, because I have read a lot of the position papers on the web and I found Jim Rosen's paper very interesting and very readable for someone who's not financially oriented. But I do

find it an interesting absence, and I found that the remark that I was given a very interesting remark and very disappointing.

DW: I'm David Wimberley, and now that we've opened the discussion up to all six of the topics, I'm going to talk about the seventh one, which is opening the flower outwards. I feel one of the problems in our sangha for the longest time is that so many of us are personally motivated to open the flower outwards, and we've chosen careers and avocations that are doing this, but yet again and again and again, our sangha collapses under debt and other problems, and we keep on going back to the old problem of Buddhist navel-gazing which . . . (laughing, laughter) It's a cartoon, it's an icon, and we do it. And here we are, having a Town Hall meeting for a Congress that is about what do we do next. And we're going to spend the whole thing about the internal matters, which are terribly important, but we should be having another Town Hall meeting that's about the other half of what we're doing. We have to have a strong centre, but why do we have a strong centre? So that we can actually open the flower outwards. So if we keep talking about a strong centre and never open the flower outwards, we never accomplish our bodhisattva vows, we never accomplish what—we never really create more of a Shambhala society than amongst ourselves and not within the greater world, and that was not the Sakyong's, the Druk Sakyong's, vision. I'm delighted that the subject is actually now being openly discussed as of last Shambhala Day, but we need to make a greater emphasis on it, and I would suggest that half of the Shambhala Congress should be devoted to opening the flower outward and not just this division that we have here, where we would acknowledge that it's half of the issue, and then not even put it on the agenda as one of the items to discuss. We really have such a grand opportunity, a grand vision, a lot of training. Yes, we have to make the centre solid, but it's so we can do the other. So let's make it at least half of what we do. The churches that are expanding and growing in the Western world today are the ones that are actually involved in social issues in real, open and transparent ways. The ones that are just focused on their memberships are the ones that are not growing, and we have a vision of Shambhala society, so let's just do it.

BR: My name is Bonnie Rabin. When I came in today I had a whole different idea of what I was going to talk about. And in sitting here for a couple of hours, it's completely changed. How has it changed? It has changed in this way. As I look around the room—and I've been in this community for probably 30 years—I am really thrilled to see that we're all still sitting here. (laughter) And that has to mean something. It has to mean something: that we haven't gone anywhere. Actually, from my point of view there's nowhere to go. So I know that we can go forward. And I honestly believe that.

What I was going to talk about when I came in was a grief issue. And that has to do with missing the teacher. I personally went through a very difficult time with grief a year ago. My youngest son passed away. And what I realized was that because I went through the grief that I did, I am now standing here. I have always been dedicated to Shambhala; I'm certainly dedicated to the Congress. But it happened because I was willing to let go. And there's something here that maybe we haven't done, you know, and that if we're going to fulfill his vision, which I know in our hearts we want to do, we have to go forward. And I guess the other thing that I'd like to say is what that means is, we have to grow up. I mean it's really true. I go through that all the time. It'd be lovely to have somebody take care of me and all that, but that's not the way it works, so I would

encourage *everybody* to come to the Congress, because it's an amazing opportunity for us to go forward. Thank you.

KC: Just a couple of thoughts. This is Kay Crinean. I was listening to all the topics, and the one that struck me most where I would think we could look at models in the world around us is the sort of structure and finance one. The way Richard John listed the topics: is it more of a business model? Is it a church model? Is it this or that? And I thought, "Now this is one where there's a huge amount of human wisdom and experience from other organizations." Now, I haven't done any of my homework; I haven't read any of the papers on the website; although I have the intention, I haven't done it, so maybe it's been addressed, but Nick Wright mentioned a government model. Well, there's tons of experience of all the good and bad points of federal, provincial, municipal government, etc., and how people contribute towards the finances of the centre and the fringe of government. There's many churches that have exactly the same issues. There are tons of non-profit organizations and charities that have similar issues. There's got to be a huge amount of collective wisdom about what works and what doesn't. So it struck me that—although I think in a number of other areas we are unique and we definitely have to figure it out for ourselves—this might be one where we could learn from what the world has already learned. Because I think everything's been tried already, and I think we probably know what works and what doesn't if we look around.

Just one other point about turning the flower outward. I've felt ever since I first heard about this whole Kingdom of Shambhala thing and since I moved here and all that, I've been wrestling with it, "What does it mean, enlightened society? How do we manifest that?" And I feel it could be extremely subtle and not simplistic. When we think, "Well gee, when is our organization going to get engaged in the world?" It seems to me that's doing it with a label on it saying, "Shambhala," brand name, getting engaged in the world. But when you look around at all of us and how, as David Wimberley said, we're all engaged in the world trying to manifest this stuff in whatever we're engaged in; well, maybe that's how Kingdom of Shambhala happens, that we're engaged out there in our many things and we're trying to do it in a Shambhala way. People notice that and they're attracted, and they learn and so on, and maybe it kind of happens by osmosis and it never does have that brand name, "Shambhala" on it.

Audience: Yay!

KC: So I think there's many ways it could happen. (applause)

RJ: So Denny, I think you have the last word. (laughter)

DB: I always get a laugh when I come to the mike. (laughter) My name is Denny Blouin. That got the laugh last time. As I've listened to the afternoon, and particularly to the centre of our lives, as members of the community, being practice, I realize that we have practices for mind—many of them. Over the last few years we have been given practices for body. One of the areas that I do not think we have practices in yet, that can spread throughout the community and become skilful means for the way that we speak to each other, the way we disagree with each other, the way we raise difficult issues and become vulnerable with each other and make decisions, are practices of speech. In the 90's there were a number of programs here—some elsewhere I think, and definitely at Karme Choling—which directly addressed: "How do we communicate with each other?" Some of those, for example the talking stick—or in our case this morning, a blue heart—were passed around the room. And what I would like to suggest is that this area of speech that is a communication—and

the root of the word “communication” means “to share with”—become a focus for practice development within our community. Thank you.

RJ: I'd like to ask President Reoch to say a few words about the Congress.

RR: I had great sympathy with the person who was sitting on that gomden there (looking for Paul Boutilier). About a year ago, that's exactly how I felt. And I've tried to preserve some of that quality in this year, against all odds—the sense of arriving in a rather bewildering situation with a considerable sense of ignorance. Now I realize, from a remark that someone made about how the centre had decayed and everybody had moved to the suburbs, that I've become an inner city youth. (laughter)

I was quite touched by those who said, “Well, we need more than listening,” and “It's okay to come to these meetings and say what we have to say, but when are we going to get a response?” Over the course of this year I've been constantly humbled—I think I've managed not to be humiliated, for which I thank everybody. But for many people in this community, it has been only the first time they've met me. So the level of the discourse, or the level of what they say, is only what they're prepared to say to someone who's completely new to them in a community which has deeply conflicted views about authority.

I don't think it's accidental that the first communication about the Shambhala Congress went out in April, inviting centres to have meetings like this, to say what they would like to discuss; yet as those of you in this room who are involved now in pulling it together know, it has this quality of a last-minute scramble. It's not accidental, that this far-flung, very diverse community would find it hard to believe that something like this is going to happen. As far as I'm aware, there's been a period of at least ten years when nothing on this scale happened. That's a manifestation of some very deep-seated problems. In this incredibly bizarre situation, I have tried to work with the quality of quicksand, because so many things look like ground, (laughter) but turn out to be a swamp.

I do get people, I get quite irate people, on the telephone asking me what's the plan. I recall one conversation quite painfully actually, in which I said, “Well, we're going to be having the Shambhala Congress in November,” and they said, “We can't wait till November! We need to get a small group of people together and come up with a plan,” and I did have to say to them, “Well you know, I wouldn't know who to invite to that small group.” That's not because there aren't all kinds of brilliant people in this community, but because our our community as a whole, not only in Halifax but everywhere else, is going to have to buy into what comes out of this. Otherwise, it's just going to be what people have stood up here and said: another cycle, another revolving door. In my case, I don't object to the revolving door (laughter), but there's not a long queue of other people behind me (laughter).

To really try and get to a deeper level of listening, which is actually a deeper level of penetration, is a lot of what I, at any rate, have tried to do and what I've been trying to encourage others to do. It's interesting that the agenda for the Shambhala Congress has changed as a result of that; in the same way that Bonnie was saying, this kind of discussion starts to change. Those of you who might have participated in these conference calls will have noticed that for the first hour, there was a kind of plausibility; that had to break, and then somebody would talk about what's actually wrong. To try to create a container or a space or a wisdom that will invite that and hold it, is something that I believe we perhaps uniquely have the ability to do.

But it really takes courage. And some of that is the courage of patience at the moment. It is a little painful, I have to say, for some people. There are some people who have said literally they wouldn't buy a ticket to come to this Congress unless I could tell them exactly what was going to be discussed, exactly what the outcome was going to be and that there was going to be follow-through on it! Well, I understand that impatience, but imagine the sort of fascist state we'd be living in (laughter) if I could answer them. And that's the contradiction that we're actually working with here. Because there are also many people who aren't yet quite clear what they want to say. And they won't figure out what it is they want to say until the community is willing to provide the container that enables them to find that. That's what I try and tell the newest people. There's some people, for example, who kind of e-mail me and say "What is this shit that they're all worried about? We just want to get on with it!" I try to explain to them, "Well, actually your not knowing is a great asset." It's not the asset of ignorance, it's the asset of being able to create an unbiased, open space with your wisdom and your heart. And we need that."

It is really important to share that with you, because many of you wouldn't know that kind of process that's been going on.

There were a few points that were made in the course of what people were saying that it might be useful to respond to.

I am extremely struck by the insistence of the Vidyadhara that Shambhala was a vision in which the sacred and secular were not separate. I personally see a lot of places in our community where these have been fractured and split apart. To find a way in which to recognize their inherent unity is extremely important. This is why those of us who are working on the Congress do not regard this as an administrative event; we regard it as a practice event. So it will take place in a practice container. There will be extensive periods of meditation, because what we need has to come out of that depth of practice, not out of conventional organizational theory.

Some of you will know that I've invited many members of the leadership—whoever those are in the sense of centre directors, people who are on centre boards as well as the international—to sit a dathun together in March at Karme Choling, and not a dathun which will be a cover for business meetings, but actually a real, old-fashioned shut-up-and-sit dathun. Because until there is that kind of profound unity of experience, then there's just going to be more administrative discussion about budgets and structures. And I also have somewhat surprised the Sakyong by talking about my own practice plans, because I think it's absolutely crucial that we find a way forward where the secular and the sacred are not split.

The second thing is about transparency. It gladdens me that people can get up and talk about Jim Rosen's report on the website, because that is a direct result of a commitment now to be even more open about the nature of our finances, not just in terms of disclosing figures, which has been done, but providing some analysis so that people who are not financial specialists can have a sense of how the money and the resources of this community are being used. There should be at some point—if not before the Congress, soon—a report assessing the risks and risk management at all our practice centres. So that's kind of step one there.

In terms of debt, the only thing I can do obviously about past debt is ensure that it's paid off. That is part of the strategic decision to stop spending so much at the present time, so that we can actually breathe. We have not been able to do and will not be able to do for many more months. But I am happy to say that Kalapa Assembly, which took place at Dorje Denma Ling and was a wild managerial gamble, resulted not only in its taking place and not only in Dorje Denma Ling actually being built out, but there was *no debt* at the end of that program. I believe that's not because there was some spectacular financial wizardry, but just because we drew a line in the sand and said, "This has to be done without going into debt." When that was clear it was doable. The same thing is also true about Kalapa Valley, as those of you who were there know. This tremendous event took place; we were actually able to receive this jewel of the mandala and transfer it to Shambhala without debt. It seems like a very, very modest, almost pathetic, bean-counter kind of thing to be proud of, but you know folks . . .

BH: (Bob Hastey) I object to the word, "bean counter"! (laughter)

RR: Okay, bean-o! On the issue of abuse of power, which was raised at the first community meeting I attended and by no lesser person than Denny, I really would ask you to, if you have time, to go carefully through the document which is now on the website, called "Shambhala Care and Conduct" and to reflect on the fact that the only detailed procedure now in place in the community for dealing with complaints of misconduct is actually those brought against office holders of the community, whether they be meditation instructors, whether they be people who hold positions in our centres, whether they be teachers. We do have to have a mechanism in this community so that people who feel like they've been assaulted, people who feel like they've been abused, people who feel like they've been harassed, people who feel that important vows have been broken, can bring that to the notice of an appropriate body and have that looked into. That is now happening.

I'm sensitive to the point that was made about the difference between secrecy and confidentiality, and any advice that anybody has on how we proceed in this area, this is the time to let us know, because we're actually evolving that procedure, and it's there now, not only for everybody in our community to read, but actually anybody who goes onto our website.

I think, finally, I'd just like to say one thing about the Sakyong. Some of you may or may not have noticed in the torrent of e-mails, that he has agreed to do a completely open-ended question and answer session for a morning at the Shambhala Congress. He's invited anyone in the community to send in their questions in advance of that, so it's not just the people who can afford to come to the Congress. I myself have been a little surprised that I've only received nine questions, from a community which has a lot to ask him. So if you'd like to rise to the occasion, please do, and just send your question to president@shambhala.org. They're all being saved there and then we'll have a mechanism for sorting through common themes, and you can ask him.

I think, finally, if I might just say, I some days I think that I might be the person who has the dimmest view of Shambhala. I had a very unusual experience recently which I would like to share with you. I went to the same congress that Steve Seeley was reporting on in New York at the Garrison Institute, with all the other Buddhist groups. On the second morning, I awoke with a strange bodily experience. I lay there trying to understand, what was this? And I realized it was smugness (laughter). It's very dangerous to say this, you know, because somebody might be listening, but it was just so great to be there from

Shambhala! As you very correctly noted, these other traditions have such a shackle on them, whether it's the weight of having to feel that you have to become completely fluent in Tibetan, whether you're carrying the dreadful burden of the social and political destruction of Tibet with you all the time, whether you feel that in order to be an authentic dharma centre you have to find a way of working very deeply with Tibetan exiles, or whether as was being said, you had to feel that in order to be accepted in North America the route of the future was an academic degree in Buddhist studies.

I was personally touched by the fact that the only person there who spoke about the importance of baking fresh bread as the authentic transmission of the buddhadharma was a young man wearing a bright yellow tie. He was like one of those creatures at the end of a science fiction movie who comes out of the egg, and you know there's going to be a sequel.(laughter) It was the Rusung from Karne Choling. My heart completely went out to him. I think it's that knowledge which has been expressed by so many people here. If we can just get the atmosphere and container right at the Congress, it won't solve all our very considerable problems, but it will bring something very, very profound back together in this community that is so longing to be back together again.

So I'd actually like to bow to you, because my personal practice is to try and understand that my principal object of devotion, through some strange force of circumstance, is the Sangha. Thank you.

RJ: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for your attention and your good heart and your wisdom.