



Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Annual Report

November 2002

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Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs Annual Report 2001 - 2002

Hon. Murray Scott
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am pleased to submit the 2001 / 2002 Report of the Committee for the Second Session of the Fifty-Eighth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

William Langille, MLA
(Colchester North)
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2002

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Foreword

Although there is no written mandate of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the report was written with the understanding that the committee be established for the purpose of considering matters pertaining to Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Legion.

The report is written under individual topics outlining the concerns and issues brought forth from each group /organization.

October 25, 2001

WITNESS

Organizational Meeting

Committee Motion

During this meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, a motion was made by an Honourable Member and passed by the Standing Committee to state,

“The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs seek to provide a link-up on the Nova Scotia Government Website between the public and the Canadian Armed Forces so that the general public can send emails to the Canadian Armed Forces Personnel serving in Afghanistan.”¹

As of October 2001 the general public can now send emails to the Canadian Armed Forces Personnel participating in the Afghanistan efforts at the following address: <http://www.gov.ns.ca>

1. News release announcing the email link to Canadian Armed Forces Personnel on the Nova Scotia Government Website. (See appendix)

WITNESS

Post Card of Thanks Program / Press Conference

During the months of October / November the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs becomes actively involved in sponsoring the annual Post Card of Thanks Program that, as of November 2001 was the beginning of the program's fourth year.

This program - endorsed by the Royal Canadian Legion - is designed to help grade 6 students across Nova Scotia acquire a personal view on the concept of remembrance. Each child is provided with a stamp, a sponsor sticker and a post card and is encouraged to write a personal note of appreciation to Nova Scotia veterans. And for the first time in the four year history of the program, the students are encouraged to send messages to current serving Canadian Forces Personnel. This is done in a classroom setting, following a lesson plan that is provided to the teacher. The names and addresses of veterans are supplied to the local schools in the area by the Royal Canadian Legion.

On November 10, 2001 the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs held a press conference² announcing the 4th annual Post Card of Thanks Program of which the sponsors of the program were invited to say a few words on the historical and educational value of the program. This year's sponsors were: Veterans Affairs Canada; Nova Scotia Teachers Union and PanCanadian Energy.

2. Materials contained in conference kit contained:

- Post Card of Thanks Program outline;
- Chairman's Speech;
- Copies of the House motions for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and for the sponsors of the program.
- Copy of the Press Release

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November 15, 2001

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion

Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command

Mr. Fred Mombourquette - President

Mr. Victor Barnes - 1st Vice President

Mr. Clarence Dawe - Immediate Past President

Mr. Jack Hatcher - Honorary Treasurer

Mr. Steve Wessel - Public Relations, Nova Scotia Command

Background

The Royal Canadian Legion has outlined several issues of concerns to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. These concerns and issues are outlined in subheadings that coincide with the presentations of the Legion members.

Considering the number of volunteers in the Royal Canadian Legion who serve the needs of aging veterans, family members and community seniors, it is small wonder that the Legion is perceived by many to be a leading advocate for the service provider to aging Nova Scotians. Some of the issues affecting seniors that have been brought to the attention of the Legion are:

Falls Prevention Initiative

Falling is a serious health problem among the elderly. Approximately 30 per cent of people over 65 years of age fall each year. The report "Taking Steps to Prevent Falling in Nova Scotia" reports that one out of every three older Nova Scotians is likely to fall this year and that more than half will fall again. The cost of treating injuries related to falls in Nova Scotia is over \$16 million, and the unintentional injuries rank as the sixth leading cause of death among people over the age of 65.

With funding from Health Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada, the Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, Community Links and the Family Care Givers Association brought together a range of organizations involved with senior support and care to develop a strategy to reduce falling among the elderly. The proposal for a second phase of funding for this initiative has been submitted and, if funded, will see the development of community and regional strategies.

Falls will only be prevented with a multi-pronged approach that includes addressing both environmental and physical reasons for falls. There is the need to look at factors such as lighting, clutter, handrails, and scatter rugs. It is clear that service providers in the home will be invaluable in identifying these concerns and recommending corrective action. VON Canada, Nova Scotia Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs Annual Report 2001 - 2002

Branch, has been invited to be a partner in the second phase of this initiative. There is also a need to address changes in sleep patterns, a reduction in muscle strength, and reduced flexibility amongst the elderly in order to reduce falls. Exercise programs designed for the elderly are most beneficial

in this respect.

A number of specially-designed exercise programs do exist in Nova Scotia, but they are not generally accessible nor is funding available to allow for their expansion.

Medications also cause side effects, such as dizziness or drowsiness, that often results in falls. While these concerns can be addressed in part by nurses, family physicians and pharmacists, it often takes a geriatrician to make recommendations regarding appropriate changes in medication. Physicians with this specialization are very rare in Nova Scotia and many areas have no access to a geriatrician. For seniors who are addicted to medications, there are no appropriate addiction services in the province designed to meet the special needs of the older population.

The community must also address fall prevention. Outdoor lighting is important, as is the installation of handrails. Uneven walking surfaces frequently cause falls, and snow and ice clearance is crucial. The Legion recognizes that the reduction of falls in Nova Scotia will require that the partner organizations work in collaboration with a variety of departments, both municipal and provincial. This may involve the development of, or changes to, government policy. It may also involve a commitment of funds. Veterans Affairs Canada has committed \$10 million to the reduction of falls across the country. In Nova Scotia VAC will be spending \$150,000. The Legion challenges the Government of Nova Scotia to match this expenditure as this important project can only result in an improvement in the quality of life of seniors and will eventually reduce the cost to the health care system.

Single Entry Access Program

This will be of significant benefit to older Nova Scotians and their families, however, some concerns regarding this program is the fact that with those who are most ill become the priority for admission to long-term care. The Legion recognizes that the level of care will increase proportionately, and are hopeful that this increased burden on institutional care providers will be acknowledged with an increase in per diems which will allow facilities to staff appropriately. Second is community-based services not being included in the assessment process. For example,

“If a person is assessed as needing Meals on Wheels, a referral will be made. However, because Meals on Wheels is not being included as part of the SEA planning process, the program may or may not prioritize the referred client. The same will be true of adult day services, volunteer visiting, etc.”³

The Legion believes that the inclusion of community-based services is crucial to the success of this initiative.

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Adult Day Services

Local branches of the Legion are still making contributions to keep the doors of adult day programs

open. The Legion has, as in the past, made a strong recommendation that this valuable service be included in the continuum of care and funded appropriately.

Introduction of the Rural and Semi-Rural Transportation Program

This is making a significant difference in the lives of rural seniors, including veterans. The Legion also commends the government for allowing the communities to develop their own strategies for delivering this service. They have found that the community development model is one of the best ways to ensure community support of a program.

Palliative Care Initiatives

One of the projects the Legion has worked on in 2001 is the proposal of a free-standing hospice in Kings County. The Minister of Health struck a committee to submit a proposal regarding the recommended commitment from the Department of Health toward the hospice. The Legion is hopeful that the department will find the funding required for the operating cost of the hospice.

Committee Motion

During the meeting the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had made a motion stating,

“That the Minister of Health respond to the following issues: Falls Prevention Initiative, Single Entry Access Program, Adult Day Services, Rural and Semi-Rural Transportation Program and Palliative Care Initiatives as outlined by the presenter in the Hansard transcript.”⁴

Veterans License Plate

When traveling on Nova Scotia highways there is no clear way of recognizing Nova Scotia veterans or their service to the country. Some veterans have chosen, of their own accord, to place Royal Canadian Legion or regimental stickers in rear windows or use a commercially produced license plate to denote their service to the province and to Canada. Similarly, with the constant changes in the Royal Canadian Legion Membership categories, not all Legion members are veterans, so the recognition of a Legion crest does not necessarily mean veteran in these present times.

The Province of Nova Scotia has made available to volunteer firefighters and search and rescue personnel a special plate, setting them apart from the ordinary. These plates serve a specific need and are provided to qualified individuals at no cost in recognition of the service they provide to fellow Nova Scotians. Other special plates such as camper plates, commercial and handicapped are also available, but at a specific cost to the individuals.

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The voicing or visualization of patriotism in Canada has always taken a back seat to that of our neighbors to the south. To this date it is unknown if any other province in Canada has taken the initiative to recognize veterans in this manner, although many states have had veterans' plates of varying types available to their citizens for years.

The provision of free plates to veterans would be a nice gesture, but unfortunately not economically feasible. However the availability of a specially designed plate at the normal cost for the veteran's vehicle would not incur any additional cost to the province, once the initial artwork was completed.

The scenario to replace the current alphanumeric plate would be for a veteran to make application to the Registry of Motor Vehicles on their approved form and, upon showing proof of service and/or eligibility, the new style of plate would be issued upon the expiry of the existing plate tag.

Members of Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command have agreed to adopt this as a very viable veterans' project for the Royal Canadian Legion, and that the definition of a veteran be that as adopted by the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Convention being,

“A veteran is any person who is serving or who has honorably served in the Armed Forces of Canada, the Commonwealth or its wartime allies; or who has served in the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command during wartime.”⁵

That definition was relayed to Veterans Affairs Canada for their consideration and the intent of the Legions' initiative to recognize all those who have served has been approved, and the Legion will have an approved federal government definition soon.

In efforts to publicize the role Canadians have played in past world conflicts and in peacekeeping mission around the world, past and present, this would be an excellent avenue on which the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command, in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia, can strive to take a lead.

Committee Motion

The Standing Committee made the following motion to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Affairs regarding the proposal by the Royal Canadian Legion to offer Nova Scotia Veterans their own unique licence plate.

“To request that the Minister of service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations initiate a follow-up with the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia Command with regard to the Legion's proposal.”⁶

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Video Lottery Terminals in Legion Branches

To clarify the Legions' share of the take from VLTs. The Lottery Commission keeps insinuating that the Legions' receive 21.4 per cent of the take and the government receives 79 per cent. However, when factoring in what the Legions' have to pay out for maintenance and upkeep of the

machines, etc. their actual share of the take amounts to 10 per cent.

Another part of the problem pertains to the Lottery Commission and another cut that is made into the revenues that the Legion branches receive. Looking at the number of break-open tickets from the old system compared to the new system, the Legions lose 50 tickets in a batch, and the revenues are reduced by \$25 dollars. The cost is the same for the tickets, costing \$200, but the prize payouts are dropped and the net return is down which results in the Legions' profit margin dropping by 19.16 per cent.

Witness Suggestion

The Legion wishes to make it known to the government that in future any discussion pertaining to the VLTs or other lotteries that affect the Legions, that the Legions be brought into it before any decisions are made.

Committee Motion

The Committee made the following motion regarding the VLT issue as presented by the Royal Canadian Legion.

“Request the Finance Minister to provide the Standing Committee with an explanation of what had been done to date regarding the issue of VLT machines in Legions across this province and that the Committee be brought up to date as to where that stands right now.”⁷

Provincial Fire Marshal's Office

Due to the fact that their branches hold bingos and serve meals for functions, Legions have come under the scrutiny of the Fire Marshal and the Building Inspector Offices for annual inspections. In some cases these offices have approached branches with large lists of repairs that they state will be required prior to a new licence being issued for that branch to continue its operation.

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Unfortunately, in some cases, this has placed a very large burden on the branches and has required some to approach local financial institutions to borrow sufficient funds to accomplish the repairs as directed. This has resulted in branches having to borrow anywhere from \$10,000 to \$250,000. Some branches are now feeling the crunch with these additional debts and are on the verge of being forced to close their doors. If the inspector from either office had informed the branches of the

necessary changes to the building and provided them with sufficient time to complete the required repairs as per the Building and Fire Codes, these branches would not be in the position of having to close their doors.

The branches do not have the funds to complete these repairs and cannot figure out why, all of a sudden, they are being directed to complete such large repairs in so short a time.

Witnesses Suggestion

The Legion would like to suggest that the Inspector's Office provide the branches with a list of repairs in order of priority of completion and that the branches be given sufficient time to complete the repairs annually. It must be clearly understood by all parties that these repairs could take up to five years or more to complete. However, with the Inspector and the branches working closely together the repairs could be completed in accordance with the safety and security regulations and in order of priority.

Committee Motion

As a result of this presentation the Standing Committee has passed a motion that,

“The Fire Marshal meet with the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command to discuss the issues herein and forward a response to the Standing Committee of the results of that meeting.”⁸

This motion resulted from the presentation of the Legion concerning the Building and Fire Marshal's Codes in the Legions across the Province and the time-lines in bringing these building up to code.

Matters of Discussion

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are the more common matters that were discussed by the committee.

— Commitment of VAC Funding. Veterans Affairs Canada have committed \$150,000 to the Falls Initiative Project in Nova Scotia. This funding is for a three-stage program and is not used for any other projects. It is to be used for study purposes in the Falls Initiative Program for seniors. Once that funding is gone, that is the end which is why the Legion is asking the government to get involved in this program; ultimately it is really going to save the province a lot of money on health care costs for seniors.

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— Palliative Care / Free-Standing Hospices. If a person is in need of palliative care and is admitted to a hospital, it costs the government \$1,200 a day for that person while they are in the hospital. If they go into the hospice it costs \$400 a day. The Legion and its partners will build and equip the hospice facility, but hope the government will fund the \$400 a day that is to be required for the operational costs of the hospices.

— Veterans Licence Plates - Cost to Government. The cost of the production of a die and the design of the artwork would be a relatively minimal cost. Depending on the manufacturer's ability to recreate the image. If it is in digital format is very minimal, in terms of the cost, to produce a design. Other issues that might affect the cost would be the number of colors on a plate which will affect the production costs, and the thousands of possible applicants for these plates, if they replace their plates at time of renewal. The more plates that are produced, the less the cost.

— Repairs to Legions as per the Fire Marshal and Building Inspector Reports. Over the years the Legions have received a clean bill of health every year with minor adjustments that they have had to make in the building. The Legions certainly do want to do what is recommended by way of the Fire and Building Codes, but it seems as though in the last two years, the Fire Marshal and Building Inspector have been presenting the Legions with long lists of what had to be repaired and completed before the Legion licenses are renewed.

The Legions know that they have to bring the building up to code, but would like to have an extension of time to make those repairs, and they would like to be able to keep their licenses so that they can generate revenue in order to complete the repairs to the buildings. So far this request has not been approved.

4. Correspondence regarding Seniors issues to the Department of Health. (See Appendix & Hansard Transcript, page 10).

5. Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, page 12.

6. Correspondence regarding veterans license plates to Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Affairs. (See Appendix & Hansard Transcript, page 21).

7. Correspondence regarding VLTs in the Legions to Department of Finance. (See Appendix & Hansard Transcript, pages 21-31).

8. Correspondence regarding the motion that a meeting be set up between the Fire Marshal's Office and the Royal Canadian Legion. (See Appendix).

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at:
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/va/va011115.htm>

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January 31, 2002

WITNESSES

Juno Beach Centre Association

Mr. Douglas Shanks - Associate Director
Ms. Emma Robar - Committee Member
Ms. Anna Green - Committee Member

Background

The Juno Beach Centre Association Committee was originally thought of in 1995, brought about by a couple of gentlemen in Ontario who belonged to an association that brought Holland children to Canada and Canadian children to Holland every year from that time on. The Juno Beach Centre Association was officially formed in 1999 by Second World War Veterans and consists of a Board of Directors, Associate Directors and the Sponsor Directors.

The campaign to fundraise money for the memorial at Juno Beach began officially on January 1, 2000. The contributions of World War Two veterans are to be recognized with plans for a memorial museum in Normandy, France. The Juno Beach Centre will be located on Normandy Beach, overlooking the English Channel and will open June 2003.

Funding

The first research done was by the Directors contacting all retail firms in Canada seeking fundraising assistance with the campaign. Most gave donations in terms of \$5,000, \$10,000, \$25,000, \$50,000 and \$100,000, however after a meeting with the CEO of Wal-Mart Canada a pledge was made by Wal-Mart that in every store, at every cash register across Canada a paper brick in memory of the fallen and those who served in the Second World War will be sold to honor a donation of \$1.5 million; and a promise was made that if they fail to raise this amount then Wal-Mart Canada will pledge the \$1.5 million regardless.

The Associate Director of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island met with members of the Nova Scotia Government to see what could be done to assist the Association with their campaign. As stated, "Halifax was known as the Garrison City in 1939 and we had more units come out of the Maritimes than the rest of Canada ever heard tell of."⁹

Funding of \$1.5 million was promised by Wal-Mart Canada; France has come forward with \$1.2 million and the City of Paris has come through with \$600,000. Various other units in Europe are pledging monies, but Canada has not pledged any monies thus far.

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The Structure

There will be a museum built at the area that is designated to Canada on Normandy Beach called Juno, which is the entrance to Courseulles-sur-Mer, the first city liberated in Europe and it was liberated by Canada.

The memorial brick kiosk will be located on the grounds outside the museum and these kiosks will

show the remembrance bricks for provincial commands, municipalities, and private donors who has purchased one will be placed there. Included at the site will be a memorial wall containing veterans bricks. The Legions and Veterans Canada did not want to have veterans bricks placed here and there throughout the site, so they asked if they could have a section in the area for all of their bricks.

An eight foot high bronze memorial sculpture will also be erected and titled, “Remembrance and Renewal”.

The Juno Beach Centre will be an educational facility designed for both adults and children. The whole interior is going to be computer-generated by push-buttons in either French or English so every one can have access to the facility. The exhibits are being developed to provide a modern educational and interactive computer-based experience, and the centre will be accessible on a worldwide basis through a Website.

Witness Suggestion

On January 1, 2002, the Association began a new campaign of making available larger bricks for governments. The “Group Memorial Brick” has been of particular interest to municipal governments wishing to honor World War II participants from their local areas. These bricks have also been of interest to regiments, corporations and other local military units and can be purchased for \$2,500. The “Provincial Commemorative Memorial Brick” is for the provinces of Canada to be able to purchase for \$25,000. To date the Juno Beach Centre Association has \$4.6 million on hand or promised, however, the Association is still short by \$1.5 million to complete the project and have only until June 6 of 2003 to reach the remainder of their funds. With this in mind the Association is asking the provincial government, through its members, to purchase a “Provincial Commemorative Memorial Brick”.

Committee Motion

During the course of this meeting the Standing Committee has unanimously passed a motion stating,

“The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs endorses the fund-raising campaign of the Juno Beach Centre Association and urges the provincial government to provide the Association with the \$25,000 they require for a provincial brick.”¹⁰

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Matters of Discussion

Although there were a number of issues discussed throughout the meeting, outlined below are the key matters that were discussed by the committee.

— Budgeting for Maintenance and Staff. The original budget was for \$3.7 million, but \$6 million was more realistic because of the cost of the bank of computers in putting the information out that they want, the cost

of the Website, etc. As well, the building structure has changed to reflect more square footage than was originally anticipated, and it will have a basement that was not originally put in the plans at the outset.

— Royal Canadian Legions. There are 121 Legions in Canada, including the two in Nunavut. The cost of a brick to the Legions is \$250. The Association is endeavoring to reach all Canadian Legions and Affiliates to purchase a brick for their specific area. They are also endeavoring to seek funding from the various branches of the Canadian Armed Forces and amongst others .

9. Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs Transcript, page 2.

10. Correspondence regarding Juno Beach Centre Association. See appendix

References to, and within, this transcript can be found on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/va/va020131.htm>

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STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the House of Assembly
this ___ day of _____, 2002

Mr. William Langille, MLA (Chairman)
(Colchester - North)

I concur

I concur

Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA
(Shelburne)

Mr. David Wilson, MLA
(Glace Bay)

I concur

I concur

Dr. Mark Parent, MLA
(Kings North)

Mr. Brian Boudreau, MLA
(Cape Breton the Lakes)

I concur

I concur

Mr. John Chataway, MLA
(Chester - St. Margaret's)

Mr. John Holm, MLA
(Sackville Cobequid)

I concur

I concur

Mr. Frank Chipman, MLA
(Annapolis)

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
(Dartmouth North)

(The original Statement of Submission is signed by all Members of the Committee and is presented in hard copy form.)

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Committee Membership

During the 2nd Session of the 58th General Assembly of the House of Assembly, the make-up of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs was comprised of the following members:

Mr. William Langille, MLA (Chairman)
(Colchester North)

Mr. David Wilson, MLA
(Cape Breton East)

Mr. Frank Chipman, MLA
(Annapolis)

Mr. Wayne Gaudet, MLA
(Clare)

Mr. John Chataway, MLA
(Chester St. Margaret's)

Mr. John Holm, MLA
(Sackville Cobequid)

Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA
(Shelburne)

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
(Dartmouth North)

Dr. Mark Parent, MLA
(Kings North)

During the Second Session of the Fifty-Eighth General Assembly, Mr. Brian Boudreau, MLA (Cape Breton the Lakes) replaced Mr. Wayne Gaudet, MLA (Clare)

Committee Meetings

The Standing Committee has been meeting on Thursdays since its establishment, and all meetings are open to the public. During the 2nd Session of the 58th General Assembly the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has met on the following dates.

October 25, 2001
November 10, 2001
November 15, 2001
January 31, 2002

Notices

Notices of committee meetings are sent to all members of the Committee, support staff of the caucus and legislative offices, the House of Assembly Press Gallery, the government wire services and is published on the internet.

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Transcripts

Transcripts of the Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Committees Office, 3rd Floor, Dennis Building, 1740 Granville Street, P.O. Box 2630 Station M, Halifax, NS B3J 3N5 or from the Legislature web-site: www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm

Annual/Interim Reports

All reports of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to the Committee Members for consideration. Once the report is finalized it is then distributed to the following:

The Speaker/Clerk of the House of Assembly; all members of the Legislative Assembly; all presenters who made presentations before the Committee; all Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Libraries across Canada, including the Territories and the media. The report is also available to all persons interested in obtaining a copy from the Legislative Committees Office or through the provincial government web-site.

Acknowledgments

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs wishes to extend its gratitude to the following for their time and cooperation:

The Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, PanCanadian Energy, Veterans Affairs Canada, and the Juno Beach Centre Association. Special thanks to Mr. Robert Kinsman, Manager of Hansard; Hansard Staff; to Mr. Don Ledger, Co-ordinator of Legislative Television and Broadcasting; Legislative Television Staff; to Mr. Michael Laffin, Co-ordinator, House of Assembly Operations; House of Assembly Staff; and to Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian and Librarian Staff.