

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, July 16, 1998

Committee Room 1

Royal Canadian Legion Veterans and Seniors Committee

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Murray Scott (Chair)
Hon. Wayne Gaudet
Hon. Russell MacKinnon
Charles MacDonald
Frank Corbett
Peter Delefos
William Estabrooks
Gordon Balser
James DeWolfe

[Frank Corbett was replaced by Donald Chard.]
[Hon. Russell MacKinnon was replaced by Laurence Montgomery.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Rodney Caley
Hansard Editor

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotian Command

John Landsburg
President

Clarence Dawe
First Vice-President

Fred Mombourquette
Second Vice-President

Myles Rushton
Chair



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1998

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Murray Scott

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will call the meeting to order. First thing, we can go around the table and introduce ourselves. My name is Murray Scott and I'm the member for Cumberland South. I'm the Chairman of this Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Maybe we can start with the left and go around and introduce ourselves to our guests and then we can have our guests introduce themselves.

[The members introduced themselves.]

MR. JOHN LANDSBURG: John Landsburg. I'm the President of Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion.

MR. CLARENCE DAWE: Clarence Dawe, the 1st Vice-President of Nova Scotia Command.

MR. FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Fred Mombourquette from Pictou County, 2nd Vice-President of Nova Scotia Command.

MR. MYLES RUSHTON: Myles Rushton. I'm the Chairman of the Nova Scotia Command and Coordinator for Seniors Investment Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, gentlemen. I would like to welcome you here today and thank you for taking your time to come and make your presentations. I understand that all four wish to speak. So, maybe we can start with Mr. Rushton. I understand, Myles, you are the Chair, unless you have a preferred order.

MR. RUSHTON: If I could just point out, Mr. Chairman, our Provincial President will kick us off; then our 1st Vice-President will have a presentation, 8 to 10 minutes, not much

more than that; then our 2nd Vice-President, Fred Mombourquette, then myself will come up the rear. That is kind of the plan, if that is okay with you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's fine. Sir, go ahead.

MR. LANDSBURG: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, first for clarification. We haven't met with this committee since October 7, 1993. At that time, I'm quoting out of Hansard, and I would like a clarification of it, Mr. O'Malley stated, "Mr. Chairman, if I may, and this is just a comment, regarding your last comment, I think it is very important for you to understand that you do have an alternative venue other than this, directly to the floor of the House of Assembly. Actually, this is not a direct venue to the floor of the House of Assembly. These committees do not have a obligation for direct report to the House of Assembly. It is often misunderstood that these committees have an obligation to report all they do and all their dialogue and all their decisions directly back to the House. That is not so. That is a weakness in the system, in my opinion. But you do, through your organization, have a direct venue through any member, in the form of a petition, in the form of private members' bills, just like any other organization, maybe more so than any other organization, because of the importance of your organization in the Canadian society."

Now, does this hold true is what I am querying? We were talking about hospital beds, I believe at the time, and the committee said that they would have a meeting with the Minister of Health. They could not pull it off. We tried it our own way. We never ever did meet with the Minister of Health. He refused to meet with us at the time. Everything worked out in the end, but is this the same venue? Is this exactly what happens, in that statement?

MR. WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Well, if I could respond, Mr. Chairman, for a moment. I'm Bill Estabrooks, as the son of a veteran, my priority is, as a New Democrat on the committee, to make it active. I know that when John Holm, our House Leader, asked me what committee do you want to be on? I said, the Veterans Affairs Committee. He said, what for, they never meet? I said, what are you talking about? I said, having a father as a veteran, and I understand that you people as a pressure group and with the interests that you have that I certainly intend, as a member of this committee, to make this an active, involved committee which would listen to your concerns.

Mr. O'Malley's point of view, in my view, if I am responding on your behalf there Murray, I don't mean to intercede, but we want to make this an active committee that we can assist veterans in their various interests. We don't directly report to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am not sure of the previous mandate of the committee, but we are awaiting now a meeting of all committee chairs to determine the mandates of each committee. I think the committee can report back to the House and make recommendations, but I am not sure if there is anything, legislated to make changes. Maybe Mr. Gaudet has more experience

than myself, but certainly from the Chair's point of view, when we meet in regard to the mandate of different committees, mine for this committee will be that after we have our meetings and we have submissions made to us, that we will report back to the House with recommendations to the Legislature for some action on those concerns. If not, we are all wasting our time. But maybe Mr. Gaudet has . . .

MR. RUSHTON: If I may interject, Mr. Chairman, that is really what we would hope would take place, and seems to be the proper sequence of events, but it hasn't been happening in the past. According to Mr. O'Malley's comments in the last Hansard of the committee there dating back to 1993, which is the last time this committee met with us, it would indicate that wasn't the case, but we hope that what you are saying will be the case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is what we are striving for. Mr. Gaudet.

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, maybe just, I guess a point of clarification, I wasn't there prior to 1993, O'Malley was, so I don't know what happened prior to that. But I know for a fact, since 1993 never that I can recall, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs ever bringing a report to the House of Assembly. I stand to be corrected on that, but not to my knowledge, and I don't know what happened prior to 1993.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am only relaying to you my personal intent from being on this committee as other members have, so I don't think we have to justify what happened before, but we certainly will have to justify what happens in the future as the result of our meetings. As I say, if everyone here is going to put the time and effort into making this committee work, obviously it is not just being here, but it is the results of these meetings. That is what my intent as Chairman will be in the future. Anyone else, any other comments in regard to that?

MR. PETER DELEFES: If I might, Mr. Chairman, I would like to add that I too have some connection with veterans. My father was a member of the Merchant Marine during the war, lost his life. He was a member of the Greek Merchant Marine actually, not the Canadian. But I do regard him as a veteran of World War II, and a victim of it. So this committee does mean a great deal to me as well. But certainly, information that is gleaned from this committee can be used in the House to raise resolutions. Certainly we can speak on issues that are raised here, raise consciousness in the House on these issues, and of course, direct the House to take any action that is deemed appropriate. So I see, certainly an affinity between this committee and the House.

MR. LAURENCE MONTGOMERY: And I would see it as an important phase here too, if the recommendations that would come out of this committee would go forward. I think that is crucial.

MR. LANDSBURG: Gentlemen, as you know we have an organization 30,000 to 35,000 people in Nova Scotia. We get phone calls, I do anyway, from my members asking me

what I am going to do about something, and how we are going to go about it. Now I haven't got the answers to this, but the concerns that are coming in from my seniors and my veterans are the cost of Pharmacare, tax on the utilities, and they are very upset. I don't know what you could have to offer, or what you could have to tell us, but those are two points that we just find that it is costing us just too much money when we hit 65 and go on to set incomes.

Another area that I am looking at is that in one of my zones, in Colchester County to be exact, they are looking for more hospital beds in the Truro hospital. Now they have started through the chain of command, I know it is a few years away, but they had to start somewhere, and I am just hoping that this committee will keep an eye on it, and when it comes that they will speak highly for these beds to go into action. We only have five in that area, but they are full and they have been full since we got them back in, I am not sure of the year now. What else do I have here?

Also I would hope that somewhere along the line in government that the federal government, in reference to the year 2001 when new benefits come into effect, we know the Group of Nine feel that the time period should be extended to the year 2006. I am afraid of the cost to seniors and veterans, family income, et cetera, when this comes about. I know that the Group of Nine, comrade Rushton could likely speak more on this than I, because he sits with the Group of Nine. Other than that, maybe you would like to touch on some of those subjects for us. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any comments or questions with regard to those issues brought forward? Just for a point of clarification, you said there are five beds in Truro now. Those are five federally-funded veterans' beds, are they?

MR. LANDSBURG: Yes.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Chairman, I don't know whether we are going to have all our presentations and then questions, or which way so you prefer to do it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess my thoughts were, and it is open to whatever the members wish, to let the four presenters do their presentations, because if not, by the fourth one, we may not have much time left. So if that is okay. Was that your presentation?

MR. LANDSBURG: Yes, that would be it for the time.

MR. DAWE: Mr. Chairman, honourable ministers, members of the House of Assembly, I have been asked to address you gentlemen on two problems that are run into by numerous branches in our command, and that is the fire marshal reports and their regulations, and the gaming and liquor licensing.

Briefly, I will give you a little situation that took place in my home branch, Branch No.

8, in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton. When our branch applied for a new license for its bingo, we were told by the licensing committee, we must have a fire marshal do a report on our building. Lo and behold the Fire Marshal's Office did a report and came back with 43 recommendations of improvements that must be made in the building. Our president called a general meeting of the branch to inform the members what had taken place. We were told that the license for our bingo would not be renewed until the fire marshal's recommendations had been carried out.

Of these 43 items, we read them all at our general meeting, we asked to put bids out on tenders to see what these 43 items would cost us. Lo and behold, when we had five reports from contractors on what these costs would be, \$240,000 was the lowest bid we received to bring our building up to the fire marshal's standards, things like applying new gyproc. We were one of the victims of grants that ran around the whole of Canada, that when we got a grant, they authorized that you use panelling, so they wanted fire-retardant panelling on three floors of our building. A gallon of fire-retardant varnish goes about a panel and a half, approximately six feet, and with three floors of panelling, it was a major cost right there. That is just to give you an idea, indoors. We are not baulking the fire marshal on the health and safety issue, we are 100 per cent behind this. But this is just one branch in particular I am talking about, because there are five others that have been hit with the same thing in Cape Breton Island.

When it was reported back to the general meeting of the costs, we are in a branch that is 71 years plus in the Province of Nova Scotia, and in an old building. It was an old home when the First World War veterans took it over, then the Second World War veterans came back, then the Korean veterans came back, then the ex-servicemen that have joined it. We have two extensions on this old home. It was adequate, we thought, and up-to-date. When the fire marshal came in, none of it suited the purpose of the fire marshal.

In order for us to host a bingo or a dance, we had to go through with these 43 recommendations, and I would like to impress upon you people, too, that we are not baulking this, we are all for the health and safety of all our patrons. But we came into a brick wall, because our membership decided it wasn't worth \$240,000 to go into an old building, that we must go another route. We decided we would take a look at purchasing land and putting up a new building, according to the codes of the fire marshal and the province for that structure.

So, we started out into this. Where our problem and our main complaint is, is that when the fire marshal's report came back, he gave us 30 days to make a move on this. So, we went right into gear. It takes you a bit of a while to get a meeting, get contractors in to do bids, and sit back and weigh this over. We have an executive council that sits before it goes to the general membership and we all agreed that it was not feasible for us to invest \$240,000; and \$240,000 we did not have.

So, after this, we appointed a committee from that general meeting and we went looking into the possibility of securing land. Now, we have one ideal piece of land in the Town

of Sydney Mines which is right on the main street. It's a veterans' memorial park where our cenotaph is. The problem is that this piece of land was leased to us by the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. After making initial inquiries with the bank, before any financing can be done, they told us, you must own your own piece of land, and something along with, stipulating, anyone wishing to borrow monies to improve their building or to build a new building must come in with financial statements, a building plan which is up to code, fire marshal's regulations and the building standards of Nova Scotia, and a note from the bank saying, yes, they are going to allow you to borrow such and such an amount of money to erect this building. With all of this, once it's approved, then we at the command have to approve any of these branches if they wish go ahead with these renovations. This is a lengthy procedure.

Now, I will go back to what I was talking about in Sydney Mines. We are still looking at the piece of land. We have a lawyer involved and he is looking into it. I want you, gentlemen, to keep in mind that the costs that are involved here to us and the stipulation of the fire marshal, they gave us 30 days originally, then they gave us an additional 90 days. Now, nobody has a magic wand. We can't work wonders. The time-frame is not decent to anyone. To look at where we are down to now, erecting the new building, acquiring a piece of land, and to finance this project and to get approval from this command office.

So, this is where we are at. Right now, we are still allowed to run our bingo on a reduced scale. There are restrictions placed on our building by the fire marshal and we are only allowed 150 people in there at any time, and one of our main money-making sources was the bingo. The rental for catering to weddings, anniversaries and whatnot, things like that, now we are stymied in revenue by the stipulation placed on us by the fire marshal's report.

This is only one branch I give you in particular because it's my home branch in Sydney Mines. At a recent district meeting in Cape Breton, where there are 29 branches that meet once per month, five branches reported the same problem that they were reviewed by the fire marshal and told to bring it up to code. I reiterate, we are not baulking to bring it up to code for the health and safety of our patrons, it's the time-frame.

At one branch it was \$35,000, that branch at the time could handle it at \$35,000, no problem. They went right about and did their repairs and they are up to code. Another little branch, and I will give the community of Louisbourg, which has fallen on hard times with the fishery and all that. Their report, when they had the contractors look at it, was \$25,000. When the president reported, there is only one problem, we are short \$24,500. So, where are they going to go borrow this money with the limited income they have there? They only have a small branch. So, I hope you people understand where we are coming from, that the hardship that is being placed on us by the fire marshal, not the report per se, but the time-frame that is causing us, our branches. It causes very serious concerns to our branches.

As I stated before, 99 per cent of the people who are involved in legions are volunteers.

They have day jobs, they have families, they have another life. We have people running around day and night now trying to track down this land. We had to acquire the services of a lawyer. We are into the process of that.

Then we have to go, if the land is acquired, get an architect to design a building up to code, then we have to get financial approval from the banking institution which we are dealing with, then we have to come to Nova Scotia Command and the president has to approach the whole council, and there are 24 members of council, and they have to be contacted by phone or by mail vote to give approval for our branch to borrow - what we are looking at roughly, right now, is - \$300,000 for a new building, not counting the cost of the land. These figures are just hypothetical right now. I don't have to tell you people the cost of land and to erect a new building up to code, with fire sprinkler systems, proper exits, proper glass and doors, and the crunch has come on.

I know numerous branches have been hit here on the mainland, but I am only speaking for the ones that I know of right there in Cape Breton. I have been in one here in Waverley and they have struggled through some of the major repairs that the fire marshal has asked them to do. We are not baulking at that. I have to keep reiterating, we are not baulking the fire marshal because it is for the health and safety of the patrons. We are asking you people, as members of the Legislature, to intercede on our behalf with the Fire Marshal's Office to allow a better time-frame.

I am looking at Branch No. 8 in Sydney Mines and to be honest with you, gentlemen, it is going to take us two years before we can turn the key in the new building. It is a long drawn out process before we get all approvals. The fire marshal has to review our reports, our building; they have to approve it before you can even drive a nail or put a backhoe to work to dig the ground. This is a long drawn out process and we want you people, as members of the Legislature, to help us with the Fire Marshal's Office to ask for a better time-frame for our branches. I speak for the 121 branches that we have in Nova Scotia. We do need your help on that because time is very valuable to us, as it is to the fire marshal. We are not trying to duck underneath these regulations. We want to abide by them, but we help in the time-frame.

The other part of my report, gentlemen, is on the gaming reports. As I stated earlier, 99 per cent of our people in the legion are volunteers. We have paid employees like bar stewards or cleaners or something like that, but our chairmen of different committees like the bingo and card games, these people are all volunteers. They have a day job to do, they have families, they have a home to run, and we are becoming paper tigers - reports, reports, reports.

We have good committee chairmen in our branches who are quitting on us. A good chairman for a bingo committee, or a card game committee, they are hard to find. You do not just go out and grab one off the street. You have to draw from within your membership. These people are quitting on us because they are being saddled with this paper work.

For instance, in my own branch, the five ladies on our bingo committee go in on Monday morning to set up for their bingo game and that is their cards, they have to number all the cards, account for all these cards, and they are there the whole day. Come Tuesday, they have to go in early Tuesday evening to set up for the bingo. When the bingo is over, the bingo player who wins or loses walks away, but these committee members have to sit there, account for all this money, deposit this money as the branches request, but they have to sit down and do up these reports. In all honesty, their husbands are a little annoyed, well, are you going to live in the legion, you know, you were there all day yesterday. It is this paper, you know we are becoming paper tigers now in our branches. We have all these reports.

We know there must be accountability for the monies raised in the branch by the licensing and gaming commission. We understand that. What I am saying is, is there some way we can help all these branches by cutting down on the paper trail? There must be some way that we can cut this down to size and not make paper tigers out of our chairmen. I am telling you, all over the province we are losing them hand over fist because of all these reports. So I say, we have volunteers and they volunteered to look after a bingo, they did not want to become statisticians for the Nova Scotia Government and that is what is being done.

So, we ask you for help in that. If you are speaking to any members of the commission, we have addressed this with Mr. Kelly at our council meeting in May, and he said he is only in charge of the licensing. Some of you people who sit in the House must have access to whoever is in charge of this paper trail. There must be some way that we can, between the government and the Royal Canadian Legion, help our branches.

I am telling you, these reports, they are going to drive some of the smaller branches that don't - we have branches in rural areas that don't have these people who are qualified to look after things, some of our branches have younger members and all that, yes, but some of our rural branches have the veterans. That is all that is left there, the veterans and their wives.

They are not up to this new stuff, they don't have computers, don't have fax machines and all that. It is getting very frustrating.

I hope you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of your committee understand where the Legion is coming from on those two issues. I thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, honourable members, I have four programs that I would like to deal with today, and they all concern our youth. But before I start, I would just like to point out that not only our branches across the province, which by the way number 120, with some 35,000 members, contributing financially to these programs, but the man hours also contributed by our branch members is well into the thousands of hours.

[1:30 p.m.]

So the reason we are here today is to ask for your assistance in supporting our efforts towards caring for our youth as well as our seniors. I am sure you realize that our veterans are getting to the age where they no longer can carry out this work with the type of energy they had in the past. It is our hope that as our younger members take over the responsibility of operating our Legion branches, they will not only receive support from the Legions but also from our government as well.

A word about Remembrance Day in our schools. Some schools in our province have teachers that really get involved with Remembrance Day. Veterans are invited to speak in their schools and to speak to the children on some of their experiences as servicemen and women during war times. The stories and experiences told by these veterans depend on the age of the children they are speaking to. In some cases, the teachers will have the children put on their own programs to show the veterans how much they really care about Remembrance Day. Unfortunately this is not the case with many of our schools and some of our teachers.

Likewise over the years, we have had problems with flags in our schools. Some schools with no flags or ones that are torn so bad we have to ask to have them removed, and our Legion branches will purchase new ones and give them to the schools as replacements. As well, some have no pictures of our Queen anywhere in their schools.

Our Royal Canadian Legion "Call to Remembrance Program" started in 1995 in a few of our schools with the assistance of some of our teachers. It has increased to last year, 1997, we had 48 schools participating for a total of 288 students taking part across our province. From the teachers who are participating with us in this program, we are receiving 100 per cent cooperation. These teachers use lunch breaks and after-school hours to assist the students. But we do have problems with other principals and teachers, who rather than participate, use the excuse that they do not have the time or anyone to assist.

Our Call to Remembrance Programs consist of the junior high school students from Nova Scotia participating in a single knock-out series of contest questions, run on a format very similar to the Reach for the Top competition. The program is recorded on video by a production crew from a local community college for broadcast on a local cable station. The local radio station also records the proceedings. The moderator or quiz master is a local radio personality who has performed this role in the past for Reach for the Top. The participating audience include Legion members, teachers, parents, and veterans from all across the province. The questions deal with World War I, World War II, and Korea, the Victoria Cross winners, Merchant Navy, The Black Battalion, and native soldiers.

Our Provincial Command is now working with Dominion Command to hold a national championship in the year 2001 at Windsor, Nova Scotia, the birth of our first provincial

tournament. Since this program started in 1995, we have only had the honour of one of our political representatives attend our finals. The teachers inform us that students increase their capacity to learn other subjects by 10 per cent as a result of their involvement in this program.

The last item I would like to bring to your attention today, is one that our legion members in the Province of Nova Scotia have been attempting to accomplish for the past number of years. It deals with trying to get our provincial school system to teach as a subject in our schools, the history of Canada's involvement in two World Wars and Korea. I am sure you will agree that there is very little information on Canadian military history found in our high school textbooks today.

What better way to educate our young Canadians about the sacrifices made by so many in the past for our benefit. Time is running out on our Second World War veterans, who would very much like to see this subject taught in our schools. A meeting with the Minister of Education would be a very good start. We ask for your support to accomplish this worthwhile project, and we are looking forward to meeting with you again to develop these other worthwhile programs mentioned here today.

I would like to leave with you, a copy of our Call to Remembrance Program, Access to History and a copy of our Cape Breton District Report with their involvement with the Victoria School Board teaching Canadian military history in their schools. We are very fortunate in the Cape Breton area, they have made great advancements with the school board there, and the teachers work with them in great harmony.

We in Nova Scotia can't seem to get anywhere with them. Gentlemen, we are asking for your support in this regard, and anything you can do to help us in the future with this very worthwhile project would be greatly appreciated. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Mombourquette. Mr. Rushton.

MR. RUSHTON: Mr. Chairman, honourable members, and members of the Legislature, first I want to thank you for this opportunity to come together with you to discuss our concerns as far as our Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion. I believe Darlene is passing out a paper there which I will be sharing with you at this time. I should explain this, I discussed this with the chairman of our track and field program, Comrade Fred Keillor. We put this report together to give you some idea as to what we are doing with the youth in our province and right across our country.

The Royal Canadian Legion, Dominion Command, in association with its 10 Provincial Commands, expends approximately \$1 million each year to host Canada's youth, ages 12 to 17, at a national track and field meet at some major centre within the boundaries of our great country. This has been an annual event since 1957, having been staged continuously for 41 years, where the Royal Canadian Legion entertained an average of 360 of Canada's aspiring

athletes annually.

The program, which runs for seven days, includes two days of competition, two days of instructional training by members of Athletics Canada, one day for meetings and practice time, and one day for recreation, normally a tour of local interests. Also included is an official opening ceremony and a closing banquet, as well as a barbecue and fun and games evening.

The venues for this event stretch from British Columbia to Newfoundland, with two exceptions. Unfortunately Nova Scotia is one of these exceptions. Gentlemen, as much as Nova Scotia Command would like to take a turn at hosting our young athletes, we are unable to do so because we do not have a facility that meets national standards. You will have to agree that this is a disgraceful situation, one that creates an embarrassment for Nova Scotia Command each time we are asked to host it.

When we consider that the provincial government supported the establishment of three or four new golf courses in the past two or three years, at a cost of several million dollars, surely some consideration should be expected to refurbish Beazley Field in Dartmouth, for example, at a cost of approximately \$500,000.

I respectfully suggest to you that the youth of Nova Scotia are deserving of your support, in fact it is owed to them. I personally have attended the last nine athletic camps, and each time without exception, I have returned home with full pride, knowing that the Nova Scotia athletes were beyond reproach, having conducted themselves with dignity and grace. I implore you gentlemen to investigate this sad situation, and reward Nova Scotia youth with your support. Being in a position to host their peers from across Canada would represent a tremendous boost to the aspirations and morale of these fine young men and women.

As a footnote to this presentation, Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion has negotiated with Dominion Command for the privilege of hosting the athletic camp in the year 2001. This of course will depend on whether or not we have a facility. The time for our decision is getting short, so I ask for your earliest consideration. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Rushton. I guess our members can start with questions or comments in regard to any of the four presentations. Who would like to start first?

MR. ESTABROOKS: I am glad that you, if I may, are the only group presenting today, because when we receive other groups, I must tell you that sometimes you have numerous questions. I think I have enough questions here alone, on the very different types of topics that you have brought up. I don't know really where to start but I am going to start in reverse order, of course.

Having been a track and field athlete representing my native Province of New Brunswick, I guess I learned something today - I can go to bed now - the fact that we do not

have a facility in this province that we can have for national competition of this nature. The old jock in me is coming out here, what is, Mr. Rushton, the facility in New Brunswick for example, that would be used now?

MR. RUSHTON: I am not familiar with the New Brunswick facility.

MR. ESTABROOKS: But it is usually tied into a university, I would assume.

MR. RUSHTON: Yes, it usually is tied to a university. The majority are, for example this year it is going to be hosted in Prince George, British Columbia, at the university there.

MR. ESTABROOKS: But I noticed that, if I may, Mr. Chair, you target Beazley Field as the facility in our province, may I ask why?

MR. RUSHTON: Well, it is the general feeling that Beazley Field, with less expenditure than possibly anywhere else in the province, would be the appropriate place for it. That is why we targeted Beazley Field, Mr. Estabrooks.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Because of my own interest in the school system and this particular sport, I would like to meet further with you in terms of what we could do, or I could do personally to expedite that matter. That is one issue, so I will be quiet now.

MR. MONTGOMERY: What about Acadia University or Saint Mary's University, would they not be suitable facilities?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Excuse me, Laurie, what are they missing?

MR. LANDSBURG: They could be if they were brought up to scratch. Eight lanes.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Eight lanes? Is that right.

MR. LANDSBURG: Most of these tracks have six lanes, or possibly less, but it calls for eight for a national event.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, excuse me, just so we don't get off track here, if you would identify to the Chair, when you want to question, the reason being so that we can identify you for the record. Because if not, the record will record the questions and the answers, but no one will know who asked or who answered. If you could, just so we can keep it for the record, plus I will lose my job. (Laughter) Mr. Montgomery.

MR. MONTGOMERY: I just wanted to ask a further question on that. In terms of accommodating the athletes, would either of these two facilities, Acadia or Saint Mary's be suitable in that regard?

MR. RUSHTON: No problem in that regard, as far as accommodations. It is the track facility that is required.

MR. MONTGOMERY: And Beazley Field, similar arrangements can be made there?

MR. RUSHTON: Yes.

MR. LANDSBURG: They usually use the university for accommodations; here in the city, Saint Mary's is usually used, but Beazley is the only one that has a track that is even close to anything.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chard.

MR. DONALD CHARD: Thank you Mr. Chairman, since we are on the subject of Beazley, I will want to pursue that for a little while. That is one of our premier soccer fields in Dartmouth, but it is a multi-purpose facility. One of the things that it is lacking is lights, there are lights on baseball diamonds adjacent to it, but there are none for the stadium itself. I was rather curious about the \$500,000 figure, where that was generated?

MR. RUSHTON: Just an estimate that we have given.

MR. CHARD: I wouldn't think that getting a decent track in there would cost anywhere near that, but it would certainly be a significant enhancement of that facility if we could persuade the municipality, perhaps jointly with the province to put some lights in there. It would be a great boon for all of the users of that facility. I am not sure how many lanes there are there now. Is it six? I don't know how much work it would take to add two. There is some work slated for that facility. In fact it has been talked about every year in recent years.

Every year we hear it is going to be done, and unfortunately, it all too often keeps getting deferred. I am in touch with people in Parks and Recreation with the municipality.

I would be glad to work with Mr. Estabrooks and pursue that to see if we can provide a little encouragement for the municipality to provide this. I can appreciate why Dalhousie and Saint Mary's aren't totally suitable. They have converted their main fields to, well they are artificial surfaces. Obviously for some functions you just can't use those surfaces. If I am not mistaken, there is no track at Dalhousie anymore. Where there football field used to be is used, I think, exclusively for soccer now. Saint Mary's is an artificial surface too, so it really limits what you can do there. It would be interesting to talk to the municipality.

MR. RUSHTON: If I could interject, Mr. Chairman, we do have a positive letter from the municipality, and I will share it with you at this time. But you said exactly what we hoped would happen, that the province and the municipality would jointly move on this. Here, I will share this letter, we just received this letter dated July 2, 1998. It is to Mr. Fudge, our provincial

secretary.

"The Royal Canadian Legion

Nova Scotia Command

Dear Mr. Fudge:

Jim Naugler, Regional Coordinator Outdoor Facilities with the Halifax Regional Municipality, has confirmed today that Dartmouth's Beazley Field will meet national track and field standards when completed this summer. That will include an eight (8) lane synthetic surface track, including a water pit, and provision for all field events. There will be access to a grandstand and washrooms."

So that is a positive thing, Mr. Chairman, and we are very pleased to hear this, but we still don't have it yet. It hasn't happened, and we have now initiated action to assure our Dominion Command, which takes in all of the country, the 10 provinces, that we will do everything we can to be ready to host the National Track and Field in the year 2001. That is really what we are hoping, that this committee and the province will certainly work with the municipality."

This is signed by Jerome Bruhm, Executive Director.

MR. CHARD: I know Jim Naugler, and I would be happy to follow this up, and see exactly when we can expect these improvements.

MR. RUSHTON: We can give you a copy of this.

MR. CHARD: Yes, we would be delighted to have that. Now I did have one or two other observations to make, because I don't want to use up the committee's entire afternoon with this. One of the things that struck me, when you made reference to the paper burden that the Legions have to deal with, is that some provinces have embarked on plain-English campaigns to try to ensure that material that is produced by their governments are a little more readily understandable to people outside the bureaucratic loop. Perhaps we should be making a greater effort in this direction, in this province, and it perhaps should deal not just with whether things are written in such a manner, documents, reports, et cetera, that are produced by the province so that that they are more readily understood, but I think perhaps the same approach should apply to a lot of the processes that people have to go through. There is nothing more frustrating than getting a document from the government - we get calls in our constituency offices all the time from constituents saying, I got this document and I have no idea what it means.

Now, I think in all fairness to the public, we should be making a greater effort to ensure that our processes are more readily understandable. I think this would go a long way to helping. It is not going to totally resolve the problem, but I think it would go a long way to helping. Having been a volunteer with different organizations, I know what it is like when you get these documents and you have to fill things out umpteen times and it seems like there is no end to the process. The documents are not always very easy to read and easy to understand.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is something that we, as a committee, should take forward to the Legislature. I am not sure which department would be most appropriate to go to with this, but I am sure we can find out what other provincial governments have done in this regard and look at the scope for doing something similar here in Nova Scotia to make life a little easier for all of our citizens. That is essentially all I wanted to say.

I want to thank you, gentlemen, for your presentation. Well, one other comment, there was reference made to the . . .

MR. ESTABROOKS: You said you were not going to dominate.

MR. CHARD: I am not going to dominate either, Bill, (Laughter) but just the comment about the teaching of our history. We had a presentation last week from members of the Merchant Marine and they said, essentially, the same thing that the teaching of our history, of the contributions Canadians have made in our wars is not told very adequately in our public schools. So, I found it interesting that you are saying the same thing. I agree that in many areas it is something that needs to be addressed and it is something that perhaps we should draw to the attention of the Department of Education. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Delefes.

MR. DELEFES: I do not wish to belabour the track and field issue - I think several points have been made on this - but I received a letter, actually, last week from one of my constituents, the Wanderers Track and Field Club, again decrying the lack of track and field facilities, both indoor and outdoor. There is, of course, an indoor track here in the metro area, at Dalhousie, it is widely used by the general community and by the university and not much time-space is available for young people. So, there is definitely a lack of that type of facility.

They also raised the same point that you gentlemen did about the inadequate facility at Beazley Field. I was very pleased to hear that, obviously, an upgrade is planned for that facility. Along with others on this committee, I will certainly see that some pressure is brought to bear to expedite that and get that accomplished.

As a former school teacher, switching to Remembrance Day ceremonies, and as a former school principal, I always welcomed the opportunity on Remembrance Day to have members of the Legion come in and we always had a Colour Party come in. Usually, a speaker

would come from the Legion and give a talk to the students. I was in a junior high school, so the person who came was appropriate to that level. Naturally, if they come to elementary school, they have to direct their presentation to the children at that level. I am not sure if there is there an actual kit or a program that the Legion has to help schools plan a Remembrance Day program. I do not remember having seen one. We used to undertake that initiative ourselves.

I just wanted to ask if you do actually have a program of some sort that can be put into the hands of a staff or a classroom teacher to enable them to . . .

MR. DAWE: Mr. Chairman, through you, what we have done in Cape Breton is we took every bit of resources we had, right up to literature from Veterans Affairs Canada, books that we knew we could access, and we had even a book of poems that were written by veterans. We used all the resources. There is a Book of Memories, we have taken it, we photocopied, we have done everything that we could find about war. The school board itself, the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, we passed this on to them. They are compiling a kit. Maybe we can get one that they have up there, but we have poems and pictures.

Sydney Harbour, like Halifax here was pretty active during the Second World War, because the convoys used to form up in Sydney Harbour before they came up here to Halifax to join up the big one before they would go overseas in the Merchant Marine. That is where the main convoys came from, from Canada, out of Halifax but they mustered into Sydney Harbour. We have a lot of this history and that is what we did. We just made photocopies, begged, borrowed and took whatever we could to present to the school board. We were given access to the Command of several books that we had there and were allowed to photocopy them, and the pamphlets that were put out by the Government of Canada and Veterans Affairs, anything on war history, facts and figures, pictures, we used all of that too.

It is not off the ground yet in Cape Breton. We are trying to get it off the ground maybe for this fall school session. It might start off and Cape Breton is going to act as the pilot. For once in Cape Breton, we will do something and then the mainland can follow.

MR. DELEFES: Good, that sort of thing is very helpful for schools.

MR. RUSHTON: Along with that, Mr. Chairman, we have our poppy kits that go out. There is a complete booklet for teachers on Remembrance Day programs leading up to November 11th. It gives our line on what they might want to do and they can divert from that and work it into the program that they wish to present to the children, and that is available to all schools.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Where the complaint comes in, some of our members, veterans who have grandchildren, they say, well, there is nothing going on in our school. Our problem is that it seems unless something is written in black and white to a lot of the schools, they just will not carry along with it. The ones that will work with this, there isn't any problem

at all. In most schools, thank God, they are easy to get along with. We do get complaints and we have to bring them forward to somebody and it seems like if there is not legislation for something today, you are not going to get it done in most cases, especially when you are dealing with large numbers of people as we are with schools.

So, it is in this regard that we are saying, if you have an opportunity to bring this subject up, whether we can ever pass legislation that would make it compulsory to have something for Remembrance Day in every school, God only knows, but if there is a possibility of working it into the school system, through the government, or through the municipality of school boards, with your help, that certainly would be appreciated. We are trying to do it on our own. When we come up against a teacher who does not want to put the program on, it is pretty darn disheartening. Sometimes you would like to say things that you probably should not, but it is in this regard that if you have the opportunity, we would certainly appreciate it.

MR. ESTABROOKS: A couple of questions. First of all, Mr. Mombourquette, I think one of the ways to respond to that is that having been a school principal, it is an expectation of the board of that particular school that the principals initiate a Remembrance Day, they should not have to be forced to do it, but in many cases if it is an expectation, these principals have to respond in kind. I have always been fortunate enough to work with teachers who were the sons or daughters of veterans who considered it such an important part of the history lesson that they have. That is a matter which, hopefully, we can respond through the Minister of Education.

I have two questions, I think I know the answer. Mr. Dawe who is your MLA?

MR. DAWE: The Premier.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Okay. I have been approached as the MLA for Timberlea-Prospect by the Lions Club, of which I am a member, about the bingo commission, or whatever it is called. Let's put it bluntly, you have to be a Philadelphia lawyer to fill those forms out. The problem that I have had, and I am a member of the St. Margaret's Lions Club, I have been in contact with the idea that there should be two forms when you are doing bingos. If you are a private bingo operator, a commercial operator, whatever, we have all heard the horror stories about bingos and how there are, without a doubt, some private, commercial operators who have abused the system. A couple in particular probably should be in jail, but we are off the record here, I assume.

There should be two categories, one for the volunteer organizations: the Lions Clubs and the Legions and the fire departments, to be able to do that paperwork. That is something that I am sure the Gaming Commission, or whatever the correct term is, has heard about. It is very important. I write a letter, as the MLA, saying, look, I think this should be done. I think that more and more people should be making noise about that fact. We have a rough time keeping our bingo chairman now, because of the counting. I don't know if we can go through

this, we are not going to turn this into a bingo affair here, but every piece of paper has to be accounted for. They are all numbered. You are sitting there, you are going, well, we sold 58 books of that, and you are looking at three hours after bingo. Thank God we have a bar in our Lions Club. If you want to respond, go ahead.

MR. DAWE: Mr. Chairman, to this member, I would like to say that, like I stated in my presentation, all our members are basically volunteers. Now, these forms must have been drawn up by an auditor or somebody with a financial background, because the majority of our volunteers are laymen, they don't understand these big, fancy forms that come out. Put it down in common layman terms, and people can handle some of them, but some of them are just repetitious; what they already did on Monday, they have to do again on Wednesday, the same report. That is basically what our complaints are.

MR. ESTABROOKS: I appreciate that. If I may, Mr. Chair, one more, and I think that each of the members could respond to this. I have a close friend who works for DVA in Charlottetown. He is legally trained, he is on one of the pension review boards or whatever. I plan to take a couple of weeks this summer and actually invite him out, how are things going, and those sorts of things. I also had an ex-football coach, a Liberal Member of Parliament, who was appointed to the review board out of Charlottetown.

I am interested from all of you, what is your working relationship with DVA in Charlottetown? I hear at times from my lawyer friend, it is quite adversarial, if I can put it in that term. Do you feel that DVA continues to be a positive advocate for veterans? Provincial Command, what exactly is your relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Charlottetown?

MR. LANDSBURG: We really do not have too many dealings with Charlottetown, per se. We deal through the district office here in Halifax, and then we have an Atlantic office in Dartmouth. We have an employee, our command service officer, who deals with these people. He tells me that he has the greatest relationship with these people. Everything does end up at Charlottetown, but then at the Dominion level, we have a Veterans Legislation Committee there as well, and we have a gentleman who sat on the pension review board. I don't know who has taken over from him, but he did do work for the Legion. In order to take the volunteer job with the Legion, he had to give up the pension reviews, and he has a great relationship with Charlottetown right now. DVA doesn't appear to be our problem.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Okay, good, glad to hear that.

MR. DAWE: In the majority of our branches, we have a service officer too. Again, a volunteer, very time-consuming job that these service officers have. Service officers have to prepare the claims, pass them on up to our provincial office, then go to Ottawa and then back down to Charlottetown. We have a district office in Sydney, and the Legions, the 29 branches

on Cape Breton Island will tell you there is no better staff or crew than in the DVA office in Sydney. They bend over backwards to assist. If it is in the legislation to help the veteran, and he has served, and has the proper criteria, no problem. They are there 100 per cent behind the veteran. We have no problem.

Any discussions we do have with P.E.I., like Comrade Myles, he chairs this committee, he will be having a meeting in October with counterparts from across Canada in Charlottetown with this Veterans Legislation Committee from the Dominion. I think Myles can speak for himself that they have no problem with dealings with anyone throughout the whole DVA. The regional director here was Ron Witt, who is recently retired and is now replaced by a lady. We have the greatest rapport in Nova Scotia with these people.

They look after all the Maritimes, and we just received a new district manager, I guess, he looks after the Halifax office here on Young Street and the Cape Breton office in Sydney, Barry Gallant is the new gentleman, and he is the new kid on the block, but he has been around for a long while working with Veterans Affairs, and he maintains the same policy they always had, open door - you have a problem, bring it to us, we will see what we can do for you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Mr. Delefes.

MR. DELEFES: May I just ask a couple of questions about the fire marshal, with respect to the bingo license. I know that in order to receive a bingo license, the organization must own its own building, which I know that the Legion does - you own your own buildings. Of course, a bingo license can be a fairly lucrative proposition, having one, and running a bingo. Now with respect to the Sydney Mines branch, where you talked about looking at a new building, were you looking at the new building primarily so that you could run the bingo, so that you would meet the requirements of the bingo license with respect to the building itself?

MR. DAWE: Maybe my explanation, I tried to keep it brief from what I was doing. Believe me, that was brief. I have to backtrack, the last time we were inspected by the fire marshal was in 1954 in Sydney Mines, so you can see where our complications came from. Not only the panelling on the wall, the doors and the glass had to have this chicken wire and all this in it, we need another exit, we need new windows, and other new doors, and all this.

Building our new building is not solely for the bingo, no. It is for the recreation of the members, like the ladies auxiliary that we do have, they host receptions, showers, and all that, the hall is rented. It is a community. The hall, the Royal Canadian Legion in any community in Nova Scotia is used by the communities. We host, since the regional government took over in Cape Breton, in Sydney Mines, the Legion and the local fire hall, we host a levee that used to be hosted by the town. We work hand in hand, it is a community building. There are a lot of times, there is no rental ever charged, because we use it for community, for people; like if there was people putting on a benefit dance for somebody who was burned out a few blocks away,

well we are not going to charge them hall rental. They are trying to raise some money for a family that is in need.

We donate. We are a community-minded people, Legions, we work together. No, the new hall would not be just for the bingo. It was three floors, we have a basement, an upper floor, then in this older part, as I said that was there 71-plus years, was a home. That was only converted into offices, we are not allowed to use them, since the fire marshal was in. We were told to get our filing cabinets and typewriters down out of there. We are not allowed to use that until a fire exit is put in the upstairs. We can see why they have done that, but it has all been renovated and it is all panelled. Like I said, \$110 for a gallon of this fireproof varnish, and it only does six feet, you are going to spend a lot of money on varnish alone.

MR. DELEFES: Does the building meet the fire marshal's standards for general use apart from bingo?

MR. DAWES: Oh, yes, we are still allowed to use it but we are only allowed, like I stated, 150 people in the hall at one time. That is for a bingo, a dance, a wedding reception, we are only allowed 150 people. Our license allows us to carry 190. So, we are denied an extra number due to the constrictions because we have two exits on that first floor and two exits on the lower floor, but there is only one way up to the office area. There was no exit there, just a stairway up into the offices and there was no exit. So, when we added all things together in the cost of renovations, it just was not worth our while to put \$240,000 into an old building, and when you are all through, you still have a renovated old building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If it is okay with the members, Mrs. Henry has a motion that was left by the member who left, Mr. DeWolfe. He had another meeting to attend so he left, but he left with Mrs. Henry a motion he wanted read here today.

MRS. DARLENE HENRY (Legislative Committee Clerk): Mr. DeWolfe says, "Residents of Canada who served other countries as part of the Allied Forces do not (currently) qualify for benefits from veterans affairs such as long term care facilities or veterans homes.". His motion is, ". . . that this committee pressure the federal veterans affairs to re-think this oversight and that this committee be a strong proponent and extend support to all veterans. Jim DeWolfe".

MR. ESTABROOKS: Do we require a seconder, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that is a motion on behalf of Mr. DeWolfe. So, if he wishes, it requires a seconder.

MR. ESTABROOKS: I would second it to indicate that we should discuss it and so on.

MR. RUSHTON: If I may, Mr. Chairman. Mr. DeWolfe called last week and he left a

message, of course, and I called him back and I did not speak with him, but I was speaking with him a moment ago. This was in the case that the Royal Navy Allied Forces wants to know if this man qualifies for veterans beds. The fact that he did not serve in the Canadian Forces, he does not qualify for veterans beds and I think this is what he is saying, that all Allied Forces that served as an ally during the First and Second World Wars should be eligible for veterans beds.

MR. LANDSBURG: I do believe at our convention in Winnipeg, in June, that a resolution of that type did go through our Dominion Convention and that it will be eventually coming in from the other end to the federal government. Am I correct in that? I am sure I am.

MR. DAWE: Yes (Interruptions)

MR. RUSHTON: . . . this Legislature, that only adds more support to our resolution. So, any support you can give on that, it would be greatly appreciated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It has been moved and seconded. Are you ready for the question? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Any further comments or questions of the guests this afternoon, gentlemen?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Mr. Chairman, if I could just ask. I heard reference to the Group of Nine, and I know you guys, of course, use various terms and so on. I am just wondering, what is the Group of Nine?

MR. RUSHTON: Mr. Estabrooks, we will just try to clear that up for you. How many are familiar with the Group of Nine, if I may ask that, Mr. Chairman?

MR. ESTABROOKS: Let the record show, none. So, the rest of you were bluffing weren't you? (Laughter) I am a school teacher, see, I have to ask all the questions.

MR. RUSHTON: The Group of Nine compiles the representatives for all the seniors groups in the Province of Nova Scotia. I will just go down through them: Canadian Pensioners Concerned; the Federal Superannuates National Association; the Gerontology Association of Nova Scotia; the Acadian community, now, I am not bilingual, but Madame Belliveau is the representative there; the Retired Teachers Association of Nova Scotia; the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP; the Federation of Senior Citizens & Pensioners of Nova Scotia; the Royal Canadian Legion, that is Provincial Command, that is who I represent, our command; and the Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees.

We work very closely with your Senior Citizens' Secretariat, which I am sure you are

all familiar with. Were you there Mr. Gaudet? Yes, sure. On May 14th, we had a very good consultation with the Minister responsible for the Senior Citizens' Secretariat and deputy ministers, and I must say we have had a reply from them, and we are very encouraged with that meeting, Mr. Gaudet. If you could pass that on to the minister, I am sure we will be talking with her as well. We represent those groups, and speak on their behalf to the minister about concerns that we have, not only for veterans, but for all seniors in the Province of Nova Scotia. That is basically what it is, Mr. Estabrooks.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Thank you for that.

MR. RUSHTON: We feel it is an extremely important group, because it does represent all our seniors in the Province of Nova Scotia. Barb Burley, I believe, is the Director of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat; oh, she is acting at the present time. We have an excellent rapport with that group, and meet, not on a regular basis, but we meet as required.

MR. ESTABROOKS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments or questions from the members? Mr. Delefos.

MR. DELEFES: There were a couple of documents, I think, that were going to be made available. You will make those available to us, will you? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, on behalf of the committee, I certainly want to thank you for taking the time to come here today, and personally my hope is that when we establish the mandate of this committee, that certainly the concerns of your group, through this avenue, will be a voice in the Legislature, that we will be able to carry your concerns to the people who in fact establish legislation in this province. We don't want this committee to be something that is just an afternoon get-together for two hours and forgotten about.

Your concerns are very important to us, to the whole committee, and we want to be here for you now, but also for the future. We want you to feel that you can contact us at any time. If you have a concern, bring it to this committee, and we will certainly see that that concern is carried forward. Once again, thank you very much on behalf of the committee, and we look forward to seeing you again. Mr. Rushton.

MR. RUSHTON: Mr. Chairman, just a couple of things that I feel should not be just dropped. Our provincial president spoke there in regard to Pharmacare and HST. I will just do this quickly. Yesterday, I had coffee with a member of one of our branches. He is a senior, and he related to me just what kinds of things our seniors are faced with, not only veterans but our seniors in general. He had to get a new car. He paid \$4,000 HST. It wasn't very long until he got his notice where he owed Pharmacare \$215. So, for he and his wife, that is \$430. He received his electric bill - he happens to have electric heat - well over \$100 HST on his electric

bill. Now, we are speaking about someone here, and there are thousands of them out there, who is on a fixed income. They are on fixed incomes, there is no way to do much about it if a bill comes in you are not expecting, or you haven't budgeted for.

He came down with a bacterial stomach infection, which is fairly new, I understand, a number of people have it, and doctors have missed it in their diagnosis and their examinations. So he was recommended about four different kinds of medication, because the medication that is required, some people have side effects. They are also concerned that some of the medication could cause ulcers, so they have to give something to offset that.

The bottom line was, when he went to get his medication, two of the medications were covered by Pharmacare, whereby he paid 20 per cent co-pay, but the other two were not covered by Pharmacare and it cost him over \$100 for each one of those other two medications. He paid that out of his own pocket.

This just gives you a bit of a picture, and we felt that we should leave that thought with you, as to what it is like for not only our veterans, but also every senior in the province. I want to leave that thought with you, Mr. Chairman, and the committee members. We certainly hope that if there is any way that that can be relieved, then it would be greatly appreciated by all the seniors right across our province. Thank you.

MR. LANDSBURG: Just a little bit further on that, Mr. Chairman, before we leave. I have to report back to the members at least that we spoke about this. I know that I read the newspapers too about this and that, and motions in the House and so on, but that does not satisfy my members. We did want you to know that our membership is really concerned about the Pharmacare because they are paying double premiums when they hit 65. They are still paying into the private medical plans. Now, it has just doubled up on them, and the HST. On the set budgets, as you say, I realize there is some relief if you are into a low income, but you are putting those people who are a few dollars up the road back into the no payment, but they are giving it out in payments.

We just want you to know that we are concerned about it and likely we will be getting resolutions at our convention next May in Port Hawkesbury in regard to this. We will likely be talking to other seniors groups. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just as a matter of comment, and maybe the other members can correct me if I am wrong, but I do believe that in the last days of the Legislature, there was an agreement to form a committee to look at, in fact, the Pharmacare Program with the view in mind to eliminating the \$215 premium. So, that is something that is being considered right now. Like I say, if any other members have an interpretation different than mine, maybe they can say, but that is my understanding that that is being considered at this time.

MR. LANDSBURG: And the HST?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, no, the Pharmacare.

MR. LANDSBURG: There is nothing in the books for that.

MR. CHARD: My recollection is actually the same as yours, that there were some assurances given that the Pharmacare premiums would be reviewed with the thought in mind of trying to eliminate them. I have had constituents approach me about this because if they are, for example, retired employees of the federal government, and have taken their medical coverage with them into their retirement, they are now paying close to \$600 a year for that and that covers their drugs. So, it is as you say, it is like a form of double billing. So, they are paying close to \$1,000 a year and, of course, it is not going to cover the entire cost of prescriptions in some cases. So, they are still paying \$1,000 a year for health coverage and it is not covering everything. I think it is really a disservice to our seniors and it is a situation that does need to be addressed.

MR. RUSHTON: Could I just ask one quick question, Mr. Chairman? Will we get a copy of the transactions taking place here this afternoon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Today's minutes? Yes.

MR. RUSHTON: Thank you very much.

MR. MOMBOURQUETTE: Just one last comment. In your deliberations with some of our requests today, you might point out that our volunteer services are such that we refuse to take any payment for our meeting today.

MR. RUSHTON: We did not fill out expense forms, is what he is saying.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[2:24 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[2:29 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess the only business left is just to confirm July 30th as our next meeting with who, Darlene?

MRS. HENRY: The Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans. July 30th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At 1:00 p.m.?

MRS. HENRY: It would be 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

MR. MONTGOMERY: There is no way we can be there, we have a caucus meeting in

Sydney.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On July 30th?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes, on July 30th.

MR. CHARD: Is there another day, or should we still stick with that date since we have a group coming in?

MRS. HENRY: I can see if they could come in at a later time, if you would like. There is going to be a lot of you missing from this, is there?

MR. GAUDET: Yes, there won't be anyone from our caucus there.

MRS. HENRY: Exactly, yes. I can see if we can push it up. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: August 6th?

MRS. HENRY: We can try for August 6th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that okay with you people? I guess we are probably going to have a hard time with vacations and everything. But I really would like to see us keep it going if we can, rather than just put it off. Is August 6th okay with everyone?

MR. ESTABROOKS: What day is August 6th?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is on a Thursday also. Is that all right? So Darlene will try for that.

MR. GAUDET: So if that is available, you will let us know?

MRS. HENRY: Yes, if I can get them, then I will send out the faxes to everybody's offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to adjourn.

MR. CHARD: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, gentlemen.

[The committee adjourned at 2:30 p.m.]