

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, August 6, 1998

Committee Room 1

Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans in Canada

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 Delefes
William Estabrooks
Gordon Balser
James DeWolfe

[Frank Corbett was replaced by Jerry Pye.]
[Peter Delefes was replaced by Yvonne Atwell.]
[William Estabrooks was replaced by Donald Chard.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Rodney Caley
Hansard Editor

WITNESSES

Committee for Veterans Organizations Services of Nova Scotia

Gerard Loughran
Chair

Allan Moore
President



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, AUG. 6, 1998

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

1:00 P.M.

CHAIR
Murray Scott

THE CHAIR: It is 1:10 p.m. and we have enough for a quorum, so we may as well get started. We can go around the table and introduce ourselves.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen. Welcome. This is the third meeting we have had of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. We certainly appreciate you taking the time to come here today and make a presentation to us. I understand you have one presentation to make between you. Maybe what we can do, if it is okay, you can make your presentation and then we can have some open discussion. The members may have some questions of you they may like to ask or you may suggest some things that you would like to see us do on your behalf. So I will turn it over to you.

ALLAN MOORE: Could I make one correction? I am a representative of the Royal Canadian Legion on the Committee for Veterans Organizations Services of Nova Scotia. I want to clarify that point. I am not here representing the Royal Canadian Legion, I am here representing the veterans organizations.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Gentlemen, I would just like to start off saying that we are the Veterans Organizations Services Committee of Nova Scotia, Veterans Geriatrics. Dear comrades, it gives me pleasure to present this almost unknown organization and to enlighten you on the work of this veterans committee. This committee helps to give comfort and show that we remember them as to their needs. Our members pay visits to the hospitals from Yarmouth to Cape Breton at least twice a year or when needed. We meet the last Wednesday of the month, quarterly. Enclosed is some of the aid we have

given to our veterans since we formed this organization. Sincerely yours, Gerard Loughran, Committee Chairman.

As you look through the paper there, you will see that there is one that I have there, a picture of one of the patios that their veterans are enjoying up in Cape Breton. ALLan was one of those who was up there at the time and made the presentation.

THE CHAIR: Excuse me, Allan. You don't have to stand. We are pretty informal here.

ALLAN MOORE: It is very formal with us, in our organizations. Whether you can move or whether you can't move, you get on your feet somehow.

I would just like to say to this Veterans Affairs Committee that this organization was founded because we learned that there were many items needed in the establishments or the hospitals that the veterans were being housed and cared for. I suppose the reason for my knowledge of the history is because I am one of the original founders of the organization. In doing that, we brought in every veterans organization that is in the Province of Nova Scotia, from war amputees right straight through to all the other veterans organizations. If you wish, I could name them, but I don't think it is necessary.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: They are all on the bottom of the page.

ALLAN MOORE: Gerry just informed me that they are all on the bottom of the page you have. There may be some new ones to be added that aren't there.

You might say, well, how did we come by the funds that we have used? Well, it was through generous donations of all members of all the different organizations of veterans within this province that contributed all the monies that we used to spend. We make one inspection a year. It is usually myself, if my health is good enough, and the chairman of the board at the present time is Gerry so he comes with me with one other member. That other member is basically our service officer within our organization. We check and find out what the veterans require that the government doesn't supply.

If you have read through, you will find out that our monies are all accounted for, the types of items that we buy that the government doesn't supply and we cover every veterans hospital or every veterans geriatric-type care bed in the province. We feel very proud that we have been able to do this for those veterans because some of them last for years and linger and others last for no period of time at all. They are no different than anybody else other than they have been dealt a very bad blow in life when they are in that type of category.

This organization was formed and founded and put to good use and has been

going ever since. That is approximately a good 12 years ago now, 15 years ago. We feel very proud of what we have been able to do with the monies that we receive. We invest the funds to generate as much interest as we possibly can get from it but we are slowly and gradually getting down to the bottom end. If you look through everything we have given you, you will find the information is there. We know how tight funds are because when we are trying to collect them ourselves, we don't have any major campaigns going on out there or whatever. We earn it ourselves.

The reason for talking with you people today is to possibly generate interest through yourselves to know exactly what we are doing, how we are doing it, why we are doing it. If you look on the main veteran sheets, the monies that we have invested, the monies we have used, how it has been spent and we certainly know that the veteran is being cared for properly and all of these geriatric care beds that both the province and Dominion have allowed us to have.

I could go a little further with certain types of items that we have supplied and it is only to point out that the government doesn't supply these items and that is what we are all about: anything that the government doesn't do, we do it on behalf of the veteran, through the veterans organizations. So we are separate from the Legion, we are separate from all the other different units. We are collectively exactly what we say, the veterans organizations, trust fund for the Province of Nova Scotia.

If you would like, I think I will leave the listing go. Some of them I have asterisked here and would only be too willing to answer any questions, as I am sure Gerry will be as well, that you may have to ask of us. In 1982 we were actually formed.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Are there any questions you would like to ask?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Balser.

MR. GORDON BALSER: Would you say that the numbers of requests for support from your organization are increasing as veterans age? Is there a greater demand being placed on your service now than, let's say, three years ago, five years ago?

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Yes, there is and we recently increased the beds in nine of the hospitals. I think nine of the hospitals have increased their beds so the demand is becoming greater there now.

MR. BALSER: How would a request for support be brought forward? Do the veterans, themselves, request it or does the hospital request it on their behalf?

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Well, what we do, when we go down to the hospitals, we see the senior nurse or the one in attendance who looks after them there and we get an

idea of the requirements that they need. They tell us that they need special scales for weighing people in wheelchairs or for lowering them into the bath and equipment like that and they give us an idea. Then we take it back to the committee there and say, well, we have inquired about this and it is going to cost so much and what can we do about it? Can we pay for it or can we go half with somebody and get one of the Legions or the other organizations in the area to raise some funds there to pay for the rest of it?

ALLAN MOORE: I will give you a prime example. We do an investigating trip once a year. That is out of our own pockets that we do this and, for example, we hit Springhill last year for the very first time because those beds just came onstream. As the Department of Veterans Affairs lets us know, then we get right on the ball and start working with them. We purchased a hand-held pulse oximeter for the Springhill outlet up there at a cost of \$1,752. It is not supplied. The government did not supply it. It was essential to have it. So we purchased it and made sure that they had it for the veteran that required it at that point in time.

Now, bear in mind one other very important point, that once the veterans are gone this equipment is left for the use of the civilians. The civilians that are there have the use of this equipment as of right now or any other time once we put it into place. I picked that one out because it just happened last year and, yes, the demand is ever increasing, and we are looking for some support if it is humanly possible through you people. I do not know what you can do or what you cannot do but at least you know what we are doing.

THE CHAIR: Just before you go on, maybe the two newest members would like to introduce themselves.

MR. JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, first, I apologize for my lateness. Mr. Moore, my name is Jerry Pye, MLA, Dartmouth North. You and I have met during city council days.

ALLAN MOORE: Many times, yes.

MR. PYE: Many times.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: My name is Gerry Loughran.

MR. PYE: A pleasure to meet you.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Pleased to meet you.

MS. YVONNE ATWELL: My name is Yvonne Atwell and I apologize for being late but I found out I had to be here quite late.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Balser.

MR. BALSER: One last question and it spins out of your request for support. What exactly could we do as a committee to lend our support?

ALLAN MOORE: I am so pleased you asked that question. For example, this whirlpool bath system, it is number two on your list here. We contributed \$3,000 towards that and, of course, all the Legions in that area raised the remainder of the funding because there was no way we could come up with the \$8,000 that it cost. So between our organization and the Legion, the Army, Navy and Air Force, and all the other veterans' organizations, decided they would work in that community, raise the remainder of the money, which they did, and now that hydraulic bath with lift and all is in place in Fishermen's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg. That is the greatest example I can give you from this. We have to be very careful as to how we expend our funds because we are very limited. We cannot put too much in that area and leave nothing for this area. I hope that answers your question.

MR. BALSER: Thank you.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: We also, Mr. Chairman, like to give you an idea, our secretary received correspondence from the Veterans Centre at Camp Hill regarding a new TV. Following that we have here "The Naval Association, president Dick White, is working with the chief of POs on acquiring a new large TV for the vets at Camp Hill Hospital. They have already raised approximately \$16,000 to \$18,000 up to now for it.". These are the kinds of things that we do all the time.

ALLAN MOORE: Could I take that a little further?

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Sure.

ALLAN MOORE: When they originally opened the Veterans Memorial Wing at Camp Hill, we contributed in the vicinity of \$20,000, actually more than that, but \$10,000 went to build a place for the veterans to go sit, to enjoy, and have a drink. That has worked out just tremendously. We are not happy with some of the services that are created at the hospital because we feel there is a bit of neglect here and there when it comes to the feeding of meals and such but we do not know how many people that they have left onstream or how many people they have taken off stream. That perturbs us to no end, to know that these people are not being cared for as well as we think they should be. Now we have visiting parties that go in and visit with them all the time, and take them little tidbits. And yes we know, they get their Old Age Pensions, blah, blah, blah, but most of that ends up going to the hospital in one form or another, and they get some back, but not a great deal. I am not sure if you are all aware of that or not.

The need is there. I guess that is the point we are stressing, that the need is there. We are the organization that is finding out these needs, and trying to supply them to the very best of all of our abilities. We have a very strong Committee of Veterans Organizations. I don't think I can emphasize that any more.

THE CHAIR: Mr. DeWolfe.

MR. JAMES DEWOLFE: Mr. Chairman, would I be safe in saying that the veterans wing at the Sutherland-Harris Memorial Hospital in Pictou is probably a Cadillac of veterans homes?

ALLAN MOORE: I wouldn't go so far as to say that it is a Cadillac. Do you mind if I keep going?

GERARD LOUGHRAN: You were the one who was there.

ALLAN MOORE: I do all of the inspecting, I likely write all the bad letters that get written too, in some cases. It is excellent, and it is done up beautifully, there isn't any question about that. But the others are just as good, but it is a Cadillac, I will tell you that right now.

MR. DEWOLFE: Because I know they have the lifts and the bath and they have all this equipment that was installed . . .

ALLAN MOORE: And they have learned it from this committee. That means I had to do that one down there.

MR. DEWOLFE: But I am sure the money came from Veterans Affairs too . . .

ALLAN MOORE: Veterans Affairs, right.

MR. DEWOLFE: . . . to put the equipment in . . .

ALLAN MOORE: Because we have had to fight with them. Now I might add, I am sure Gerry won't mind me saying this, that we do have a Veterans Affairs person that sits with us with every meeting we have now. So they get the ideas, because I don't think they work the field as hard as we do, for the needs of those veterans. Believe me, I am one of those veterans.

MR. DEWOLFE: You are there at the front line in the grass roots of the situation.

ALLAN MOORE: Right, but I am also one of those guys that has been wounded two or three times too, and I could be in that same position any time at all. The good Lord has seen fit to let me stay viable to the degree that I am in order to, I am sure, help.

MR. DEWOLFE: The reason I mentioned that is because that is the only one in fact that I am familiar with. My father was very fortunate in spending his last few months there. It is just a marvellous facility, and first-rate care. I was really impressed with it. The reason I put the question is because I hope that you hammer away at Veterans Affairs to get some of this equipment, like baths, before you put money into it, because you might be able to channel that money into more productive areas.

ALLAN MOORE: Absolutely. Just to go a little farther with you, there are spacious places in some of these establishments that aren't properly furnished. We furnish as well. We get them the types of chairs that they need for those veterans to sit in. We have bought pianos, and as Gerry said, we have supplied televisions to all the various ones. And we have special people throughout the province that belong to the different organizations that report to us. So we keep our thumb right on everything that is happening. I hope you don't mind me, I might be stealing some of your thunder here. But if it strikes you at the time and you are thinking of it at the time, it is best to say it at the time.

We do all of that. We do a thorough investigation before we can expend any of our funds to make certain that we are doing the right thing for the right people under the right circumstances.

MR. DEWOLFE: And just one more quick question, and thank you very much for your response. It is probably in here somewhere, how many beds in veterans' wings do we have in the province currently?

ALLAN MOORE: We didn't bring that with us. I would say somewhere in the vicinity, without an exaggeration, 200, I think. There could be more.

MR. DEWOLFE: And I think the one in Pictou, for instance, there is usually a waiting list for people to get into . . .

ALLAN MOORE: All the time.

MR. DEWOLFE: Is that consistent across the province?

ALLAN MOORE: Every one of them.

MR. DEWOLFE: So there is need for more beds.

ALLAN MOORE: There is need for more beds, there is no question about it, and people such as us, as our years increase, it is going to become more demanding. But the end result is, I think the thing that you have to think of which is the most important in my eyes, that those same beds are going to be there for the civilian populace when it is

required for a lot of those people, and they are now anyway. It is a case of dollar bills, and we are looking at the whole scope of it. All it says is, here we are, this is what we are about, this is what we have to have.

[1:30 p.m.]

MR. DEWOLFE: Thank you very much.

ALLAN MOORE: You are more than welcome.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: By the way, Comrade Chairman, the DVA representative on the committee is Darlene MacAvlay. She is the representative that attends our meetings.

MR. DEWOLFE: Just butting in for a moment, is she the lady who moved to Dartmouth who recently . . .

ALLAN MOORE: Oh no, that is Nancy somebody. I have forgotten her last name. I was only introduced to the lady once.

MR. DEWOLFE: Yes, I met her as well.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: I think this woman is out of the DVA office on Young Street.

ALLAN MOORE: Yes. She is just a counsellor. (Interruption) No, not the lady you are speaking of, I am talking about the lady who comes to our meetings.

THE CHAIR: Just for clarification, Mr. Balser had asked earlier about what this committee could do to help you in ways of support. I don't know if I . . .

ALLAN MOORE: This committee could say yes or no to special requests. If we need special help on a special project, then I am sure we would sit with this committee, and this committee could say yes or no, we can help. I realize you have to go through the government bureaucracy and all that it entails. But there are certain items that are terribly expensive, that if you look at our funding, we are down pretty small to what we started with.

It is pretty difficult for us to go out to the general membership of all of these organizations now, because tax structuring is starting to become different, we are being hit in different ways, and well, I am going to be very truthful, we are hurt by it all. To think that these men have given up so much, and now they are nailing us; the regional municipality, they are going to start to hit us and hit us hard, and we aren't going to be able to do what we do now.

Can I go just one little bit further . . .

THE CHAIR: Go ahead until you are finished.

ALLAN MOORE: I belong to a Legion that has existed since 1921. In that period of time, that one little Legion in Dartmouth has contributed \$3-plus million to the community, which is far more than any taxes they would ever collect from us. If they start to tax us, we won't have the money to put into the right places. That is another reason for us coming and talking with you today: to look at us carefully, study us carefully, but know what we represent. If I am saying too much, shut me up. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

MR. PYE: I just want to go to Mr. Moore with respect to that. I think what you are making reference to is the property tax on non-profit and charitable organizations that was set up most recently by the HRM, Halifax Regional Municipality. Is that what you are making reference to?

ALLAN MOORE: That is what I am making reference to now.

MR. PYE: Yes, and I am wondering if in fact your Legion, which is on Queen Street in Dartmouth . . .

ALLAN MOORE: King Street.

MR. PYE: King Street, excuse me, yes, and the Army, Navy, Air Force clubs within the metropolitan area have sent a letter off to HRM's Grants Committee, with respect to how distasteful you feel that this taxing process to your organizations have been. And if you haven't, I would recommend that you do so. I have spoken with my regional councillor with respect not only to your organizations, but other organizations that do exceptionally well in the community and offer services to the community that otherwise the community would not receive.

I think you are absolutely correct in bringing this before this particular committee. I think that this committee should in fact, if it is possible for this committee, send a letter off to the Halifax Regional Municipality, particularly to its Grants Committee and to its Taxation Department, and indicate to them that they have some concern with respect to taxing your organizations. We certainly do recognize the contribution that you have made to our community over the years. I would want that to be noted.

ALLAN MOORE: We are only one . . .

MR. PYE: You are only one of many, exactly.

ALLAN MOORE: I wanted to make that clear, because if we have contributed that type of money to the community, this Veterans Organizations Committee is working just as hard, and over the years, we will contribute that and more and more as time progresses. Nobody knows, there may be another war sometime, and some of you people sitting right here with us may have to fight that, God forgive me for saying that. I hope you never have to. I wouldn't want anybody to live through what I have been through, and I am sure Gerry is the same as my myself.

MR. PYE: I want to tell you as well, if I can, that I believe in my conversation with some regional councillors that they are open and receptive to getting feedback. It is not etched in stone at the present time, from my understanding. It is something that you should seriously consider.

ALLAN MOORE: Very much so. That has been done. It is more important to the Army, Navy and Air Force units than it is to the Legions because we have had that exemption, and we have had it for a great number of years. But if we have to take what we have now, then forget it, and I don't want to deviate from what we are actually here about. I am sure that of the 120-plus Legions in the Province of Nova Scotia, the doors would close very quickly. Any monies that are earned there are put back into the community so fast it is unreal.

None of us have any money to have money. Our Poppy Trust Fund is just exactly what it says, it is a trust fund. We can't get anything from it even for this organization.

MR. PYE: Mr. Chairman, would it be in order to draft a motion indicating that this committee should send a letter off to HRM with respect to the issue brought here before this committee today?

THE CHAIR: What do the rest of the members feel?

HON. WAYNE GAUDET: Could I speak to that? I think, Mr. Chairman, before we entertain such a motion, we should certainly have some understanding, basically what the assessment is provincially, right across the board. I am just looking at the Legion hall in my area. If they are paying taxes and the motion is basically in support for HRM, I certainly would like to have more information before I am ready to entertain such a motion.

THE CHAIR: Province-wide?

MR. GAUDET: Province-wide.

MR. PYE: Yes.

ALLAN MOORE: Mr. Chairman, with due respect to these two MLAs, I would suggest that you sit with yourselves when we are through and come up with your own assessments.

THE CHAIR: We will do that.

ALLAN MOORE: I am sure that is the way you would go.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

ALLAN MOORE: Because we are not here pushing anything. We are here making you aware of what we are, and what we represent. It is neither Army, Navy, Air Force, nor Legion, veterans organizations of the Province of Nova Scotia are what we are representing.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chard.

MR. DONALD CHARD: Mr. Chairman, I was going to ask if there have been changes in programs that have taken place that are causing problems to your organization and make it difficult for you to carry out your mandate. Before I could even ask the question you provided some information about one area where clearly there is a problem, the taxes you have to pay on your property, or may have to pay on your properties.

At one of our previous committee meetings we had concerns expressed to us about the cost of maintaining buildings to standard, the fire marshal, building inspectors come in. It is an old building and it was fine when it was built for a certain purpose and now Legions are being told they cannot operate even though they have been operating for a long time.

ALLAN MOORE: Mr. Chairman, through you, in order to answer your question, I have to say this in all fairness. It is not an issue of the Legion. It is an issue of all the veterans organizations. Therefore, it would have nothing to do with us at this meeting today. That is the only way I can answer your question, to answer it correctly and truthfully. You are going to get that another day I am sure when the whole provincial command of the Royal Canadian Legion are going to walk in here upon you and present you with all of these facts.

MR. CHARD: Yes, I just used that as an example.

ALLAN MOORE: No, I understood that. That is why I asked the Chairman if I could go through him to you and just give you that explanation.

MR. CHARD: Yes. What I am curious about is whether there have been changes

in what, for example, the government provides for veterans who are in veterans hospitals, their hospitals, that make it difficult for them to enjoy the level of care that they should be receiving. Are there changes of that nature?

ALLAN MOORE: Yes, there are. That is an ongoing thing that will go on forever because as something is developed more sophisticated than something else within the framework of medical care, then it does not matter who is in that bed, they are going to be treated with the upgrading more so than the downgrading. I think that is the question you are asking me. The answer would be yes, a simple yes.

MR. CHARD: We all know there have been cutbacks in some areas relating to health care. Has this been a particular issue or problem for veterans?

ALLAN MOORE: No, it has not been a problem to the veterans here at this point.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: There was one problem because they were saying that there was the cutback of the nurses in some of the hospitals and that they are not providing the care that they should get because the nurses just cannot handle it. It is too much for them.

The other thing that came up at our last meeting and we were quite concerned about it, you will see on there that we have awnings, et cetera, for the Walter Callow buses. I do not know how many buses they have, two, but they are in terrible shape and they are going to require to be renewed because they have been repaired and repaired and repaired and they are just about falling apart. They were saying it would be cheaper to buy two new buses than to carry on with the repairs that they are having there now. This is a big concern because they do a lot of work taking the people around from Camp Hill and all the rest of it to the different areas there to give them days out. So this was one concern, what we were going to do about these buses.

ALLAN MOORE: It is very important to us that the Callow coaches stay in the type of operation that they are at this particular time unless something better comes along because they can move the sick, I will say it that way because they are used now everywhere, the people in the wheelchairs, even to the people in beds, with the wheelchair type of beds, who are bedridden for the rest of their natural lives are left in these things and these coaches move them with the utmost of ease. Now the time has come that the coaches, as Gerry has just said, are so old that they are beginning to fall apart at the seams and for an example, if you run over our list again - too bad they are not numbered - but it says awnings, et cetera, for Walter Callow buses in Halifax. We have already spent \$7,000 of our money to have those awnings put on those buses to begin with so that the veterans, or anybody else travelling them, could sit in the shade instead of the sun pouring down on them. That is a very important thing.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Balser.

MR. BALSER: Thank you. Just on a clarification, what is a Walter Callow bus?

ALLAN MOORE: I thought everybody knew what they were. The Walter Callow coaches are strictly wheelchair coaches. They are big and they carry approximately 20 wheelchair patients. That could be slightly more now because I am just quoting off the top of my head.

MR. BALSER: If you were looking to replace them, where would you go to get them replaced? Is this a manufacturer's name or something?

ALLAN MOORE: We would have to go through a man by the name of Andrew Ritcey, who is the responsible body at Camp Hill Hospital Veterans Memorial Wing, and whatever companies they deal with that would be the replacement companies. We could find that information out for you, gladly, and forward it on to you but the time has come that these old buses are not just going to chug along forever. At the present time, they get the veterans out to the various different Legions that can house them within a certain mile radius. Because of illnesses, they can only travel so far.

Not every community gets the service of those coaches as we do in the metropolitan area but that is only understandable because the heavy population in the community is here. The heavy population of veterans is here but they do send the coaches to some of the other hospitals to take them out for a day and they get a good run to maybe the Legion in Lunenburg, well, Fishermen's Memorial Hospital is there. They have their own means and they get them back and forth, I happen to know this. But as you get into the other smaller communities, the larger coaches help considerably. They take them, they show them a lot of nice entertainment. They give them a nice meal. They are allowed to have a drink under supervision and they get their tickets and they have a drink. So that is what your Callow coach does.

To go a little further, there was a man in the Great War, his name was Walter Callow. He was bedridden for his entire life in Camp Hill Hospital and could get nowhere. He is the man who actually designed these buses that have been in use since, I would say 1947 to be safe. The Walter Callow coaches have been going ever since that time. As an engineering officer at 6th Company REME many moons ago, I was able to get the repairs done through the Army, free, for nothing, and we kept them right up to bang, right on. The government picked up the tab and were very pleased to be able to do that. None of those resources are available to them anymore and they are just riding on a thread and a prayer, if you want the God's truth, and with what monies that the Legions can give them to keep them going and the rest of our organizations.

MR. BALSER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

MR. PYE: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to make comment with respect to the Walter Callow buses and the awnings. They were out during the Dartmouth Natal Day parade most recently down by Lake MicMac and the awnings are there and they provided an excellent shade. I also want to recognize the Callow buses because before public transit came in and Access-A-Bus, there was only one way of moving disabled individuals in wheelchairs and people with poliomyelitis as well.

Those individuals were, in fact, thanks to Veterans Affairs and people like yourselves, were able to use the Walter Callow buses in order to transport themselves to special events. The Walter Callow buses are also used to bring people from the Army, Navy, Air Force who are disabled individuals, to the Metro Centre and take them back to their special occasions and so on.

ALLAN MOORE: All the time.

MR. PYE: I am concerned about the Department of Veterans Affairs. Surely there must be some avenue whereby they can provide some financial assistance to bring in some new buses. These buses probably cost somewhere between \$80,000 to \$100,000 each and probably even more.

ALLAN MOORE: I think you would be talking \$150,000.

MR. PYE: Yes, so I am not going to guess as to what the cost of these buses would be but I do know that you indicated that there are two but I believe there were somewhere around four Walter Callow buses, maybe two of the most recent or something. However, I am not here to debate that. The point is this, you do need new buses and you do need to have buses to transport those individuals around. I am wondering, has there been any approach to Veterans Affairs with respect to providing some funding for the purchase of new Callow buses?

ALLAN MOORE: All right, I will answer your question for you very briefly. The Walter Callow coaches have a special committee that raises the necessary funds. We are only part of the vehicle that helps and yes, I would suspect, not knowing for sure, that the federal government definitely helps now with these coaches, not likely in this Province of Nova Scotia where we were the very first but I think would be in any province across our great nation today. I honestly firmly believe that but I am not positive of that.

I do recall, having served at the Dominion level in the Royal Canadian Legion for eight terms, that we discussed them at various times but I can't honestly say that we ever came back with the concrete answer. So I know you are not supposed to assume anything because that is crazy, to assume anything, but I would feel that all of that was actioned

through those types of steps in order to meet the requirements or the prerequisites that were required. I think what we are trying to say to you from our point of view is that if we needed help, could we come to this committee and possibly could the government do anything? I know how you are strapped now. We know because we have to pay the tax bill and you people are watchdogs, regardless of Parties. You people are our watchdogs who have to do just that for all of us and without that type of integrity on two sides of the table, then there can't be that happy medium so we have to find some level ground to work with and I guess that is what we are asking.

THE CHAIR: Any further questions from members?

MR. CHARLES MACDONALD: Could I talk on your hospitals. The Glace Bay hospital, is that a full veterans hospital or is that a part of it?

ALLAN MOORE: If Gerry doesn't mind, I will just keep answering. It is a part of the Glace Bay hospital. The full wing for Veterans Affairs is in Sydney Mines and I am sure if you are from Cape Breton, you are aware of that. Our representative is Jean MacLean down there. She is a very old lady at the moment but she was a nursing sister through all the war and has a great knowledge of what our organization is because she is one of the original founders as I am, myself, for this organization. If you were to talk with Jean in Cape Breton, she is our representative down there. That is the only part of the province that we don't go because she covers it so adequately and does such a remarkable job that it isn't necessary for us to travel that far.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: She keeps us informed.

ALLAN MOORE: And she keeps us totally informed. I hope that is answer enough for your question.

MR. CHARLES MACDONALD: Yes, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Are there any further questions or comments?

Gentlemen, on behalf of this committee, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for coming today and sharing your thoughts and concerns with us. I can assure you that this committee is very concerned about the issues you brought forward here today. We will be meeting and discussing, as we have done with the various groups that met with us in the past, and hopefully making some recommendations on your behalf in the future to the government. I think the onus is upon us at this point in time. Certainly the people who have gone before us have laid the groundwork for us and it is up to us now to carry the fight for you. We are certainly well aware of that and I think you will find that everyone on this committee feels the same way. So, once again, thank you very much for coming today and we look forward to carrying those concerns for you.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: It certainly has been a pleasure coming, Mr. Chairman, and to you, gentlemen, it was a pleasure to get all of this off our chest and give it to somebody else to think about.

ALLAN MOORE: It certainly was a pleasure, on my behalf, to be with you and I hope that you didn't find us boring and I certainly hope that the understanding is there, I feel it is, because you feel vibes in the air and you certainly understand within yourself that it is there. We just hope that if and when the time comes that we have to come back to you, that you will be as nice as you have been today. Remember one thing, Mr. Chairman - it is Mr. Scott; see, I have a memory too - that we haven't asked you for one buck. All we are asking is possibly to help us in the tax structure so that we can continue to do the good work that we are doing.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: We should have brought a tin hat with us. (Laughter)

ALLAN MOORE: But, gentlemen, thank you very much for your time and effort.

GERARD LOUGHRAN: Through your DVA representative, we will try to keep you informed of what we are doing.

ALLAN MOORE: Are we supposed to fill in an expense claim?

THE CHAIR: I don't think so.

ALLAN MOORE: I will donate mine, if there is one, back to the government. You people likely need it as badly as we do and I am not envious of any of your jobs.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Goodbye.

Just in regard to Mr. Pye's motion, there, I am not sure with our mandate, I don't know, it is open for discussion. Go ahead.

MR. GAUDET: Maybe, Mr. Chairman, what I can do is, if that is the wish of the committee, I can go back to the department to bring back some information, to find out if all Legions across the province are assessed and pay property taxes. I suspect what we are going to find probably, with 55 municipal units across the province, we are probably going to have different stories for different areas. I can certainly undertake to go back, get that information and provide that information to all the members. Once we have that information before the committee, then we are probably in a better situation to either act upon or move towards Jerry's motion if the committee so wishes or if we so wish to have a general motion for the whole province. So I think once we have that information, then we will be in a better position to move with a decision.

[2:00 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: Just something, if I could, Jerry, and it is just within the last few weeks that I had the occasion to gain a little bit of knowledge in regard to that, because I had no idea until a concern was brought on behalf of a constituent. It was a non-profit organization basically, these groups are around the province, but I don't think there are very many that actually own the building that they are in, so I made some contacts on their behalf with the government. Through that I learned that the Legion in Springhill, it is up to the municipality, isn't it, basically, whether to charge them residential, commercial or no tax at all?

MR. GAUDET: That is right.

THE CHAIR: I know that there are some that do and some that don't. That is my understanding, and I was making inquiries on behalf of a different organization, and that was what I was told, that the province leaves it to the municipality to decide. Is that right, Wayne?

MR. GAUDET: I do believe.

THE CHAIR: To decide whether to levy that tax, they are assessed, or whether that town or municipality actually wants to charge them tax, it can charge them at the commercial rate, residential rate or not at all.

MR. PYE: Mr. Chairman, I guess that is why I am very pleased to see that the Minister of Municipal Affairs serves on this committee. (Laughter) It is the fact that he recognizes the role of municipal government, and municipal government does another factor as well. Not only is it up to the municipality to make the charge of whether they are taxed, at what rate, be it residential or commercial, but they also have the opportunity to send it forward through their Grants Committee and charge them a tax rate, but exempt it through a grant allocation.

They do that from time to time as well, so it looks as though the municipality is giving a contribution to the non-profit or charitable organization, when in fact, it is just a paper process that goes through. What is pleasing to hear is that the minister and his department can do that. He can look at it throughout the entire Province of Nova Scotia, to see how each municipality addresses not only the Legions but the Army, Navy, Air Force clubs, and the charitable and non-profit organizations with respect to taxation.

I am willing to hold a resolution until such time as that comes forward at the next meeting, so that we have a better understanding of exactly what is occurring out there. Then the minister, through his department and the province can turn around and set a uniform policy throughout the province with respect to this, if that is what you choose to

do, or recommend to municipalities what they should consider, or let the municipalities make the decision. You have the options and you have the power as well, we must be clear on that as well, but you do have the power to make those recommendations.

Therefore, I am quite prepared to not entertain shifting a resolution in that direction until such time as we hear from the minister with respect to the findings from his department.

MR. GAUDET: I just want to get a clarification, should that information be referred to the Chair or to all the members of the committee?

MR. PYE: It should be referred to the Chair, of course, but all members of the committee as well, there is no problem with that.

THE CHAIR: Anything else before we adjourn?

MR. CHARLES MACDONALD: I guess I agree with what the honourable members are saying, and I think it is important that we look at them all, so that we can treat them all in the same respect, as opposed to introducing a motion to reflect on one municipal unit. Beyond that, we have the tax structure, and you have your water and you have your sewer services as well that impact on our charitable groups, whether it be the Legions or the halls and the churches and that.

It may be interesting to understand how, I guess, each municipal unit deals with all the areas of impact on that building. Do you know what I am saying, Wayne? Inverness County, I am not sure, we may charge sewer and water maintenance, which is costly to the operation as well, although the Legion itself would be exempt tax-wise. Would it be hard, if we are going to get some information, to get all the information on it? I guess what I am trying to understand is all the areas that would financially impact on the Legion. We have the tax side, the sewer and the service side.

MR. GAUDET: I just want to make sure, I think originally what Jerry was bringing forward was Legions, now we are looking at non-charitable organizations?

MR. CHARLES MACDONALD: No, I just referred to non-charitable organizations but we are looking at Legions, yes. Sorry.

MR. GAUDET: I just wanted to make sure of that.

THE CHAIR: And it is the assessment of Legions we are talking about, is it?

MR. GAUDET: Yes, that is what I had understood.

MR. PYE: We are just looking at specifically the assessed property rate, the real

property rate, or the business occupancy rate and that is primarily what we are looking at. We are only looking at that with respect to Legions and Army, Navy, Air Force clubs, or Veterans Affairs, associations or organizations that occupy premises.

MR. CHARLES MACDONALD: I guess I am asking is it possible to just get the additional information on sewer and water services to understand if all the municipal units as well charge them in that area so we have a proper understanding of what the municipal unit does charge that Legion?

THE CHAIR: To do that, Mr. Minister, are you going to have to contact each municipality?

MR. GAUDET: How about if we more or less focus on the property tax. I can certainly ask and probably report off the record to the committee in terms of water and sewer rates that are being charged. If that information is available, I certainly will bring it forward but I just want to make sure that I understand what we have agreed upon, as I do not want to mislead any committee members. We will provide all members across the board with the 55 units with the assessment on Legions, the ones at home and the ones outside your area.

THE CHAIR: Any further business before we move to adjourn? I guess we are looking for a next meeting date. I know August 20th for us is out because of vacations and we are caucusing away. Then Mrs. Henry is going on vacation.

MRS. DARLENE HENRY (Clerk of the Committee): I was looking at September 10th. That would be the next available date if it is okay with everyone.

MR. DEWOLFE: Some members of this committee I believe are involved with the Committee on Workers' Compensation. We are going to do our road travelling and that will be over the second week of September.

THE CHAIR: Jim, do you have the schedules on it?

MR. DEWOLFE: Yes, I do.

THE CHAIR: Is there anyone else besides yourself here, Jim, that is on that?

MR. DEWOLFE: Charlie and Paul. September 10th is the last day of our hearings. The week following is clear for me. I know that.

THE CHAIR: Shall we meet on September 17th?

We will go with that date.

MRS. HENRY: Actually, I am going to try to contact several groups and I believe they are going to get back to me with the names and addresses of those people.

THE CHAIR: We have had some more requests. Thank you very much, everyone, for coming today. I know in the middle of summer meetings are the last thing on everyone's mind but enjoy the rest of the summer. See you in September. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 2:09 p.m.]