

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, November 18, 1999

Committee Room 1

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia Command

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

William Langille (Chair)
Eileen O'Connell
Jerry Pye
Mark Parent
David Wilson (Cape Breton East)
David Morse
David Hendsbee
Mary Ann McGrath
Brian Boudreau

[William Langille was replaced by Kerry Morash.]
[David Morse was replaced by Jon Carey.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotian Command

Clarence Dawe
President

Fred Mombourquette
Chair of Veterans Services and Seniors Committee

John Landsburg
Past President

Vic Barnes
2nd Vice-President



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, NOV. 18, 1999

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
David Wilson

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. We will call the meeting to order. First of all, if we could just start by introducing the members who are present here today for the committee.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: If I could ask our guests here this morning to introduce themselves as well we will get on with our presentation. The gentlemen over there, for the record, if you would, when it comes time to step up to a microphone so we can have it on record as to who is here.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, could I ask perhaps for Mr. Barnes to join us over here.

THE CHAIR: You certainly can. Mr. Barnes, would you like to have a seat at the microphone? We just finished introductions so . . .

KERRY MORASH: I am the MLA for Queens County.

THE CHAIR: . . . we will get under way. It is rather informal as far as I am concerned in terms of - oh, we have one more introduction to do. Mr. Parent has just arrived. Mark, would you just like to introduce yourself please, before you grab a coffee.

MARK PARENT: If you are French, I am Parent; if you are English, I am Parent, I am from Kings North.

THE CHAIR: Gentlemen, would you like to start your presentation.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, first of all, on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia Command, we want to thank the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for allowing us to appear here today to voice the concerns of our veterans and our seniors. It is our hope that this presentation which we will bring before you does not fall on deaf ears. These concerns of our membership are legitimate and interfere with the lives of our members whom we represent. It would be a complete waste of your time and ours if these concerns are not presented on the Legislature floor to make the other members of the Legislature aware of the concerns of our veterans and seniors.

I will now turn the Legion's part over to our Chairman of Veterans Services and Seniors Committee, Comrade Fred Mombourquette.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, honourable members, our Veteran Services and Seniors Committee is made up of three members and our provincial president. We each have a presentation to make and if you agree, I will start off, followed by our President, Clarence Dawe; followed by our Past President, John Landsburg; and then our 2nd Vice-President, Vic Barnes, will make our last presentation.

Mr. Chairman, on July 16, 1998, 16 months ago, our committee met with the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Most of the issues we bring before you today have been presented before, but because so little action has been taken on these issues we have no choice but to present them again in the hope that this time sincere consideration will be given to our requests.

We realize that since our last meeting we have had an election in our province and we are now bringing our concerns to a different and new committee. It is our hope that we will be able to work together to address the concerns of our veterans who are reaching the time in their lives when too many of them are unable to speak for themselves because they are either confined to their homes, or in a long-term care facility, or are restricted in one way or another because of medical reasons or age. But, I can assure you that they feel as we do, that if some of these issues are not dealt with soon, it will be too late for them, as our veterans will not be here to carry on the fight for the 114,000 men and women who paid the supreme sacrifice that allows us the many privileges we are able to share, such as we are doing here today, speaking in a free and peaceful country.

We would like to start off with a little good news. Since our last meeting we are pleased to report that our Royal Canadian Legion Call to Remembrance Program is making some progress in our schools with the assistance of some of our teachers. This program has now

increased to 65 schools for a total of over 400 students taking part across our province, but our objective is to have 100 per cent participation. The provincial play-offs will take place May 4th, 5th and 6th, 2000, at F.E. Butler branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Chester, Nova Scotia. Our Provincial Command Committee are looking to expand this competition to a Maritime play-off. For more detailed information, it can be found by covering our Call to Remembrance Program in Hansard dated July 23, 1998.

In regard to Remembrance Day in our schools, as you know, November 5 to November 11, 1999, was marked Veterans Week, a time set aside to encourage Canadians to honour the commitment and courage of Canada's war veterans and peacekeepers. This year from all reports it was very successful, with many of our teachers participating and for their assistance we thank them most sincerely, as well as our veterans, Legion branches and the children who took part.

As you are aware, our veterans are invited to speak in schools to the children on some of their experiences as servicemen and servicewomen during war times, but we are sorry to say that the last few years our branches are having a problem getting enough veterans to attend these sessions at school because, as I mentioned earlier, they are either confined to their homes, or in long-term care facilities, or are restricted in one way or another because of medical reasons or age.

This, Mr. Chairman, leads to one of the reasons we are here today and that is to, once again on behalf of all veterans, ask for your support in attempting to have the history of Canada's involvement in two world wars, Korea, Merchant Navy and peacekeepers integrated into our provincial school system as a subject and part of a history course. This becomes more important as our veterans continue to age. We need the younger generations to remember our history and to bring it forward into the future.

I am sure you will agree that very little information on Canadian military history is found in our high school textbooks today. We have made attempts in the past to set up a meeting with the Minister of Education to discuss this very issue, but were unsuccessful. This September 10, 1999, our provincial president wrote the Minister of Education on our behalf and I would like to quote a paragraph of this letter. "On behalf of all the Members The Royal Canadian Legion in Nova Scotia, we respectfully request that you investigate the possibility of incorporating the history of our Veterans from World War I, World War II, Korean War and the United Nations Peace Keeping efforts of our Service Personnel into a Canadian History Course to be taught within the Schools in Nova Scotia."

On October 7, 1999, we did receive a reply from the Office of the Minister of Education. If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to quote from that reply, "Currently, all students in Nova Scotia are required to study Canadian history and, in particular, World War I and World War II as part of the curriculum of the compulsory grade 8 social studies course."

In another paragraph, "At the senior high level, students who choose to take grade 12 Canadian history will study these eras in depth. In our grade 12 global history course, which is one of the two choices students have to fulfil the mandatory global studies credit, case studies on the Korean War and peacekeeping are included in the course of study."

As you can see by the above, this is nothing near to what our veterans have been asking for. Unless we can arrange a meeting with all interested parties through the Department of Education, we will never get anywhere with this issue. This is why we are relying on you to help us make this happen.

To support what I have been saying about Canada's war history and why it is so important to have it as a subject in our schools, I would like to read a report from an Angus Reid survey. This report was just released over the radio on November 10th of this year, a day before Remembrance Day. I obtained a copy from the local radio station and it reads - and I won't say what radio station - Military education Ottawa. What was Vimy Ridge? If you said the setting of a great Canadian victory during the First World War, you would be correct; you would also be in the minority.

An Angus Reid survey commissioned by the Dominion Institute suggests Canadians don't know very much about Canadian war history. The survey asked 15 questions to a cross-section of 1,500 Canadians. Slightly more than half failed the test. A majority of those under 25 who flunked, got three-quarters of the questions wrong. Only one-third knew the significance of Vimy Ridge, while less than one in four thought D-Day marked the bombing of Pearl Harbour.

The Dominion Institute's Rudyard Griffiths calls the results sad, particularly since tomorrow is the century's final Remembrance Day, a century filled with bloodshed in which more than 100,000 Canadians lost their lives in wars. The Institute has set up a website for Canadians to find and discuss our war history.

A lack of knowledge about Canada's military history comes as no surprise to the head of the National War Museum, Jack Granatstein. He points out that Canadian history is not a mandatory high school course in four provinces, and as he puts it, if it is not in the schools, people won't know anything about their military history or Canadian history. An Angus Reid survey commissioned by the Dominion Institute suggests Canadians don't know very much about their war history. Slightly more than half of the 1,500 Canadians polled failed the test, and a majority of those under age 25, who flunked out, got three-quarters of the questions wrong. So you can see by the survey, our veterans have reason to be concerned about the future of remembrance and our youth. As we approach a new century, it is our hope, that with your assistance, we will be able to meet the concerns of our veterans and the teaching of Canada's involvement in past wars and peacekeeping will become a reality in our schools.

Mr. Chairman, at the end of the session today, it will be our privilege to present you and your committee with copies, in booklet form, of Canada and the First World War, Canada and the Second World War, Canadians in Korea, and Canada's Merchant Navy. They have been issued by Veterans Affairs Canada and are an excellent source of information. Thank you very much for your time. I will now turn our meeting over to our President, Comrade Clarence Dawe.

I might add one thing, Mr. Chairman, if you don't mind. If we could all present our briefs first before any questions, in that way, we might be able to get them all in, in case we run out of time. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Absolutely.

CLARENCE DAWE: Thank you, Comrade Mombourquette. Mr. Chairman, members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I have been asked to present to you today the problem area of video lottery terminals in the Legion. We at the Royal Canadian Legion feel that we are not being dealt with fairly with these machines. We are lumped in the same category as all other bar owners. Where private clubs and bars operate for profit, we, at the Royal Canadian Legion, are a non-profit organization.

The majority of funds we raise in our organization goes towards veterans and seniors in our group. We are also major sponsors of cadets throughout the province, also the Little League, minor hockey and other groups within our communities. We also give out major bursaries and send our youth to Encounters with Canada. We also have a leadership training camp that we have operated at Acadia University for the past 35 years. For the past two years, the Royal Canadian Legions across Canada were the main supporters of the Terry Fox Foundation. In Nova Scotia, we also sponsor the provincial track and field meet and our winners are taken across Canada every summer to the Legion's national track and field meet. In the past year, the Royal Canadian Legion has donated into the communities of our nation \$337 million. So you have just heard why our members are complaining that we are lumped together with clubs and bars that operate for profit alone with no commitments to our communities.

I am sure all of you are aware of a Legion in your area and what it means to your community. That is why we are asking for a fair share of the profits to help us support our efforts within our communities. Presently we receive approximately 21 per cent of the profits of the VLTs. From these profits we must pay for our phone lines, the hook-up, and we are also responsible for the insurance of these machines in our buildings, all of which comes out of our small portion of the profit.

The Royal Canadian Legion is, and always was, a community-minded organization. For us to be in the same bracket as a club and a bar for profit is not totally fair. We ask, if you are sincere in your terms as members of the Legislature, to take a serious long look at our

organization within our communities and you will see that we not only represent our veterans and seniors and their loved ones, but we also represent all of our province and our community involvement. I thank you for allowing me to make my presentation. I will turn it over now to Comrade John Landsburg.

JOHN LANDSBURG: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. I have been assigned the task of speaking on two old requests, one new one, along with a letter from the Minister of Finance dated June 1, 1999 regarding war memorials. We never received a copy of this letter. It went to the Legion branches, but not to our command. I would like to know, in reference to this, and I guess I would have to read the letter to explain it a bit.

The Minister Don Downe wrote on June 1st, I am writing to let you know about a measure I announced as part of the Nova Scotia budget for 1999-2000 concerning war memorials. A number of people in your organization asked for some measure of help in maintaining war memorials throughout this province. I am pleased to let you know that we are able to assist in the reduction of repair costs through a rebate program on the provincial portion of the HST paid on materials and labour. This amounts to an 8 per cent tax rebate to your organization. Applications to this program can be made through your local municipality.

I guess what we would like to know is if this is still in effect due to the change in government, or would there be anything? Possibly somebody could answer that question for us.

MARK PARENT: Are you making a request for that now?

JOHN LANDSBURG: Yes, if you would. (Interruptions)

THE CHAIR: Just one second. I just wanted to make sure that the members are recognized for the purposes of Hansard. Mr. Parent from Kings North.

MARK PARENT: I recommend we write a letter to the Minister of Finance asking if that decision is still intact.

THE CHAIR: Would we like to deal with that at the present time or continue on?

DAVID HENDSBEE: I would second that, but I would also suggest that the transcript of today's hearings, dealing with the VLTs, should also be brought to the attention of the minister.

MARK PARENT: I agree with that.

DAVID HENDSBEE: As well, the other matters about Canadian history should be brought to the attention of the Minister of Education, just provide them with copies of today's transcripts for their information. Two motions then.

MARK PARENT: Maybe we are making it too broad, David.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Parent, go ahead. Sorry, this is just for the purposes of Hansard because we did have a lot of problems at the last committee meeting sorting out who was talking.

MARK PARENT: Mr. Chairman, perhaps we should just stick to the first request, to ask if that position by the Finance Minister in the previous government still holds in the present government, and then deal with the other ones in a different fashion.

DAVID HENDSBEE: I will second the request.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau, first of all.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, I guess just writing the minister to ask if this provision is still there is not enough for me. I think if it was granted by the previous administration - I guess the budget wasn't tinkered with too much by the new government. I would suggest the letter be more forward and just indicate quite clearly to the minister that this rebate of 8 per cent was provided by the previous government and that we expect it to be endorsed by this current government.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, as everybody is well aware, the new government is doing a full program service review of all its programs. I think what we should just do now is to request from the Minister of Finance what the status is for this particular program, had it been put in place, have there been any rebates offered from the previous administration, and will there be a continuation of the program or not?

MARK PARENT: I would agree with Mr. Hendsbee, and that is why I made the motion. We may be anticipating a problem that is not there. If the answer comes back that it is there, then fine. If it comes back that it is being reviewed, then we can follow through with perhaps Mr. Boudreau's suggestion and look at perhaps being more proactive in asking for it to be put in. I think we are probably anticipating a problem that isn't there now. Why do that? Why not just make the request, and if it is not there, then follow through with that second action.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, I will be voting against the motion. I firmly believe that the provision was put in the budget. It shouldn't have been taken out, if it was. I

am not saying that it was, I am not sure. I am not going on the record to say that it was taken out, but if it was it should be put back in. I think this committee, in taking that shortcut, we send the letter to the minister and indicate that we want to know if this provision is still there, and by the time we get the letter back and then reply, it could be two or three months down the road.

I think, in all fairness to the Command, the letter should indicate quite clearly that we expect this rebate to be in place. If it is not, he should initiate whatever avenue he has to go into to provide this to the command and to each and every Legion. I think it goes a long way to say what type of respect we have for these veterans. It is no good for me to sit here and extend how much we respect these people, they provided our freedom.

[9:15 a.m.]

These gentlemen were here twice already, I think if this committee is really going to do the work that it was intended to do, we should do it. Get on with it. Don't take the long path, take the short path. I will be voting against the motion.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor, Mr. Parent's, for a letter of inquiry, shall we call it, to the Minister of Finance regarding this situation, seconded by Mr. Hendsbee. Any further discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Sorry, Mr. Landsburg, just a little discussion there that you got us into. You can continue.

JOHN LANDSBURG: Now for our new request. Two years ago we put before our Dominion Command, a resolution asking them to intercede with us with the federal government to enact laws in reference to the desecration of our Canadian flag. This was passed at our convention. Our Dominion Command then went to the Justice Minister on March 31st, and as of August 5th of this year, had still not received a reply to that response.

They went out again on August 5th, and I will read part of this. "I am sure that you are aware of the most recent episode of our flag being held in contempt, this time by the representatives of the Reverend Fred Philips in his anti-gay crusade. Once again the symbols of our nationhood have been vandalized and burned in public." I will just stop there. This has been going on - by reading the newspapers - for quite a while now. I guess what we are asking of this committee, through the province, is possibly the province and possibly other provinces, could push a little, take a stand on this in regard to asking Ottawa to enact these laws. We feel very strongly that our flag is what our 114,000 people died for, over this last century. I will just

leave it at that, and that will be your decision. We are asking for your assistance in dealing with Ottawa in this regard.

Now, to the old. In our last meeting with your body, we inquired about track and field facilities in the province. We now find out there are only three provinces in Canada that cannot host a national meet, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, the Maritime Provinces. In your interim report dated November, which was this committee's interim report, November 1998, you did touch on this subject by stating, "Encourage participation between the municipality and the province in enhancing Beazley Field up to national standards for Track and Field meets that are held annually across Canada by the Royal Canadian Legion, Dominion Command and its ten provincial commands."

Since that time athletes in Nova Scotia, who look after our meets, advised the municipality what was required at Beazley, but since that time we have found that Beazley has deteriorated even more. Last summer the washrooms were even closed over there. Metropolitan Field in Lower Sackville is now closer, but not yet up to national standards. The other provinces have their fields, usually located at universities, which takes care of all the sports because they can live there and so forth and so on. It is more desirable that way.

Now I understand that none of our universities in Nova Scotia have these facilities as of now. We would like you to look at this again and possibly, either with the universities or one of these fields, through the municipalities, try to get something going. We had the occasion, because we were promised, I have letters here too, that Beazley Field would be ready by 2000 for this. We had requested the track meet, which has never been held in Nova Scotia but since that time, we have found out things weren't going, we had to cancel out on that. In fact, the only place in Eastern Canada that can hold a track meet is in St. John's, Newfoundland. That sort of costs everybody more money because east has to go west, and so forth and so on in that regard. I will leave that with you, and possibly you could look back and see if there is anything you can do in this regard. Thank you.

My last item is one that wasn't touched on by your committee at our last meeting, and we did get into it but nothing seems to be changing. At the time I had stated that we were receiving lots of phone calls at our Command asking what we were going to do about certain things in the province. I will name those things: one was Pharmacare, another was HST and utilities. Now, just recently, it is starting to ring again because we pick up a newspaper one morning and we read that possibly in five months' time we are going to have a tax on 911.

We understand taxes and so forth and so on but what we are concerned with are our veterans and seniors in the province. Many other seniors organizations, retired people, are in the same boat in this respect. I think my stand personally on this regard is those who are in need or are just barely making it, when they have to pay an extra \$39 or \$40, or up to \$75 on HST on utilities, I think it puts them in a very bad spot. We are definitely taking a stand, with

the other organizations in this regard, as to the possibility of this committee or the government taking a look at some of these problems.

With regard to Pharmacare, we did bring that up at the last meeting. Since that time, Pharmacare has been looked after as far as the Public Service insurance part. We are not paying double the premiums any more, if you belong to the Public Service plan, but I have received phone calls and had conversations from other members who have private plans, they are still paying double. Possibly somebody could mention this, that seniors that do have private plans are paying double premiums with regard to Pharmacare. That is my request.

THE CHAIR: Comrade Vic.

VIC BARNES: Mr. Chairman, honourable members, my concerns today are the ageing population in Nova Scotia. I will be speaking mainly on my area of expertise which is around Kings County and the Kingston Legion. However, these concerns go right across the province.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today of the concerns of the Royal Canadian Legion for the veterans, their families and cohorts. I represent an area where the population of seniors is growing every year. In fact, my home community of Kingston has a significantly higher percentage of seniors than the national average of 12.3 per cent.

For over a decade the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 98 has worked collaboratively with other groups addressing the concerns of older residents of Nova Scotia. In the process we have learned a great deal about the needs in the community and we have arrived at some innovative ways of meeting those needs. Today I will detail for you some of what we have found.

The first one is on transportation. The western region of Nova Scotia is entirely rural. It has the advantage of offering a peaceful way of life, affordable housing and a reduced tax rate. All of these features are attractive to older people. However, rural life also offers challenges to people as they age. One of the major barriers ageing rural residents face is that of transportation. Few areas have public transportation and in those areas that do, it is inadequate to meet the needs of most older people. The rural areas of Nova Scotia typically have large distances between communities and accessing physicians, dentists, banks and grocery stores can be a costly ordeal. Ten years ago the Legion in Kingston teamed up with VON Kings to establish a volunteer transportation program. Older people in the community could call for transportation 24 hours in advance and be driven anywhere in the county for a cost of \$5.00 for a return trip. The drivers pick them up at the door, escort them to their appointment if necessary, and return them home. The drivers are compensated for their expenses but not their time.

The calls for this program originally came through the Legion but after approximately 18 months the program outgrew the capacity of the Legion to meet the demand and calls began

to be taken by the VON. There are now approximately 400 older people in Kings County using this service and they keep six to eight volunteer drivers busy every day. The program costs approximately \$50,000 per year and it is a constant struggle to sustain this efficient and cost-effective rural service. It should be seen as a model for other rural areas to follow, but the daily struggle to survive is not a strong selling feature. I invite the provincial government to explore the possibility of funding of such transportation services across the province, thus reducing the burden on rural seniors.

My next subject is informal caregiving. As people age they are increasingly susceptible to chronic conditions. These conditions affect people both physically and mentally. Shorter hospital stays, insufficient long-term care beds and a shift toward home care have resulted in new expectations of family members. In fact, 80 per cent of all care for seniors is provided by family members. Most often the primary care provider is also an older person and the burden of providing constant care takes its toll on the health of that caregiver.

Again, the Legion has been instrumental in addressing this concern. For four years three Legion branches in Kings County have collaborated with VON Kings to offer adult day services. This is a cost-effective and high quality means of providing respite care. We were happy to see that adult day programs were included in the platform of the governing Party, but the Legions in Kings County have just been contacted again and informed that there has been no word from the government regarding funding for these programs and that they will need the financial support of the Legions again this year. I invite the government of this province to consider responding to the funding concerns of adult day programs as soon as possible.

Based on the situations of caregiver stress that we have seen I would also recommend increased respite care hours be made available through Home Care Nova Scotia and designated respite beds be established in long-term care facilities around the province. Informal caregivers have also found that it is difficult to access information about services in this province. There needs to be a central point from which informal caregivers can get the information they need to provide the support and care to their loved ones.

This past spring the Legion launched a unique program to help service officers and branch members learn more about how and where to access health information. It involved an eight week program, one afternoon per week, in which resource people shared information about a specific aspect of health and the participants were taught how to access more information by computer. For many participants this was their first exposure to computers and all they had to offer. I would recommend that this program be offered to a wider community as it is a powerful tool to connect with both information and others who are facing similar concerns.

I would now like to speak on volunteer services. Many of the services that older people find a requirement of their daily lives are provided by volunteers and many of these volunteers

are seniors themselves. These volunteer services include friendly visiting, Meals on Wheels, frozen meal programs, congregate dining programs and exercise programs to name only a few. In the western region of Nova Scotia the provision of these services is coordinated by professional coordinators of Volunteer Services. These positions are funded, in part, by the regional health board and Home Care Nova Scotia. The training, support, recognition and encouragement provided by the coordinators are most important to the volunteers involved in these programs. I recommend that this funding for volunteer services be sustained and broadened to include other areas of the province which do not now have access to funding.

Palliative care; when asked, the majority of people indicate that they would prefer to die at home. At this point the majority of deaths in Nova Scotia are in institutions. When we look at other places in the world, there is a growing movement to support people to die outside of institutions. It is time that the Nova Scotia Government look at innovative ways to honour the wishes of Nova Scotians to die at home. This may require an enhanced equipment loan program, increased home care services and the introduction of hospice care. As you are likely aware, a hospice is a home-like facility in which people are supported to die in comfort. Hospices are now operational in B.C., Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. It is a cost-effective option to hospitalization and allows significantly more involvement of family and friends.

Now I would speak on elder abuse. The final concern I wish to raise is one which people would just as soon not address, that of elder abuse. One does not have to be involved with the aging population too long before this problem becomes evident. The most common form of elder abuse we see is financial abuse. We are also increasingly aware of what we refer to as systemic abuse, that is an older individual who has been discriminated against by the system because of age, lack of education, lack of assertiveness or a combination.

In Kings County we have a unique program to address this issue. It is called the Senior Support Network. It trains volunteers to work with people who have experienced elder abuse. This unique program was highlighted at the first national conference on elder abuse in Toronto in March. It is a program worthy of replication and again one which struggles to survive from one year to the next.

It is important to the health and well-being of ageing Nova Scotians that the issue of elder abuse is brought to public awareness and that effective strategies to prevent abuse are put into place.

In closing, I believe that it is worthy of note that most of the services I have spoken of today were not developed by the government, rather they were developed by rural communities in response to perceived needs. Unfortunately, in spite of addressing pressing needs for minimal costs, many of the services I have spoken of will not survive without government support. It is my recommendation that the models I have spoken of here today be reviewed as models to share with the rest of the province. The community is the birthplace of many unique

and creative programs. Effective partnerships with the community is the best possible way of addressing the concerns of the aging population of Nova Scotia. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Are there further presentations, gentlemen?

CLARENCE DAWE: That is our presentation right now. If you have any questions, we will attempt to answer them.

THE CHAIR: First of all, let me thank you for your presentations that you have made. You have certainly left us with a full plate, I can say that much, and let's start to deal with them, if we could, Mr. Hendsbee is first, Mr. Parent will follow, if we just get into a general discussion here on anything and everything, and then Ms. O'Connell will continue along the lines. If we could, just for the purposes again of Hansard, recognize who is speaking, especially of our guests, our witnesses here this morning as well. So, Mr. Hendsbee, you will start things off, please.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could ask you, with the assistance of your administrative assistant there, in regard to the various presentations made here today. Will the transcripts or requests be given to each of the departments to make a comment or a report back to this committee? I believe the Department of Finance, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, Municipal Affairs, the Seniors Citizens' Secretariat and the Minister of Justice, in my opinion, should be provided with a transcript of today's presentations and perhaps there should be a departmental reply to inform this committee of what activities have been transpiring in regard to any of these issues or also bring it to their attention. So I was wondering if that is a common practice of this committee to do so?

DARLENE HENRY: Yes, it is.

DAVID HENDSBEE: It is?

DARLENE HENRY: We always give transcripts to whatever department happens to be spoken about or mentioned during a meeting. It always goes to the minister.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Do they voluntarily reply to those comments or do we have to ask for a reply?

DARLENE HENRY: We can write and ask for a written response to anything that was mentioned in the meeting.

DAVID HENDSBEE: I suggest that perhaps we may have a formal motion of asking the respective departments to make some kind of reply to the comments that are raised here today, to advise us of the current status of some of the concerns they have raised. So I will make that as a first motion.

THE CHAIR: Do I hear a seconder?

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I second the motion.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the question? The motion is that the transcripts which normally go to each department will be accompanied by a letter requesting a response to the material and the questions that are raised within the Hansard itself.

Any further discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, the second item I wanted to talk about would be the sports field facilities, the track and field facilities. Since I am probably the only one here who has some municipal experience with HRM, I have known that, for instance, Beazley Field, I recall it being on the capital program for the municipality for repairs and stuff. I don't know if it would be within our jurisdiction to make enquiries on that, but perhaps we can just send a letter to the respective department, or perhaps to the mayor to advise him that the Royal Canadian Legion made a presentation to this committee enquiring about the status of track and field facilities, primarily Beazley's Field and Sackville, and asking that these repairs be addressed, to meet the standards requested by the Legion, in the upcoming capital budgets.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion?

MARK PARENT: Should we not also copy that to Minister Purves, who has responsibility for sport in the province?

DAVID HENDSBEE: I would have thought that would probably be required. I would assume that we would probably make a request to Sport and Recreation for any major assistance if there is going to be significant upgrading of those facilities. I would concur with Mr. Parent that the Sport and Recreation Commission and Minister Jane Purves be cc'd in the letter.

THE CHAIR: Any further discussion?

MARY ANN MCGRATH: I am just wondering, would it be helpful to point out in that letter that the request is being made because there is no field in Nova Scotia meeting national standards? That might perhaps give them a bit more encouragement.

THE CHAIR: I think in the presentation you did mention that the only one is in St. John's, is that correct?

JOHN LANDSBURG: In eastern Canada, in Atlantic Canada, yes.

THE CHAIR: The motion was originally made by Mr. Hendsbee. Are you saying okay to that Mr. Hendsbee, if that is included?

DAVID HENDSBEE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: If I can remember the motion.

DAVID HENDSBEE: It is to write a letter to the mayor asking them to give us a report or the status, and inform them of the request made by the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia Command, about stated conditions of the Beazley's Field and Sackville facilities and whether there will be upgrading in their upcoming capital budget to meet the requirements for their endeavours.

THE CHAIR: The motion has been made and seconded. Any further discussion?

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Just a question, Mr. Chairman. Does that include Minister Jane Purves, responsible for Sport, for her to also include it in her budget?

DAVID HENDSBEE: A lot of the times, requests of this nature would probably have a request to the province also for cost sharing, that is why the minister should be cc'd in the letter.

Just for information, a lot of the times Sports and Recreation respond to a request from a municipality, they don't take the initiative themselves to go out and seek programs. There has to be an application come from the municipality for cost-sharing the sport and recreation facility, the RFD Program.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: The province also has a great deal of say in the decision on any recreation facility when the request is received and it also can be reversed where the provincial government can request the municipality to have this included in their capital budget because they wish to fund the project. So is that what we are talking about here or are we putting all the emphasis on the municipality instead of the province? Is that the intent of the motion, I guess, is what I am going to ask.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Recreational facilities are more of a municipal mandate than provincial, provincially they are only asked to participate when it comes to either upgrading or improvements, or expanding, or building new facilities. It is only a percentage of cost-sharing, the province normally does not carry the lion's share of funding for those type of projects. The participatory levels depend upon the nature and scope of the project. I know that Beazley, I think Sackville, were on the capital project list of the municipality and I think we should, if we can, get some information just to see where they now stand.

THE CHAIR: On the question, and you have heard the motion, would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

MARK PARENT: Two very quick questions; one, I am not sure if you are aware, Vic, of the seniors' program at Acadia University that they are starting which touches on many of the items that . . .

VIC BARNES: Yes.

MARK PARENT: You are already involved in working with them?

VIC BARNES: In some of it, yes, I am. I am aware of some of it. In talking to the people from the VON the other day, we are right now trying to set up a committee to build actually a hospice for our area. We had figured we would need one bed for every 10,000 people. So we would need a seven-bed facility. We are trying, or we will be as soon as we can get this committee together, to raise the money to build the hospice itself and then once it is built and up and running, we would hope the government would take over the operation of it, but the initial funding for it we hope to raise ourselves. That is what we are trying.

MARK PARENT: My second question is concerning the teaching of war history in Canadian high schools. Why was your meeting with the former Education Minister turned down? Was any explanation given?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: No, we have never received a reply; it never got past here. It never got past a letter. We never did receive a reply why we could not have a meeting.

MARK PARENT: Could I make a motion that we support the request to have a meeting with the Minister of Education concerning the teaching of war history in Nova Scotia high schools?

THE CHAIR: Is the motion that the minister appear before this committee?

MARK PARENT: No, no, that we support the request of the Legion for the minister to meet with a representative of the Legion concerning this matter. I see no reason at all why a Minister of Education cannot meet with them.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I second the motion.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hendsbee. Sorry, Mr. Boudreau, Mr. Hendsbee had already indicated that he would second that motion. We will get you later on. Any discussion? Mr. Mombourquette.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: We do not pretend to have all the answers in regard to having history taught as a subject in the schools, but what we would like and what we are seeking is a meeting with the Minister of Education, teachers and other interested parties and between the group we should be able to come up with a system that would work that the teachers would be agreeable to as well as the Minister of Education and that is what we were striving for. Thank you.

[9:30 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Mr. Barnes.

VIC BARNES: Yes, Mr. Chairman, speaking on this subject, I chaired the first two, three, four years of this Call to Remembrance Program that the Legion has set up. It became the concern of everybody who was involved with the program the amount of knowledge that some of the school kids had. One of the principals of Cornwallis High turned to me one day and he said, my goodness, the kid did not even know where Egypt was and he said these are our best students.

They are just not getting, as far as we are concerned, the education on Canadian participation in history, you know, the soldier's participation, and it is quite evident when you see our program. We incidentally have all of these programs on tape and tapes can be made available to anybody in this committee who would like to see one. It is run along the same lines as the Reach for the Top program and it is an excellent program. Our response is out of this world, but we need a better response from the Minister of Education, as you know, and some of the teachers.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Parent and then Mr. Carey.

MARK PARENT: I was going to make a snide remark, which I should probably not, about even our Prime Minister and the Premier of Quebec don't know when Canada was founded.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, Ms. O'Connell, but I think we are still talking on a motion. I did not forget about you. Mr. Carey.

JON CAREY: I just wanted to, whether it should be implemented in this motion as for a letter writing. As probably most are aware, or all are aware, teachers with the Department of Education in the school system have specific groups which are specialists in these fields and one, of course, would be history teachers in the province. I would think if we could get the attention of that group, because they have input into the curriculum. So if it could be directed through that avenue, would happen faster than going maybe through the Minister of Education if we had a letter drafted to the history department, the organization within the province's group.

THE CHAIR: I think right now we are dealing with a motion that this letter go to the Minister of Education requesting a meeting with the various representatives of the Royal Canadian Legion - Scotia Command. Perhaps we can deal with that later on, but I think we can move on at this point right now on that motion which was made by Mr. Parent and seconded by Mr. Hendsbee. Any further discussion?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Ms. O'Connell.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Mr. Chairman, that is the very topic I wanted to talk about because I am a teacher and this is probably the thing I know the most about, but first I want to say that when I get a little older, I want to move to Kings County. The stupendous programs that seem to be operating there for the care and protection and community of seniors I think it is awesome.

VIC BARNES: We are very proud of them and we are trying to even make them better, but it would be nice to see them go right around the province and, believe you me, none of this could happen without the VON.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Yes, that is clear too. I have to say I do not know if I would be politically welcome in the Valley, but I certainly would love to live there in my golden years I must say.

MARK PARENT: Of course you would.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I want to talk about Canadian history in the schools because I have taught Grade 8 to Grade 12 over 18 years and there has been, and I am sure you know it, a clear trend, for the last 20 years, away from the kind of pride of nationalism that used to take place in schools. We can see it in our national institutions in the cuts to funding for the CBC, for example. We can see it in other areas and, in my view, one of the biggest sins, if you like, of government in education, speaking as a teacher, has been this obsession with education fads, where historically you go global and local, so you know your own little patch and you are slightly more aware of the world that is farthest away, but that you have no firm grounding in your own historical sense. This was a clear direction from the previous Minister of Education who did not answer your letter. It makes perfect sense that that letter wasn't answered in my view, given the philosophy of that minister and the previous government.

What I wanted to say that might be useful to you, because I am sure you know all that, and I think that Mr. Carey was pointing to it, I think you have a lot more allies in this than you may know of. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union brought a resolution to annual council last May

demanding compulsory teaching of Canadian history in high school. I believe, if my memory is correct, that resolution passed at council in May. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the History Teachers Association, the social studies teachers, I think, a great many feel powerfully that we have lost something utterly vital to our sense of national identity.

We talk about military history, but that is part of our whole historical sense that we are losing, that we seem to live in the eternal present. I don't know whether you want to marshal your allies on this and do something broader to try to promote this, but I do know that there are a great many Nova Scotians who would support you in it. In fact recently, I believe it was Ralph Surette who was persuaded to write in The Halifax Chronicle-Herald about this very issue. I am not sure if it was Ralph Surette or Dean Jobb, but I think it was Ralph Surette. So there is some sense even in the public press that there is something terribly wrong here, that something has been lost or nearly lost or abandoned. I am sure there are people who could work with you on this.

My only other contribution to this is that the other thing that can't be forgotten is that you can teach Canadian history through other disciplines in schools. The concern that I heard about ageing veterans and the difficulties getting out to schools, one of the ways that can be addressed, and I experienced this first-hand purely by accident, I accidentally gave the best assignment of my teaching career once about 10 years ago to a group of Grade 12 students. But it answers the questions - and I will tell you what it is - but it answers the questions about getting veterans into the schools, getting the programs, writing booklets and all those things that you might do directly.

There is another route, and that is teaching packages and suggestions for teachers which could come out of social studies, teachers jointly working together and they don't have to be in the history class. The accidental gem, and I had no idea it was going to be so amazing, was we did a series of short stories in Grade 12 around Remembrance Day that had to do with war, children of parents who had gone to war, Margaret Lawrence and other Canadian writers. I sent them out with - in those days - just tape recorders. I am sure they would use video recorders now. Sent them out with audio tape recorders to talk to anybody who had been alive during the war and what they did.

To my utter astonishment, stories came back, for example, of a German Canadian woman who had spent her childhood under her bed while the Allies were bombing Germany. That is just one example. People who had participated in the riots here in Halifax and so on and so forth. It was astonishing to me. It was astonishing to these students that the world around them was survived by this whole piece of past. Their own families, their uncles, their mothers, whom they had never known had any role at all, or weren't even grasping the concept.

To make a short story long, I think there are many different ways to implicate our history into the school curriculum. The booklets that you can provide are excellent. The

programs that are done in school in gymnasiums, coming up to Remembrance Day, and I have participated in those and they are valuable, too, but the real way and the best way is to implicate them into the curriculum and have the students actively involved, whether it is in history class, English, what we now call fancily the language arts, social studies programs of any kind, science. They can be implicated into any stage of the curriculum.

It would be very interesting to see some kind of a joint project. Maybe the Teachers Union and I can't speak for the union, but maybe in their new anti-violence foundation that they have just set up, which they are putting money into. There are all kinds of avenues to maybe work with other groups to find really creative ways to get into the schools. I don't have the answers, but just a few suggestions. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: You can reply to that then, Mr. Barnes. Go ahead, sir.

VIC BARNES: I think you have all heard of Austin Willis. He has recently joined our Legion in Kingston and we have some members who got right after him and he is now setting up interviews with as many veterans as he can. It is all on tape and the tapes are going to be made available to anybody and everybody who wants them. Each person interviewed will get a copy of the tape and there are some fantastic stories coming out of it.

The thing that bothers me most about what is happening in today's world is, who do our kids consider heroes? High-paid sports people, that is who they consider heroes, and we have forgotten all about our VC winners. These are the country's heroes, not these high-paid sports people and we have to change that outlook. Thank you.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if the representatives here today from Nova Scotia Command were planning to take these thoughts, presented to this committee, to the Voluntary Planning Committee, who would be seeking citizens' input with regard to the programs and services review that our government is now undertaking? I think it would be best to put your irons in many fires instead of just putting all your eggs in one basket. I would suggest that perhaps you should consider having your presentations also made before that committee with regard to suggesting what programs and service this government should be participating in, or what things it should not be participating in.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: We agree wholeheartedly with what you are saying. We have tried a lot of these avenues that you are referring to now, and it gets very discouraging after a while. We have files in the office. We weren't the only committee that ever brought this up or have tried it. We are talking maybe 10 years or 15 years and we are not getting anywhere. We are at the point where we feel if we don't sit down with the Minister of Education, with some teachers, or someone responsible for some of these other organizations, we are just wasting our time and our breath again. At least, we could get a no from her, face to face, or from the minister, I should say, whoever that might be.

It isn't that we haven't been trying other avenues, as well. We certainly have and we intend to keep on trying. Your suggestions are very well taken and we appreciate it very much. When we listen to you people, like we did a year ago, and we go back and a year goes by, our memberships are pressing us. We go to conventions and they are saying, what did you do? We say, well, we wrote this letter and we wrote that letter and we contacted - you are not getting anywhere and you are not doing the job. It gets a little frustrating to the people who are trying to do something.

We don't have much time left. We want to meet the Minister of Education and we want to meet the Minister of Education with help from different organizations. We, after all these years, feel that this is our only avenue now, that it is a waste of time to start going through back doors any longer. If we are not going to meet with her, then tell us point-blank and we will take it from there with our 35,000 members that we have and with the Teachers Union and anybody else, but that is what we want, is to sit down with the Minister of Education and let her tell us, or him tell us, or whoever it is, that they are not going to participate in this in any way, shape or form or that they are, hopefully. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Just in reply to that, Mr. Hendsbee, and then I have Mr. Boudreau, Mr. Parent and Ms. O'Connell who want to continue.

DAVID HENDSBEE: I think you may have missed the point of my question or perhaps I should have asked it more directly. I am talking about the other points that were raised here today. I am not talking about the educational aspect about Canadian history, I was talking more about your concerns about the VLTs, your Pharmacare Program, the HST rebates on utilities, the war memorials, or the VON and the respite services.

Those are particular programs, or suggestions for programs, for reevaluation of various things that government is doing, and we, as a government, have put together this Voluntary Planning task force to go out and seek input from the citizens in this province in regards to what things this government should or should not be doing. I would think that the presentation made here today should also be given to them. I think you missed my point in regard to not just the educational aspect, I think the other points have to be brought forward.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: I think our president can probably answer part of that.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Hendsbee, we have no problem making a presentation before other groups, but I do not know if you people are aware, this is the only group relating to the government we are ever invited to. We are not invited to any other organizations to make any presentations. We are willing to go. I will sit before anyone and make the presentations we have done today, but if we are not invited, it is kind of hard to get up to the podium and get to talk if you are not asked to attend.

DAVID HENDSBEE: I believe it is an open-door invitation that the Voluntary Planning committee will be doing. It is not by invitation only. It is just, you walk up to the podium and let them have it.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, all we have to know is the time and place and know that it is a free playing field and we will be there.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, it is an interesting conversation we are having because I think it goes back to what I already indicated, I believe it is the responsibility of this committee to, I guess, pursue the initiatives of the Command. It must be very frustrating for you guys, that this is the third trip here. I just want to acknowledge to this committee that I feel very strongly about this and I feel also that I have a responsibility and an obligation and if this committee does not pursue these avenues, then I will seek out other avenues in which I will have to pursue them myself.

I just want to comment on Ms. O'Connell's very good input. It was rather professional the way she said that and everything, but I think we, as a committee, should be approaching the Teachers Union ourselves as a committee and requesting on behalf of the Command for a meeting, or whatever, to listen, to allow the Command to have input. I firmly believe that this committee should direct the Education Minister to sit down with this group. As I said, if we don't do it as a committee, then I will seek other avenues personally. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Boudreau. I don't know if the committee has the power to actually direct the Minister of Education to do anything, but we can certainly light a few fires under a few people if that is what you are looking for anyway.

DAVID HENDSBEE: On a point of order, could I ask, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the administrative assistant, what the powers of this committee are because I know the Public Accounts Committee has quite broad powers, even to subpoena if necessary. I don't know if we have the same kind of legislative authority as the Public Accounts Committee would have?

DARLENE HENRY: Any committee actually can subpoena, but our committee is basically one that listens to concerns and issues brought forward by groups and makes recommendations to the various ministers in the federal government if we need to, right to the federal Minister of Veterans Affairs. However, the Canadian Veterans Affairs Committee, the federal one, is I think they are the powers that be, more or less and I guess we as a committee don't have really that much power to do much and tell them what to do. We can only make recommendations to these people.

THE CHAIR: May I make a suggestion? Mr. Dawe, I know you want to comment on this, but I think one of the motions we approved here today was a letter to the Minister of Education. That should be our first step and if that does not happen, we will deal with it after that perhaps in a more forceful manner if we can.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: On a point of clarification. It is the previous minister who did not reply, correct? You have not yet written to the current minister?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: No.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I just want to respond to Mr. Boudreau's comments, because I think there is a little bit of a white-knight syndrome going on here. The Royal Canadian Legion and the veterans have been conducting their affairs for a good many years; certainly it is our job to support them, but I would not want to see us assume tasks that are rightly theirs. We can act in a supportive role.

In addition, I think that if you look through this, there is federal relevance to a great many of these issues but by and large the issues, that are coming here today relate to provincial jurisdictions, whether it is education, whether it is taxes or the Gaming Corporation, or whatever. So I think in this case our job is fairly clear, which is whatever has a provincial dimension to support and get answers and enlightenment, but I would be a little bit leery of saying that it is our job to do their job. They are perfectly competent, knowledgeable people but in instances where our help is wanted I see no question that we can do it.

THE CHAIR: First of all, Mr. Dawe wanted to reply to a number of things that have occurred.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to say that the Royal Canadian Legion has a great rapport with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. I would not take anything away from those people who were our biggest allies in our little program we just had, the two- minute wave of silence - some of your committee members might remember - they took their own initiative and they put out posters that went all across Canada on our two-minute wave of silence.

Further, we will request again from the Minister of Education, a meeting, along with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. All we are asking for is support from this committee, we will do the asking. Again, that is not our problem, like Comrade Mombourquette stated, we will keep asking and asking until we get this meeting. All we are trying to do is drive home our point: where is the Canadian history in our schools?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Parent, if you could just allow a couple more responses from our witnesses before I move on to you.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, in reply to your question. You asked me if we wrote the minister of today?

EILEEN O'CONNELL: The current one.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Yes, our president did. As I mentioned earlier in my brief in the last paragraph, "On behalf of all of the Members of The Royal Canadian Legion in Nova Scotia, we respectfully request that you investigate the possibility of incorporating the history of our Veterans from World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the United Nations Peace Keeping efforts of our Service Personnel into a Canadian History Course to be taught within the Schools of Nova Scotia.". As I mentioned also the reply that she gave us at the time was, in the social studies course for Grade 8. So we did not actually get what we were asking.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Do you have any problem making those letters available to members of the committee?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: No.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I would love to have them.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Go ahead. As long as our president says fine, he is the one who wrote them.

CLARENCE DAWE: That is what we are here about.

THE CHAIR: If we could have a copy of that, Mr. Mombourquette.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Sure.

THE CHAIR: If copies of this letter could be made before the end of this meeting, Darlene, and distributed to all of the members present here today. If we could move on now.

MARK PARENT: I had a question, I wanted to talk about the VLTs, but the two other matters that have come up. My understanding is, as Chairman of the Human Resources Committee, that every committee is a mini-Legislature and has the same sort of powers of the Legislature. Now, by practice, different committees operate in different ways because of the mandates they have been given, but that in effect is supposedly what is to prevail at these committees. We are mini-Legislatures and we have the same sort of powers and we can view ourselves in the same role when we meet.

The second point I think Ms. O'Connell cleared up, it was the former minister who turned down this request for a meeting. I wish Mr. Boudreau had been an MLA then to put some pressure on the former Minister of Education. It would have been appreciated. From the present minister, you got a letter which was not satisfactory, but have you requested a meeting? I understand that you have not and we are supporting that with a support letter, right?

CLARENCE DAWE: We will be requesting a meeting again with the Minister of Education and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. We want a joint meeting with the Legion.

MARK PARENT: So then we have moved that and supported that request, right.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we have done that here today to my knowledge. I would suggest you get your letter out quickly before our support letter gets there before yours. I would take it, hopefully, that the Minister of Education will get the message from both letters and, hopefully, that would spur on . . .

MARK PARENT: A face-to-face meeting.

THE CHAIR: I take it what you are looking for is a face-to-face sit down with the Minister of Education, departmental officials and whoever else would be helpful in solving some of the problems. That is what we have got on record as being in favour.

MARK PARENT: We have taken care of that issue really.

THE CHAIR: To the best of my understanding, we have taken care of that here this morning.

MARK PARENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The thing I really wanted to talk about was the VLT issue. I have never been in favour of VLTs. As anybody knows, I was active in the movement against them. I have been worried about the sort of culture of gambling that we seem to be creating, not only in Nova Scotia but across Canada. However, having said that, if there are going to be VLTs, I would rather they were in Legions than anywhere else. My understanding is, and I want clarification of this, that the Legion has been notified that these letters that have gone out telling them that they are going to be moved, have been nullified as of right now and that no Legion is being asked to remove their VLTs. Is that true or is that false because that is my understanding?

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, in reply to Mr. Parent, we had a meeting about a month ago with the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation. Again we brought up these concerns about not only the VLTs but bingo and whatnot that our people are involved in. Our branches got a letter of notification that if they do not make \$275 a week a machine, then there is a threat of these machines being removed within a six month period. We have no notification that they have nullified those letters. Our branches still have that threat.

MARK PARENT: I hope that you would get a different response if you contact them now and I suspect you would. There has been a change since a month ago, and it may just be the Gaming Corporation has not yet caught up with that change. I am wondering if perhaps you could contact them again about these letters and if you still get the same response that you

did a month ago, then we could raise this issue on our next meeting as an agenda item for substantial discussion.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, I thank Mr. Parent and I hope what you say is true, sir, that that letter of threat is gone because, as the President of the Nova Scotia Command, the Gaming Corporation people, or you as the government, do not receive the threats. I get all of them from 119 branches in Nova Scotia. They come to me. What are you doing for us? We approached the Gaming Corporation. I brought their concerns here today, but they still say we are not doing anything. I hope that letter of threat, that is what I call it, is removed because we get anywhere up to 50 calls in the run of a week about what are you going to do about this?

[10:00 a.m.]

MARK PARENT: I am 99.9 per cent sure that it is removed for the next foreseeable future, but I would like to know very much if the Gaming Corporation has gotten that message and the way to find out is, if you would not mind, sir, asking them what is the status of these letters and if they they are still in effect, then, please, come back to the committee and alert us and let's put this on as an agenda item for substantial discussion.

CLARENCE DAWE: We will make the inquiry, Mr. Parent, and I guarantee you this committee will be notified if they are still in effect or if they are not. We will notify you all.

MARK PARENT: Because each one of us, you get the letters on your desk. We have Legions in our ridings who get letters and phone us with concerns too and these have been relayed and our understanding is, I think everyone on this committee from the government side, at least, is that those threats are lifted for the present time. I am almost positive. But I would like clarification officially, and it would be better if you asked. Then we would get the official clarification from the Gaming Corporation.

MARY ANN MCGRATH: I would like to take that one step further. I wonder if we could write a letter to the Gaming Corporation asking for clarification of their position?

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I'll second that if you want to make that a motion.

THE CHAIR: The motion is that a letter be forwarded to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, I would suppose, is it, or the Gaming Commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: The Nova Scotia Alcohol and Gaming Authority.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, the Nova Scotia Alcohol and Gaming Authority, inquiring as to the status of - can you give me some wording for it?

MARY ANN MCGRATH: The status of the Gaming Authority's position on VLTs in Legions with respect to the letters of threat that were sent to the Legion.

THE CHAIR: The motion was seconded by Mr. Boudreau. Is there any discussion?

EILEEN O'CONNELL: It seems to me that the question, to be clear, is quite simple. Does the Gaming Authority require that these machines in Legions make this minimum sum of money in order to retain the machines?

THE CHAIR: So we are making a specific inquiry as to that minimum level per machine in this motion?

EILEEN O'CONNELL: It seems to me that is the question.

THE CHAIR: Let me go back to Ms. McGrath for the motion. Is that okay to reword it in that regard with Mr. Boudreau for the seconder?

MARY ANN MCGRATH: Yes, please.

THE CHAIR: On the question. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We are moving along folks at a rapid rate.

We have some committee business to take care of, but as I can see it, it probably won't take any more than five minutes or so towards the end of the meeting. So unless anyone has an objection, I would like to carry on with our witnesses this morning and give them as much time as we possibly can.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, I just want to say in response to Ms. O'Connell, she misunderstood what I said. I am not suggesting that we do the work for these individuals. What I am suggesting is that we pick up their initiatives and provide the avenues that are necessary, that they obviously are having a very difficult time dealing with these issues. I believe, as a committee member, it is the role of this committee to provide those avenues. I know the president of the Command fairly well and he is a very capable individual, as you have said. He doesn't need me to speak for him, that's for sure, but as a member of this committee and as a member of the House of Assembly, I feel it is my responsibility to ensure that those avenues are there and that these concerns are not going to fall on deaf ears. These concerns over several years now, and three attempts, it is indicated that they are frustrated and it is very discouraging and I can recognize that as a committee member.

In response to Mr. Parent, I make no apologies for any minister. It is unacceptable for me as a Nova Scotia citizen that a minister, whether he be a Liberal, Progressive Conservative or NDP, not provide a reply, particularly to this organization. It is quite obvious from comments for the last couple of meetings that this organization is highly regarded by each and every one of us. I guess it is going to take a little bit of courage. I certainly will be bringing this to my caucus, that when a minister of my Party does not respond to this organization it is an insult, and I intend to bring that up.

I am, I guess, challenging the caucus members here from the other Parties to ensure that our Parties are very well aware of these issues and the importance that these issues have, not only to the Legion members themselves, but to the communities and the people we represent. I guess that will be enough from me today, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any further discussion on any of the issues that we have raised here this morning?

VIC BARNES: If I may, I would like to just mention a point or two. I want to speak on long-term-care beds. We don't have enough of them in the province and I just wonder how many people realize the difference of having a long-term-care bed or having that patient in the hospital, the difference being \$180 a day to \$800 to \$1,000 a day. So it just makes sense to have more long-term-care beds, rather than have these people in the hospital.

MARY ANN MCGRATH: Yes, that is one of the issues that Mr. Hendsbee, I think, was alluding to when he mentioned the task force that is currently charged with getting the views of Nova Scotians about what the programs are that government should be concentrating on. I have asked that the information on how to contact the task force be made available to you, either before you leave today or faxed to your office at Scotia Command. That is a specific issue amongst many that you have mentioned, that if you made presentation directly to the task force, the job of that task force is to distill, I guess, the areas that we are going to concentrate on as a government in funding increases and program changes.

JON CAREY: Just perhaps, Mr. Barnes, or maybe some of the others, a more local concern to me is the Soldiers Memorial Hospital that has the Veterans' Wing. Could you give this committee a little bit of an update - I understood a few months ago that it was not totally being used because of lack of funding or whatever, I never knew the exact reasoning - and the desires and requirements of your people for that.

VIC BARNES: I have the distinct honour of being on that council with the veterans at Soldiers Memorial Hospital. There are 25 beds in that wing and they are used all the time. It is an absolutely beautiful facility; I have never seen anything like it in my life and they are very well taken care of. I have no recollection of any real problems there, whatsoever. They have a

new head nurse who is absolutely fantastic; the gentlemen and the ladies who are in there are very, very happy with the facility.

The Legions get together and they support that facility all the time, in every way possible. We bought the bus for them, which is now operated by the hospital, \$60,000-odd and we have already set up a fund for the next bus, because a bus will only last so long. I think we have \$10,000 to \$12,000 already in the fund for the next bus I don't perceive any problems there and I am up there all the time with them.

JON CAREY: Is that wing being totally used?

VIC BARNES: Yes. Now there is an upstairs that is bare. That was built when the wing was built; they built two floors. The inside of it has never been finished. Mind you, there is a list of people waiting to get into that facility, as well as all the other facilities in the province, but as soon as one bed is empty, the next day it is filled.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I realized that I had written down a quick question before about accessible transportation. In my constituency office some months ago, I received application forms from government for pilot programs and accessible transportation. We sent those out at the time to the two people representing groups who had been trying to get funding for accessible transportation. I have no idea what has happened to that program. I assume it is under review, like everything else.

I wonder whether we couldn't enquire about that program. I don't know whether you would find that useful or not.

VIC BARNES: Oh, yes.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I can get the forms, they are on my desk in my office. I can locate them today and look to see exactly what they are. They did exist and they did promise grants, and I have no idea what the status of them is now. Maybe we could explore that.

THE CHAIR: Sure. We could put that in the form of a motion, if you wish.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I second it.

THE CHAIR: The motion was moved by Ms. O'Connell - I will summarize - to explore that program. If you could give us the exact name; Darlene already has it, probably.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I can get it for you today.

THE CHAIR: Seconded by Mr. Boudreau. Is there any discussion? I will call for the question.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say, Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, through you I would like to ask Mr. Barnes a question. You made the comment about - and I am trying to remember exactly how you said it - building these hospice facilities and whatever the case may be, and then eventually have them operated by the government. Would you not feel that it would probably be better to have these facilities managed, run and controlled by community organizations versus government departments?

VIC BARNES: It is possible, but like I say we are just on the ground floor with it, and this is just the way we are starting out. Anything could happen in the future. I have to agree with you in some ways it might be better to be funded by the organization that set it up. However, we are certainly going to need government participation, there is no question about it, to keep these things going.

As I said, in my area we need seven beds, and we have a big area. It isn't really that many beds that are required; one bed for every 10,000 people is all that is needed. It puts the people into an environment just like they are at home; they are well taken of, they have a kitchen that they can use at any time, and it is just something that is needed. It far outdoes going into a hospital, cost-wise especially. Yes, we will certainly consider that.

I just wanted to mention something on that transportation bit. One of our drivers, every day, is a designated vampire. This is a system that they set up in Kings County. You quite often can't get a senior or a veteran, an elderly person to the hospital when they need to give blood. So the blood is taken at home, and one driver each day goes around and collects this and delivers it to the lab. They have taken the precautions of guaranteeing safety to the driver because these are all put into a plastic container and put into the trunk of the car, so that if there is an accident, nothing can happen. Just an added point that I wanted to mention.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Designated vampire, is that what you call it? (Laughter)

JOHN LANDSBURG: Mr. Chairman, in reference to the education, don't think that Nova Scotia is the only province, it is right across the country as far as the history in the schools is concerned. Every province is after the same thing, or every Legion Command in the country is after the same thing. Ms. O'Connell stated a while ago that we did bring things here, that we are strictly dealing with the provincial government because our Dominion Command does look after the federal side of it.

The only thing that we did bring on the federal side of it to you, and I have had no comments on it, unless it was in a motion, is in reference to the desecration of the flag. I have no comments from any of you members here in regard to that. As I said, we feel very strongly

and it is a federal issue, but we are asking the provincial government to please encourage the federal government to look into this Act.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, I should advise Mr. Landsburg that, I believe, just recently a resolution has been read in the House by Mr. Brooke Taylor, the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, in regard to the desecration of the flag and a request of a resolution sent to the federal minister in regard to that. So we will try and get a copy of that resolution sent to you for your attention.

JOHN LANDSBURG: Okay, would you please, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: This is just a bit of information. I know that there was, at least, a program in place for the HST rebate for low income and people on fixed incomes, of course. That rebate is available through the Department of Finance.

JOHN LANDSBURG: I knew that was into effect for Pharmacare, but I did not realize on the utility side of it.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Yes. It is an HST rebate for low income families. Actually the last time I checked it, it was very disappointing, I guess, to the bureaucrats, because not many people - it is not publicly acknowledged enough, or whatever, but there are a lot of Nova Scotians who do not take advantage of that particular program and I guess it is because people are not knowledgeable regarding it.

JOHN LANDSBURG: I have no knowledge of that at all because I have talked to many people and I am sure that they have no knowledge of it. If I had known it, I would have been passing it on to them to take advantage of it. Could we get a copy somehow or other of this legislation?

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau, will that come from the committee or will it come from you?

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Whatever the wish is of the committee.

THE CHAIR: Before we do that then, Mr. Hendsbee.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Can I ask for a clarification from the honourable member. I thought Mr. Landsburg was asking more about the HST rebate on utility costs. I know there was a one-time initiative that the previous government had in their budget in regard to refunding on HST, provincial amounts of the HST on utilities. I do not think it was a

reoccurring program. It was a one-time thing in the budget. Perhaps we should try and get clarification.

THE CHAIR: If that is okay, we will seek clarification and perhaps once we get that clarified, we can give that information to Scotia Command, let them know exactly what is going on. Is that suitable to everyone? I think we are about to wrap up this portion, gentlemen. I would like to take the opportunity, first of all, to thank you for your frankness and your presentations here today, not holding anything back and letting us know what you did not like about some things that have happened or not happened in the past.

There have been a number of comments that were made this morning. I would like to add my personal comment on one item, that being that perhaps you sometimes feel that you are forgotten by many people. In my personal experience, just this past Remembrance Day, and I am sure all of us were at Remembrance Day ceremonies, but I had the honour of speaking to about 800 people who were in attendance at the Savoy Theatre in Glace Bay, one of the largest turnouts ever for a Remembrance Day ceremony. Previous to that, what actually brought it home to me most of all was the fact that before that ceremony my six year old daughter, who is in Grade 1, demanded, not asked, but demanded, that I take her to see the guys who make the poppies in the parade.

So I think your message is getting through at a very young level. You are getting through to a lot of people. The public support is there, in my personal opinion, and now you need support from other sectors. I certainly hope that you would get it and I hope that this is a start here today. So I thank you all very much for your thoughtful presentations. Mr. Barnes.

VIC BARNES: If I may, I would just like to mention one more point.

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

VIC BARNES: In this government's 243 promises, three times they mentioned support for adult day programs and it is to be noted that the Liberals had budgeted in their Health Investment Fund backing these programs and I am wondering if this government is doing the same thing. We are really looking forward to that.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman and honourable members, before we close, our committee would like to thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to come here today to speak to you. I think the four of us feel that you have listened to us and that you are sincere in trying to carry out some of our wishes. We are here on behalf of the members, when you are looking at the four of us, you are looking at veterans and you are looking at the Royal Canadian Legion, we are speaking for them, and we thank you very much. We hope that it will not be too long before we have another opportunity to meet with you and maybe have some better news. Just before we leave today, we are going to leave you with these kits and, hopefully, you will find the information helpful. We even supplied the bags.

THE CHAIR: Again, thank you very much, gentlemen. We certainly appreciate your taking the time to appear before us this morning. Can we move along at a rather rapid rate.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Yes, I have got to go to caucus and I am half an hour late. Anything you could do to speed it up would be nice.

THE CHAIR: I certainly can, full speed ahead. We had some committee business regarding a response from the Speaker, a request for the committee to present the Lieutenant Governor and the three Leaders with poppies during a ceremony at Province House. We had some correspondence on that?

DARLENE HENRY: Yes, that is the top letter here dated October 22, 1999, from Speaker Scott. Basically what he is saying is that he contacted Ms. MacDonald regarding the request and that the presentation of a poppy to the Lieutenant Governor is done at Government House and this is the first poppy to be presented in the province. As a result, His Honour should not be included in the presentations with the Leaders.

However, the presentation could be arranged for the three Leaders' offices to present them with poppies. At that time the three Leaders could not get together. The PC Leader was out of town or somewhere at the time and you had extended hours in the House dealing with the paramedic bill and all that stuff. So that did not happen, but nobody, according to Ms. MacDonald, can receive a poppy prior to the Lieutenant Governor. In the future, if they want to do this again, it is to somehow make arrangements after that for the three Leaders to get their poppies at the same time.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Mr. Chairman, I understand the protocol. I knew that that day that when the Lieutenant Governor was getting his poppy, I know that other members of the Legislative Assembly had poppies on. Probably the eager beavers went out and bought their poppies and got them on early, but I just thought that perhaps in the future, that it would be a more significant ceremony at the Legislative Assembly itself, that if the Lieutenant Governor is given his poppy at a particular time on a particular day, that right after that, perhaps the Legion can come down to the Legislative Assembly and do a ceremony to present the Leaders and perhaps all members of the Legislative Assembly with the poppy.

I just think that the traditions in history that this province has with the military and remembrance, I think that we should perhaps give it more pomp and ceremony instead of just walking in casually with a poppy on when it happens to be Veterans Week. I would hope that perhaps next year we will probably try to organize something and we will have a more formal vestiture of these poppies done in the Legislative Assembly. Perhaps we could ask our Speaker's Office or the Protocol Office to arrange something for next October.

THE CHAIR: Do we want to deal with that right at this moment?

DAVID HENDSBEE: It is not time sensitive right now, but I would hope that it doesn't get lost until next August.

THE CHAIR: I am sure you will make sure that it won't. (Laughter) If we could move on then, our next meeting date is December 2nd, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Our witnesses here will be from the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Mr. Alex Morrison and Ms. Christine Vroom. Our next meeting after that will be January 13, 2000, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and Mr. William Gibson will be making a presentation concerning German prisoners of war.

Unless there is any other new business that you want to bring up, perhaps I can call for a motion of adjournment.

DAVID HENDSBEE: So moved.

THE CHAIR: The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

[The meeting adjourned at 10:26 a.m.]