

HANSARD

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STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, May 11, 2000

Committee Room 1

Department of Education

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

William Langille (Chair)
John Holm
Jerry Pye
Mark Parent
David Wilson (Cape Breton East)
David Morse
Cecil O'Donnell
Mary Ann McGrath
Brian Boudreau

[John Holm was replaced by Eileen O'Connell.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia Command

Clarence Dawe
President

Fred Mombourquette
First Vice-President

Nova Scotia Department of Education

Dennis Cochrane
Deputy Minister

Tom Rich
Executive Director of Program Branch

Bob LeBlanc
Director of English Program Services



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2000

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
William Langille

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I want to thank everybody for coming this morning. I am going to ask that the members of the Veterans Affairs Committee introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: With us today we have Clarence Dawe, President of the Provincial Command; and Fred Mombourquette, 1st Vice-President of the Provincial Command. From the Department of Education we have Dennis Cochrane, Deputy Minister; Mr. Tom Rich, Executive Director of the Program Branch; and Mr. Bob LeBlanc, Director of the English Program Services. I would like to welcome you all here today. Mr. Cochrane, I understand you have a presentation to make first.

DENNIS COCHRANE: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. It is nice to be invited out to talk about education and curriculum. Many of our topics lately have only revolved around that, so it is rather nice to have a chance to talk about what we are teaching in our schools. Tom is on my right, and Bob is on my left, so that will help you identify which one is which. We are pleased to be here this morning and have a chance to talk about what is going on in Primary to Grade 12 currently, and probably more significantly, given the topic, what is going to be happening in the near future with regard to our programs.

What I would like to do is begin with a short overview of the social studies curriculum and the place of Canada's involvement in World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict and peacekeeping as it relates to that curriculum. We have a written submission for the committee, which profiles both the current status of the curriculum and recent curriculum initiatives that have been undertaken with some of our partners and Nova Scotia on its own. We have also

attached a partial list of the print and video resources that are in our schools and that support the teaching of Canada's role in peace and war.

I will give you a little overview first, as to where we are and what we now teach throughout the curriculum, particularly with regard to World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict and Canada's role in peacekeeping. The elementary program, as well as our program in Grades 7 and 8 social studies are under review as part of a curriculum initiative by the Atlantic Provinces. We develop curricula, jointly in many areas, with Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. Given the size of our population and the amount of movement that takes place among the provinces, it is reasonable that you would find a curriculum that is somewhat similar in the four Atlantic Provinces. If we speak of the APEF, it is the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, which is the group that coordinates the curriculum development throughout the Atlantic Provinces.

When we venture into an area where we are revamping or changing the curriculum, we will invite teachers from the four jurisdictions, along with the curriculum development staff in the four respective Departments of Education, and they work on the actual documents, what is going to be in the curriculum. Then it goes through a whole approval process, and we very often pilot it. It is a rather lengthy process. We hear constantly from people that the curriculum is changing too often; we hear that a lot. I guess if you taught Grade 4, and you taught math and science and social studies, you would feel that. The other thing, of course, is that we can't really stop, and we can't completely abandon the aspects of curriculum development, although this year we are going to be slowing down some.

We are trying to get a coordinated effort amongst the Atlantic Provinces, and in some areas we deal with the other provinces in Canada, through the CMEC, which is the Council of Ministers of Education. We are looking at our elementary program and the Grades 7 and 8 program in social studies.

Our current elementary program offers multiple opportunities for teachers to engage their students in an age-appropriate manner, in a study of Canada's role in the World Wars. Obviously Remembrance Day is an opportunity for our teachers and our students to engage in a discussion, and I know members of the Legion have been very supportive in our classrooms throughout the province, over the years, in providing the expertise that goes a long way toward educating children. They very often learn best by talking to people who are experienced and who understand what has gone on. One of the things I always worry about is that society has had a tendency over the years to kind of institutionalize our grandparents, so kids often miss that one-on-one, first-person contact that the Legion is able to provide. For that, we are very appreciative of the efforts of the veterans, in getting into our schools in and around Remembrance Day. Certainly that is an opportunity.

In education, we talk about teachable moments, and we try to work around days like

that and events such as that to talk about Canada's role in the World Wars. In Grade 6, obviously the study of Nova Scotia's history, the role of Halifax as a naval port and a convoy port in the World Wars opens the door for all kinds of discussion with regard to the role it played and, obviously, beyond that, the role that Canadians played in the war effort. The Halifax Explosion itself opens a door for a discussion about why this happened and what the port was being used for at that time. Obviously, it is a very real way to draw to the attention of the children exactly what was happening, and what was going on, and what Canada's contribution was in World War I.

In our junior high school program, the Grade 8 social studies is the best venue for our students to study the World Wars, the Korean War and peacekeeping. The historical focus is on Canada from 1837 to the present. The Grade 8 social studies curriculum includes a unit on World War I, another one on World War II, and the aftermath of World War II. That subject is compulsory for all students. Obviously, we are in compulsory subjects at that level, in junior high school. Every student is exposed to Canadian history and the study of it, and the inclusion of those two World Wars.

The senior high school program, our students have to take one social studies credit and one global studies credit as well. At that level, students may choose to take Canadian History, Grade 12, and that is obviously a survey of Canada's history in the 20th Century. Students who select Global History 12 to fulfil their global studies graduation requirement will study the Korean War and peacekeeping as a result of East-West conflict and resolution of that post-1945. The senior high school program for the Acadian-francophone students includes Canada's peacekeeping role in the United Nations in a Grade 10 course *Le Canada et le monde contemporain*. In Grade 12, *Histoire du Canada 12* includes Canada's role in the World Wars and in peacekeeping.

That is what we do, but probably of more interest to the committee is what we are going to do and what we are going to be attempting to do in the near future. Some of our curriculum that is under development through the APEF, Nova Scotia has been working with our partners to revamp the social studies curriculum from Primary through to Grade 8, and in Grade 3, particularly, students will study their province and heritage, including studying aspects of Nova Scotia and Canada's role in the World Wars. Again, we always teach this in an age-appropriate manner, to make sure that we handle the sensitivity of the issue in such a way that the children can deal with that.

The junior high school proposed curriculum, Grades 7 and 8 social studies will require an in-depth study of Canada's role in World War I, World War II and in peacekeeping. The proposed Grade 7 curriculum, which will focus on Canada from the early 1800's to the 1920's, obviously, will pick up World War I. The Grade 8 social studies curriculum, from the 1920's to the present, will pick up our role in World War II, and obviously our peacekeeping role that Canada has become known for. The specific curriculum outcomes for both Grades 7 and 8

focus on Canada's role in the World Wars.

In the senior high school program, we have begun a review of our high school history courses, including Canadian History. There has been, for the Acadian-francophone students, a new course called Histoire de l'Acadie et Canada 11. That has been under development to replace their Grade 12 history course.

Our minister has been particularly interested in Canadian history and the teaching of Canadian history, and has asked the department to bring forward a proposal by which Canadian history would be compulsory at the high school level. That is currently being developed. We will have our proposal going to the minister very shortly, to look at that. I think it is something that in the presentation the Legion made back in December and January, they had highlighted that. I think every person, particularly in the electoral process, hears from people regularly about Canada and our civics and our citizenship and what is happening.

We are on the verge of making the presentation to the minister. She has asked to see it, she is interested in it, and would like to see a way that Canadian history could be made compulsory in our high school curriculum. It would involve a little shuffle with regard to our programs and so on, but I think everyone looks at the benefits of that, and it outweighs the adjustments that we are probably going to have to make. We will probably have to stop teaching English in high school or something like that. (Laughter) Just kidding, in case you missed the wink to the member. That won't show on the tape, so I thought I should throw that in. Having been an English teacher, I would resist that too. Certainly the minister has asked us to look very seriously at that and, quite frankly, I think that very soon you will see some reaction or some action in that regard.

We have a number of authorized learning resources that are available to our students throughout the province that particularly support the study of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict and our peacekeeping efforts. Two kits from the Department of Veterans Affairs - and we have brought some materials with us today as well - are readily available, and are excellent resource documents, and so on, for our students. We also have a number of other kits that are provided; interestingly enough the Heritage Minutes videos are available to our students. I would guess it is probably one of the most positive things that we have seen by the Bronfman Foundation, as far as bringing Canadian history alive to students through television. We have copies of those and so on.

In Grade 8, we use The Second World War: Conflict and Cooperation as a resource. Spotlight Canada, which is authorized for the current Canadian History course has specific units on Canada in World War I, World War II, and a chapter on post-war Canada on the world stage. The Holocaust Education, which has been developed in conjunction with the Atlantic Jewish Council, provides resource materials for our schools for students from Grade 7 through to Grade 12. It includes a teacher's guide, a whole diversity of materials, both in print and in

video, which talks about the study of the Holocaust in junior and senior high school social studies and in the English language curricula as well. Obviously, you can't talk about the Holocaust without talking about war and the issues that surround that.

In the document that will circulate, we have a whole list of video resources that we have in our schools to support the teachers when they take on a particular unit with regard to Canada's involvement in the wars.

That gives you a little highlight as to what we are doing now and, hopefully, what we will be doing in the future as a result of a number of people's interest in Canadian history, and certainly as a result of our minister's interest in seeing it brought forward in a revamped way, but also to make it compulsory.

What we will do is open the floor to any questions that you might have. Obviously, Tom and Bob are here to deal with the specifics, and would be glad to answer any questions you might have. We would also be very pleased to take into consideration any recommendations you might have with regard to what we have talked about, and obviously with regard to the work of your committee, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Cochrane. For the questions, I believe you all have a copy of the correspondence from the President, Nova Scotia Command, Mr. Clarence E. Dawe, which was passed around. I am going to ask that we start from the right. We are pressed for time this morning; as you know the Legislature is sitting at 10:00 a.m., pushed ahead two hours. I would like to start on my right, the honourable member for Cape Breton East, if you have any questions.

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, you will have to allow me the time to catch up. I am just back from a temporary leave of absence, so I have a little bit of work to do to catch up on the committee. This is the first meeting that I have attended in a while, so I would graciously pass on to my colleague from the NDP.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, first I must say that I am surprised, I didn't realize that there was a curriculum review through our P to 12 schools that encompassed the four Atlantic Provinces. I want to thank you very much for that information. I think it is good, it is consistent and it certainly has no boundaries.

My question. You did indicate, deputy minister, that there is a program review. I would have believed that is with respect to history and social studies within the school. I am wondering if there has been a time-frame set with respect to that? Would that curriculum review be available for the next school year?

DENNIS COCHRANE: No. One of the interesting things about developing curriculum is that generally once you develop it, you will pilot it in various schools, and pick it up in one or two areas to start. The review in the Primary to Grade 8 area is under way, but moving relatively slowly. Interestingly enough, social studies has been one of the last ones. Everyone looks at math scores and looks at English and all the sciences and so on, and if you look at what society has dictated in the last number of years, unfortunately social studies is one of the latter ones to be reviewed. That process is under way. We have looked at the Canadian history aspect, in the recommendations that we will be taking to the minister.

In order to adjust the compulsories for high school, you have to start at the beginning. We would say, okay, students entering Grade 10 in September 2001, this will be your list of compulsory subjects. We will have to get our curriculum in place, have some work done on it, obviously, for the students who enter at that time, if that is what is adopted at the end of the day. It won't be ready for September 2000, for example, that particular one. Depending on the kind of approvals we get, it would be intended that the students that enter Grade 10 in September 2001 would be told it is compulsory, and they would take it in Grade 11.

That gives us a couple of years to get it in place. It is a kind of evolutionary process to change the curriculum. Certainly, there are no quick fixes, unless you go to a prescribed program that you buy from a publisher, with a book and you start at Page 1 and go right through. Our trend in recent years has been to kind of bring more resources in to the program. It does take a while to develop.

JERRY PYE: I do know that we have two guests here today, Mr. Clarence Dawe and Mr. Mombourquette. I do know that they are here as observers for the most part, but I am sure that we could allow some latitude, and if they want to put questions before the deputy minister, that they would be able to, if they choose to do so?

THE CHAIR: If they choose to do so. Is that permissible?

DARLENE HENRY: You could do that if it is the will of the committee.

THE CHAIR: At the will of the committee, yes.

The honourable member for Halifax Fairview.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Do you want to engage now?

THE CHAIR: We will have to put you up to the microphone.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: I almost got kicked out of the house a couple of times for talking too loud. I have to use a mike here? (Laughter)

Good morning, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you. We do have a number of notes and so forth, but I am more or less going to speak from the heart rather than from any notes. There is quite a bit of information in the Hansard that we had at our last get-together. Over the last year or so, we have been very fortunate to have at least three meetings with our MLAs, which we are very thankful for. Tomorrow I will be 74 years old, that is no big deal. I was also involved in the Second World War at the age of 18. Most of my friends and most of my comrades, a great many of them are gone. They have left the scene. Since that time, our Legion members have been trying desperately to get some recognition for the history being taught in our schools. It wasn't a selfish reason, it was the reason that a lot of our young boys and women didn't come back.

[9:15 a.m.]

Your generation, right now, is about the last that can do anything about this. By the time the next generation of politicians comes along, they will not even know anything about it, or very little - I should not say anything, but very little - if we do not take action now to do something about this. You can imagine yourself how very little our grandchildren in the future are going to remember why this country is established, why it is here and how important it is to our grandparents, our fathers, our brothers and our sisters.

I am sure everybody here today has some relative, some cousin, some friend who was involved in it. I am not going to bore you to death, but if you would stop for a minute to realize how many veterans and citizens in this province you are going to make very happy by implementing these programs. I know it is going to take a while to implement, but let's just not let it die here. Let's just not say, okay, we are going to give them a little piece now and then in 10 years' time we will give them another little piece. Let's do something about it. Let's carry it through. It will have to go in steps, but let's not make the steps too long apart. Thank you. That is all I have to say.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Mr. Chairman, I could talk all day, but I will not. I will try to be really quick because I have a couple of questions and a couple of comments. The first one is about who we are talking to. I had suggested that we talk to John Stone who spent his life teaching social studies. I was absent from the last meeting, but my understanding was that when inquiries were made, Mr. Langille was told that John Stone no longer works at the Department of Education. Is that correct?

THE CHAIR: That is correct.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: He worked there some years ago I know, but he is back there as far as I know so I want to know if he has been laid off since the last time I spoke to him?

TOM RICH: If I could clarify, John is working in a professional development capacity with the department currently.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: So he is there?

TOM RICH: Yes.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: In a way that is good to know, but it isn't just social studies teachers, I guess, who would be trying to implement this and this is what I don't know, whether people outside the system would understand. I knew nothing about World War II because my father spent World War II in Kentville recovering from TB and I knew very little about it until I started teaching. As was jokingly pointed out, I am an English teacher, I am not a history or social studies teacher, but one of the things that was blossoming nicely in the high school when I left, which is some years ago now, was teaching across the curricula.

When I learned about World War II was when I assigned a project to Grade 12 students which was a spin-off from a Margaret Laurence short story where the student had to go and actually interview someone who was alive during World War II and whatever role they played, whether it was counting the ration coupons, or whatever, and the end result was absolutely astonishing to me. The results included people who had participated in the looting in Halifax. It also included a woman who had spent most of World War II in a bomb shelter in Germany while she was bombed by the Allies.

I only say this because we can mandate course content, but it is a very limited way of both teaching and learning. You don't need to answer this now, but my concern would be, what are the relationships between course content as they are designated in little pockets and silos, and other areas of the curriculum where you can integrate learning about wartime and peacekeeping? As I said, we could talk all day about it, but I did want to mention that because I think it is largely misunderstood how modern teaching and learning is done.

The other comment I want to make, and I would be happy to hear a response, five years ago I guess it was - no, it was longer ago than that. A number of years ago I was also part of the review of the junior high language arts curriculum and when we got it all done, we discovered that it was going to be done all over again with APEF. My concerns were, I had spent some time sitting in classrooms in New Brunswick and they were so far behind Nova Scotia at that time, they were basically doing content-based everything and copying notes off the board in the junior high school language arts classes. So I have always been nervous about the camel that you get instead of a horse when you put four provinces together and tell them to come up with a curriculum. So I guess reassurances on that would be helpful and I really guess that is all I wanted to comment on. I guess there are questions implicit there, so do what you like with it.

DENNIS COCHRANE: The cross-curricular aspect of it is very interesting and it is happening more and more. I used to teach language arts in junior high in New Brunswick; I am a bit worried but, anyway . . .

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I will tell you, every classroom I went into, they were memorizing the parts of the short story. I nearly had a breakdown.

DENNIS COCHRANE: I can understand. What happens now, and the beauty of what is going on in the classrooms is, at one time when I used to teach English, I was the only teacher who talked about spelling. I always tried to convince the children that this is just a skill that I am teaching you that you should carry on to social studies, or math, or whatever. It was always very difficult to get through that concept, but now it is happening regularly, that we will do a project in English that will relate to the war or we will do a poem in English and it will deal with something that maybe took place in Great Britain and they will go back and research that.

We are seeing a lot of cross-curricular teaching which is very positive because we don't learn just in little categories of subjects. So the member is correct. It is a trend that is changing and I don't know a teacher in the Province of Nova Scotia who should not be a teacher of civics and citizenship because everything we do with a group of children should be an opportunity to teach them how groups work and how we make decisions and so on.

On the aspect of the APEF, I think one of the things that is happening is that there is a review of what we are doing and then collectively we decide is this one that we are going to change; in other words, is Nova Scotia going to go on its own on this. In various ones, some partners will buy in or opt out and once the group decides what they are going to do, one province takes the lead and generally it is a province that is recognized as having had some expertise or has an individual or two in the department, or in the teaching profession, who are particularly engaged in that.

This is the document that has been produced with regard to the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum. When you look at the list of people who were involved in drafting this, you have from the various provinces, in some cases there will be classroom teachers, others will provide program consultants and so on who will be involved in kind of putting together the outcome documents and so on. They sit down and talk about it as teachers and educators and look at what we can do.

Sometimes provinces will say, look, we have a good curriculum in that area and we are going to opt out, but really with the fact that we probably would not have as many students in all of Atlantic Canada as they have in Toronto, we have to start doing some things together because we get better use of our resources and we can afford then to develop the curriculum document as opposed to a textbook just for Nova Scotia, or a textbook just for Prince Edward Island which would even be more difficult. It is a cooperative venture, but we are not automatically dictated to, by members of the APEF, that we have to be part of it. We actually have an option to opt in or opt out, depending upon how we are doing with the current documents that we have in our respective jurisdictions.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Kings North.

MARK PARENT: I have just two quick comments and a question and I am just picking up on Mr. Mombourquette's comment that action is needed now, which brought to mind - and I am not sure if I am paraphrasing it correctly - that well-worn, but very significant phrase that those who don't remember their history are doomed to repeat it. I am wondering if behind the whole question of course content is a larger question of approach to the teaching of history, and what is our Canadian history and military history, in particular.

What sparked this is one of the last things I went to at Mount Allison, when I was teaching there, which was a lecture by Jack Granatstein. So I had never thought about it being a religious studies, but some of the parallels were there. Is this part of the tension that is going on? It picks up in some sense as perhaps what you are saying, how should history be taught? It sounds to me like it has been covered already, so what is the problem, I say to myself, why are people upset? Then I thought of Granatstein's comments. That is a question I have.

The third thing, and this may be very particular only to myself. I grew up in South America and went to an American high school, and the Vietnam War was incredibly important. Coming back to Canada, I was interested to find many Americans had come up as draft dodgers. It really impacted on Canada as well in a very different way, but still the impact was there. I was wondering if that is somehow included in the curricula as well?

DENNIS COCHRANE: A lot depends on how the teacher wants to relate the subject material. You can have someone who teaches just the factual aspect - getting back to memorization and so on - and, yes, the children will learn it, they will write it, they will regurgitate it. That will happen. History, in particular, is cause and effect. That is where we learn. We don't learn the lessons of the past from taking a look at a specific battle in World War I or World War II, but we probably learn a great deal about what caused World War I and what caused World War II; how do we avoid that in the future, what could have been done differently?

The detailed battle-by-battle is part of it, and interestingly enough, that interests children greatly. I am not sure what causes that, but the whole debate of what we do and how we interact as people, and I think that is where things like the Vietnam War can be talked about, because the same mistakes that happened in advance of that, that caused it to happen, really caused every other conflict we have had out there. So, it is something that a lot depends on the approach.

It is interesting with Canadian history. You could teach Canadian history and probably not mention much about World War I and World War II. You could teach people the names of the Prime Ministers and their careers from 1867 on to the year 2000, and you could have a very strong aspect of military history: when you look at the unionist government that Borden had in

the 1920's and why that happened, where Canada was at the time; or you could talk about Lester Pearson and where he came from and the Nobel Peace Prize and so on. It depends on the nature of the individual who is teaching it.

I think what we have to do is talk to our teachers and say, okay, what is it we want our society to learn? Teachers are extremely adaptable, and when you give them a good curriculum document with the resources that are there and then you say, okay, here are the outcomes, that is where you really have to work. Tom may want to speak a little bit to the outcomes and the graduation learnings and so on that are in the document.

TOM RICH: If I could, I think one of the important changes we have made over the last five years as we have moved to change the curriculum is, firstly, to focus on what Dennis says, what the outcomes are that we want; and, secondly, what the purpose of our teaching is. One of the significant aspects of the document that he showed you, which is the foundation document for social studies, is it provides the context for the teaching of history, the teaching of history in the context of citizenship, and provides a meaning for studies. Unfortunately, too often in the past, history was just simply a recitation of facts and the memorization of facts. One of the reasons it was often not a terribly popular course in school is because of that.

I think what has really changed now with the new program and the new approach, is it changed to doing it in a meaningful context. If I could, just to quote a couple of things from this document, which is now the framework for social studies and for history teaching in the schools. First of all, the context is now that of citizenship. The reason for talking about history is its role in citizenship; in particular to, " . . . demonstrate understanding of the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped the past and present . . . ", and for the student to, " . . . apply those understandings in planning for the future".

In particular, history comes under an outcome for all students that is about time, continuity and change. "Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the past and how it affects the present and the future." Again, I would like to read this because I think it is very specific to what you were talking about, what the elaboration of that is. This is, if you will, the instruction and the background for the teacher on the approach. One of the things it says is, "History is to society what memory is to the individual. It provides a frame of reference for testing the merits of ideas, philosophies, and beliefs.", the sort of thing that Jack Granatstein often talks about in his writings.

The purpose is for students to understand and develop, " . . . through critical analysis of the events of the past, their effects on today, and their ties with the future." History then, " . . . provides a window on Canada and the world, serving to broaden our understanding of the interdependent nature of society on a national and global level." That is very much what we are trying to do with the history, to change it into something so as to understand Canada's role in the wars and conflicts and peacekeeping. Canada's role from that historical framework right

from the beginning - from the aboriginal peoples to the present time - provides that framework for them looking in the future. So, we are very positive about those changes.

One of the things that is happening too, particularly in junior high schools, the approach is now happening much more on a team basis with teachers. We have been able to integrate this with the junior high network project which has been working particularly in Grades 7 and 8, with team teaching among teachers, and we are happy to say that language arts and social studies are areas where the teachers are working together to approach subjects like these.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Cape Breton The Lakes.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: First, I would just like to apologize for being late - and I missed part of the presentation - but we had another meeting and it was scheduled at 8:00 a.m., prior to the change to this meeting and we got here as quickly as we could.

DENNIS COCHRANE: We just marked you late, not absent. (Laughter)

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I just have a couple of short questions. The one question that I have is, is this going to be instilled into the education system in the province and what timetable and what assurance do you have to provide to this committee and the Legion members who are here today? The understanding that I have from some of the Legion members is that they are very frustrated with this issue. Continually over the years they have pursued this and have been told, time and time again, that it was a strong initiative by the various governments. Today, I am concerned, when we hear Mr. Mombourquette, a 74 year old veteran, that I think it is vital to all our veterans that this issue be taken very responsibly. Is it going to be initiated or not?

DENNIS COCHRANE: Certainly the review of the Grades 7 and 8 curriculum, the development of that is under way, and we have very clear outcomes of what we want to achieve in Grades 7 and 8. The Grade 12 one, which will become Grade 11, we have drafted now what would be in the program, what the resource materials would be and so on, and basically we will go back to the minister and say, here is what we think we should be teaching at that level, because she has asked us to look at that, and then also with the aspect of it being compulsory. I think that given the interest of the committee and obviously the influence of the Legion and the interest of the minister, I think you will see that happen.

I was always a teacher of Canadian history, so I have a little bit of a bias in this regard, but I always compare the American system and the Canadian system and what they do differently. It is interesting because Canada has a very good reputation internationally and when you look at the outpouring of emotion that takes place in the Netherlands and places like that when Canadians present themselves, and yet there has to be a balance. We have a very good international picture that we get as a result of our school system, which is a good thing and we benefit from that internationally in our role in the League of Nations and United Nations, all those things. Yet, the Americans seem to have a much stronger feeling of patriotism. Somehow

there has to be a balance.

They, quite frankly, know very little about anybody else - I have to be careful - in the world. I don't have to go into that, I guess you know that. That is not every American, but they have a very strong sense of themselves in the world, being the centre of it they think, but in Canada's case, we have a very good understanding of the world and we are appreciated and recognized in that regard. But probably as a Canadian - and I think probably from where all of you are coming - we may not have that same sense of, it is our nation, it is our country, and we are proud of it. We don't express it as well. I guess we are kind of beige, when you look at how Canadians approach most things; we don't want to offend anybody.

I think we have to find that balance in our school system. We can't lose our international perspective, but I think we have to drive home the message more, of Canada's contribution in the world, and as Canadians, a good feeling about ourselves and what we have done. I think that balance is something that we are looking for. I believe that with the review of Grade 7 and Grade 8 and looking at what we are going to do in Grade 11 and the potential of doing that, we can find maybe more of that balance. But it is going to take a generation.

There is no quick fix in teaching people, because you just can't stop and say, okay, we are going to teach everybody this now. We have to develop that continuum and what we are going to do. It is a good question and a fair question. I like to think that the plan that is on the table will allow us to give a positive answer to that.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, just a comment. I know the deputy minister is new to his post. I am impressed with his abilities so far. I am willing to accept what you are saying here today, but I just want to acknowledge that I am not going away on this issue. I feel very strongly about this issue, and I know the other members of this committee do. I will wait a couple of months, and then we will be back here on this agenda. Perhaps there will be some debate in the House of Assembly before this session is over, regarding this issue. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Halifax Bedford Basin.

MARY ANN MCGRATH: I have not so much questions as a couple of comments based on what Eileen O'Connell and Mr. Mombourquette have said. My perspective of this is as a parent. My children and I have been fortunate as we had good access to personal information about the effect of the wars that were fought by citizens of this country. I have memorabilia and personal letters from World War I, from family members, that my children had access to. My children probably learned more about the war and its effect on this country and its people because they had access to people who lived through it.

Based on the comments that Ms. O'Connell and Mr. Mombourquette made, we have a window of opportunity whereby probably for the next few years the children we are going to educate still have access to that personal window. As we are developing the changes in this

curriculum, this might be the last opportunity we have to incorporate into that curriculum what those personal things mean, because I think children learn quite a bit more that way than they do reciting text from books. We have that opportunity, perhaps through film or through other means of capture, to make those things real for our children in the future.

DENNIS COCHRANE: I was in a school not too long ago, in another jurisdiction, where the kids were doing a project for the National Canadian Heritage Fair. Some kids from every province get to go to a national competition. Their whole focus was their small community, but the role the adults and seniors had played. They did a whole series of interviews, and some of the veterans would go in and sit down with the kids and talk about their first-hand experience. The good thing was that the kids taped it all, and videotaped it. So it is always there. That is an opportunity, as you referred to, if we don't take advantage of that - mind you, we probably have reams of these in existence - and reproduce them and put as resources, we will lose that. That is very important.

Even now, I notice there has been a fairly strong letter-writing campaign with regard to George C. Blackburn's trilogy. We are always getting new resources and looking at them and deciding whether they fit with our curriculum and what we are doing. You are right, we have a limited opportunity to create more resources in that regard, particularly the first-hand exposure, and we have an opportunity to expose our kids to that.

TOM RICH: If I could just add a small note on that. One thing that has been very positive in the last five to six years, is the work of the Department of Veterans Affairs in producing materials - video materials, print materials and CD-ROM computer materials - and they have been doing this very aggressively. They are excellent materials, there are other very good materials too from other sources, but I particularly single those out. Essentially they are available to us at very low or no cost, so they are very accessible. They have been excellent in working with the Department of Education on those materials. We have made, and schools have made, very good use of those materials.

The other thing that has happened, to amplify what the deputy said, is the creation of what are called digital archives. The digital archives are being done in many cases by students in schools. They are taping, taking materials, photographs, memorabilia and putting those into individual databases that are then available on the Internet. Capturing the memories and the recollections and the stories of an historical context, a heritage context, is a big element of that. Industry Canada has assisted in that by providing small amounts of funding to schools to assist in doing that through a grass-roots program and a digital archives program. So that really is being able to capture that, and the digital world, the Internet world, gives us a way to share those materials, not only within one school but across all of the schools in the province. That is a very positive change in the last five years. It allows us to capture those materials.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Kings South.

DAVID MORSE: Mr. Chairman, two items. The first - taking Mr. Rich's comment that this has to be done in a meaningful context for the students - there is a little bit of a paradox in Canadian history. In World War II, we were off fighting the intolerance of the Third Reich. Recently I had the great pleasure of meeting a very kind and caring man on the Acadia Board of Governors by the name of Lorne White. Not in a negative sense, but Lorne shared something with me which has stuck with me. He was talking about his father's involvement in World War I. You see, Lorne's father was in a special regiment, and the only way you could be on that regiment is if your skin was a certain colour. I understand that is World War I, but I still think that the gradual evolution out of our own intolerance should be very much part of our own history. I hope that is somewhere in the curriculum and there is an acknowledgement that we did discriminate within our own. That is the first comment, and I am hoping the answer is yes.

Do you want me to go on to the second one, or is that a yes or a no?

BOB LEBLANC: We have really had a tremendous effort throughout our entire curriculum, and not just in social studies, but to include the perspectives of many groups that have often felt their voice has not been presented, their images have not been presented, their culture has not been presented.

Within the Department of Education, we have a Mi'kmaq services division, which very importantly brings the perspective of the Mi'kmaq people. We have an African-Canadian division which brings the perspectives of their communities. We have a multicultural component. In our social studies curriculum, you will see throughout this particular document, and through all the documents we are producing, we are indicating that multiple perspectives are required in the analysis of any issue or question. If you look at some of the resources and details that are behind me, you will see the role of women in World War II. You will see the role of First Nations in World War II. You will see a whole variety of perspectives from people and communities that make up our nation.

I must say, it is one of the highest priorities we have in the Department of Education at this point, to ensure that all voices are part of the curriculum development. In fact, that is one of the challenges. Each time, and especially with social studies, as we begin the curriculum development process, we communicate with all the teachers in the province, plus all of the groups and organizations that have something to contribute to the curriculum development process.

DAVID MORSE: Thank you. I will take that as a yes.

BOB LEBLANC: Yes.

DAVID MORSE: Point number two revolves around the use of video, maybe CD-ROM. I am glad to hear this because, as a young man at McMaster University, I can remember late one night, about 1:00 in the morning, I flipped on the TV and there was a black and white

film clip from World War II, the Allies were trying to take an island back from the Japanese and you had your usual guns going off. That is the sort of thing we see in the movies and that is not really real anymore because we have become numb to these scenes.

[9:30 a.m.]

What was in this film clip which has always stuck with me is that they showed the aftermath of taking this little island. The aftermath was rows and rows of bodies washing up on the shore, being drawn out with the tide, back up on the shore. If every person in the world was shown that at a time in their life where it could mean something to them, I think it would go a long way towards making sure that this never happens again. I hope that profound lesson could somehow or other be encapsulated in the video portion of history.

DENNIS COCHRANE: I suspect that the current generation of children have a better understanding of the decimation of war than my generation would have. CNN, it is phenomenal what the coverage is now - hopefully it is not glorified, but it is phenomenal - the instantaneous reaction of a conflict around the world. I think those kinds of things will make people more aware of the devastation that takes place as a result of human beings not being able to resolve their conflicts in other ways.

In reference to your first question, the Citizenship Essential Graduation Learnings talks about - there are a number of them, but two very specific ones. One is, graduates are expected, for example, to, "examine human rights issues and recognize forms of discrimination", and also to, "demonstrate understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage and cultural identity and the contribution of diverse cultures to society". More than ever, we are trying to emphasize that in the teachings of our social studies program right from P through to 12.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I am just wondering, has the Nova Scotia Command been given the courtesy to have an input into the materials that you are gathering?

BOB LEBLANC: I have met with the Nova Scotia Command and we had a very productive meeting one afternoon. They presented me with a draft of some material that I brought back and some of our specialists have gone over that material and it was very helpful. It would be our intent that if we proceed with the curriculum development in the areas related to the particular issues that they brought up, that we would be inviting their participation again because they have a particular expertise that would contribute to the development of the best curriculum possible.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: What concerns me is when I hear the word "if". Will this courtesy continue to be extended to the Nova Scotia Command, in the future?

DENNIS COCHRANE: Yes, by all means.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: I wanted to pursue something else on this because I think everybody believes - I hope everybody believes - that we mean it. I also had quite a bit of experience with what used to be called the Media Library Services on Kempt Road, which is now what is called Learning Resources and Technology branch; have I got the name right? I was doing a short-term study for the old Halifax board on the teaching of media literacy and so I spent a great deal of time in there. For members who don't know - and this is where I may need some help - it used to be a collection of other media resources for teachers. What you did was if they had a movie in their catalogue that you wanted, in the very old days you went and borrowed the movie and lugged it back to school and put in on the projector; in later years you could borrow a video; then there were videos that you could send a blank tape in and have copied, and you would have a copy for the price of a blank tape. I know it did a great many other things, too.

I see a lot of video resources listed here, and the power of pictures is unquestionable. It needs a gatekeeper, because if you talk about CNN war, you are talking about war as entertainment, you are talking about desensitization. You are talking about a whole lot of modern trends that have to be counteracted by the kinds of thoughtful resources that are here.

I understand there are serious cuts to the Learning Resources and Technology branch in this budget, and I would like to know, for instance, if a teacher wants to use The Battle of Vimy Ridge Series. That is a National Film Board film. We lost the office here. We lost free access to those when the National Film Board went, then we may or may not have been able to borrow them from the media resources library. What is the extent of these cuts, what is being cut, and how will this affect people who want to do the very thing that we are all advocating?

DENNIS COCHRANE: Good question. Specifics?

TOM RICH: I can deal with the specifics of that. You are quite right in saying that we have a very good resource in Learning Resources and Technology and the media library. The reductions in budget will have only a marginal impact on the media library. Most of the reductions will affect the production services, and in particular, some of the still photography and other production services which, largely, are not services that are currently directed toward the school system.

The media library itself, the distribution to schools will continue; I would anticipate the same volume of distribution to schools will continue in the next year. Teachers still have access to that. They can still get the duplications. We actually are now the repository of the NFB materials, so those are still accessible to schools through the media library. Even though the NFB library was shut down, they transferred the materials to us, so we distribute many of those materials still to schools.

EILEEN O'CONNELL: Are they free?

TOM RICH: It depends on whether or not there is a duplication charge. There is still that videotape cost to the duplication charge. So, yes, the particular materials you suggested on Vimy Ridge will still be available on the same basis to schools as in the past. The duplication will still be done. That is a very valuable resource.

Also, I think implied in your comments was the question of reviewing materials. We have some of the most stringent guidelines for reviewing materials in the country. We have done that very deliberately because of the issues of bias and stereotyping and fair representation of materials. All materials in the media library are reviewed by the appropriate curriculum consultants. They are also reviewed by our African-Canadian services and Mi'kmaq services division and the race-relations consultant to make sure there is fair portrayal of various cultural and other groups. That will also continue.

DENNIS COCHRANE: One of the other things that has happened at the national level, too, which will facilitate some of the things we do in our classrooms, there has been an agreement with CANCOPY with regard to printed materials related to copyright. That is always a question that teachers debate as they photocopy something or make copies available. We are also now negotiating, I believe, a national agreement with regard to video rights and trying to deal with protecting our teachers - teachers are extremely resourceful, they will get them wherever they can, and the Legion has been very supportive of that - and trying to make sure we provide nationally some agreements by which we pay en bloc for copyrights for not only printed materials, but we are also looking at the video reproduction opportunities and so on.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. As time is running out rapidly, I would like to put a motion on the floor, please. We, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, support the Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion's proposal to integrate Canadian military history into our provincial school system as a compulsory subject and part of a history course.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I second the motion.

THE CHAIR: Are you ready for the question? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Just before we adjourn, I am wondering if the deputy minister would commit to providing a written report on the progress, perhaps every three months?

DENNIS COCHRANE: Sure. We circulated today's presentation, but we will get back to you, once our minister looks at the presentation the department will make to her. Ultimately, the decision that she will make will be conveyed.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: When can we expect that? Do you have an approximate time?

DENNIS COCHRANE: The time frame is quite tight; I would suspect in the next two or three weeks we will be making a submission to the minister. She has asked for it, and we will be getting back to her as quickly as possible. It is virtually ready now, it is a question of time and opportunity to lay out all the details.

THE CHAIR: I want to thank our guests for their presentation, and also our two observers for their attendance here today.

This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:41 a.m.]