

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, November 23, 2000

Committee Room 1

Royal Canadian Legion

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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

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia Command

Clarence Dawe
President

Fred Mombourquette
First Vice-President

Vic Barnes
Second Vice-President

John Landsburg
Past President



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2000

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
William Langille

THE CHAIR: Good morning. We have with us this morning the four members of Provincial Command. Do you know everybody in the room, the members?

CLARENCE DAWE: I think we have met everybody here before.

THE CHAIR: If not, I would ask them to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Today we have, as guests: Clarence Dawe, Provincial President, Royal Canadian Legion; Mr. Fred Mombourquette, 1st Vice-President; Vic Barnes, 2nd Vice-President; and John Landsburg, Past President, Royal Canadian Legion. I would like to welcome you all here. I see that you have your presentation, so I would ask that you start, Mr. Dawe.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, first of all, on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia Command, we want to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for allowing us another opportunity to make a presentation. We would also like to throw out a bouquet to you, the chairman, and to the committee members for the assistance we are already given. If anyone has heard the Legion's remarks at the unveiling of the signage for Highway No. 102, we appreciate the work that has been done on behalf of the veterans of Nova Scotia. Coincidentally, three times this year the veterans of Nova Scotia have been honoured by the Government of Nova Scotia and we are most appreciative of the work that has been done.

I will now turn it over to the chairman of our veterans affairs committee, Comrade Fred

Mombourquette.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, I guess maybe I am going to repeat some of the things that Clarence said, but I can't help it because I feel that as chairman of this committee it is important that our members know what is happening to our committee.

This morning our Royal Canadian Legion Veterans Services and Seniors Committee would like to start off by thanking you and your Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for your support during the past year on implementing some of the issues we brought before you such as having the history of World War I, World War II and Korean Peacekeeping being taught as a subject in our schools in a short period of time, and the honouring of our veterans by renaming Highway No. 102 Veterans Memorial Way. I can assure you that our committee, our veterans and Legion members are very much appreciative of your efforts.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate the opportunity this morning to give you and your committee some idea of the kinds of services our Legion branches provide for legionnaires, seniors and our youth across the province. Our President, Comrade Dawe, will follow my remarks, followed by Past President Comrade Landsburg and 2nd Vice-President Comrade Vic Barnes.

Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion has appointed a Veterans Services and Seniors Committee that works with the 119 Legion branches in our Command and its membership of 35,000; the chairman also serves on the Nova Scotia Group of Nine along with the Senior Citizens' Secretariat. As over 50 per cent of our membership is seniors, our Legion branches are very active in supplying programs and projects for seniors in our communities. We have just received a yearly branch seniors' report form that has been completed by our branches, supplying us with information as to what each branch is doing for seniors in their communities. We were more than pleased with the results of this survey covering our branches all over our province.

Branches are involved in such things as foot care, hospital visits, help with paperwork, sick and visiting, comfort, Meals on Wheels, use of branches for meetings, social events, health clinics, telephone reassurance, transportation to doctors or hospitals, branch card parties, bingos, bus trips. It is almost impossible to figure out the number of free man-hours supplied by our branch members, not to mention the dollar factor supplied by the branches. If you would like to take a look at some of these replies we have on hand for your observation, I have them here; even after the meeting if you would like to look at them, you certainly can.

Also of note is our Dominion Command Veterans Services and Seniors Committee mandate of which Nova Scotia Command is a member. It is charged with looking out for the interests of seniors and those entitled to programs and benefits of Veterans Affairs Canada. It also maintains liaison with our other national or international organizations involved in the

promotion of CARE and other useful programs for seniors.

In 1991, the Royal Canadian Legion, Dominion Command, produced a guide in book form for the use of Royal Canadian Legion branches covering programs for seniors, and it has provided valuable information on the many programs and can be made available for the welfare of our senior citizens. I also have a copy of that book. It was a job done by Dominion Command back in 1991 and it was well put together. It was a costly venture and our branches, since 1991, have taken a very active part and have used this book. It is a wonderful book for the branches and for the new committees that are usually set up after elections. I am sure you fellows know about after elections.

In addition to the above, Nova Scotia Command has a full-time Command Service Officer in the person of Comrade Marc Gauthier. He assists branch service officers as well as directly offering services to veterans still serving, service personnel, former service and RCMP personnel and their dependants. His main emphasis is on service related to appeals and disability pensions. He also provides a full spectrum of services to veterans and their dependants on a province-wide basis.

Nova Scotia Command, through its Veterans Services and Seniors Committee, participated in a Senior Citizens Fall Consultation at Mount Saint Vincent University on October 4th; participated at meetings on October 5th at the Senior Citizens' Secretariat boardroom with the Honourable Michael Baker in attendance, dealing with safety and security for seniors; and participated in a workshop at Mount Saint Vincent University on October 18th, to address the issues related to ageing drivers.

Nova Scotia Command entered into a partnership with Community Links and Dr. Clarke, MD, Director of Long Term Care, Camp Hill Hospital. Its objective is to promote the independence and quality of life of veterans and seniors by reducing the number and severity of falls. If approved, funds for this four year fall prevention initiative will be made available by Health Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada for community-based projects in our Atlantic Region.

Over the last few minutes I have tried to give you a brief summary of the contributions our Legion members and branches are making in Nova Scotia communities for the betterment of our veterans, seniors and youth. This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion. This gives you some idea of the many years our members and our branches have been involved with our volunteer work, but we do wonder who would carry on with these worthwhile projects if our membership was to decline to the point that not enough volunteers were available or the necessary funds required for these projects could not be raised.

Mr. Chairman, before closing this presentation, I think I will cut off there and ask Comrade Dawe to take over.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman and members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, it is again my privilege to make a presentation to you on behalf of the members of the Royal Canadian Legion of Nova Scotia Command. My presentation relates to two of the programs which we have been involved in over the past 40 years.

The first program which we sponsor is the Leadership Training Camp which is held for 10 days in the summer at a major university in Nova Scotia. This program is designed to encourage the youth of Nova Scotia to become leaders in their communities. Eighty-four students are enrolled each year to take part in this camp as well as 10 professional educators - that is, teachers - who are hired to perform the instruction. These teachers are currently instructing in the provincial education system and are selected from various educational facilities from across Nova Scotia.

The purpose of this camp is to provide opportunities through teaching, planning and conducting programs whereby personal leadership potential may be further developed. Number two is to assist in developing some of the skills which will help the youth fulfil various leadership roles in the school or their community. To be considered eligible to attend this Leadership Training Camp, the applicants must be 15, 16 or 17 years of age during the year of the camp; must be under the age of 18 as of September 30th in the program year; and, number three, have completed either Grade 10 or Grade 11 and are planning to return to school the following year.

The purpose of this camp is to offer an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Elements of art, drama, sports, music and dance are used to allow the individuals to develop public speaking and communication skills, to learn motivation skills and to be able to organize groups to conduct specific tasks or pursue a course of action for the benefit of the group. The alternate goal of this camp is that students will make a potential difference in any team or organization that they are involved in, either school, church or community. This camp is designed to challenge our youth for their own personal development and its success is only limited to their own imagination and initiatives. It is unique for there is no other camp in Canada that strives to create potential leaders within our communities. After saying all this, the Leadership Training Camp costs the Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion approximately \$51,000 per year to operate.

Our second large contribution to youth is our assistance to the track and field of Nova Scotia. Through funds from Nova Scotia Command, we run the provincial competition to select potential athletes to send to the national competition which, again, is paid for from Dominion Command and Nova Scotia Command for the Nova Scotia athletes. We have done this each and every year since 1926. This year we sent 44 athletes, six coaches and chaperones to Calgary where they competed against athletes from across Canada. Some of these athletes go on to be Olympic competitors. In fact, last year we had several Olympic contenders and some of our athletes set many personal records and Nova Scotia records.

Depending on the location across Canada, this meet has become quite expensive. This year the cost of the provincial competition which was held in Sackville was approximately \$3,000 and for the national competition an additional cost of approximately \$42,000 for airfares, meals, accommodations and awards. As you can see, these costs are escalating each year and our funds are very limited as well as access to new money. It is starting to become a heavy load to Nova Scotia Command's pocketbook. Unfortunately, as our members continue to decline and our membership continues to drop, the funds available to youth will become less each year. We may have to examine our priorities and determine which programs Nova Scotia Command can participate in and which ones we will have to drop. I thank you for taking the time to listen to my presentation.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Dawe. You are to be commended for your work with the young people in this province. Mr. Landsburg.

JOHN LANDSBURG: Yes, gentlemen, I am Past President of the Command, but I am also the finance chairman and this is why they have put me in this spot. Some of my figures will likely differ from what Comrade Clarence said due to the fact that I am only looking after the Command.

We conducted a poll last year and in January we got a report on it from the 119 branches. Of these 119 branches, they donated approximately \$1.3 million to their communities and provincial groups. This does not take into consideration the donation of their halls to worthy groups in their communities or the man hours which we just cannot put a figure on to raise this kind of money. It also does not take into account the money raised for veterans through the branch poppy funds.

Monies are raised in the branches by the members of the branch and the ladies' auxiliary. There are many different ways - I have about 20 here, break-open tickets, flea markets, catering, VLT machines, so on and so forth.

The cut that we had to take last year on the VLT machines has not helped the branches in their endeavours. The Command, of course, is of an administrative nature, but we do support youth and senior programs. The Leadership Training Camp, which is an annual 10 day event for 84 students, usually costs us in the vicinity of \$51,000. Our track and field program - Clarence gave you a figure of \$42,000, that could go up depending on where and what it is - Dominion Command picks up a lot of the cost. It cost us at least \$15,000 last year for this program. All provinces send 44 athletes to this Dominion meet.

Our provincials, which were held in Nova Scotia, cost us another \$3,000. We also have a Call to Remembrance Program, which I am sure some of you are aware of and we have a play-off with all 15 zones of Nova Scotia, the winner of each goes to the finals.

That is not only what the branches pay to do this, plus the zones, it costs the Command

another \$8,000 to run this final play-off for prizes and so on and so forth. We also sponsor Cadet Squadrons, Air Cadets for public speaking and we contribute money to the Army Cadets for the Beazley Shoot which leads to a national competition which is another cost of approximately \$3,000.

Seniors' programs we more or less leave to the branches, but it is still \$4,500 to \$5,000 a year that we have to contribute. Four years ago we started a lotto sweep fund to cover these expenses. This has been gradually drying up as money has been getting more scarce. We used to receive a grant from the provincial government - this was a few years ago - of \$7,000. Eventually it kept going down, to \$1,500, it went to \$700 and then we were told it had dried up so for the last several years, we have received no money.

I guess that is about all I have to say in that regard. I will pass it back to Comrade Fred. Thank you.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Comrade Vic, would you like to take that microphone?

VIC BARNES: Mr. Chairman, members of the government, comrades all, they say that a speech should be like a lady's dress - long enough to cover the subject, but short enough to keep it interesting. I have a few points I would like to bring up today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I bring before you on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion the concerns of veterans, their families and other ageing Nova Scotians.

As you are well aware, we are just years away from the greatest influx of the Canadian population into the senior age category ever. In fact, if current predictions hold true, we will have doubled the population over the age of 65 by the year 2020. In preparation for this influx, it is wise to reflect on Nova Scotia's current capacity to serve the needs of older people and to begin planning for the required expansion of services and programs. In the federal election campaign, it has become clear that the most pressing concern of Canadians is health care. In this regard, we congratulate the Nova Scotia Government for the introduction of the single-entry-access program which will make access to health services by older Nova Scotians significantly easier. In addition to this initiative, there are a number of programs which, if implemented appropriately, could improve the health and well-being of ageing persons, while at the same time reducing the cost to government. These programs include, but are not limited to:

(1) Wellness Programs. Regular monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, weight and nutrition can alert health care practitioners to possible problems. There is no reason that this monitoring needs to be done in a physician's office. It is a program which can be offered in a church basement, or in a lounge in a senior's complex, by nurses who could also offer educational programs and provide participants with information about other community services. The opportunity to gather for wellness programs will also meet one of the most

pressing needs of ageing persons in Nova Scotia, that of social isolation.

(2) Fall Reduction Programs. One of the most frequent reasons that older people are admitted to institutional care in Nova Scotia is because of falls. There are a number of programs which address this concern, including specially designed exercise programs and environmental adaptations to the home. These programs are well-documented in their effectiveness in preventing falls, as well as reducing or delaying the need for institutionalization.

(3) Provision of Equipment for Home Care Clients. The majority of care provided to ageing Nova Scotians is, in fact, provided by family members. This takes a significant commitment, and one of the problems that informal caregivers encounter is the cost of renting the required equipment, including lifts and electric beds. This is not the type of equipment that is generally available through an equipment loan program but is vital to provide adequate care to persons with certain conditions, particularly those at the end of their life.

(4) Respite Care. A program of limited respite care is provided through Home Care Nova Scotia; however it is often not adequate for those who are providing care to a loved one, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. We were sorry that the in-home support funding disappeared when the Department of Community Services merged its programs to seniors with the Department of Health. This was a valuable program of relief to families supporting low-income seniors. We are also disappointed to note that adult day programs are still not supported in any way by the Province of Nova Scotia, this in spite of the fact that these programs are known to meet the needs of both care providers and care recipients and are more cost-effective than the provisions of in-home respite.

(5) Palliative Care Programs. The provision of effective, coordinated palliative care is a compassionate and cost-effective way of supporting people to die. While this is being looked at in Nova Scotia, particularly in the northern region where the rural palliative care project is nearing completion, it must become a reality throughout the province. Communities are attempting to respond to the needs of palliative care patients and their caregivers by developing palliative care to volunteer programs and hospices, but they are not always able to access support for these initiatives from the government.

(6) Transportation. It is interesting to note the priority of transportation in the recent report of the Provincial Health Council. If older people, or people with disabilities, can't access health services, they may as well not be in place. A number of transportation programs to meet the needs of seniors have been developed by communities throughout Nova Scotia; however these programs get little or no funding from the provincial government and they are constantly having to fund-raise in order to survive. Many transportation programs serving seniors piggyback on Human Resources Development Canada programs to promote employment or employability. While this arrangement works, it is generally recognized that seniors will be the first group dropped in a funding crunch.

(7) Volunteer Services. A significant amount of the planning for and provision of health care in this province is provided by volunteers. Volunteers serve in hospitals, in long-term care facilities and the community. Volunteers serve on community health boards, district health authorities and the Provincial Health Council. Throughout the province volunteers raise millions of dollars, which is used to sustain the health care system. Very little is done in the Province of Nova Scotia to recognize the contribution made by volunteers in the provision of health care. There are no coordinated, sustained grants available to volunteer programs; there is no minister responsible for volunteers; and we are not aware of any provincial initiatives to recognize the International Year of the Volunteer, which commences in less than two months.

None of the ideas I have raised today are new ideas; all of the ideas I have raised have been effectively addressed in other provinces. We do not need to reinvent the wheel to find high quality, cost-effective programs to meet the needs of Nova Scotia's ageing population. Templates for reliable programs are available. What is needed in Nova Scotia is immediate planning for services for ageing persons which incorporate the following:

Consistent collaboration with community groups, working for, and/or with seniors. This does not mean periodic meetings, this means inviting these groups to the table every time a new issue is raised or a new program is being considered.

A consistency in services and programs for seniors throughout the province. With the introduction of district health authorities, we run the risk of further fragmenting the services available throughout Nova Scotia. Older people need to know that regardless of where they reside in this province, there are certain basic services which will be available to them.

A government program of sustained funding for volunteer initiatives which addresses the health and well-being of the elderly. This would allow communities to plan for the development of volunteer transportation, palliative care, meal programs and other valuable services, without the burden of constant fund-raising.

Collaboration amongst government departments and levels of government in the recognition that the health and well-being of older people is not the exclusive responsibility of one department nor one level of government.

Creative thinking. There is no reason to deliver services the way they have always been delivered. Why do older people die in the hospital? Why not a hospice? Why are families only offered in-home respite? Why not adult day centres? Why are older people treated in hospitals for falls and no one ever visits the home to see what changes could be made to prevent falls.

A focus on health promotion and illness prevention. This has been given lip service by the provincial government. However, it is clear in looking at the budget of the Department of Health, and in reviewing the responses of the citizens of Nova Scotia in the report of the Provincial Health Council, that it needs significantly more support in terms of funding,

programs and personnel, if it is to significantly affect the lives of ageing Nova Scotians.

Royal Canadian Legions throughout this province have developed a high level of expertise in ageing persons, as they attempt to respond to the needs of veterans and other elderly people in the communities they serve. The Legions have developed effective partnerships, we have raised money for community programs, we have designed unique programs to meet the needs of seniors, and we have supported and recognized the volunteers in our communities. What we ask of our government today is no less than the Legions throughout this province are already doing. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that presentation. Any questions that are directed to the Command, I would ask that you go through me first so that you can be identified because of the recording.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

[9:30 a.m.]

JOHN HOLM: I would like to thank you for the very thorough presentations. Vic, as you pointed out in your remarks, so many of the items that you have raised are not, unfortunately, new and they are not easy. I am not trying to be partisan, they are not easy issues to address, but I think that they are very serious issues and some of us are not going to be waiting until the year 2020 to enter the senior bracket, but whether we are there now or will be sometime in the future, there are pressing issues that are facing countless seniors across this province and families each and every day.

This really isn't so much a question to Vic or our guests today, but rather a suggestion maybe to this committee. I think that there have been some very serious issues raised and I think that a copy of this presentation should be sent to the appropriate ministers and that we ask for a written reply from each of those ministers, departments - and hopefully give them a time-frame - and we ask that the ministers reply to this committee and that copies of the letters - obviously because it is based on the presentation made by the Command - that a copy of the responses to the concerns that have been raised be sent to the current president or whomever you feel might be most appropriate . . .

CLARENCE DAWE: Just to the president, whether I am there or somebody else, there is a new one in May.

JOHN HOLM: I think that these are very serious issues and so I guess if it is appropriate - and I am not trying to cut off questions or anything, and we can go on to other discussions before we have a vote on that - I would like to make that as a motion, Mr. Chairman, that you would be sending that on behalf of this committee.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion that the concerns brought up today be put in the form of letters to the appropriate ministries?

JOHN HOLM: I don't think there is any need for us to rewrite the presentation. I think that we should be writing to the ministers and pointing out that at today's meeting we had this presentation and submit the presentation - the issues are laid out quite clearly - and ask that appropriate responses be made and that they be provided to this committee. I would like to put a time line on it; I would like to say before the end of this fiscal year so it is not something that is going to be dragging on for years and years. Quite honestly, it is not reasonable to think that all of these issues will be able to be addressed and solutions found in a very short period of time. But I think that it is extremely important that ministers know and hear first-hand the concerns that are being raised and by at least responding to them, they are going to have to turn their attention to those issues and give it some thought in terms of how they are going to respond.

THE CHAIR: We have the motion, are you ready for the question?

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I am just wondering if the member would entertain adding to his motion that a copy of this be put on every MLA's desk in the Legislature as well.

JOHN HOLM: I would be happy to either add it to the motion, or it could just be something that we can do. Simply ask that photocopies be made and with the sitting of the House this afternoon, it just be distributed to all members. That would not be any kind of a problem, just give it to . . .

DARLENE HENRY: Do you want the submissions sent out because the Hansard will not be ready to go.

JOHN HOLM: No, no. I am just talking about the submissions. I think that is what you are talking about - it would have to have a brief cover to say . . .

DARLENE HENRY: Yes, not a problem. I will send a memo and send . . .

DAVID WILSON: Just with a cover outlining who gave the presentation to this committee on this day and then a copy put on every member's desk for the session this afternoon.

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.

The last time we met, the member for Sackville-Cobequid brought up something - does

the Legion have a brochure that they hand out to people in their area?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: If I might interject, we have brought some copies with us and we will leave them with you. We have them here now and you can have them for your office to pass on. I meant to refer to that in my closing remarks, but since I am speaking on it now I might as well complete by saying that there are also calling cards there from our provincial secretary, Comrade Frank Fudge, who is a full-time employee and we have his card there which will go with these brochures and if you receive questions from some of your people who come into the office you can certainly refer them to Frank who is in the office eight hours a day, five days a week and it might take some of the workload off you, or at least give you an opportunity to steer the person in the right direction. So we will leave those with you today.

That was one of the things - before we close - that we were going to suggest, that the recommendations that we have made today be placed before the proper committees for their consideration and so we thank you for thinking of that before we even had an opportunity to ask you. It was certainly on our minds, so thank you for that too.

JOHN HOLM: I will just go on to a couple of things, more than just committees. I think it is often good to go directly to the minister because committees have - although we sometimes like to think we have more powers than we actually do. One of our powers is actually to direct, really, questions to the source that has the information and the ones who make the decisions and so I am pleased. I think all committee members are only too happy to try - well, we have already shown that - to assist in that area.

I just want to put in a couple of things. One, a plug for the Calais Legion in Sackville because they have been a tremendous service within the community. They are a very vibrant club. One of the things, I think, because it is one of the visible things, is the Heritage Park and the memorial they erected which is unique in the world as far as I know. One of a kind and it was just a fabulous venture and having the Nunavut stone placed there this past summer, to me it sort of made it whole again because we had a new territory and we did not have the stone from the new territory. We did from every other province and every other country around the world.

For those who do not know it, the recently built cenotaph in Sackville has stones in it from every province, every territory as well as from every country around the world where Canadian soldiers have served and given their lives and it is an impressive monument. Not only for how it looks, but for the message that it is bringing and the Legion deserves tremendous credit for that.

The other thing I wanted to ask about - you had made mention during your presentation about declining enrolment and also about the need to reflect on priorities in the future possibly because of declining revenues. I am wondering if you could just expand on that slightly, just

put it a little bit more in perspective. One, how is the enrolment changing? What is actually happening? How much is it dropping? Also, you spoke about having to depend upon new members coming in. Are the younger members picking up the responsibilities that some of the older members are no longer able to carry? Are they stepping in to fill the branch? And, I am interested in the changes in the VLT lottery. You talked about \$1.3 million as the value of the monies contributed towards the communities and so on. I am wondering, how much revenue are the VLTs now bringing in, and how did that decline as a result of the changes?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: To answer your first questions, I am going to turn the microphone over to our president, who is also chairman of our membership. He can probably fill you in on some of the details.

CLARENCE DAWE: Mr. Chairman, honourable members, not to our liking, and I would say ours as the elected officers of Nova Scotia Command, the younger people are not carrying the torch, as we call it, as the veterans have done. The veterans, we are unique, when they were with ex-servicemen and peacekeepers, they had a calm realm, they all served, they all wore a uniform. The younger people are not as enthused in the volunteerism that the Legion is founded upon. The majority of us are volunteers, we do have paid staff in our Command and in our branches, but the younger people are not, if you can understand the younger generation, they come along, they are married, they have families, they have jobs, and they don't have the hours to donate to our service. We still have a lot of the veterans, the Second World War veterans who do a lot of the volunteering, but their age and ailments are now coming against them.

VLTs, now that is another matter. We have an appointment to see the Minister of Finance; we made an approach last year on that. We are receiving some funds from the VLTs, and we don't think we are getting a fair shot on that. We are a non-profit organization, as our presentation here today displayed. We do a lot in the community, and that is where our money is going. We don't think it is fair that we are lumped together with bar owners, per se; they get 100 per cent profit, ours is spent on veterans, seniors and the community. That is where our bucks go.

JOHN HOLM: I am just trying to figure out how much of a hit you took with the changes.

JOHN LANDSBURG: What was it, 2 per cent? (Interruptions) It was 5 per cent, I think, the profits going to the branches went down.

JOHN HOLM: I am just wondering what that translates to in terms of the number of dollars; 5 per cent could be a few dollars, and 5 per cent could be enough to decide whether you can or can't deliver the programs for youth, for example, or more.

CLARENCE DAWE: The Gaming Commission estimates that we get 20 per cent of

the take, but out of the 20 per cent of the take, we have to pay our employees to look after handling the machines, depositing the money, we have to pay for the electricity, we have to pay for the lines coming in for the computer for the machines, and the Gaming Corporation takes the lion's share, 75 per cent; they say 25 per cent, it is not. In all actuality, we figured it out, we get about 12 per cent of the income that goes into the machines.

JOHN HOLM: And you don't have the dollar figure for that?

JOHN LANDSBURG: No, but on the bigger branches, possibly I could give a guesstimate, and that is all it would be. The bigger branches, with the cut, would likely lose about \$3,000 a year. Of course, that would go down with the smaller ones, and going by machine, how many you have and so forth. Figure out 119 times, well we will even say \$1,500, that is quite a hunk of money that they can't put back into the community.

JOHN HOLM: Sackville probably would have taken \$3,000 . . .

JOHN LANDSBURG: Sackville, Truro, they would be the bigger ones, yes. One thing I didn't because it wasn't typed up the way I had given it, the monies raised by branches is done in many ways, but also at the same time what they give to is the Terry Fox Centre, Encounters Canada, hospital equipment, Scouts, scholarships, so on and so forth.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Halifax Bedford Basin.

MARY ANN MCGRATH: I am interested in the transportation issue that you highlighted in your presentation. I seem to recall, maybe last year, hearing about a volunteer transportation program, I think it was running in the Valley. What Legion would that be, or was it a joint effort?

VIC BARNES: We had one in the Kingston Branch, and it is still operating to a very small degree. Most of it has been taken over by the Victorian Order of Nurses. They have a vehicle that will take people just about anywhere at any time. We have a bus that runs from the drugstores in the area, that brings people into appointments, into Halifax, and that is always full as well. It is to be noted that the Legions support all of these, monetarily, every year, quite a bit of money, all the Legions in the Valley.

There is one other thing I would like to mention at this point in time, if I may. I mentioned in my report about hospices. I think this is one of the biggest things we are going to need in the future. If the government would only realize the money they can save on a hospice, you are talking, per person, long-term care in a hospital, over \$1,200 a day. If that person was in a hospice, it is about \$187 a day. There is a big difference. We have a committee in line now in the Valley, we haven't even gone out to ask the people yet or the Legions for funds, and it already had \$0.25 million donated to the hospice. It is well under way. If we could get this going all over the province, what we are asking is, once we get the hospice up and running, for

the government to participate in it. In other words, you are going to save yourself a lot of money by doing this. That is all we are asking for.

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

BRIAN BOUDREAU: The VLT issue, what do you suggest is an answer?

CLARENCE DAWE: I will give you an honest answer, if we got 50 per cent, that would be Utopia. In reality, we know that the Gaming Commission had to purchase these machines. We think a more fair share, if we were getting an actual 25 per cent of the machines, I think all the Legions would be smiling. For the time and effort that our people put into it, we are not getting the bucks. We do all the work, the government agency put the machines in there and all the work is done by our people. We have to pay for everything. They come in and do the maintenance and whatnot, but if a machine is down, you are not making any money from that machine. We do all the work, and our money goes right back into the community. It has not gone into our pockets or a big fat bank account, we look after veterans, seniors and youth in our communities.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: If I may, I think, despite some of the comments from my colleague across the floor, this committee has been very successful, at least since I was elected 15 months ago. I have to congratulate you in particular for putting forth issues that the Command has initiated. They have been accepted by this committee and, of course, you as the Chairman have taken up the fight. I think each of us, as members, have to recognize when there is an issue here, particularly for the Command, we are all very much aware of the work that they do. It has positive results throughout the communities of Nova Scotia. I believe this is a major issue for Legions. I recognize the fact that they only get 12 per cent now. Financially, the province is now moving forward. We see the royalties on gas development, for instance, coming forward, and the Finance Minister feels that he has the debt under control.

I feel that, perhaps, a letter from this committee to the Finance Minister, just asking for his comments on this particular issue, not necessarily putting pressure on him or anything, recognizing that we do have a financial problem in this province. However, I think that because of the work the Command and the individual Legions do throughout this province, we at least have a responsibility to request from the Finance Minister a comment on this particular issue, and if he sees anywhere down the road where this revenue could be increased for the benefit of all the people of Nova Scotia, not just the Command or the individual Legions.

THE CHAIR: Before we do that, last year you met with the Finance Minister and I understand you have another meeting scheduled for the Finance Minister?

CLARENCE DAWE: We have a meeting on December 13th.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, I . . .

THE CHAIR: I think before we do, would you people want a letter from the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs?

CLARENCE DAWE: We appreciate any assistance we can get, that is our plea. When we go to the minister again, we are going to ask for more bucks from the VLTs. As you have heard from our reports here today, our pot is starting to dwindle and in order to keep the programs going that we do within our communities, just imagine if there were no Legions in all the communities you people serve, where would the crunch be? It would be back on the government to do some of the work that the Legions are doing now. All we really are is an arm. We are assisting in our communities, our seniors, our veterans, our youth. We are doing a major contribution to the province and we are not asking for all the money, we are asking for a fair share, that is all.

JOHN HOLM: Can I just ask a question before we do anything . . .

THE CHAIR: Yes, but just before you do, you want an increase in the percentage?

CLARENCE DAWE: I think we warrant it in all honesty. The work we do in the community, the work we do with the VLTs, the onus is on all the individual branches that have these machines, and where our money goes, like I say, we are lumped in with the private bar owners and we do not think it is fair. Theirs is for profit. We are a non-profit organization.

THE CHAIR: I guess where I am going is to the content of the letter that you want us to send.

CLARENCE DAWE: Just say you support our initiative, that it is a fair request.

JOHN HOLM: Today you very kindly provided us with written copies of your presentation and your recommendations. My question is, in your December meeting with the Minister of Finance will you likewise be going in with a written proposal and requests, recommendations?

CLARENCE DAWE: We will do much the same as in the presentation we have done here today, maybe in a briefer form because we only have an hour.

JOHN HOLM: Right, but dealing specifically with the VLTs, I guess, because I do not honestly know exactly what is or is not going to be said in that letter - and I am wondering if the member for Cape Breton The Lakes would agree to this - that a friendly amendment or change in your motion would be that we write to the Minister of Finance and state that we would like to receive a written response as well to the requests that are going to be made in writing to him by Central Command on such and such a date.

In other words, I do not know exactly what is in it and while I want to say I support

you 100 per cent, quite honestly, until I see what you are putting in in terms of a request, I am not prepared to say 100 per cent I support regardless of what I know you are going to say. Today we were being asked to sign last year's report of the committee and so I put my signature on it, but before I put my signature on it, I had read it and I am sure you would understand this. So I am just trying to make sure we are asking for responses based on that and then when we get that response, then we can determine as a committee if there is something more we wish or should be doing in support of the proposals that are being put forward.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: I think this would be an asset to us if that would be done.

CLARENCE DAWE: We would even go as far as a copy of our presentation would be given to the members of this committee.

THE CHAIR: That is where I was going. You are meeting on December 7th?

CLARENCE DAWE: December 13th.

THE CHAIR: It does not give much time for us to put something in place and you are already going to make your presentation.

CLARENCE DAWE: This committee has a meeting the day before to gather facts. We will all do our homework for our presentation and we will have it done on December 12th. Maybe we can reschedule our meeting so you people have it before we go to the minister.

JOHN HOLM: I do not think that would be necessary, not if the mover of the motion is agreeable with that as a kind of friendly suggestion in terms of amendment. Brian's motion then would say that we write a letter to the Minister of Finance in which we would basically say that we understand that he has a meeting with yourselves on such and such a date and that the presentation will be in writing and we would, as a committee, appreciate receiving a written reply to the recommendations and requests that are going to be made during that presentation.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: I think that would go a long way in assisting us, as I say, if it was done before we got to see him.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, I do not have a problem wording that motion in that particular manner. However, I want to stress it is important, I believe it is very important, that it be known to the minister that this committee discussed this issue with the Command and that we are in support of their initiatives. I think in all fairness we have to respect the fact that the minister is aware of all the issues here, particularly when we come to the debt and all that kind of stuff.

I do not want to pretend I am a Finance Minister because I am not but, again, I would

like to repeat that in the past 15 months - unfortunately, I have been removed from the committee and my Leader is now the member, I am filling in today - I think all members, particularly the government members, have shown an interest in these issues that are important to not only the Command, but to the people of Nova Scotia.

We have to recognize the work that they do. I think the committee has done that, at least for the last year that I was on the committee, and I am encouraging that that same initiative be held here on this issue, that the minister be made aware that we discussed this issue with the Command and are in support of their initiative and that we recognize the need of this Legion because of the economic crunch that they are experiencing now, as every government body is, but they are a vital part of our society. We must find an avenue to provide help in areas that we can and I think it is important for the minister to know that prior to making any decisions.

JOHN HOLM: Mr. Chairman, to try to put things in context, as well as the letter, as Brian has agreed to in terms of the kind of wording, would be to submit along with that letter a transcript of the minutes from today and then the minister would know of the discussion.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: That is fine.

THE CHAIR: Pertaining to the VLTs?

JOHN HOLM: Well, you can give him the whole minutes, but with specific reference to comments made between pages such and such.

THE CHAIR: I believe the member for Cape Breton East has a question?

DAVID WILSON: On the letter, Mr. Chairman, just to clarify, you said you already had a meeting with the Finance Minister?

CLARENCE DAWE: Last year.

DAVID WILSON: Last year, and did you bring up this subject?

CLARENCE DAWE: Yes.

DAVID WILSON: Was anything done about it?

CLARENCE DAWE: No.

DAVID WILSON: Well, I would hope that we would take a little stronger stand here today because what appears to be happening is that the Minister of Finance is only paying lip-service to these people. If the matter has been brought up for a year, does it take the Minister of Finance a year to reply. Have you had any reply?

CLARENCE DAWE: Well, just verbally at our meeting there. He told us that we were not the only non-profit organization that was looking for money. I, as the president of the Nova Scotia Command, have to speak for 119 branches of the Legion. We are in the communities and, as I stated before, if a Legion was to falter or fold up in a community, the community would notice it. It is not only a rallying point, it is a great spot in a community. It is vital to the organization and the community.

DAVID WILSON: I think, and Mr. Barnes made reference, Clarence, in his presentation that his worry is that the government is just not paying lip-service to all of the concerns that you have listed in your presentation. You brought up the issue before to this committee, in particular on VLTs. You brought up your other issues before, too, but if you have had a meeting with the Minister of Finance and his comment has been that, well, you are not the only non-profit organization in the province, then I would respectfully submit that maybe the Minister of Finance has already made up his mind on the issue and are we just wasting our time here. Should we not be a little bit stronger in saying to the Minister of Finance, look, these people deserve an answer and they deserve it sooner rather than later?

[10:00 a.m.]

JOHN LANDSBURG: Excuse me, could I speak on the VLTs. When we did meet with the Minister of Finance, maybe we weren't strong enough or whatever, but at the time they were just going into the fact that they were going to cut the profits to all vendors of the VLT machines. We had asked for him to consider leaving it where it was for us because we were a non-profit organization and that is when he told us that there are other non-profit organizations, so we knew we weren't going anywhere there.

JOHN HOLM: It has been a number of years since I have been on this committee. Once upon a time - it almost seems like another generation ago that I used to be on this committee - a number of these same kinds of issues kept coming up, whether that be during the 1980's or the 1990's, dealing with VLTs when they were first being brought in, it seems to me that there were issues about the amount that the Legions were getting. So it is not just a matter of this past year. Then, with the break-open tickets, that was another issue that went on for quite a number of years. So in terms of the kind of lip-service, it sounds like that same kind of issue has maybe been expressed for quite a number of years.

CLARENCE DAWE: I would just like to say to this committee that I realize there are other non-profit organizations within this province but we, as Legions, I and my fellow comrades have to speak of ours. If there are other people out there who want another piece of the bone, it is their job to get off their butts and do something about it. We are speaking for the Legions and there are 119 of them throughout this province. That is the job we were elected to do, to speak on behalf of our fellow members.

BRIAN BOUDREAU: I think in all fairness to the minister, a year ago the minister was in his portfolio for perhaps less than six months. I think today, at least this year, he should have a better handle on both his responsibilities and his ability to manage the debt in this province. When I hear my colleague across the floor, I think it is important to recognize that this province was in a money crunch. However, I believe that we are on a course with the new revenues coming in, particularly with the development of gas - there are others, like tax breaks from the federal government that Nova Scotians haven't seen as yet - there may be an avenue that we can provide support to the Command and the individual Legions out there. I believe it is the responsibility, as members of this committee, to recognize their efforts and provide support in the areas that we can.

I believe that the minister should be at least made aware that this committee has discussed this issue and does support the Command in their initiative because their costs are increasing. The work is valuable that they do within their own communities. We must sustain the involvement of this Command in Nova Scotia, in order to have healthy communities.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, if I may, in our presentation today the situation has become a little more serious, as far as we are concerned, than it was a year ago. We are looking at a drop in our membership, as we suggested. We have 119 branches but there are many branches today in that 119 that have serious problems. You can look at the bigger branches and see people coming in and out but there is so much competition out there today, with other organizations and other establishments, that it is making it difficult for us to train our younger members - the ones we can get - to carry on.

As we look at the situation five years down the road, we are going to be in a serious situation. If we can get some of these things under control now, it will help the younger people, who are coming on, a lot. That is why at this time, more than ever, we are going to have to impress upon the Finance Minister how serious the situation is. You know as well as I do that once it does go down, you have one heck of a job to get it back up again. So we don't want that to happen and that is why we are here today and that is why we are going to see the Minister of Finance.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Kings South.

DAVID MORSE: Well, I am just listening to the debate, and I apologize for being late, and the gist of this is (Interruption) You're welcome. I try to be congenial. So the question is, what is in the letter? In essence, you are looking for a letter from Veterans Affairs that is supportive of your approach to the Minister of Finance. I think the Veterans Affairs Committee - if I am being presumptuous I am sure somebody will tell me - is supportive of the program supplied by the Legion and the concept of the Royal Canadian Legion.

You have brought forward that you are experiencing some financial difficulties, which

could be explained in a sentence or two in the letter, and what you are asking us to do is ask the minister to please give some consideration to varying the VLT percentage. Is there anything wrong with just capturing that in the letter?

JOHN HOLM: That, in essence, is really what I think we were doing but we went a step further in saying that we would like to have a written reply to the recommendations. So we are not only asking him to consider it, but we would like to have some feedback from the minister on the recommendations being made.

DAVID MORSE: And could we have a written response by . . .

JOHN HOLM: I would say by the end of the fiscal year, the same as we did in the earlier motion.

DAVID MORSE: So, is there any disagreement with putting that in the letter?

JOHN HOLM: And attach a copy of the minutes.

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.

VIC BARNES: I would just like to bring up a point, if you don't mind. I feel terrible about us asking for assistance but we are involved in so many different programs in this province, it is unbelievable. We brought only a few of them here today. You wouldn't believe the programs we are involved in and we don't want to lose them. If we don't get some help from somewhere, we are going to lose them. As the Chairman said, if we lose them, we are finished. We just cannot have this happen and this is one of the reasons we are here asking for your help. We need to keep these programs going to keep these people happy. We are getting more older people all the time - I am one of them - and they are going to need help. I don't need any yet but there may come a day. We do not want to lose the programs we have going.

MARY ANN MCGRATH: Mr. Barnes, if I may, I don't suppose that anybody who ever comes to you and asks for help, you ever say or ever indicate to them that they should apologize for asking for that help. In the same way, I would say to you that you should never apologize in asking for our help in carrying out your very important work.

VIC BARNES: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other questions of the Command? Do you have any questions for the committee?

CLARENCE DAWE: I would like to make one further comment. Mr. Chairman, and

members of the committee, the gold book, the one with the gold cover, that is the Camp Director's Report of that leadership camp I talked about. At the very end of it are the comments of the students who attended it. It is most impressive, if you read what these students say who we select to go to this camp. It is a great eye-opener and a great morale booster for the youth of this province to attend this camp. To read this report, it is just a pleasure. So if you have time - I know you are busy people too - I would ask you to glance through this report. It is most uplifting.

JOHN HOLM: Just as a comment, the committee has agreed to send a couple of letters and we would anticipate, therefore, that there are going to be a number of replies - Community Services, Health, Finance and so on. I know I, as a member of this committee, and I am sure all members of this committee, would very much welcome learning of your response to the replies given, whether that be done at a future meeting or by written replies.

I know I would like to hear what you think of what the various ministers are going to be saying in terms of responses.

CLARENCE DAWE: We have no problem. We have the list of the members of this committee and we are only too glad to share.

JOHN HOLM: One letter is all that is needed, and it would be copied to us all and to the chairman.

JOHN LANDSBURG: I have a question, possibly someone could fill me in here. We were here before and we talked about track and field arrangements. It wasn't in this presentation today, but just this week I believe it was, I read in the paper where they are talking about renovating Saint Mary's University. Does anybody on this committee know anything about that? Is there money allotted for this, or is this just wind for the time being?

MARY ANN MCGRATH: Saint Mary's University got an endowment in the last year or so from, I believe, an estate. It was a substantial amount of money and they are using that endowment to do a lot of the upgrading, like the upgrading of the residence in the Loyola Building, to the stadium and to the science building. They have a three or four year construction renovation planned.

JOHN LANDSBURG: There was nothing on track and field in that report that you are talking about, was there, or what the endowment is going to pay for?

MARY ANN MCGRATH: Whatever Saint Mary's University wants to pay for.

CLARENCE DAWE: According to what I read in the newspaper, it said they were going to increase their track size. My eyes just opened like that, because we have been looking to try to host a national competition of the Legion track and field. If this is done, if they do

increase their track and stadium, we get to be able to put a bid in and, within the next few years, host the national track and field.

THE CHAIR: We realize we don't have the facilities here in Nova Scotia to hold a Dominion Command track and field event.

JOHN LANDSBURG: That was another subject that we broached when we were talking to the Minister of Finance, that maybe he could find some money to help one of these universities get into that business of a track and so forth and so on.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any other questions of the committee?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: It sounds very much like you gentlemen have to go to another meeting, and we certainly don't want to leave here without telling you how we appreciate the fact that you pay attention the way you do to our committee. We have found a big difference in the last number of years, not to downgrade anybody before. We certainly appreciate your attentiveness and your contribution so far. It is quite a pleasure for us to be able to go to a convention - and we are having one next May - and tell our membership, not only at the microphone, but in writing, of the cooperation that we are receiving from you gentlemen. As we leave here, we want you to know that we appreciate the sincerity of your committee and yourself. Thank you very much for that.

THE CHAIR: I thank you for your comments. It is also a pleasure for me to be a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, I know the work that we do.

If there is nothing else, I thank you gentlemen for coming in. If you don't mind waiting a few minutes, I will get you a tape of the Memorial Highway. We have some things we have to discuss here, and then I will meet you outside. Is that all right? I don't think it will be too long.

[10:15 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:17 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: I guess we are ready, are we? Last meeting we discussed the Walter Callow Buses coming in at a future date. Now, we are coming into the month of December and if we have a meeting in December, it would have to be early in December as it is a busy time of year. Either that or it would be January. What is the pleasure of the committee? (Interruptions) We are just saying that it is a busy time of year in December and we have the people from the Walter Callow Buses requesting a meeting with us. Is that right, Darlene?

DARLENE HENRY: They had written a request to us - it will be a year next month - asking to come before the committee just to speak on what they do. So, it is just a matter of

fulfilling their request.

JOHN HOLM: Since we have been very prompt - a touch of sarcasm there - in fulfilling their request, I think that yes, we should be setting a date and maybe January would be most appropriate.

THE CHAIR: Do we have a date in January?

DARLENE HENRY: Early January, it would be January 11th which is right after the holidays, the second week of January.

THE CHAIR: Would January 11th be suitable for our next meeting? (Interruption)

DARLENE HENRY: It is a Thursday.

THE CHAIR: It is always on a Thursday. Would all those in favour of our next meeting being on January 11th please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We also have here our end of the year report that is getting a little late now, isn't it? It should be in.

DARLENE HENRY: No, it is not too late.

THE CHAIR: We have a statement of submission and I see that three of us have signed it. So the members on the committee who are here, I would ask that you sign it. There is just the one, is there? Yes. (Interruptions)

BRIAN BOUDREAU: Is there a motion to adjourn?

JOHN HOLM: I so move.

THE CHAIR: There is nothing else on the agenda. The motion is to adjourn. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:21 a.m.]