

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, January 11, 2001

Committee Room 1

Callow Wheelchair Buses

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

William Langille (Chair)
John Holm
Jerry Pye
Mark Parent
David Wilson (Cape Breton East)
John Chataway
Cecil O'Donnell
Mary Ann McGrath
Wayne Gaudet

[Jerry Pye was replaced by Kevin Deveaux.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Walter Callow Buses

William MacDonald
Board President

John Morse
Executive Director

Kevin Page
Board Member

Harold Shea
Board Member



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2001

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
William Langille

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. I welcome our guests here this morning. Today we have members of the Walter Callow Buses: Bill MacDonald, President of the Board; John Morse, Executive Director; Kevin Page and Harold Shea, board members. Welcome here today to the Veterans Affairs Committee. I would ask now that the members would identify themselves to you.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I believe we have a presentation and, Bill, you are going to start, are you?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Yes I am, Mr. Chairman. We are very appreciative of having the opportunity to meet with you today. Aside from the people who came with me today, how many of you are familiar with Walter Callow? Have you ever noticed the buses around town? So you are somewhat familiar with our organization. My first recollection of Walter Callow - and you will probably tell from my hairstyle that I went to school in the 1950's - I recall the teacher saying, class, when you go home at lunchtime, bring back some pennies, dimes and nickels for the Walter Callow bus. That was my first recollection of Walter's endeavour.

It was 20-odd years later that I became involved again. I was appointed Manager of Scotiabank on Quinpool Road and historically, traditionally, the branch manager there became the treasurer of the organization. Of course, you could have sort of just sat back and said, okay, I will act as a figurehead treasurer but it became more than that. You became involved in the organization and you became a director and helped in operating the organization. As far as I can recall and as far back as I can see, the Manager of Scotiabank on Quinpool Road has been

the treasurer of the organization and that continues on today.

Walter has to be known as one of Nova Scotia's most remarkable sons because the organization he created was done under very trying circumstances and, of course, it was done primarily for the benefit of veterans. He started his organization in 1947 and, of course, here we are 50 years later still going strong. We have a volunteer board of about 14. We have an executive director, full-time clerk typist, full-time driver and a part-time driver.

Originally the organization was incorporated as Callow Veterans and Invalids Welfare League. A few years ago we decided, as a board, that maybe we should change the name a little bit and came up with Callow Wheelchair Busses. That certainly was well received by our clients and the public. Our objective is to make certain that as a non-profit organization, we dedicate our time to providing group recreational transportation for persons with disabilities and I guess that is the key that it is a group facility, if you will, and it is unique. It is not the same as Access-A-Bus where you have sort of a one-on-one, as need be. As a group, you go out with your peers, so to speak, to different functions - Legion parties, picnics, events at Metro Centre - all the sorts of things that you and I would like to do.

Walter was a native of Parrsboro. In 1917 he was hurt in a flying accident, actually it was a test flight. As a result of his injuries he was sent home in 1918. He was still able to carry on a living. Initially he was trained as a mechanic but I understand from information in our files that he operated a lumber business in Advocate and was quite successful. His injuries from that plane crash were making it very difficult for him to carry on a normal lifestyle and eventually he ended up in Camp Hill in 1937, never to leave. He had a 10 year old daughter at the time and within one year his wife had died and his mother, who used to help him extensively carry on his endeavours, had died.

If you look into literature, you will quite often see the term human log, which is what he was known as. It was sad but at the same time he was known as the human log with a heart and a heart as big as ever. He would eventually become blind, two years later, having entered Camp Hill, he became paralysed, he became a double amputee, but through all these trying times, he was able to create an organization that at one time had about six buses on the go right across Canada.

In 1947, there are pictures of a tour that they took in Ottawa and in those days, not only did they have a bus driver, they had a hostess. The first bus, he designed it himself. I don't think he ever saw it because I think by that time he was blind but he certainly knew everything about it. Harold was with the Halifax Herald at the time and he would get calls from Walter in the middle of the night because Walter, being blind, had no conception of time. Maritime Tel & Tel had provided him with a communications device that fit on his head and he could speak and hear. I am not quite sure how he dialled out. Harold, do you know how that happened?

HAROLD SHEA: He had somebody who would dial for him, one of the nurses. I'm sorry, go ahead.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: I was just going to say that he would call the Premier, like at 2:00 a.m. in the morning and say, I need this for my colleagues, my veteran friends. But, initially, he had this iron will and he had wonderful organizational skills, an abundance of patience, but a heart full of love for his suffering humanity. From this hospital room, he made the spirit of Christ live.

He was instrumental in not only getting the buses going for the vets, it is told that he caused some 3 million cigarettes to go overseas for World War II veterans. At one point, he noticed there was a particular vet who had been in the hospital for about seven years and he had only been out three times. He said, that's unacceptable. We've got to do something. So he designed the first bus. It cost \$15,000. It was made in Nova Scotia and, as I said, they did that national tour in 1947. Sadly, the only time Walter was on a bus was when he passed away in 1958 and he was driven back to Parrsboro for burial.

What led to us coming here today? Back in April 1999, we were contacted by Murray Scott and Gordon Balser. Apparently, in various meetings, the name, Callow, would come up and everybody was saying, well, are they still in business? What are they doing?

If you look at the back of this brochure, you will see a letter reproduced which talks about that contact at that time. Of course, Murray and Gordon were saying, well, what is it that you need? It was just at that time we were getting ready to launch our campaign for a new bus, costing \$200,000. Subsequently, we have taken \$75,000 of our own funds and set it aside towards the purchase, leaving, of course, \$125,000 to be raised. To date, we have raised \$50,000.

Just recently, through one of our board members, we met with Bruce Oland. Bruce has agreed to be honorary chairperson of our fund-raising activities. Tomorrow, in the Halifax Herald, you will see an article by Joel Jacobson, talking about Walter Callow, his work and what we are endeavouring to do at the moment. We also have asked Arnie Patterson to do an article, as well.

For the new bus, we are getting quotes from Bluebird and Thomas. We are hoping that the cost may come in below that \$200,000. We have asked them to sharpen their pencils. We may find that it may come in less than the \$200,000. If we do raise that \$200,000, certainly anything above what is needed for the bus will be still greatly needed.

We have an operating budget that varies, depending upon the cost of servicing the buses. For an average year, you might spend \$5,000 maintaining the vehicles but in 1999, we spent \$16,000 because of the transmission going and things like this.

In 1997, the board decided that we were going to have to introduce somewhat of what you would call a user-pay system for certain clients; the nursing homes, people who are not connected to Camp Hill, let's say. The idea was that if we went beyond a radius of, say, 40 miles, we would charge them a flat fee of \$120 plus mileage. We were concerned about introducing that. Obviously, we thought that that might be received negatively but it wasn't. We approached our clients and told them that our costs were escalating and we needed to look at different ways of enhancing our revenue.

The other thing at the time was, United Way, who had been supporting us over the years, in 1994, started reducing the monies allotted to us. In 1995, I think we received \$22,000. This past year it ended. We no longer receive funds through United Way. So as you can see, as the years have gone by, we have had to find ways of replacing that money.

The public has been generous. Above all, the Legions have been extremely helpful. I think, in the last two years, through the poppy funds and different fund-raising ventures, they have given us close to \$30,000. Without the Legions, we would be finding it very difficult to meet our normal operating costs.

We do get about \$31,000 a year from DVA which is to cover the costs of the vets rides, as we call them. In an average year, we would do about 325 outings and about 180 of those relate to the veterans. About 100 relate to the nursing homes and the rest would be for other groups that need our equipment.

We recently took what funds we have on the investment side. Traditionally, we have been using guaranteed investment certificates at Scotiabank. The board decided it was maybe time to move some of that money into a balanced portfolio where we get a little better return on our investment. We are being very conservative. We appreciate the fiduciary responsibility we have here. I will say that John's predecessor, Pat Fletcher, a former Scotiabanker, was very instrumental in reorganizing our operating situation, meaning, he looked very closely at where we were spending our money and how we could reduce our costs and how we could enhance our revenues.

In 1997, we had a remarkable change in our bottom line. That continues to this day, of course. We have to keep a very close watch on expenditures. Sometimes things will happen unexpectedly, of course, like a transmission will go on a bus or the buses have to be inspected every six months and, maybe through inspection, they will say, look, this has to be done, that has to be done, and you will get a bill for \$5,000.

Fortunately, over all these years, we have never had an accident and that is a testament to the quality of drivers, of course. We have a clerk typist who has been with us about 15 years. You could say that she could probably run the show in our absence. She is a great credit to our organization. I think that is probably what I would like to share with you for the moment.

When I met with Gordon and Murray, they said that they felt they would be able to help us on the fund-raising side by perhaps approaching some of the corporate entities in the province like Stora, IMP, Michelin, that sort of thing. I am going to leave that with you just to give me a little feedback as to what you think about that.

Obviously, our greatest need today is to get the rest of the money for the bus. Now, having said that, we have two buses, a 1985 and a 1989. We are replacing the 1985, obviously, because the lifespan is generally 15 years, but that 1989 is going to have to be replaced in a few years' time. If we do raise \$200,000 and only spend \$150,000, that other \$50,000 is going to be used for the next bus that comes along.

I'm quite receptive to any questions and Harold may be able to share a few stories with you and John and Kevin are quite willing to answer questions as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for that presentation. Maybe we can start with the member for Sackville-Cobequid.

JOHN HOLM: I am a little bit familiar, certainly, with the Callow Busses and have a few questions, if I might. First, I was interested in when you talked about a fee of \$120 plus mileage, I think you said if it was beyond 40 miles?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Yes, that is right.

JOHN HOLM: Is that a fee that is charged to the individual clients or is that a fee that is charged to, for example, the nursing home facility?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: The nursing home facility.

JOHN HOLM: So the residents, themselves, are not charged a fee to use the services at all.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: No, they are not charged a fee, John.

JOHN HOLM: You talked about having \$75,000 that you have put in from your own capital fund. Does the company have a large investment portfolio and is it the income from that, other than the money you have talked about from the Legion, the DVA and so on, is that the principal sum that is used, or the income from that, to carry the operating costs?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: The total investment portfolio would be in the range of \$200,000; \$75,000 of that is earmarked for the bus. The revenue from the investment would be in the vicinity of \$9,000 a year so it plays a very small part in our total revenue picture.

JOHN HOLM: Okay, so your operating expenses, the fuel for the buses, the wages for the bus drivers and your clerk typist and so on, that comes out of the money that is raised, say

from the Legions and elsewhere?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Yes, and from DVA. That allotment is about \$31,000 a year.

JOHN HOLM: The Veterans Affairs Committee hears witnesses and presentations. We, ourselves, don't have any powers to make any major decisions but we can make recommendations. One of the things I am wondering about is, have you put forward any applications to the provincial government for assistance or funding, whether it be for the purchase of this bus or ongoing operating costs through maybe the Department of Health or anybody else, or do you intend to?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: We haven't done that in the past. John and I have talked about the tax on the bus, that hopefully we would get some sort of rebate there. We do enjoy a rebate on the gasoline and I am not sure what the percentage is, John.

JOHN MORSE: We get half back of the tax.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: So we are getting some assistance, sort of indirectly from the province but we have never gone to the Department of Health, as you mentioned. Of course, if you can help us in that regard or suggest ways of doing that, that would be wonderful.

JOHN HOLM: That question was really just trying to find out what we can or can't do in terms of recommendations. The presentation, don't get me wrong, was very interesting and I enjoyed it but what can we do or what would you like this committee to do to try to be of assistance?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Well, it is a little difficult for us to answer in the sense that we don't know your capabilities. We are not sufficiently familiar with how you operate.

JOHN HOLM: As a committee, certainly we can hear - maybe I am overstepping my bounds, Mr. Chairman. If I am, snap me, as I am sure you will. We do have not only the ability to hear but we can, as we have done, as an outcome of our last meeting, we wrote a letter to the Minister of Health and we have a response on the table. The questions or the issues that were raised with the Minister of Health at that time were issues that came out of the last presentation by the Legion seeking answers to certain questions. If, for example, your organization would like to, and does, make presentations to government for assistance, if we have those, we can at least write to inquire either to support or recommend support or to ask for copies of responses and so on. It would be coming from an all-Party committee, government members included.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Is anyone here aware, are there any particular grants available for getting a bus? Would that be possible, I wonder?

[9:30 a.m.]

JOHN HOLM: Well, it could possibly be through Sport and Recreation, maybe through the secretariat there might be some kind of assistance as well. I don't know but certainly if requested to the chairman, maybe the chairman could at least ask staff to compile a list of what possible avenues. It is not saying that there would be any success but at least to try to feed some information back that would hopefully be helpful.

I would like to ask just one last question just out of curiosity. You had talked about back, I think it was in 1947, that there were buses right across the country. Does the organization still go across the country or is it just now strictly in Nova Scotia?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: We used to go to Cape Breton and Yarmouth, the whole province, if you will, and into New Brunswick but we found that we weren't getting donations from those areas so, in all fairness, we had to cut back. It was one of those measures of reducing expenses. I recall one visit to Cape Breton cost around \$300 and the donations were around \$100 so that sort of made us stop and think, well, is it really proper to be going these distances when we are not getting the support from the area? So today we are concentrating on HRM, you may as well say.

JOHN HOLM: I think I have occupied enough time.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Mr. Chairman, I just have a couple of quick questions. I guess first of all, is there any opportunity to give us an update on how, you say you wanted to raise \$125,000. At what point are you with regard to that?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Tomorrow our Vice-President, Jim Trainor, will meet with Bruce Oland and they will be sending out 50 letters to selected names, people who we feel can get out the chequebook. That will be the first step. Bruce is going south for a couple of months so we won't be able to get him out in the public arena, so to speak, but we do hope to get him out and have him with a picture of the bus, let's say this sort of thing. Hopefully, those initial 50 letters may bring back a very positive response because these will be people who he knows personally, people of means, let's say. So we are hopeful that that will result in having a fair amount of money come that way.

JOHN HOLM: I am not on the list.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: It will be Dear John. (Laughter)

JOHN HOLM: Exactly.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Or Dear Kevin.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: So the process has just started. You are just initiating it now.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Well, it has been going on since 1999 but it is only in the last couple of months that we really have been pushing hard because, as you can see, the brochure says 2000. We had hoped to have it all finished at the end of last year but for different reasons, we just didn't get our act together, if you will, so now we are working on that.

KEVIN PAGE: Can I speak on that just for a second? I can only be quiet for so long. Mr. Chairman, MLAs, thank you for having us here this morning. My name is Kevin Page and I have sat on the board for approximately three years now. I started as Branch Manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Quinpool Road Branch. Even though I am still with the bank, and not in that position, I have stayed with the board because I feel it is a very useful service that we offer.

In answer, in part, to your question, Kevin - I can remember that name, it is pretty easy - we have raised, I believe, right in the proximity of a little over \$50,000. So we have about \$75,000 left to raise but, as Bill was saying, none of us really have had a whole lot of experience of being out in the fund-raising world. So we have about \$75,000 left to raise.

As Bill was saying, none of us really has had a whole lot of experience of being out in the fund-raising world. So we have been sort of hit and miss with a lot of things and we have tried some different opportunities. We have looked at even hiring outside firms to do some of our fund-raising but with the amount that we are looking at, it is just not feasible. So that is when we came up with the idea of approaching Mr. Oland and he was very gracious in offering his services. It is very nice to be able to go out and say that you have a leader in the community who will back what you are looking at doing.

Before I sit down, in case they take the mike away from me and not let me talk anymore - they set me in the back row. (Laughter) I'm upset about that. No, not really. Of course, it was only over the last three or four years that I really became aware of Callow Busses and what it meant. Prior to that, I would always see the buses driving around and not really sure - I knew it was a disabled bus service.

It is just amazing. Any of you who have been at the Metro Centre or if you have been at Veterans' Day, Remembrance Day services and you see the veterans coming off that bus, I tell you, it brings tears to your eyes when you see them and you see them come in to a hockey game, the Tattoo, or whatever; big grins on their faces.

What is really displeasing, I know, from my point of view, is, we spend a lot of time down the South Shore to a summer home. I don't know how many times I have come home on a Sunday and seen the two buses on the side of the road, one of them broken down, the older one broken down and them transferring the veterans over to the other one. I said, this just isn't

acceptable and we really need the new bus.

Anyhow, at that point, thank you very much. If I think of anything else or can answer any other questions, please feel free to ask.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Well, just a couple of follow-ups to that, then. First of all, I guess, if you can give me a sense of - does most of that \$50,000 you have raised come from Legions, has it come from the corporate sector, is there any sort of ability to break that down? I notice you had, sort of, as your goal a . . .

JOHN MORSE: Probably half, 50 per cent of it would come from Legions and veterans, and that type of thing. The other would be from corporate - a lot of individuals over the years. Callow has probably - we send letters out every year, about 400 letters. These are not major, it is like \$50, \$20 right across the province. I know this year I sort of monitored it. Normally, when you mail out requests for money, if you get 10 per cent back you're pretty lucky. In Callow, we have got about 70 per cent response out of 400 people.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Kevin, there is a list. The first significant amount, \$5,000, is from Fairview Branch Poppy Fund.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Right.

WILLIAM MACDONALD: The largest, \$10,000, is from the Halifax Poppy Fund. We recently received \$5,000 from the F. K. Morrow Foundation. John took the time to send letters out to 30 or 40 foundations. No, no, no, and all of a sudden, a cheque for \$5,000 arrives from a foundation in Ontario. That is the sort of response we have received so far.

JOHN MORSE: Scotiabank, they gave us \$7,000 over a year and one-half period. We are going to go after the other banks now.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Yes. (Laughter) Having worked with non-profit - in my case, it was the Boys and Girls Club - trying to raise money, I understand the difficulty you have.

The one thing - this is my last question. You were projecting \$200,000 for the bus and there may be a way of getting the company who builds it to reduce that price a bit. Are you calculating the HST as part of that price? If so, I think I heard you earlier suggesting, maybe there is an opportunity to see if that can be rebated somehow.

JOHN MORSE: Yes. It would be great if we could get - we will probably get half back, according to the arrangement we work under now. If we get the other half back, it means about \$12,000 or \$13,000. If this committee could help us in any way to approach that, that, in itself, would be a very significant contribution.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Right. Thank you.

JOHN MORSE: Every \$10,000 . . .

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Sure. Absolutely. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I would like to introduce the member for Cape Breton East, David Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, I apologize for my tardiness. Nonetheless, I am here.

THE CHAIR: Go ahead.

DAVID WILSON: Thank you. It was a very interesting presentation, gentlemen. I have a couple of questions. I find it even more interesting because I found myself recently approached by a group in Glace Bay, looking to try to obtain, I suppose you would call it a van, a service for a nursing home in Glace Bay which has a DVA wing in it. I have contacted the Royal Canadian Legion and there is some money there. We are starting to try to put things together.

I am interested in a couple of things that you said. One is the provincial funding part of it. Is there a particular reason why you haven't thought of going down that road in the past?

JOHN MORSE: If I could maybe speak to that. We used to get a small grant from a youth foundation - I have forgotten the exact name of it now. They cut us off last year. I phoned the person involved and they said, because our organization only served a part of - like, the HRM, we do go to Windsor, Kentville and that, but because it didn't serve the province in its entirety, they wouldn't fund us. Now that was in that area. Now, that was the only help that we got, really, from the provincial area. I guess one of the things we are saying today, if you folks could give us any idea who we might approach, we would do a presentation, show them our records and whatever. We haven't been able to get any help from the province.

Now, the feds gave us the \$30,000 through DVA but the province hasn't done, really, much for us. I guess the question is, as I said, if you folks knew of any way we could approach somebody or if there is any department that might consider helping our cause, your voice on that would be very important because you do represent the vets.

DAVID WILSON: In other words, any kind of monies that would be available would be a help.

JOHN MORSE: Oh, anything.

DAVID WILSON: It doesn't matter whether they are large or small sums.

JOHN MORSE: Yes. We are not looking for millions.

DAVID WILSON: The other point that you brought up is fund-raising and corporate sponsors. You mentioned Murray and Jamie. I am assuming that is Murray Scott and Jamie Muir. Am I correct in saying that?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: No, Gordon Balser.

DAVID WILSON: That's right. Okay. I'm assuming that those are former members of the committee, is that correct?

JOHN MORSE: That's correct.

DAVID WILSON: I'm making a lot of assumptions.

JOHN MORSE: You're doing great so far. (Laughter)

DAVID WILSON: They had suggested going to corporate sponsors. I had a little, not trouble, but I wonder if that is the role of this committee, in terms of approaching corporate sponsors. Certainly, if we did it for your organization, I, for one, would sit here and expect it to be done for the organization that is trying to get a bus in Glace Bay and the organization that is trying to do whatever could be connected.

I think there are some important contacts that could be made, whether it is through those MLAs or whatever MLAs with corporate sponsors. A lot of corporate sponsors - and I guess I am speaking from some experience because I have been associated with a number of non-profit organizations who did not think to approach corporate sponsors for instance, banks, who have money. If they are not approached and asked, they will not give it to you just out of the kindness of their hearts. First of all, they may not know about your project.

There is probably something along that line, I think, that could - and I am certainly not trying to tell your organization what to do but there is a lot of corporate money that is out there, especially for an organization that is as worthwhile as your own. I throw that out as a suggestion.

I would also think that it is incumbent upon this committee after your presentation today, to try and seek out some provincial monies that may be there, in terms of whatever may be available. I think, perhaps, we can entertain that thought as we go around the table and at the end of the meeting today, come up with some sort of suggestions that we can take to various government departments and see if there are any monies that are available for you.

JOHN MORSE: Thank you.

HAROLD SHEA: We certainly welcome individual support from the members in

advocating assistance. (Laughter) That's very helpful.

DAVID WILSON: I would send a fund-raising letter to each MLA. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. The member for Clare.

WAYNE GAUDET: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to thank you, Bill, for your excellent presentation. I have a couple of questions. First, you have mentioned that you used to get some funding from the United Way, I think somewhere around \$22,000. Did they provide reasons for discontinuing their level of support?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: I'm trying to recall the exact wording they used. It escapes me at the moment but it was quite evident, going back to the mid-1990's, that they were finding it difficult to give us the kind of support that we were previously enjoying. I think it stemmed from the demand on their services, the increasing numbers of organizations going to them. I think they looked at our financial picture and said, this organization is a little stronger than some of the others that have come before us. They wouldn't come right out and say it like that but I think that is basically what happened.

WAYNE GAUDET: Thanks. My final comment, Mr. Chairman - I think we have been basically looking at ways of, maybe, trying to help in some way. I think, from past experience, maybe the committee should forward a letter to the Minister of Finance on behalf of this group, requesting to see if there is a rebate on the provincial tax paid on a new bus. I am sure we will probably have a chance to debate this at the end but I think that certainly would be an avenue for this committee to explore.

JOHN HOLM: Can I just ask a question of Wayne, on that suggestion?

WAYNE GAUDET: Sure.

JOHN HOLM: I am just wondering if that letter should go from the committee first or should a letter come from Callow and we support their recommendation? I am just wondering, in terms of the process. If we did it that way, we would be pre-empting the actual request because they could come back very quickly and say, we have no such request.

WAYNE GAUDET: Right. I would agree with you. Basically, our committee would support their request that will be coming in addressed to the Minister of Finance.

JOHN HOLM: Yes.

THE CHAIR: The member for Shelburne.

CECIL O'DONNELL: Well, just to comment, I, too, can remember when the Walter Callow bus used to come to the Shelburne area, actually, and used to go out on Cape Sable

Island, to pick up some of the . . .

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Yes. Well . . .

CECIL O'DONNELL: That has been a few years back there. (Laughter) I'm a little older than some of these guys. I would agree that this committee should probably explore every government department to see if any funding is available for the purchase of a new bus.

THE CHAIR: The member for Halifax-Bedford Basin.

MARY ANN MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am a Parrsboro girl so it is nice to meet a bunch of guys who are working to continue the work of a fellow Parrboronian, as we call ourselves sometimes.

I have a bit of a fund-raising background from my previous life so I can appreciate your dilemma. Just from past experience, very often, we were most successful when we approached groups of people or businesses who were associated in any way with the line of work we did. For instance, a lot of my fund-raising would have been in education. We would go after the businesses in the community that were served by the people who lived there and they lived there because their kids went to school there and so on. We looked for any kind of associations like that, companies that the schools did business with to buy supplies and books.

We sort of looked around and scratched our heads about, who uses our service? Who benefits from our clients? Those are the kind of people that we tried to tackle and appeal to their sense of generosity to help the people who help their businesses, kind of thing. Aside from that, I certainly support the endeavour that you have on your hands and would throw my support behind any recommendations of the committee.

THE CHAIR: The member for Kings North.

MARK PARENT: Mr. Chairman, just picking up on Mary Ann's comment and then widening it out a bit more, I was interested in the slightly different question, the fund-raising question that ties into it.

When the service was started in 1947, you had an enormous amount of people who had served overseas who used the service. Then, as they aged - and, thankfully, we don't have wide scale wars that we are involved in as a country - it begins to change. I notice you widened out to people with all disabilities. How does that affect your ability to fund-raise and how does that affect the whole project?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: I thought you were going to ask, with the veterans passing away, would your service be diminishing? In fact, that question has been raised several times lately.

There is no question that the number of vets that we serve is reducing. What we do find is, with the ageing population, there are more and more people going into homes. Of course, that means our service is shifting more toward servicing that clientele.

I suspect that we will continue to enjoy the same level of financial support from the DVA for a while yet. We do receive reasonable financial support from our major clients, we think there could be more and we are going to have to make some suggestions to those clients on what they can do to help us. I am thinking in particular of some of the major nursing homes here that use our service fairly frequently. While we haven't implemented a charge to some of those organizations because they are within that 40 mile radius, we do feel that maybe we could spend a little more time with them and ask them to help us in fund-raising activities, for example. I think as time goes by you will obviously witness more and more of these special homes using the service than obviously DVA will.

HAROLD SHEA: May I add, Mr. Chairman, the number of World War II veterans and Korean War veterans is certainly diminishing, but there always seems to be a pool of other service personnel, people who were in Vietnam, people who are doing peace-keeping work now and while we all hope there will never be wars again, for some years after all the World War II veterans are gone - and they are going quickly - there will be a need for such services.

I was at a meeting at Camp Hill the day before yesterday and learned that in December, 12 resident veterans died; so far in January there were 5. The 17 rooms, within that six weeks or so, were only vacant long enough for repainting and redecorating. There is a waiting list of hundreds of veterans still to come and, of course, that is a continuing service that we will have to provide through the Callow bus. Speaking as a veteran who was not disabled and survived the war without injury - I was one of the lucky ones - I have never had a ride on the bus although I have been on the board for 15 years or so, so I see, as Kevin says, the pleasure the veterans get from coming into the bus and going to service.

We had our national convention at the Legion here this summer and the Callow busses brought veterans from Camp Hill down to participate in the programs. The Halifax Foundation gave us a grant to bring in some disabled veterans from elsewhere, who would not normally be able to come. We put an accent on disabled veterans at the convention in 2000 and it made a wealth of difference, in terms of support for the Legions and the veterans; we are happy with that.

JOHN MORSE: Just to add one quick sentence to what Harold said, December of this year was the biggest month we ever had in handling veterans from the DVA and the Veterans' Memorial and all of that. So it is not dying off, as Harold said, we have seen the largest number of veterans.

HAROLD SHEA: The average age of World War II veterans now is 80 and Korea

veterans about four years younger. The veterans are living longer, their injuries are with them longer, of course, and that is a terrible drain on Veterans Affairs Canada costs and the veterans pay for their room and board at Camp Hill so, it is a contributory thing, everybody chips in. The costs are rising so much, not only for the hospitalization but certainly for the Callow busses and all services to veterans are going up.

MARK PARENT: Thank you for your answers, it was interesting. I appreciate that you still go up to the Kentville area, that is my area. Kentville and Canning, the Habitant Branch, are very strong Legion branches, so I appreciate that. I was going to tease you that we need a little blue on the bus but that was just a joke. I will be as supportive as I can, as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for your presentation. I have a couple of requests and questions. First, can we have a copy of your fund donors?

WILLIAM MACDONALD: Certainly, yes.

THE CHAIR: I believe you said you received \$30,000 last year from the Legion?

JOHN MORSE: From various Legions throughout the province.

THE CHAIR: I was wondering, did that come from the Provincial Command or did that come from Legions within the HRM area?

JOHN MORSE: Provincial Command support us for sure and they support us through the individual Legions. Our monies basically come from the individual Legions like Cape Breton Legions, New Glasgow and Pictou County. In the last 60 days we had asked Provincial Command to put a brief write-up in the newsletter that they send out annually to all 129 Legion branches within the province. As a result of that insert in their monthly magazine, we did receive approximately \$16,000 in the last 60 days from that and it would come from probably 25 different Legions and they are coming in every day - \$50, \$100, \$1,000, \$500 - so it does come from the individual branches.

THE CHAIR: Where it comes from all over Nova Scotia, that is what I was getting at, but when your veterans come to Camp Hill Hospital from all over Nova Scotia - that is where they are served, in this community - but what you are actually doing is serving the veterans from Nova Scotia?

JOHN MORSE: Yes. Veterans' Memorial Hospital, as the vets come in from the various areas, that is where we would pick up the people from Glace Bay, Sydney, New Glasgow and Truro.

THE CHAIR: I am bringing that up for a reason because you mentioned earlier that you were serving this area but not the province but, in fact, you are serving the province because

Camp Hill is located here . . .

JOHN MORSE: Yes, and they draw veterans province-wide. You are exactly right and that is a very key point.

THE CHAIR: Maybe we could put that into a letter when you are requesting support for your monies. Another question is, does HRM donate any money to the Walter Callow . . .

JOHN MORSE: They have been giving us \$5,000 for a number of years but in the last two years they have cut us off as well. We have written to them and they say this year it is not in their budget so we don't get anything at the present time. Prior to 1998, we did get something.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, I certainly appreciate you gentlemen taking the time to come here. I know you are appreciated and we will support you in your endeavours and I request that you write us a letter or letters stating what you would like us to do for you. Thank you.

[10:00 a.m.]

JOHN HOLM: Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if maybe before our guests leave, if we are going to try to do things, for example, find out what government departments or agencies might be eligible, we should make arrangements and commitments to our guests to provide that information by a certain time and also to request that should they be writing letters or making applications that they be provided to this committee so that we could be writing in support. Just before our guests leave I think that might be helpful.

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, with regard to my colleague's comments, from my experience I would say there are probably five areas where a letter should be sent and those would be the Department of Transportation and Public Works, the Department of Health, the Department of Community Services, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, and Sport and Recreation. We should provide the emphasis and information to our guests and maybe ask our guests to provide this committee with a copy of their letters of request sent to those departments and then in return, this committee could send a letter of support for a request for funding.

THE CHAIR: Did you include . . .

JOHN HOLM: The Department of Finance, as well.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I was going to say did you include the Department of Finance in this?

JOHN HOLM: It is No. 6.

WAYNE GAUDET: We had talked about the Department of Finance for the rebate on

the provincial HST.

JOHN MORSE: If I could get the names of those departments from you so that I will know who to write to because I will forget all those names you mentioned.

THE CHAIR: We can supply names and addresses to you.

KEVIN DEVEAUX: Just following up, the Sport and Recreation one is a good one but you should know the deadline is February 2nd. They actually have a person who will come out, meet with you and give you a tentative thumbs up or thumbs down fairly quickly so you don't have to go through the process. Given the deadline is February 2nd, when the chairman does give you the name of the person, you may want to follow up immediately with a telephone call to them.

THE CHAIR: We also have some housekeeping we must do, so we will take a short break and we will come back.

[10:03 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:08 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: We can resume the meeting. The last time the Provincial Command made a presentation, they requested we send out letters. We received a letter from the Minister of Health and his response to the letter that we sent out. I believe you all have the letter.

JOHN HOLM: I, Mr. Chairman, would be interested to have the minister's response. It has gone, I assume, to Provincial Command. Although the letter has been addressed to you, I would like to know if a copy of his response has actually - and it should be checked for CCs; no, it is not - been sent to Provincial Command; if not, I would suggest we send it. I would also be inquiring of Provincial Command if they are satisfied with the minister's response because the minister tells us all kinds of things that, oh, yes, these things are important and we are going to be looking at it, but he really doesn't say anything. He really doesn't address the issues that they asked.

THE CHAIR: That's a good observation and we can write the Provincial Command and enclose a copy of our letter if they did not get one. Like you say, there is no CC on the bottom so, with that, I was assuming that they wrote us without a copy to the Legion.

JOHN HOLM: Yes, but in that letter that goes, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the committee, I very specifically would like for us to make sure that we ask, are you satisfied with the minister's response and we would welcome receiving your observations or comments on the minister's letter.

THE CHAIR: That appears to be fair.

JOHN HOLM: Great.

THE CHAIR: We will include those in our comments. Any questions? Okay. We will send the letter.

The other thing is, we have the Debert Museum. I think it is the . . .

DARLENE HENRY: Military Historical Society.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Military Historical Society.

JOHN HOLM: Do we have something in front of us on that?

THE CHAIR: No. Well, we just have it under Committee Business. We do have an e-mail here. I will just give you a bit of a background on this.

This is a museum operated by a group of people in Debert. As you know, Debert was a staging area in the Second World War. What they have done, they have started a museum there and they have collected all artifacts of the Debert military base and the Second World War. What they are looking for, I believe, is funding. It is operated by Ken Kennedy, I believe he is the chairman of this museum. They have tours with the underground bunker there, that I am sure everybody is familiar with.

JOHN HOLM: The Diefenbunker?

THE CHAIR: The Diefenbunker, that's correct. Although he hasn't made an official request here, from myself talking to him, he would like to come forward and give a presentation of what they are doing.

Now, a little bit more on the background. They have approached the Minister of Tourism for assistance with a grant which they were denied, on the grounds that they didn't follow the criteria which is laid out for funding. It might be interesting, if you agree to have him as a witness, to let him tell the story of the museum and the background.

JOHN HOLM: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I have a question to you. I see the scheduled date is February 8th. The budgetary process and approval or non-approval - Wayne, you, having sat in on that as minister and I think you had Culture once, too, didn't you, with Education?

WAYNE GAUDET: Yes.

JOHN HOLM: I'm just wondering, in terms of the time-frames, when those decisions as to who does and who doesn't get assistance are normally made. The time-frame would

probably be pretty much the same now. I'm just wondering if your thought, Mr. Chairman, is as a result of the meeting, for us to be making recommendations re funding for the upcoming fiscal year, if February 8th date is too late. I don't know if that is your intent.

THE CHAIR: The earliest that we could accommodate Mr. Kennedy would be in April.

JOHN HOLM: Oh, is that right?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

JOHN HOLM: Okay, all right, fine. Question answered.

THE CHAIR: Is everybody in agreement that we invite Ken Kennedy to our meeting?

WAYNE GAUDET: I just have a question, Mr. Chairman, I have heard lots of talk over the years about this famous bunker. Is it possible for this committee to actually tour the site?

THE CHAIR: It is possible. They have dates when they do tours. I don't know if they are touring in the winter, although it is underground and heated. I would think that they probably would. I have toured the bunker. That is a good question. It is interesting. As you know, the bunker in Carp is a big one, outside of Ottawa, for their members. This was set aside for the provincial government.

JOHN HOLM: Yes.

THE CHAIR: It is interesting. This is one of the things that they do. At that time, when he comes, we could ask that. You were thinking of after, were you?

WAYNE GAUDET: Well, it would certainly be open, for the committee to go down to tour the site and meet with the people involved.

THE CHAIR: I think that is a great idea.

JOHN HOLM: Instead of coming here?

WAYNE GAUDET: Yes.

JOHN HOLM: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Oh, instead of coming here?

WAYNE GAUDET: Why not? Is that possible?

JOHN HOLM: It's a good idea. The only reservation I would have to that is if that is in April, the House will probably be in session. While I might like to see the bunker, I don't

know that we could necessarily schedule a trip if the House is in session, especially into extended hours. That could be done at another time.

WAYNE GAUDET: Well, I misunderstood. I thought, the fact that the place is heated, what prevents us from going in next month? Maybe you could enquire and, from there, the committee could make. . .

THE CHAIR: Well, we have a scheduled meeting next month.

JOHN HOLM: Who is scheduled?

THE CHAIR: Who is our witness for February?

DARLENE HENRY: Sue Riordon is coming in, in February. She is the lady that we were originally supposed to meet with last year but because she had contracted the uranium disease from her husband - who is now deceased - she had gotten sick herself. Through her illness and whatnot, we had to cancel several meetings. At the request of this committee at the last meeting, we had written a letter asking if she is still interested in coming before the committee and if she is available. This date seems to be good with her.

THE CHAIR: So. . .

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, in light of that explanation maybe we should enquire to see if it would be possible for early March, before the House goes in.

DARLENE HENRY: I didn't call the Korean War vet yet, so we could postpone him until April and bring in your tour at that time. I have two possible dates, either March 9th or March 23rd because you have March Break in between there.

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, maybe you could look into this matter and report back to the committee on February 8th, whether this is possible or not, and then at the February 8th meeting we could decide for the witness for March 9th.

THE CHAIR: March 9th is not a good date for me. That is a Thursday and that is pretty well the start of March Break.

JOHN HOLM: It is the day before March Break.

THE CHAIR: I realize that but I am thinking of my plans, too and I would like to be there, where it is in my area. If we could up the date . . .

MARY ANN MCGRATH: What about March 2nd?

THE CHAIR: What is March 2nd?

MARY ANN MCGRATH: That is the Thursday before.

WAYNE GAUDET: Is that possible?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

DARLENE HENRY: March 1st, actually; March 2nd is Friday.

THE CHAIR: So we would like to have the meeting take place in the bunker in Debert. Having said that, I will get in touch with Ken Kennedy and we will see if he is in agreement with that.

JOHN HOLM: Maybe we should ask somebody from the Cabinet Secretariat to come along with us to see if they would like to use that as a possible home away from home. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Is there any other business?

MARK PARENT: The next meeting is February 8th, at what time?

THE CHAIR: At 9:00 a.m.

JOHN HOLM: The copies of the letters that go to the Provincial Command and the information that is going to be sent to Callow busses, can copies of that information be sent to members of this committee prior to the next meeting so we have it for our files, in advance?

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is not a problem. If that is all, then thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:20 a.m.]