

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Committee Room 1

Debert Military History Society

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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

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Ken Kennedy
President of Debert Military History Society

Sheila Crowe
DMHS Vice-President

Wendy Robichaud
DMHS Education Director

Don Davidson
Retired Businessman

Mac Langille
Veteran



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2001

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
William Langille

THE CHAIR: Maybe we could start and just do the agenda at the end and see who we are going to get in next. I think we are just going to do some housekeeping here which we will do at the end of the - after you people do your presentation and leave.

I think, because you are going to be late and some of the members here are pressed for time with other appointments and so on, including myself, that we will start and then we will take a break until your people get here, then we will continue on with yours, okay? Okay.

Everybody should have been given a package there of the letters and everything that was sent out by the Vice-Chairman, Dave Wilson. It is letters that were requested and were all sent out. We have a couple of replies.

There was a meeting on the 20th. We haven't got a reply back but Brian Gallivan, Director of Policy and Planning sent us this letter. They were meeting on February 20th and they were going to contact Mr. MacDonald immediately following the meeting, however, we have not been contacted yet.

JOHN HOLM: That was from the. . .

THE CHAIR: That was from Policy and Planning, the Director, Brian Gallivan.

JOHN HOLM: Oh, okay.

THE CHAIR: We will just stop now. I guess you are all here.

JOHN HOLM: Could we get copies of those replies? I don't think we got replies, did we?

THE CHAIR: Nobody. . .

JOHN HOLM: Oh, did we get those?

DARLENE HENRY: I mailed those out, yes, to you, from Mr. Gallivan.

JOHN HOLM: Oh, okay.

DARLENE HENRY: Yes, and then you have it there.

JOHN HOLM: Okay.

DARLENE HENRY: Those are the replies that were in response to the Walter Callow Wheelchair Busses.

JOHN HOLM: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On the outstanding witness list, we have the Korea War Veterans Association. The Korea War veteran is Mr. Leslie Clayton. We have not contacted him yet for attending a committee; however, we can do that if it is your wish, whichever one you prefer first - the Korea War Veterans Association.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We will invite the Korea War Veterans Association at our next committee meeting.

I see everybody has arrived, so let's take a break from this and go right to your presentation. I see some familiar faces. I guess you got caught up in traffic this morning, did you, Ken?

KEN KENNEDY: I got in Halifax okay but we had some problems with the parking lot next door there.

THE CHAIR: Oh, I see. Before I continue, I was at the Legion on Remembrance Day, the ceremonies in Truro, among the other ones I attended that day. But anyway, Mac Langille gave the presentation, and it was very well received and everybody was very attentive. I didn't congratulate you then, Mac, but I do now. It was very interesting. We are no relation, by the way. (Laughter) (Interruption) Not that he will admit to, yes. What I will do now, I will get

each one of you to introduce yourselves to the committee and then I will have the committee introduce themselves to you.

KEN KENNEDY: Okay. I'm Ken Kennedy. I'm the President of the Debert Military History Society. Back here, we see Sheila Crowe. She is the Vice-President. Wendy Robichaud, over here, is one of our directors, our Education Director. This gentleman here is Don Davidson. I am sure you know him, Mr. Langille. He is a retired businessman. And you just introduced your namesake there, Mac. He is a veteran. I have brought those two gentlemen along to give you sort of a history lesson.

Can I start my talk?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

KEN KENNEDY: What we are here for this morning, ladies and gentlemen, is to give you a bit of a history lesson about Debert and our efforts, as a small group of volunteers from the community, our feeble efforts to this point in trying to bring back a history of the military involvement in the community, going back to World War II, in particular. Now, we have heard that Debert was a training ground back as far as 1896 for the Fenian Raids. We are not going to go back that far. We are going to stick with World War II.

When it was Canadian Forces Station Debert, there was a museum there, not the building where we are now but a building that has now been demolished. They had a museum there and they were funded by DND, DVA and various other government agencies. They left in 1995. We were a bit slow off the mark. I can remember distinctly, they did come out with a press release or an advertisement saying, the Canadian Forces Station Museum will be closing as of such and such a date. Anyone having an interest in maintaining this museum, you know, speak now or forever hold your peace, type of thing. We didn't.

A couple of years went by and a dozen or so of us put our heads together and we got to thinking, well, gee whiz, you know, we should really try to bring back some form of remembrance or some form of maintaining some type of museum or some type of artifacts for the community.

We went to work and we formed a committee. We came up with the Debert Military History Society which is an incorporated - well, not incorporated, but a not-for-profit charitable organization under the laws of Nova Scotia, the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. That was April 1998, I believe.

The people who now maintain the base - if you will remember, when the military decided to pull out of Debert, I think it was \$2.2 million that was given to this other non-profit society called the Colchester Park Development Society. They were to sort of pick up the slack after DND moved out. They were mandated to bring some new industry to the base, which

they have done. They have done a very good job, although it was not until last year that they finally got complete control of the underground nuclear facility.

Three or four of the buildings, if you have the brochures - I don't know if you have those - nearest the highway was that type of building. It is called an H-hut and it is aptly named that way because it is shaped like an H. There were three or four of them sitting side by side. As I say, three of them, I believe, now have been demolished.

This one was slated for demolition, I believe. We thought that would be a shame, to let that go. So we bargained with them, CPDS, that they would allow us to use that building which they have done and which they have funded for us. They look after what the director calls the envelope, the exterior. We fixed up the inside and look after the oil, that type of thing.

You will have to stop me, I guess, when my time runs out here.

What we did then, we went to work and we tried to get the artifacts. When the DND museum disbanded, they went out with an all-points bulletin, or whatever you call it in the military, to all the bases and said, look, we have this, this, this and this and we are closing down. Would you like to have some of it back, or whatever? They did. A lot of it was shipped out to Greenwood; Gagetown; Kingston, Ontario; and Shearwater, I believe. Our main objective up to now and until now is to get that stuff back.

We have, through various fund-raising efforts and underground bunker tours - which by the way, may not exist this summer because we are hearing that the bunker is being leased or sold and we may not have that resource this summer. In the meantime, as I say, through fund-raisers, yard sales and that type of thing, and donations, we have been able to get quite a few artifacts back from those places, but not all. They were very selective in sending stuff back, but we are quite happy. Not only that, we have advertised through the Legion magazine and others that we are a viable entity and that we are willing to accept any artifacts that anyone would send in. They have been coming in, as Sheila will tell you, from all across Canada, testimonials and whatnot.

Speaking of testimonials, I think maybe at this time I will ask Mr. Langille if he - what we want to do, we want to recapture as much as we can of the wartime history of Debert. We brought some of the artifacts that we have on our walls. Then we have bundles of other stuff, as well. This is all we could take with us this morning. You can have a look at those pictures after, if you like.

What I wanted to impress upon you is, some of the testimonials, some of the "war stories" and some of the personal memoirs of people who actually went through Debert during the war years, and the type of information that we are trying to capture. Now, Mr. Langille is going to tell you one story here that spoke to my heart and soul and I am sure it will impress upon you, our desire to capture that information and be able to display it. Mac, could you tell

us about your time that you spent in Debert in the military hospital and how you came to be there?

MAC LANGILLE: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, going back to 1941, I was a member of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, who marched into Debert from Amherst early in May. We were there from May until July when we went overseas. I landed with the North Nova Scotia Highlanders in Normandy on D-Day and lasted four days. I was seriously wounded by an armour-piercing 88 and started on my way back to Canada.

Eventually, on September 18, 1944 - which, by the way, was my birthday - I landed in Debert military hospital. There I was to have a lengthy stay. That was September 1944. I was there all the rest of that year, all of 1945, until the end of January 1946. So you see, I have a first-hand knowledge of Debert military hospital. While I was there, I had eight operations.

Anyway, while we were there in 1941, we had our usual training while we were waiting to go overseas. But the part that always sticks in my mind, of course, more than anything was my long stay there in the military hospital. All that is left of the hospital nowadays is the foundation. I tried to get into it some months ago but it is blocked off now with all the industrial buildings, so I couldn't reach it. I had been in about two or three years ago. As I say, all that is left is the foundation of the hospital.

In connection therewith, I will tell a funny little story. While I was there for Christmas in 1944, there were two of us who had body casts on. When I say a body cast, I mean from your toes up to your hips and then around your body. There were two of us, the other a chap from Montreal. The question was, how are we going to get these two to Truro for their Christmas dinner?

So the undertaker, Don Christie, came to the rescue and came out with a hearse. (Laughter) He made two trips. He took me in first to Dominion Street and the other chap to Queen Street. That is how I had my Christmas dinner of 1944, by means of the hearse. I will always remember that; if you are living, you go in head first, and I was told if you are dead, you go in feet first. (Laughter)

KEN KENNEDY: And they took you to a movie.

MAC LANGILLE: Oh, yes, they took us in the afternoon to the movies and laid the stretchers across the backs of the seats, and we saw a movie. (Laughter) Without trying to hold you too long, that was my experience with Debert. It mainly has to do with little over a two month stay there in 1941 and then my return in 1944 for a lengthy stay.

KEN KENNEDY: Thanks, Mac. When Mac is talking about the foundations of the buildings, I am sure if you are familiar with Debert, if you were to go off the beaten track, if you get by Tim Hortons and all the rest of it - and there is a story there, too - our purpose in

the beginning was to identify these buildings, these foundations with - what do you call them? - signs denoting where the hospital was, where the nurses' quarters were, where the detention barracks were, where the engineers were and that type of thing. We obviously don't have the funding to do that at this point but that is our aim. Hopefully at some point we can get to do that.

The other aspect I wanted to bring to your attention is the then economic impact that these 30,000 service people had on the civilian community. Don Davidson was a young businessman at that time, operating Davidson's Store there, and I have asked Don if he would come and just take a few minutes and give you an impression as to how the civilian populace felt and the impact that the influx of all of these people made on the community of Debert.

DONALD DAVIDSON: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the invitation to come here this morning. I have written down some notes, mostly from memory. I figure I should read most of it or I will forget half of it.

I lived in Debert all my life. I grew up there and when the war came along I was just a teenager, 15 or 16 years of age. I have been asked to come and give you a brief history, so starting off, my name is Donald Davidson and I would like to speak today on the economic impact the Second World War had on the civilian population. During the 1930's, the Village of Debert had a population of about 500 to 600 people and was mostly supported by mixed farming and lumbering operations. Many portable sawmills operated on the Debert Mountain with the lumber being hauled by team to the Debert station where it was shipped by rail.

The village was also supported by a permanent lumber mill and factory located near the Debert railway station, employing about 12 men. The village had three stores, a post office, a railway station, two churches and a gospel hall, a barber shop, two room school, a community hall and a blacksmith shop. A daily jitney service was provided for the high school students and the general public running between Oxford Junction and Truro. The jitney was an extra service to the regular passenger trains.

Debert was noted for its gravel beds. A number of gravel pits and a permanent crusher operated by the Department of Highways and the Canadian National Railway shipped gravel by train during the 1930's.

In 1939, at the start of the Second World War, Debert was really put on the map. Commencing with the clearing of the site for the Debert airport and the building of the Debert military camp, during the next few years the population of Debert exploded. Approximately 6,000 civilians were employed during the construction of the airport and the building of the military camp. During the construction period, many of the civilian employees commuted daily and came from within a radius of 35 miles to 40 miles. A large number relocated to the Debert

area from all over Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and some from New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

[9:30 a.m.]

Many homes in Debert and area took in boarders. Cabins sprung up throughout the community, all creating extra income for the local people. Also a number of new homes were built during the war. At this time, the trucking business was booming with much demand for gravel trucks for road building, service trucks were hired and many lumber trucks were engaged for hauling the lumber from the railway station to the building sites. By the way, the lumber came in pretty well by the trainload and it was hauled to the various areas in the camp.

Troops started moving to the area as the construction proceeded and with the completion of the camp and the RCAF station, the military population of service personnel was approximately 22,000 plus the civilian employees. The Village of Debert would never be the same again. This large increase in population created a huge demand on the existing services provided in the village and a need for many more.

The demand for more services created an opportunity in the business sector of the local economy and with the construction of about 10 restaurants; two drug stores with lunch counters; two meat markets; another grocery store was added; a hotel was built, and it was noted on the hotel, hotel with telephones and running water; two barber shops; a telephone office; a bank; there were three taxi businesses, each operating several cars; also a laundry service; a bus line service to Truro; and a charter service. The railway station was greatly enlarged with many new offices including a ticket office, freight office, express office, also a baggage and a telegraph office.

The new business establishments and services created a major demand on the labour force and provided much new employment in the area. There were also many service centres throughout the military camp such as the Salvation Army's Sally Ann, the YMCA, a Hostess House, et cetera. A large military hospital was also located in the camp. The military camp was a training ground and a holding area for the troops going overseas. Daily route marches were a common site in the village, often breaking in front of the store for refreshments. A Coca-Cola sold for 6 cents a bottle in those days.

Civilian guards were posted around the clock at the railway bridge for security. Also safety guards were posted at the railway crossing by the station. Traffic was extremely heavy on both the railroad and the highways. Six regular passenger trains stopped daily at the Debert station. Also, a daily shunter train worked the many sidings involved. I might add that our general store was located right across the road from the railway station. We were kept very busy, especially on days when special trains arrived to load troops for overseas. Also many trains were dispatched for Christmas and embarkation leave for the troops.

I remember the Air Force personnel prior to boarding the trains for overseas. The boys would buy all the chocolates and candy bars they could get hold of as they were rationed here and very scarce in England. We were fortunate as we had a large quota which was based on sales during the year in 1941. Nylon stockings were very scarce, also on a quota basis and not available in England, we were told. The Air Force boys were hot after these items to take overseas to the English lassies. The story goes the boys gave only one nylon on their dates.

During the war, many servicemen's families were accommodated in private homes, usually renting a room or two, some even had fixed up their garages, they had them rented.

After the war, the military camp was maintained on a much smaller scale and phased down. The next 50 years, the base provided a source of economic stability for the Village of Debert. The military was closed by the federal government around 1997. Many civilian employees lost their jobs with the closing.

The industrial park. During the late 1970's and with the military being phased down, the Debert Industrial Park was born and has been a success story ever since. Employment at the industrial park is currently running around the 1,000 mark. It may be of interest to note that at a joint council meeting held in Truro in the late 1960's, a Canadian National survey team of the development division reported that the Debert military area, which is now part of the industrial park, was the best site for an industrial park east of Montreal due to its central location, infrastructure and served by the Trans-Canada Highway, the Canadian National Railway and an airport. I might add that this park has much growth potential in the near future. I would say it is a very important area today.

Some of the things that I could remember back when I was a boy going through the war, many more little stories and memories but that is just something that I put together in a few hours to bring down. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Don.

KEN KENNEDY: I should have had my tape recorder with me when we were coming down in the car. We heard some interesting stories from both of these gentlemen.

So again what we are trying to do is to impress upon you what we feel is a need for a museum in Debert somewhere. Hopefully we can stay where we are. I am sort of attached to the old H-hut because I spent 25 years in the services and a few years in those old huts but if not there, someplace else. CPDS. our landlords, are getting a little bit impatient with us in not being able to meet our financial needs and it is partly our fault, I suppose. Over the last three years we have sort of been walking in the wilderness; most of us having day jobs and being volunteers and trying to divide our times between things, we have not been able to hit, push the right buttons, whatever the terminology is. We haven't been able to hit the proper funding sources.

Now I must say that whatever you people have, you must have some type of charm or something because since we started this thing of coming down and speaking to you, there have been some positive impacts. Since I first made the request to come before you, we have had help from the Colchester Regional Development Agency which has put together a business plan that Wendy is going to talk about in a few minutes. So things are starting to move. I have just retired again from my day job and hopefully I can maybe put some more effort into getting this thing up and running but we are still not sure of where we are going to be able to find the funding.

We have our Member of Parliament in Ottawa trying to talk with Heritage Canada and whatnot to get us some funding and that has not been successful to date. Through the courtesy of our MLA, our Chairman here, we have been able to have a summer student for the last three summers as an interpreter and hopefully we will get somebody again this summer. Other than that, our funding has come from our volunteer work and our underground bunker tours which, as I said before, are drying up, we think, this summer.

So what we are here for is to maybe ask you if you could at least give us some moral support or go to bat for us in whatever way you see fit and hopefully we can convince you of our good intentions and at some point in the not too distant future we will have a very active museum which will not only serve to hold or display artifacts and memoirs and memorabilia but also to create a tourist stopoff and thereby create some economic impact. For that reason, I am going to ask Wendy now if she could speak on that subject.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. One of the things that perhaps you could understand, I am the next generation. My father was a North Nova Highlander. My whole culture growing up was my mother played cards with the women who were either widows or men who had returned, some safely and some not physically great, but I grew up in the culture of that post-war era. I also became very interested and my family loves history and steeped - my father would not discuss many of the things that happened overseas but my mother kept all the clippings and after a while, things would come out. He found it a very difficult experience but the camaraderie that he had at Camp Debert, he marched in May with Mac back through, my parents were married on a short stopover in North Sydney with crossed rifles coming out of the church, all the men in their kilts and two weeks later my father was shipped overseas. So I am very comfortable. I don't live in Debert itself. I live outside of Debert but I live in that country area and was very familiar and have watched the community break down. I don't think there is any need of it.

I am going to give you some figures that are very simple to think about. Fifteen years ago, the Trans-Canada Highway going by Debert, approximately 4,400 cars per day went by Debert. At this time, there are over 66,000 per day. So economically when we are talking about establishing a museum there that would not only create a wealth and resource of the history of Canada because people from right across Canada were based there and left - for many the last

place they slept in Canada, was Debert. They went on the train, they went on the boat that night, that was it. It was all the way from B.C. on through. So it does have impact right across Canada but economically what can be done with that site that would create employment as well.

With Debert, I think there is one thing, too, Ken was mentioning his group. I have just come to the group about two years ago and their attempts are astounding. This is a small, volunteer group. They have pulled together artifacts, they have tried to catalogue them as professionally as they can. They have sought help. They have worked very hard at their endeavours for fund-raising in their impressive little group. I am a community relations officer with libraries in the centre part of the province so I work with a lot of profit and this is a really good group, just as my own opinion.

This is our presentation. We would like to make our presentation to you. Early economic development. As we mentioned before, Camp Debert trained 30,000 troops and there are many stories in our community, both in Truro and around about the kindness, men really lost, men scared to go to war, boys scared to go to war but the comfort that the community gave to them about bringing them in the home, Sunday dinners; they would adopt a boy from the camp. It really built a culture that surrounded that area.

During the Korean War, there were troops that were trained there before they went over, short term, but also when they came back to be demobilized. They were done at Debert so it also maintained impact.

The base was maintained during the Cold War with the installation of the bunker and that bunker was a matter of great interest, of course, to the community but also to the province because the Leaders and the legislative people, you would have had first option to go there in case of a nuclear war. So it had quite a bit of interest.

The community capacity building. Now I apologize, this is rather difficult to read. You do have a folder in front of you but what I want to present here is the idea that that museum has a capacity to build not only within the community of Debert but within the County of Colchester and the province and whatever.

So at the top you have Debert Military Museum. I have indicated three main branches here. One is CORDA which is Colchester Regional Development Agency. Coming from that development agency we have had Anna Parks, an RDA, come out and do a strategic plan. We are working on the business plan now. Out of there come several options. One is the small business development entrepreneurship which comes out of our RDA and out of there is a possibility of a number of businesses in that area whether it be tours come out of there, development of business, restaurants and all sorts of things that could come out of our museum.

VolNet is an Industry Canada program where not-for-profit organizations are given or at a very low price given computers. Once they have computers they are trained by libraries and other people for e-mail and basic Internet skills. We believe that we could be a VolNet site. We do have a computer. We would like to be that and HRDC is also being a partner. We are approaching HRDC for funding for our coordinator who would help us with our marketing and pull us all the way through it, particularly for the next three crucial years.

Underneath small business I have listed tourism. Tourism is absolutely huge and it is going to be huge in this area with other developments that are coming and with 66,000 cars passing a day, that is a phenomenal amount because of course they have to go by Debert before you get to Cape Breton, before you go to the Valley, before you go to the metro area. It is actually quite a catchment area for tourism.

On VolNet, I would like to bring up the fact of digital collections and I think this is a really important fact on Debert because we can do digital collections which are sites on the Internet, they are funded by Industry Canada, the funds go up to \$9,000 per grant. There are three grant periods a year and we would do pictorial and history and even sound histories of different aspects of the war. We can do it on the regiments. They used to drive wooden tanks out there for training. They didn't have real tanks. In the beginning they built a wooden tank. We would love to find the plans for it. If any of your constituencies, any of the Legions have the plans for that wooden tank, we would love to get it back. But the digital collections are a growing way to expand to the world to encourage visiting back but also to present Canadian history on the web.

HRDC, they are developing - and I am sure many of you are quite familiar with - the Mi'kmaq Paleo-Indian site. This is the oldest site in the world and I grew up with this site. My father was a bit of a historian and always studied these sites. I spent many summers digging in Debert. On this site, there are universities around the world that want to come. The University of Pennsylvania has offered \$100,000 to come to the site here. We have universities in Germany and Britain, they really want to come to this site. It is a huge development. It is going to take many years. It is going to be a world-class facility. We are right next door. I mean we are within a quarter mile of where this development site is going to be. It is really going to draw so we would complement each other in that.

Debert Park Development Society, and I actually should make another one there. I was speaking to Colonel Bob Baxter at the chamber of commerce and the Colchester Air Development Industrial Park is there. They are two separate entities but they are both encouraging industrial development. Out of that we could combine marketing. They could include us in their marketing. They have a hospitality centre now. They want to bring people in. They are bringing all sorts of industries. If they have culture and tourism things, it helps bring in executives with families to settle in the area. It is a trade-off balancing.

Special events. There are a number of special events which I will deal with a little later that we can work with them as well.

The third is national and international veterans. These veterans, we have people coming, as Ken has said, they drop in, they say I was such and such, I was here such and such year. I met my wife here, or my best pal and I were here. We have all sorts going across. We have had people from Germany who have dropped in because they are aware of our site. So the potential of it being there is quite good.

Out of that, the Royal Canadian Legions, Canada-wide. We would hope to be campaigning to them, even a \$5.00 or \$10 donation from each Legion across Canada would help our sustainability quite a bit. Allied countries, again, setting up networks, particularly, of course, with the Netherlands. We have quite a few contacts there. Developing school kits. There is a need for people who are educated in a topic to go in as special speakers but to develop kits that can be used by teachers to enhance their teaching as well, and exchanges.

When I was growing up, there was an attempt at one time - that wasn't yesterday, I know - to start exchanging the children of veterans both in the allied countries and here and there still is some talk about that. I think that could be developed, which again builds community linkages, commercial linkages, all sorts of things.

So where do we fit? If we are going to build to maintain the H-hut, we are part of the regional development of Colchester. Tourism, national and international. We are a national site. We dealt with people right across Canada. We have national importance so therefore the tourism can be developed on that base.

Research. We are, in a very limited way, trying to build a research library that would have books that would deal with whether it be battalions, the North Novas, the Irish Highlanders, whatever, so the people can come and research. We can get people from the universities. We can get people from other museums, people who are trying to find out what their dad or their grandfather did and are trying to find that special link. So we are trying to do that.

Small industries, sales and support, such as a hospitality centre. They took the junior ranks and made it basically into a hotel or a convention centre. We have things that we can do to help encourage people to stay over if we have special two and three day events, so we will help support that major event.

There is an airport there and we have some reunions. We are looking at the possibility of bringing in some major military reunions to that area using the hospitality centre. They can stay there. They would support our local businesses by buying in the area. They would use our museum and they can have fly-ins and we can have special shows.

Education, school kids and on-site visiting. This would be coming out of the hiring of a coordinator - knowledge industry, digital collections. That is all part, but I do have the five year plan for CoRDA that I went through very carefully, the regional development agency and these are all specific items that they are hoping to target.

Housing the museum. We have the authentic H-hut, it is already there; it is an original building on the original site. Now outside the building there is a large field and we have noticed in some other areas people have military vehicles that are made so they can't move but they are still on display, and we are thinking that that is a natural. It is already in place, it doesn't have to be developed in any way.

We have prominent highway visibility. If you are going from Tim Hortons to the Paleo-Indian development, you will see us. We are right there and with better signage and more development we would be a viable - we are not out of the way and they say location, location, location; we have a good one. But it does need extensive renovation, there is no question. It is a large building, though.

If we consider a new building, it may have more space. The new museum built in Kingston which opened this year has 15,000 square feet. So that is a comparable size but when you start doing that at about \$110 or \$125 per square foot to build, so that is a price thing. A new site may not have high visibility. If they give us a new site, it may not be right on the road. That would not be as good a site.

High initial costs. Providing employment during the building phase is a positive part of it; where there is a lot of activity in the centre it would. That should be CPDS may not want to give up industry space. They are really trying to develop each part.

We have things to offer. We have an established history. We have the potential of corporate partners. We have national institutions. Now where national institutions come from is the more we go out and search for artifacts to come back, we are finding people who say, well, look, if you do a really good job and we come back in two or three years, we will give you more. So that is great. That means that we have the potential to build and change our displays. That is really great.

We are part of our community now. As Don was saying, we have been there, we are part of the community. Part of what we have are ex-military who understand the culture. I think it is important to note that it is not just community volunteers who are there. We have ex-military people there who really do understand the culture and that is good; and our development and we do have a strategic plan.

Now, what we have done is sort of taken this and said, what do we have and where are we going? So we have materials, we have volunteers. I am not listing the building because it is not a stable thing. On the upside, if we hire a coordinator, that coordinator would help us

with the marketing and also help develop products. We would develop things like the badges for the different regiments, the hats, different things would help us with our sustainability. Underneath that is our initial funding that we would need to make sure that things are started and continue and income from the marketing would help us and we would develop the permanent national museum because I think it really would be, in time - we would have to go with certain criteria but - it would become a permanent national museum.

This is sort of, after our strategic plan, what we are looking to develop so in 2001 we are looking to secure initial funding and make sure of location. Are we going to stay in the H-hut? Will we have to move? We have to make sure we know that.

Moving to next year, if we get our coordinator, we will be into a marketing plan to expand and grow and 2003 is our major event. We feel that if we are going to do a major event in coordination with the hospitality centre, it is going to be done right, it is going to be done well with lots of advertisement, a two year time-frame.

So what I have done here, and it is on your slip, is just list you some ideas of things that we can do for sustainability.

Our immediate needs. Our immediate need, obviously, right now is our physical plant. We are in dire straits. I want to point out to you that this group, this volunteer group which I am a part of but have not done as much work as some, like Joe Slack and some of the others, they have gone into that H-hut and they have painted weekends and nights and they polish floors, they put down moulding, they have made curtains. They have put a tremendous amount of work. It is not a small building, the H-hut is a big building so they have really done a good job but because of the physical structure and the high heating costs, we have to make sure that we have a physical plant.

We need new materials. Paul Collins from Nova Scotia Museums came in and he gave us ideas on how to make better, more professional exhibits and that is really important if we are going to try to be a good museum but again we are caught because you have to buy things to create mannequins, to create whatever. We have had donations of display cases which have been really great and we are really working the maximum with what we have. A full-time coordinator and our immediate need is to secure income for two to three years so we can move forward.

The plan. We have a good idea and we really think that it is a good marketable idea as well as one with heart. This has heart. It touches people's lives but it also is a good marketing thing. But as a volunteer group and a number of them are over 50 in this volunteer group they are willing to work but they have done a lot. There is just too much to balance. We need to find some help to do this. Combined effort will lead to a national museum built by community

effort. I would just like to point out, I have those blue lines. Those are CF-18 fighter planes; we decided as they were going through, just to add but it will lead to a community event.

[10:00 a.m.]

What we would like the standing committee to think about when they think about the Debert Museum, we would like you to think about, as a person, lending support for our Nova Scotian initiative, but it has a national profile.

You also have people in Legions and veterans, lot of veterans in your constituencies, if you could - in one of your speeches to them - let them know that what we are trying to do. They may have artifacts or be able to lend support in some way for us, and support our financial campaign, to make sure that we have a permanent building that we would be able to look after. We are all part of the puzzle. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your presentation. Is there anything else towards the presentation?

KEN KENNEDY: No, that is the basis of our presentation. I will ask Sheila if she could say a few words.

SHEILA CROWE: Thank you for hearing me. I am not on your schedule there to speak today but as Vice-President of the Debert Military History Society and Museum, I sort of look at things from a little bit of a different angle. I am a civilian. I don't have any military contacts, other than my uncle who was in the war at one time but my interest in history has grown greatly since moving to Debert 17 years ago. In attending my first meeting, I got hooked on the importance of the museum being there and the military existence in Debert.

I guess, going through school and being of a different generation, I had no idea of the importance, that the war actually impacted on my life and on everybody's life, in order to have the freedom in this country that we have today. So often we take these things for granted.

The museum in Debert, in my mind, even though it could be an internationally-known place, it is just amazing to me to think that, back in 1939, how many men had gone through there. I can't even begin to explain how I would feel about what they went through to give us this freedom that we have today.

Just out of respect and in honour of their memories and their dedication, for us to have a museum there is of a great importance. Not just to me, but I feel that everybody should look at it as sort of a beginning for those men. I know a lot has happened since then and of great importance as well, but we are just looking at Debert as this one area, back as far as 1939, and we are just asking to have a place in history so that we can pass on to future generations this

information and knowledge so that we can have an ongoing respect for what happened back then. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Before we move on, is there anything else?

KEN KENNEDY: If I could have one minute here. I just have a couple of statistics to give you and then, that's it, I guess.

Just as a matter of interest, Sheila did some legwork for me yesterday. Over the three years that we have been there, we have recorded 1,325 visits. Now, I am pretty sure you can double that because sometimes we weren't right there to make them sign the guest book.

As far as we can figure out - and these, again, are rough figures because we have put in over 3,500 volunteer hours - we have had 42 World War II veterans come in and sign our guest book, as people who had come through during the war years.

Again, that is our presentation. I suppose from now we go to questions and whatever.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Before we do, I would like to say that Debert has been part of my life too, where I grew up in Londonderry and travelled to Truro through Debert many times. Also, my wife's grandfather, during the Second World War, was killed at Camp Debert when he was struck by an airplane propeller. I am very familiar with the camp, going and seeing the ruins and buildings, back from the 1950's on.

Anyway, I would ask at this time that the members of the committee introduce themselves. We didn't at the first.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will start the questioning with Mr. Gaudet.

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, basically, I want to congratulate your committee. I think it is, certainly, a very good presentation. I just recognized while you were doing the presentation, on this so-called national site, you know, more than likely, people from Digby County probably went through Debert. I guess, going back to the roots of this country, it makes you realize that Debert was probably part of the people back home, as well.

It is evident that all the interest that you have put into the site so far - you have a devoted group over there. I want to wish you all the best. I will be, certainly, dropping in. I had actually suggested to our Chairman, several months ago, maybe we could actually come down and tour the site. I just hope that, Mr. Chairman, the committee will probably get a chance at some point in time; probably not soon but once the snow goes away we will actually have a chance to come down.

I want to thank all of you for a job well done. Thanks again.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Holm.

JOHN HOLM: Thank you very much. I would certainly like to associate myself with the comments that Wayne just made, in terms of congratulations and thanks for all the hard work that you have been doing. It certainly is a very ambitious plan and these kinds of projects and plans don't come to fruition, unfortunately, overnight, as some of us who are impatient - at least I am referring to myself - might wish but they do take the dedication and hard work of a lot of community volunteers. It sounds like you are having some progress.

I have a couple of questions I would just like to throw out, if I could; one deals with the bunker. That is one thing that many people - you know, certainly, a lot of people are familiar with Debert but they are also familiar with the idea that there was a bunker there, supposedly to keep people like us safe.

Anyway, I am interested and a little bit concerned about your suggestion, for example, that the bunker could be sold or leased. It is a revenue source but it also strikes me that it would be a very valuable part of the museum, and of great interest, not only for the war but also the history, as you talked about, after and during the Cold War.

I am just wondering if you could just expand a little bit more on what is happening, why are they talking about selling it, what are they talking about doing with it? I can't see that the bunker is going to have much industrial use unless you are going to demolish the site. Have there been efforts made to get that declared an historic site? Where do things . . .

KEN KENNEDY: Okay. Well, I will give you a brief history. Of course, you probably know that the bunker was constructed in the 1960's. It started in 1960, I believe, Sheila, wasn't it? They just dug a hole in the ground. Mr. Castro was kicking up his heels and Mr. Diefenbaker decided that he was going to put all his key politicians underground. That is why, by the way, we call it the Diefenbunker. Anyhow, I don't have the full statistics of the size. It was built to house 350 people for 30 days. I worked there a number of years. I went there in 1960 when it was being constructed and then, again, back in 1979 when it was up in full force. In the meantime, the facility was used - and I'm sure, maybe, some of you would have been called, or your positions, at least, would have been called out there on exercises, on trainings which we call lockdowns.

There is a big status board and we would - I was working in the message centre at the time. At 2:00 a.m., you would be kind of half asleep and the bells would ring, there would be a message coming in saying there was a bomb dropped in New York City, prevailing winds are such and such, and the nuclear fallout has determined - well, these people would go to work and, on this big wall map, they would determine where the nuclear fallout would drop in, say, Digby, for instance. So someone would run over and push the air raid siren button and the

sirens would go off in the Digby area and people would, theoretically, head for the basements and that type of thing.

That was, briefly, what that underground nuclear bunker was to do. It wasn't built to withstand a direct hit. It was there to filter any fallouts and whatnot. Of course, the Lieutenant-Governor would be the key man in that position because of his non-political stripes, or whatever you call it. Of course, the Premier and his key aides, and hundreds of military personnel.

When the military moved out in 1995, of course, the bunker became vacant and CPDS, Colchester Park Development Society, just - it was the last holdout by DND. They moved out in 1996. I think it was only last year that CPDS really got the clearance, that they became full owners of that underground bunker.

Anyhow, it is there, and they have been doing some marketing and wondering, what can we do with this thing? They received some real pretty fantastic suggestions as to what kind of industry could be carried on there, anything from growing eels to cultivating marijuana, medicinal marijuana . . .

JOHN HOLM: Underground?

KEN KENNEDY: . . . or THC, or whatever that ingredient is. Anyhow, out of their good graces, they have been allowing us to use that in the summer months. We have been charging \$10 an adult, I believe, Sheila, was it?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Yes.

KEN KENNEDY: Yes, \$10 an adult and \$5.00 per student, I believe it was. On weekends, we have had as high as 150 people go through, I believe, was it? I think that was our highest number; 30, 40, 50, up to 100 people go through on a weekend, three weekends of the summer, or thereabouts. But we have just learned - I guess it was in November, October or November, or just recently, anyhow - that that resource might not be available to us this summer because, I believe it is an offshore group has made application to lease. I don't know any more about it than that.

MARK PARENT: There is an article in there, a pharmaceutical company . . .

KEN KENNEDY: Oh, is it? I don't know.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: They put a non-refundable deposit and they had to make a reply by Tuesday - just two days ago - whether they were going to take the facility, or not. I tried yesterday to find out before we came down. I could not find out.

JOHN HOLM: I don't want to take up any more time. I guess, just one other question and then I will roll a couple of things together with one brief comment. The brief comment is that, Don, you talked about your memories and the stories. Hopefully, all those kind of things have been written down, that part of it, for you and others who have those memories.

In terms of the funding - and you talked about various funding sources - I am interested to know what the budgetary requirements of the society are in order to be able to operate this year and what projected requirements would be for next year? How much of the current budget has been met by the visitors coming to the bunker? If that kind of information isn't available now, then maybe you can provide it.

KEN KENNEDY: No, we haven't costed out, I don't think, have we?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Well, we have done some. Basically, if we want to take all our basic costs for a year, we can run the present facility during the summer months and heat in the winter with no open hours. We can do that for approximately \$8,800. Our heating costs are about \$5,000. So the rest goes to wages, phone, photocopying, that sort of thing. So it is a very bare bones kind of thing but our problem is that if they won't allow us to stay in that building, we can go to the hospitality centre, which will not cost us any heat or lights, but the collection will be broken up. It won't be a single entity. It will be broken up so all of a sudden we haven't got one museum, it is broken up into very small rooms. Actually, one room may be two-thirds of this size and that is the biggest room and we have about two or three of those. So all of a sudden we lose the impact.

JOHN HOLM: But a lot of the museum's authenticity has to do with being in the H-shaped building.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Yes. When you look at renovation costs on that, Mr. Holm, probably, well, it would run you between \$85,000 to \$110,000. The main problem is the foundation. It would have to be raised up and a good foundation put in.

KEN KENNEDY: We got an estimate on shingling one side of the H for the roof and it was \$12,000-some but, as I say, the CPDS has been very gracious in doing those renovations for us but they are getting a little tired of it and eventually we are going to end up, if we take a long-term lease, we are going to end up funding the whole building, including the exterior.

We haven't sat down and put a dollar figure on the entire renovation and this is why we are trying to hire this coordinator through HRDC, someone with some expertise in this, estimating and that type of thing. Hopefully, by the end of this year, by the end of this summer, we will have some more direct costs on it and where we are going to go on that particular construction.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Actually, our estimated costs are no less than \$125,000 for renovation of the building itself, between \$85,000 and \$125,000.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I think we have all very much enjoyed this great presentation you have done. Mr. Langille has amazing stories, Mr. Davidson. Mr. Chairman, I didn't get your name . . .

KEN KENNEDY: Ken Kennedy, the president.

JOHN CHATAWAY: And the person who normally works for the library system, that is very good training, yes.

KEN KENNEDY: She is a pro.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I am just wondering, the Department of Tourism and Culture, of course, supports many museums across the province. I would just like to review, very quickly, what contact you have had with them and I understand you have had people come up and give you the basic plans and things to look out for and create.

KEN KENNEDY: We have applied twice to the provincial Department of Tourism and Culture for funding to upgrade our museum. It is the chicken and egg concept, I guess. They say we can't fund you until you meet certain requirements like security and whatever. We are saying, great, we realize that but we need some seed dollars to be able to do this. That is where it stands. We are caught between a rock and a hard place, I guess. I don't know where we go from here. Do you have any comment on that?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Basically, it is a matter of standards, the standards that Tourism wants for a museum that would be underneath their names, which is really understandable, and that is desired, you have to have the standards. This is a small volunteer group that has worked very hard for four or five years. They have put in their personal time, money and everything and they have raised as much money as they can. The thousands of dollars that it would take to enhance their exhibits are more than the \$1,000 to \$1,200 that they can make in a bunker tour. So that is basically a chicken and egg situation but they are interested. If we had gone to them and they had said, just go away and never come back, how nice, put on your aprons, have a bake sale, it would have killed the volunteer group but they are not. They are interested. We get interest from a number of different groups that say, we would be very pleased to have you as a military museum, as part of our group, but you have to do this.

KEN KENNEDY: The other factor is, the provincial/national concept, are you a provincial entity or are you a federal entity. Why don't you go to the DND and DVA and ask

for money for funding? Well, we did. We went to DND and they said, well we can't fund you because we only fund military museums if they are on a military base, Greenwood, that type of thing. So we have lost out on that. It is very frustrating. That is why we are here. So we are still in dialogue, at least, I think we are, with the Nova Scotia museums and the Department of Tourism and Culture and we are asking you gentlemen, if you could go to bat for us to those people and suggest that they give us some seed money or something so we can get up to standard where they will support us and become under their umbrella.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I certainly can sympathize with your comments and your comments as well. Basically, this year, I have won the Phyllis Blakeley Award for being more than 30 years in the heritage business and certainly in my own community I am involved with a heritage unit and we have had good support but we have to talk with Nova Scotia. We are, I think, a unique province in that I think we have more museums or potential museums, et cetera, that reflect on our history than other provinces because we have basically, when Europeans came to live in Canada or even North America, they settled first in Nova Scotia and it has been going on and it is certainly your attempt to what you are creating, I think, is a very important thing not only to yourselves but of course to the whole province and everybody who is involved with it.

Thus, I know the rule you just said, if you don't have a base, the government may not support you but what about the Royal Canadian Legions? Have you approached those people at all? Have they been giving you any aid or anything?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: When we started, because we were local, we went after the local Legions. We have put notices in The Legionnaire but as far as a full-blown marketing going after them saying we would like each one to do this, we haven't done that because we are sort of not sure, again it is the chicken and the egg. We looked at counting how much revenue per Legion in the province, per Legion in the country, how much money can you get from that, where would that go, where would that match your budget for how many years? You can do all that but by the time we get the word out and do the marketing, we have to put money into marketing to get to them. We are right back to the beginning. The potential from them is good.

KEN KENNEDY: We have tapped our own local, Zone 10 Legions, and we have received funding from a couple of them, not funding but donations from a couple of them. Of course, they have their own, the two that I think of, Debert/Truro and the Great Village Legions, they have their own memorabilia rooms. We are sort of competing a little bit with them maybe in a way but I don't think that is a problem, as yet. As I say, we are a group of volunteers and there are a lot of things we haven't done that we should have done and that is probably one of them. With the coordinator that HRDC - please, God - is going to give us, we will be able to do those types of things.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: I think what we would like to do is two ways, Mr. Chataway. We would like to look at the membership of the past regiments and target those people where they are in the families and look at the Legions themselves. We have just started that.

KEN KENNEDY: If I can just interject. The other thing that we need to do is we haven't really gone out to tap into the businesses. We haven't gone out - what do you call that? - business support. We haven't done as much of that as we should have. That is in our plans as well.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: It is coming up next month at the chamber.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I don't want to keep talking because I know others do wish to talk but all the best to you. You are doing great work so far. Keep it up.

KEN KENNEDY: We will.

THE CHAIR: Mr. O'Donnell.

CECIL O'DONNELL: I just have a comment. First I want to thank you for your presentation today. It was very interesting. Actually, I think it was in the 1980's I had the privilege of visiting this site at Debert. The mayors and wardens from across the province met there. Also we stayed overnight in the bunkers there.

KEN KENNEDY: That would be interesting.

CECIL O'DONNELL: Yes, it was very interesting.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hendsbee.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Yes, just to follow up on that, I think an overnight stay in the bunkers would be quite an experience, like a different type of a B&B, I guess you would call it, Bed and Breakfast, in a bunker overnight or whatever.

KEN KENNEDY: Well, it was clean.

JOHN HOLM: That's called the Cabinet Room. (Laughter)

DAVID HENDSBEE: Following up on that comment, I am just curious what the present Emergency Measures Organization protocols would be in such a case, or the provincial protocols if an emergency situation should happen. Is there a need or a call for such a facility? I am kind of curious if such requirements are even being considered in emergency measures parameters, in case an emergency should occur. I am just kind of curious if there has been any discussion, if this type of facility is required in current-day situations.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: The EMO has been running certain dialogues with certain groups. One of the things that was considered was, Truro is on the wind path of the nuclear station outside of Saint John, New Brunswick. If that should go up, the majority of the fallout would actually land on Port Hawkesbury and there up, but Truro would definitely be on the wind path for that plus some other chemical spills that may come up from other areas, whether it is metro, we are on a direct wind path. So could that bunker be considered as part of EMO? Yes, very definitely it could, particularly in this case. When you think of the breakdown of all . . .

KEN KENNEDY: But it isn't.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: It isn't but when you think of the other nuclear stations that are having trouble because they are old plants, they haven't been maintained, it could definitely be . . .

DAVID HENDSBEE: I understand that with Point Lepreau they are trying to make a decision, should they mothball it and dismantle it or keep it going.

In regard to your comment about how a lot of times it was the last place a lot of our military laid their head to rest before they were shipped out the next day or whatever, I am kind of curious as to what connections you have made with any of the Halifax military museums to acknowledge that fact. Maybe Halifax and perhaps the Port of Sydney were the points of departure but I can't recall any references to the overnight stay at Debert anywhere. I was kind of wondering if there is an opportunity to have that expanded upon. Perhaps they should acknowledge that, that this might have been the place where they last stayed and whether there is any opportunity to make that connection known. I thought that might be interesting, what you see on television, these little historical vignettes, these Canadian minutes that the Bronfman Foundation supports. I think that that might be a nice, interesting story to do.

My last question though is, you said that these Diefenbunkers were back in the days of Diefenbaker in the 1960's and the Cold War and the threats of the Cuban Missile Crisis and everything else. What has happened to the other bunkers across the country? I am sure there must have been one per province or one per region, whatever. I am just curious, have they been decommissioned or destroyed or have some of them been revitalized or used in other functions?

KEN KENNEDY: I don't know but I think there is a link on our website to the Diefenbunkers and you might just check that. It pertains to, I think the most active one is the one in Carp, which is just outside Ottawa. That is actually where we got our idea from and actually we had the lady come down and talk to us about that in 1997. So they are pretty active. They are using a part of the bunker up there, actually that is their museum. They have a floor or something of that bunker. The rest of it, apparently, has been mothballed. Penhold, I believe, is mothballed and the other ones, I don't know what has happened to them.

[10:30 a.m.]

SHEILA CROWE: If I could just speak on that for one second, just this week it was brought to my attention that that too has been ordered to be demolished. There are two of them and Penhold will be the only one that remains. As Ken just mentioned, it is being used as a museum.

DAVID HENDSBEE: So if this is going to be one of the last two in the country, I think that makes it another significant feather in your cap in regard to the historical significance of them.

SHEILA CROWE: Yes, it does. I would like to refer to Dr. Hamm. Earlier he was speaking about whether there was any future interest in the underground bunker as a tourism industry, too. We are here specifically asking for the museum but our ideas for that bunker certainly have been expanded at one point in time or another but the struggle with just keeping the museum there and alive and going, we haven't had the opportunity or the interest to further that insight into the underground bunker which, to me, if the museum was in there, we could continue our tours, we could do re-enactments of the actual lock downs. There are so many things that could be done and that has sort of been a future discussion among many people of what could be done like out on the highway for those many people travelling through each day, there could be a big board put up, come in and do a re-enactment of the Cold War.

Our minds have wandered beyond the museum but, again, without financial support and the ongoing area of that and needing people to come up with these ideas and implementing them and that, but that was an interesting question that he had, what would become of that bunker and why is it being leased or for whatever other interest because it is not being recognized, the historical fact of that building.

DAVID HENDSBEE: I would think it would probably give a new definition to an underground economy. (Laughter)

SHEILA CROWE: Yes, absolutely. Thank you.

KEN KENNEDY: Yes, there is a cost factor. How much does it cost, is it \$5,000, heat and lights?

SHEILA CROWE: To do the tours, \$500.

KEN KENNEDY: It costs the owners \$500, every time we go in and turn the lights on apparently and run the power system. It is a massive building but you can go in there today and the air you breathe in there is cleaner probably - well, I wouldn't say that, but it is clean air. (Interruption) (Laughter) You can draw your finger along any of the ledges there and it is almost dust free. It is filtered air and it is beautiful and warm.

DAVID HENDSBEE: That's probably why the pharmaceutical company is interested because of the isolation and everything else that it is a contained atmosphere.

KEN KENNEDY: We would certainly like to make it a national historic site but I don't know if we are going to be able to get there.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Parent.

MARK PARENT: I wanted to pick up on Mr. Holm's comment about the importance of the bunkers, part of the whole museum complex because to me there are lots of museums and military museums across the country but the bunker is essential. I really would encourage you to continue on that.

However, my own comments and questions are probably arising more out of my concern with the downgrading that has happened at Greenwood which is in my area. The neighbouring MLA, Jon Carey, and myself have written a letter which we sent out decrying the sort of cutbacks at Greenwood. You mentioned in Debert when it was closed as a military base in 1997, the effect it had on the community. I think you may have mentioned, Wendy, the words community breakdown. Could you elaborate on that a little bit more and the effect that closing a base has on a community?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: I would give some. Don certainly could give more as well. When Debert pulled out, there were restaurants, they had to close down. We don't get as many people supporting baseball, hockey, all the non-profit, you don't have people in your schools, your schools have less teachers. We had housing up for sale, no one buying. Just the impact all the way over. Those who were there and didn't have employment, if it got a little bit pricey to drive back and forth to Amherst or Tatamagouche or to Truro, they would move there rather than stay. So the community capacity certainly was greatly diminished for all sorts of levels.

KEN KENNEDY: I was pretty well involved with it there at one point. I think there were 160 people on the base there when it was closed. I forget how many PMQs, they are called, private married quarters, I think there are 40 left because there is some military still working in Great Village, the underground communications centre there and the Folly Mountain satellite ground terminal. So I think out of the PMQs, or the private married quarters, I think there are about 40 left that are military staffed or military owned or rented, whatever. The others are rented by people, actually there was just an ad in the local papers saying that there were homes available for rent. I think it was \$350 to \$450 a month or something like that, not including utilities or whatever. So there is a fair turnover and there is apparently a waiting list there.

The civilian population have sort of come in to those quarters and replaced the military. So there is definitely an economic impact there on the stores in Truro. The thing is, the base has a recreation centre there. That was a fully-stacked recreation centre just across the road

from the main gate. Actually, you can see the shingles falling off it. I think CPDS at this point would probably give it to somebody if they wanted to just pay the heat, lights and maintain it but nobody wants to. I see there is a local group now, a community group, that is going in there for some gym, volleyball, and things like that but it is not really being utilized. There is a putting green and an outdoor rink, two ball fields, soccer pitch, that is not being fully utilized but there is some activity there from the local community. Obviously there is certainly an economic impact for sure.

WENDY ROBICHAUD: I might note that remaining on Debert is a family resource centre which is a military base organization. It does work with families from Truro right through to Sydney, any military families but now they have started to work with local families because of high stress due to unemployment, due to family breakdowns and things like that. They are absolutely up to their gunwales there because I work with them with literacy problems, just helping with employment and that sort of thing. This group is in there and actively trying to support the family, from a family-based value system and they are really busy.

KEN KENNEDY: They are DND-funded, aren't they?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Are there any other comments? Any members? On behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am very pleased that you came here today. I enjoyed your presentation. As the members, I believe, are aware, Debert is in my constituency and I realize the efforts that you have put forward, I have taken the tour of the underground bunker, I have visited your museum and I understand the hardships you have had when it comes to funding and trying to obtain funding. I wish you every success and if we can be of assistance. I believe one of the routes that I like is the Legions of Nova Scotia. Maybe if you could solicit the Provincial Command, I don't know if you have done that with Clarence Dawe or not. You have?

WENDY ROBICHAUD: We have been in touch.

THE CHAIR: I would think that the history of Debert and of the military in Nova Scotia and the staging area and that, that it would be beneficial to have your museum in the middle of the province as a remembrance to the men who served overseas. If we can assist you, give us a call and we will see what we can do. Again, on behalf of the committee, I thank you very much for attending today.

KEN KENNEDY: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

SHEILA CROWE: At this time I would just like to extend an invitation to the Debert Military Museum. You are welcome any time. In the winter we are closed. We are open by appointment and our numbers are there. So you are welcome any time. Thank you.

DAVID HENDSBEE: When does it open for the season?

SHEILA CROWE: It is open from May until October, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each day, Monday to Sunday.

KEN KENNEDY: On Victoria Day weekend in May to . . .

THE CHAIR: Just before we break, we have the Korean Veterans Association that will be next.

JOHN HOLM: What is the date of that?

THE CHAIR: Go ahead.

DARLENE HENRY: We are looking at April 19th.

THE CHAIR: Is that a good date, April 19th?

JOHN HOLM: That is my birthday.

THE CHAIR: Is it? That is an excellent date.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: My son's, too.

THE CHAIR: The next meeting is April 19th.

DAVID HENDSBEE: Well, it all depends on what the House hours are going to be at that time.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour?

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:43 a.m.]