

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Committee Room 1

Royal Canadian Legion

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

William Langille (Chair)
John Holm
Jerry Pye
Mark Parent
David Hendsbee
David Wilson (Cape Breton East)
John Chataway
Cecil O'Donnell
Frank Chipman
Brian Boudreau

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia Command

Fred Mombourquette
President

Steve Wessel
Public Relations

Vic Barnes
First Vice-President

Clarence Dawe
Immediate Past President

Jack Hatcher
Honorary Treasurer



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2001

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
William Langille

THE CHAIR: Good morning. We have a quorum, so we will start the meeting. At this time, I would ask the members of the Legislative Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: We are honoured to have the Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion here today. We have Fred Mombourquette, President of the Provincial Command, and I would ask that he introduce the other members.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, to my left is Steve Wessel, and Steve is our PR man for Nova Scotia Command; this gentleman is Vic Barnes, he is the First Vice-President of the Nova Scotia Command; next we have Clarence Dawe, Past President of the Nova Scotia Command; and Comrade Jack Hatcher, who is our Treasurer and we always take him with us wherever we go.

THE CHAIR: We also have joining us, Wayne Gaudet, the honourable member for Clare and also with us today we have two observers and if they would introduce themselves.

[The observers introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I thought we would have a member of the Health Department here as an observer too, but as yet, no. So, Fred, if you have a presentation.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, this morning our Royal Canadian Legion Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee would like to start off by thanking you and your Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for your support during the past two years, by implementing some of the issues we have brought before you on behalf of our veterans, our seniors, and our Legion membership.

I can assure you and your committee that at our 45th Biennial Convention, held at Colchester Branch 26 in Truro on May 2001, our committee reports to our convention regarding our meetings with your committee were very well received and much appreciated. We would like to bring to your attention that on December 7th this year, Dominion Command, Nova Scotia Command and the Nunavut Territory branches will be combined into a new regional command of the Royal Canadian Legion entitled Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, and this new structure will take effect on January 1, 2002.

This will allow the Legion members of Nunavut to participate in Dominion Command programs that they cannot participate in at present, such as youth track and field programs, sporting or leadership training activities, Legion pilgrimage programs, and essay and poster entries for the Remembrance contest. At our convention in May of this year, our membership was very pleased to vote in favour of amalgamation so that our comrades in Nunavut would be able to share in the full structure of the Royal Canadian Legion.

A final note. So many times our Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, we have been asked: with so many World War II and Korean veterans passing away because of age and as a result, membership decreasing, what does the future hold for its Legion branches and members? Our answer is simple. We now have peacekeepers in parts of the world and we are now engaged in another war with our young men and women serving in faraway places and we, as members of the Royal Canadian Legion, will make sure that our Legions will be here for them, and their families, when they return, as our Legions have done for our veterans in the past.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am now going to pass the mike over to our Comrade Vic Barnes.

VIC BARNES: Good morning. If you will look in front of you, you will find the folder submission to the Committee on Veterans Affairs. I am happy to join you today, in the last few weeks of the International Year of the Volunteer. Considering the number of volunteers in the Royal Canadian Legion who serve the needs of aging veterans, family members, and community seniors, it is a small wonder that the Legion is perceived by many to be a leading advocate for the service provider to aging Nova Scotians. Today I will share with you some of the issues affecting seniors that have been brought to the attention of the Legion; I will also highlight some of the steps that the government has taken, which we in the Legion perceive will have a positive effect on the older population in the province. Finally, I wish to revisit

some of the issues that I have shared with you in the past, where we have noticed little in the way of progress and would appreciate an update.

One of the major projects in which the Legion has been involved this year is the falls prevention initiative. Falling is a serious health problem among elderly people. Approximately 30 per cent of people over 65 who live in the community fall each year. In the document, *Taking Steps to Prevent Falling in Nova Scotia*, released in May 2001, it is reported that one out of every three older Nova Scotians is likely to fall this year and that more than half will fall again. The cost of treating injuries related to falls in Nova Scotia is over \$16 million, and the unintentional injuries, which most often result from a fall, rank as the sixth leading cause of death among people over the age of 65.

With funding from Health Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada, three organizations in this province, the Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, Community Links, and the Family Caregivers Association, brought together a range of organizations involved with senior support and care to develop a strategy to reduce falling among the elderly in Nova Scotia. The proposal for a second phase of funding for this initiative has just been submitted. If funded, it will see the development of community and regional strategies.

What can be done to reduce falls? Falls will only be prevented with a multi-pronged approach that includes addressing both environmental and physical reasons for falls. Within the homes of older people, there is the need to look at factors such as lighting, clutter, handrails, and scatter rugs. It is clear that service providers in the home, such as home support workers and visiting nurses, will be invaluable in identifying these concerns and recommending corrective action. As a result, VON Canada, Nova Scotia Branch, has been invited to be a partner in the second phase of this initiative. There is also a need to address changes in sleep patterns, a reduction in muscle strength, and reduced flexibility amongst the elderly in order to reduce falls. Exercise programs designed for the elderly are most beneficial in this respect.

A number of specially-designed exercise programs do exist in Nova Scotia, but they are not generally accessible, nor is funding available to allow for their expansion. Medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, can cause side effects, such as dizziness or drowsiness, that often result in falls. While these concerns can be addressed in part by nurses, family physicians and pharmacists, it often takes a geriatrician to make recommendations regarding appropriate changes in medication. As you would be aware, physicians with this specialization are very rare in Nova Scotia and many areas have no access to a geriatrician. For seniors who are addicted to medication, we have also found that there are no appropriate addiction services in the province designed to meet the special needs of the older population.

The community must also address fall prevention. Outdoor lighting is important, as is the installation of handrails. Uneven walking surfaces frequently cause falls, and snow and ice clearance in the winter is crucial. We recognize that the reduction of falls in Nova Scotia will

require that the partner organizations work in collaboration with a variety of departments of both municipal and provincial governments. This may involve the development of, or changes to, government policy. It may also involve a commitment of funds. Veterans Affairs Canada has committed \$10 million to the reduction of falls across this country. In Nova Scotia alone VAC will be spending \$150,000. We challenge the Government of Nova Scotia to match this expenditure as this important project can only result in an improvement in the quality of life of seniors in this province and will eventually reduce the cost to the health care system.

We have watched with interest the development of a single entry access program. As I mentioned last year, we anticipate that this will be of significant benefit to older Nova Scotians and their families. We do, however, have some concerns regarding this program. The first concern is the fact that with those who are most ill becoming the priority for admission to long-term care, we recognize that the level of care will increase proportionately. We are hopeful that this increased burden on institutional care providers will be acknowledged with an increase in per diems which will allow facilities to staff appropriately.

Our second concern has to do with the community-based services not being included in the assessment process. For example, if a person is assessed as needing Meals on Wheels, a referral will be made. However, because Meals on Wheels is not being included as part of the SEA planning process, that program may or may not prioritize the referred client. The same will be true of adult day services, volunteer visiting, et cetera. We believe that the inclusion of community-based services is crucial to the success of this initiative.

Speaking of adult day services, local branches of the Legion are still making contributions to keep the doors of adult day programs open. We have brought to your attention in the past our strong recommendation that this valuable service be included in the continuum of care and funded appropriately. To date, we are not aware of any sustained commitment by this government to fund adult day services. This is so in spite of the fact that funding adult day programs was part of the Progressive Conservative platform in the last election.

One of the major success stories that the Legion wishes to acknowledge this year is the introduction of the rural and semi-rural transportation program. This is making a significant difference in the lives of rural seniors, including veterans. We also commend the government for allowing the communities to develop their own strategies for delivering this service. We have found that the community development model is one of the best ways to ensure community support of a program. We are happy to see this is the model that is being promoted by this funding program.

The Legion participates actively in a number of palliative care initiatives in this province. One of the most exciting projects we have worked on this year is the proposal of a free-standing hospice in Kings County. You may be aware that Mr. Muir struck a committee to submit a proposal regarding the recommended commitment from the Department of Health

toward the hospice. We are hopeful that the Department of Health will find the funding required for the operating cost of the hospice and we will have participated in the establishment of the first free-standing hospice in Atlantic Canada.

[9:15 a.m.]

The Legion continues to be committed to supporting aging persons in Nova Scotia. We have served this population by working as project partners, funders and direct service volunteers. We appreciate the fact that we are able to meet with you to present the successes and challenges we see as we serve our communities. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for that presentation. I think there are two more presentations to be presented, but rather than go on, would the committee like to open up the floor for questions on this particular one and then after that, move to the other.

JOHN HOLM: I am just going to throw in a couple of questions. There's certainly an awful lot of valuable information in the presentation and you have raised a number of questions that I think maybe this committee may want to try to get answers to. I will skip over the single entry questions that you asked about and also about the continuing care funding for the moment because those I don't know if the committee would have the answers to right at the moment.

In terms of Veterans Affairs Canada, and you said that they've committed \$150,000 to projects in Nova Scotia for the . . .

VIC BARNES: That's just for the fall prevention.

JOHN HOLM: Yes, for the fall prevention program. Do you know what projects they have approved, or have specific ones been approved yet? Also, if you have any additional information - something maybe I am sure we can get ourselves anyway - but information on the exercise programs that are designed for the elderly and where those might be available.

VIC BARNES: We can certainly get that. I don't have it with me, but it would be no problem at all to get it. The \$150,000 that you mentioned was brought forth for the fall prevention only.

JOHN HOLM: Have they identified any specific projects that they're going to spend that money on?

VIC BARNES: What we've done so far with it is we've had a workshop where just about every department going was there to see what had happened. It was quite interesting. We discovered that the Legion was just about the only organization that was able to give them sustainability. When we first went in, they were wondering why we were there, and a gentleman from VAC stood up and he said without them you don't get the money. It was quite

a shock to them, but after Comrade Jack and I spoke to them and they realized what we are doing in this province as Legionnaires and what all the Legions are doing, they were quite interested. As a matter of fact, some of them wanted to be able to contact the Legions in their area and get involved with some of the programs.

We do have 120 Legions in Nova Scotia and we have committees in each of those Legions. We have a service officer who is able to meet with the seniors and the veterans and go out and see what their needs are. We're just entering Phase III on this.

JOHN HOLM: I guess what I was wondering about, and I think you could probably answer my question, but I am just wondering if there are funds - and there are seniors in all parts of the province who I am sure can benefit from that and Jack certainly would know that within Sackville we also have an aging population. I am sure there are many who are on fixed incomes who may not be able to afford that railing that may be needed or be able to identify where the risks are in their own homes. I am wondering if there are any funds available to . . .

VIC BARNES: Through the Legion? Yes, there are funds available. It's up to the individual Legion in that area, but they will certainly assist with it. If the person is a veteran, VAC will definitely be involved as well.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: If I may, Vic, I think this \$150,000 is for a three-stage program and the money itself right now is not used for putting anything into the homes. It is more or less used for finding out how serious this problem is. We know it is serious, but how serious it is, what kind of help can we give out there, and so it's more or less a use for that. In other words, right now, if you knew somebody who needed this assistance, this money couldn't be used for that purpose, but it will be the next step or so as they go along with the problem.

JOHN HOLM: The next step.

VIC BARNES: Once that \$150,000 is gone, that's the end of it. So that's why we're asking the government to get involved because in the end it is really going to save them a lot of money. For the interim, okay, the Legions will be doing what they can to support it.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to you, Mr. Barnes, I am very pleased to see that the workshop which was held most recently on fall prevention, particularly among seniors, was a workshop where a number of stakeholders were asked to participate. In that workshop they were asked to provide some findings with respect to how that might be prevented - falls among seniors. My understanding is that there is going to be a final draft of some of the recommendations that were put forward and that draft is going off to the appropriate government departments. I am wondering if, in fact, you're aware of that.

VIC BARNES: Yes.

JERRY PYE: You are aware. I didn't realize that there were monies from the Legions with respect to that particular program. However, I thought that this would all be part of that in-package where people would be informed and so on and we are awaiting the information to come forward with respect to what the final findings are with respect to that workshop.

VIC BARNES: Yes, when that package comes forward, what we have asked for, in particular, in the Legions are speaking notes. We have the people who can go all over the province and they're always asked to go in and speak on different things and we want to push this to the fore.

JERRY PYE: Finally, I am wondering if you can enlighten me and give me a bit more background on the free-standing hospices. I know that this is something that was encouraged by Minister Muir and the Department of Health and I am wondering if, in fact, you can just enlighten us with a bit more with respect to that project. I believe it's in Kings County?

VIC BARNES: Yes, it is. It's going up in Wolfville as a matter of fact. Robbins Elliott is, I think, the one who's going around collecting the money for it, but when it first got started and the word went out, I think within the first six months they had donations of over \$250,000 towards it from individuals.

JERRY PYE: Specifically on what it does, if you can?

VIC BARNES: What it does, right now if a person is needing palliative care or is very seriously ill and they go into the hospital, all right, it costs the government \$1,200 a day for that person while they're in the hospital. If they go into the hospice, it costs \$400 a day. There's a big difference, a big saving to the government. They figured it out at 10,000 people and I think there were 10 beds or something like that, I am just not quite sure on the amount, but it's well underway and there are a lot of funds coming in for it and they're still collecting. What they intend to do is to put the building up and pay for everything, but then they're hoping that the government will move in and pay the \$400 a day that is going to be required. It is a big saving.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Mr. Chairman, I very much appreciate being here to listen to the presentations so far and, Fred, it's wonderful to hear you and Mr. Barnes again, and the information is very informative. Further to the question just already raised, has the Legion, or I am sure they're aware of the Wheelchair Accessibility Program through the Department of Housing and I understand that we've committed about \$0.75 million to public buildings, getting up to \$10,000 to create accessibility to public buildings. Are you aware of that or do you have any reaction to that?

VIC BARNES: Myself, I haven't been aware of it. What I am aware of is that any veterans or seniors who need wheelchair accessibility to their homes, the Legions have been doing it for quite a few years. They'll send a person in and build it for them and pay the whole shot. In some cases we can use poppy fund money, but for seniors we can't. If it's a veteran, we can, but if it's a senior, then it comes out of the general funds for the Legion, but they're only too happy to do it. I am glad to hear that it's going in everywhere. I think it's long overdue.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Wheelchair accessibility is only for a public building, but it's every description. A public building is a public building and so you can get assistance. From what I understand, it is not spent entirely on one or two projects. It's only limited, I think, to \$10,000, or something like that.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: What department is that?

JOHN CHATAWAY: Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

JERRY PYE: No, it's the Department of Housing.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Is it the Department of Housing, okay. (Interruption) And the question that you raised, Mr. Pye, on hospices, is the idea to, okay, this is in Kings County, is it going to go all . . .

VIC BARNES: We would like to see it go right across the province. This is the first one and it's the first one in all of the Maritimes. So it's sort of like a new project.

JOHN CHATAWAY: And this would in theory be just for veterans, I assume?

VIC BARNES: No, no, sir, it's for seniors.

JOHN CHATAWAY: The nursing home in my community where I live, we have a respite bed and it's a person who would go there for . . .

VIC BARNES: Yes.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Is there a limit to that? If I was in the hospital, how long would it be until they finally say here, get out of here? Does it go on for . . .

VIC BARNES: Oh, it would go on forever.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Yes, okay.

VIC BARNES: Oh, yes, as long as that person needs that bed, that person has got that bed. Oh, yes, they would never put them out, no, no, but the thing is if we can get this right

over the province - do you understand me? - the government is going to save an awful whack of money.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Well, homes for special care certainly have the same thing, too.

VIC BARNES: Yes, the thing is we in the Legions, the public and everybody are putting the money in to build the buildings. We're getting everything up and running and then we hope that the government will take over, you know, like the cost of \$400 a day. There's still a big saving.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Gaudet.

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Barnes, I, too, wanted to acknowledge your presentation. I am looking for a clarification on that \$150,000. Am I right to assume that this money will be used to do a study to look at the reduction of falls and not fund projects?

VIC BARNES: Yes, I believe that's true, yes. It's being used, okay, the first thing was this workshop. Do you know how many people were there? There were so many organizations, I have the figures and that at home, but I didn't bring that with me. Just about every organization in health was there and it was a pretty fabulous two days, I don't mind telling you, and it opened our eyes. As a matter of fact, the Maritimes, I think, Alberta and British Columbia were the three organizations that started this out through DVA and when I met in Ottawa with the Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee, this was brought up and, believe me, Nova Scotia is moving right along with theirs as well as everybody else. So it's very interesting and I think well worthwhile.

WAYNE GAUDET: I guess my next question, Mr. Barnes, is who is actually conducting this study? You made reference to 120 Legions in Nova Scotia. Is everyone involved or is it Veterans Affairs? Who is actually doing the study?

VIC BARNES: Yes, it's through Community Links. Marilyn - what's her name?

JERRY PYE: Marilyn Moore.

VIC BARNES: Marilyn Moore, that's right, is the lady who is heading it.
(Interruptions)

JERRY PYE: And with respect to the Legion as well, there are three major bodies that are the components of this study.

VIC BARNES: That's right and we invited all the rest of them to this workshop and it went over extremely well. They had some very smart ladies there speaking, believe me and,

like I say, one of the things that really came out of it is we do have the ability with the Legion for sustainability for them.

[9:30 a.m.]

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to mention that I might have mentioned that it was Valerie Bruhm, instead it's Gail Bruhm of the Family Caregivers Association of Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other questions from the members? The presentation, I would like a mover.

JERRY PYE: I so move.

THE CHAIR: We will forward this on to the Minister of Health and I will talk to him personally. Go ahead, Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: What are we voting on? Are we just voting to accept the . . .

THE CHAIR: To accept the presentation and forward it to the Minister of Health.

JOHN HOLM: Well, if we are talking about doing that, Mr. Chairman, there are a number of key questions. If we are just forwarding it to the Minister of Health, I think that we should be asking for some specific responses to the key questions that were raised. We don't necessarily need to go through the report at the moment to identify them all, but certainly there were requests about continued funding, single entry, and all of those different things. If we are going to forward this to the Minister of Health, we should be also asking for a response to the questions that were raised and ask that we have a response provided to this committee, with a copy going to Command, before our next meeting.

THE CHAIR: That was my intention, but make a motion to that.

JOHN HOLM: I so move that, Mr. Chairman, the essence of what I just said.

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

The motion is carried.

Mr. Wessel.

STEVE WESSEL: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, in front of you there is a package entitled the Veteran's License Plate. I would like to be able to talk to you this morning

about the visual presentation of our veterans in Nova Scotia, specifically regarding a new veteran's license plate.

Ladies and gentlemen, generally, when travelling on Nova Scotia highways there is no clear way of recognizing our veterans or their service to our country. Some veterans have chosen, of their own accord, to place Royal Canadian Legion or regimental stickers in rear windows, or use a commercially produced front license plate to denote their service to our province and to Canada. Even these commercially produced front plates may disappear in the near future, with the possible reintroduction of a mandatory Nova Scotia-issued front license plate. Similarly, with the constant changes in the Royal Canadian Legion membership categories, not all Legion members are veterans these days, so the recognition of a Legion crest does not necessarily mean veteran in these present times.

The Province of Nova Scotia has made available to volunteer firefighters and search and rescue personnel a special plate, setting them apart from the ordinary. These plates serve a specific need and are provided to qualified individuals at no cost in recognition of the service they provide to fellow Nova Scotians. Other special plates such as camper plates, commercial, and handicapped are also available, but at specific cost to the individuals. I have included a copy of that in Annex A, but I am sure we have all seen on our highways these plates that I mention.

The voicing or visualization of our patriotism in Canada has always taken a back seat to that of our neighbours to the south; a trait which we feel should be changed. To this date I am not aware of any other province in Canada that has taken the initiative to recognize our veterans in this manner, although many states to our south have had veterans' plates of varying types available to their citizens for years.

I have just gone on the Internet and included a couple of those in Annex B, the veterans' plates. One in particular says, "In a measure to honor persons who have served or are serving with United States Armed Forces, the State Legislature has designated several special license plates for veterans . . .". It goes on to inform the individual on how they can apply for these plates. I could have included about 50 of these if I wanted to, but I didn't think it was necessary.

The provision of free plates to our veterans would be a nice gesture, but unfortunately not economically feasible. However the availability of a specially designed plate at the normal cost for the veteran's vehicle would not incur any additional cost to the province, once the initial artwork was completed.

The scenario to replace the current alphanumeric plate would be for a veteran to make application to the Registry of Motor Vehicles on their approved form and, upon showing proof of service and/or eligibility, the new style of plate would be issued upon the expiry of the existing plate tag.

Based on the foregoing, the following action has already been initiated. Members of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, at our provincial convention last May, have agreed to adopt this as a very viable veterans' project for the Royal Canadian Legion, and that the definition of a veteran be that as adopted by the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Convention, in the year 2000, here in Halifax. That is included in Annex C, if you would turn to it, please.

This is a memorandum from Dominion Command with regard to the definition of a veteran. At Dominion Convention 2000, the following definition was approved:

"A veteran is any person who is serving or who has honourably served in the Armed Forces of Canada, the Commonwealth or its wartime allies; or who has served in the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command during wartime."

That definition was relayed to Veterans Affairs Canada for their consideration and the intent of the Legion's initiative to recognize all those who have served has been approved, and we will have an approved government definition soon.

The design of the license plate hopefully will be based on the design included in Annex D - which is a colour representation of what we would like to see on our highways - at the back.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, in our efforts to publicize the role Canadians have played in past world conflicts and in peacekeeping missions around the world, past and present, this would be an excellent avenue on which the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia, can strive to take a lead. I believe this project would be an excellent complement to our new Veterans Memorial Highway which was named last year. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I will open the floor for questions. Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, presently you can obtain a personalized license plate from the Province of Nova Scotia. There is an additional cost for that, mind you, and there would be nothing to prevent someone from saying that they were a representative of the Canadian Armed Forces by having the insignia placed on their license plate - is there? - at the present time.

What you are requesting is a specialized license plate that would obviously have some sort of a patent to it in order that it would not fall into the hands of everyone, so therefore there would be some restrictions on the use of that, that is what you are saying?

STEVE WESSEL: That is basically true, yes. If a person was to go out and get a custom plate, so to speak a vanity plate, if they were just to put Navy on it or Army or whatever, that is gone, it cannot be used by anybody else and they pay a certain fee for that. What we are

proposing here is that this veteran's license plate be available, such as a firefighter's plate, to those who qualify, at the specific cost, whatever the cost would be for that veteran to go in and re-register his vehicle, whether it be \$100 or \$110 for registering your vehicle. This plate would be available to that veteran upon proof of eligibility.

JERRY PYE: And the cost is obviously, as you have indicated, not going to be assumed by the Nova Scotia taxpayer but by the person who is purchasing the plate.

STEVE WESSEL: Exactly. The only extra costs, I would assume, would be the cost of making the die to produce the plate, which is minimal at best, I would think.

JOHN HOLM: Just a couple of quick questions on that. Has this request ever gone in to Service Nova Scotia? Has there been a request made, or is this the first time the request is being advanced?

STEVE WESSEL: This is the first time.

JOHN HOLM: Obviously there is no response yet. Do you know, approximately, the number of veterans who might qualify in the province? I am just trying to think of how many there might be out there.

STEVE WESSEL: There would be thousands.

JOHN HOLM: Has there been a widespread request from veterans, according to the definition you have here, for similar license plates?

STEVE WESSEL: We haven't received specific requests for this. As I mentioned earlier in the presentation, there are plenty of veterans out there who would like to be recognized. The visual recognition of our veterans is limited. They try to put things on their vehicles to be recognized, but it's all personal. I would like to get something that is standard and quite noticeable in our province.

JOHN HOLM: I would just throw this out, and it's probably a ridiculous concern but I will throw it out anyway. Especially as you hear about people travelling in different areas, certainly if you travel in the States and you are in a rental car, in a lot of areas they don't indicate on the vehicle that it's a rental because they don't want to signify that somebody is from out of the area, because you may then be more prone to being robbed or having some other kind of violent act performed. I am just wondering if there has been any thought to designating plates as being veterans', if that plate is seen, especially if you are travelling outside of Nova Scotia, in some areas, that that might be a signal to criminals that this is possibly an elderly person and somebody who would be an easy target?

STEVE WESSEL: We hope they would think the other way around.

JOHN HOLM: I appreciate you might hope that they would, but an awful lot of veterans, certainly, are elderly. I just throw that out. It would be up to each individual member to consider that if they are applying for it. I am just wondering if that thought came into consideration at all.

STEVE WESSEL: Yes, it's obviously considered, but to harken back to what you had said about how many people had requested, this presentation was made to our full provincial convention last spring. It was unanimously carried then. There were no such arguments brought forward at that time, that anybody would feel a little bit marked, so to speak, by having a license plate like this. If you refer back to the definition of a veteran, it is any person who "has honourably served" or "is serving."

JOHN HOLM: I noticed that.

STEVE WESSEL: It will be serving members as well. So not necessarily all are elderly.

JOHN HOLM: That's why I indicated as per your definition.

VIC BARNES: These are proud people who would like to prove to the country that they are proud of what they've done.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: I was just wondering, in your question - even if you were travelling without this license plate at the front - if you have your own car from Nova Scotia, isn't Nova Scotia on the back license plate anyway?

JOHN HOLM: I wasn't just thinking about Nova Scotia, but I was thinking of the designation on that plate, the Nova Scotia plate. I see this not just as a vanity plate that would be going up front; this would be replacing your rear plate. I raise it as probably a frivolous concern, but if a vehicle was parked in a parking lot and somebody was trying to stake it out in certain areas - that's all I'm raising. Again, as I point out, that would be something for the individual who would be applying for it.

STEVE WESSEL: The notification of a license plate stating veteran on the back, which you say might indicate an elderly person - I guess it wouldn't stand out any more than a very expensive car in a parking lot . . .

JOHN HOLM: That's true, probably less.

STEVE WESSEL: . . . which would represent money to whoever was staking it out.

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I think the member to my left is advocating that we remove the words Nova Scotia from all license plates in the province.

[9:45 a.m.]

JOHN HOLM: I think you're wrong. (Laughter) I think you're very wrong.

DAVID WILSON: I am only kidding, Mr. Chairman. I would like to know more on the cost. When you say there would be a minimal amount that would come about from the striking of a casting die or something, do you know the exact amount? Has there been any research done on how much this would cost the Department of Motor Vehicles?

STEVE WESSEL: I don't know the specific cost. I haven't approached them yet. The cost of the production of a die and artwork to produce the die, I wouldn't hazard a guess, but I would say it would probably be less than \$1,000.

DAVID WILSON: So we'd be looking at a very minimal cost.

STEVE WESSEL: Yes, because that die is just put in a machine and the blanks that are used to produce our license plate right now are not going to change. The blank would just go in and the die comes down and stamps it, then the reflective coating is put on.

THE CHAIR: If I might interject here at this time, we do have a person from Service Nova Scotia. Would it be proper for her to clarify the amount of money that you are talking about at this time?

STEVE WESSEL: That would be excellent if she could.

NANCY CRAGG-NODDIN: The design of the artwork, I believe, would be a relatively minimal cost, and it would appear as if you've done some groundwork here. Depending on the manufacturer's ability to recreate this image if it's in digital format it is indeed very minimal, in terms of the cost, to produce a design. There are issues around the number of colours on a plate which will affect the production costs. When I look at this one, the flag gives me some cause for concern in terms of replicating these plates. That would have to be discussed with the manufacturer.

DAVID WILSON: Excuse me, Nancy, you have a plate now in Nova Scotia that is two colours, so the cost for three colours in this case would be a lot more? Or you don't know?

NANCY CRAGG-NODDIN: I would have to find that out. This looks like a silkscreened image, it's not raised, so that might make the cost somewhat minimized rather than a raised image. The other issue that might affect the cost of this is you hinted that there would be thousands of possible applicants for these plates. If they replace their plates at time of renewal, generally these would be on passenger vehicles on a two year cycle; typically a plate is on a car for a much longer period of time, up to eight years. I don't know how many veterans would meet this definition in Nova Scotia, but that would certainly speed up the

replacement cycle of plates if these were in demand, and I expect that they would be. However, the more plates that are produced, the smaller the cost. We would have to do some homework to really determine the cost impact of this.

JOHN HOLM: Obviously the cost when one renews one's registration or you get a new plate, what you pay doesn't reflect the cost of that piece of metal you are putting on the back. Do you know what the cost is, approximately, for the production of a single plate right now?

NANCY CRAGG-NODDIN: About \$2.50 for the standard passenger vehicle plate with the Bluenose.

DAVID WILSON: I'll ask the members of the Legion here, but I don't think you're submitting this design and saying it's this or nothing else.

STEVE WESSEL: No. We are suggesting that this design has been accepted by the members of the Royal Canadian Legion across the province.

DAVID WILSON: But if you were looking at entering into negotiations, which we hope you will, with Service Nova Scotia or the Department of Motor Vehicles, then there is a possibility of looking at something similar to what firefighters have, where there are only two colours, Nancy, on that license plate, but there is still a designation that recognizes you as veterans or whatever the case may be. So you are open to negotiations on the design itself, right?

STEVE WESSEL: Yes, definitely. We assumed that we wouldn't just be able to go in and say that this is what we want. Everything is negotiable, but I find it hard to understand. We kept with the Nova Scotia colours, other than the colour of the flag itself, which we pretty much can't change.

THE CHAIR: In order to keep the sequence, Mr. Chipman had a question. Is this in relation to Ms. Noddin or is it something else? Mr. Pye wants to ask a question of Ms. Noddin.

JERRY PYE: The only thing I would say is that I don't see this as being a major cost. The embossing of the Canadian flag and the numbers may be an additional cost, but that is the only initial cost, I should say, that would take place there because once the die is cast, then it is there forever and a time. The major concern I do have is with respect to the Nunavut crest, I believe, and the 75 crest. There is more than one colour in that. There is actually yellow, red and blue.

STEVE WESSEL: Sorry, Mr. Pye. The only presentation of the plate itself - it did say it is just a proposal at the bottom. Our 75th Anniversary Legion pin is just included on there for the 75th Anniversary of the Legion.

JERRY PYE: Sorry. I'm glad that that is clarified.

STEVE WESSEL: The plate itself is just within the blue rectangle.

JERRY PYE: Then I don't see a major problem. It is one additional colour and when you do these in volumes in the profession, the initial cost is just the set-up cost and everything there and after goes forward. I agree with Mr. Wessel that this is not a major cost item.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chipman.

FRANK CHIPMAN: Mr. Chairman, I just had a couple of questions. Your definition of a veteran says post-war-time ally. So basically, a U.S. citizen who served in the Vietnam War or the Gulf War who is residing in Canada could apply for a plate if they are living here, or any other war, because you have wartime allies.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: You have to serve in the Forces of Canada.

FRANK CHIPMAN: Or its wartime allies. I am just thinking of the Gulf War, the Vietnam War or the . . .

STEVE WESSEL: A U.S. citizen residing in Canada right now can apply for application to the Royal Canadian Legion as well.

FRANK CHIPMAN: I realize that, but it was just included in there and I was questioning it. You are not looking for free plates. You are willing to pay a fee.

STEVE WESSEL: Definitely.

FRANK CHIPMAN: And it is not going to include the full membership. It will just be those that fall under - because you have associate memberships and full members.

STEVE WESSEL: That's right.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I appreciate this. It is a very good idea. I am just wondering, I agree with the sentiments that were raised by Mr. Holm here, that basically most people would very much like this license plate or something. It doesn't necessarily have to look exactly like this, but a license plate that is recognized as saying this person had something to do with the Armed Forces. Basically though, of course, it would not be forced. Most people would want one, but some people would not. They just don't want to be recognized or anything like this. We are not going to force this on them. If you are a veteran or in the Armed Forces now, you don't have to have one. You can just choose to have one.

STEVE WESSEL: That's right, sir.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I wonder, it is past the provincial convention, but have you possibly just sent this out to 120 Legions and also some bases where the commander could decide how to poll the people in his or her base on exactly what they would like, how many would buy and things like this and with a deadline? Have you ever taken that forward to the Legions and the bases?

STEVE WESSEL: We have gone out to all the 120 Legions across Nova Scotia and asked their acceptance of this. We have never asked specifically, all right, you do accept it, but how many in your specific area would actually go out and buy it? We haven't asked that question. But not only is it just open to the members of the Royal Canadian Legion, because we do have a lot of veterans and serving Canadian Forces personnel who are not members of the Royal Canadian Legion at this time and this would also be available to them. So the numbers increase exponentially.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Certainly, with estimates and things, it might be wise - it doesn't mean they have to get them, but just a show of hands with your group, how many would be interested in this and then we could get a better cost on it, maybe.

STEVE WESSEL: If we could get some sort of reassurance, either through this committee or through Service Nova Scotia, that this is a viable project, we could actually go out to the Canadian Forces bases, as well, informing them of the project. But I wouldn't want to do that prior to actually . . .

JOHN CHATAWAY: Basically, if you could - maybe first if you sent the letter out to set the deadline. We have to have your response by such and such a date, or the base or whatever, and maybe give them two or three choices. This is choice a, choice b and choice c, that sort of thing. But you have to cost it out. I think it would be very meaningful. The government, basically, as far as I see it, wants to do what many people want. We are talking about the cost, which is not going to be way out of line. But basically get to more in depth of exactly what people will think about it, I think it would be very wise if that is considered.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Gaudet.

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, I think, from what I have been hearing here, everyone around here at this committee meeting certainly agrees that recognition should be offered to our veterans in Nova Scotia. I would like to make a motion that the Royal Canadian Legion make a formal request to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for a veteran's license plate. If there is any support that we can provide as a committee to their request, we should certainly do a follow-up with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Holm.

JOHN HOLM: If I could, on Mr. Gaudet's motion. I think that your motion was that the Legion should make a formal request. I guess, and I mean this as a friendly amendment because I was thinking along the same lines. I think everybody here, as committee members, certainly are supportive of what is being proposed. Maybe it would be more appropriate, instead of asking the Legion to make the proposal, because they really have already done that here with presentations to this committee, maybe you would be agreeable to amend your motion so that it would be asking that the presentation be forwarded to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations with the request that he ask the appropriate staff within his department to contact the Legion to determine the feasibility of establishing such a plate.

Right now, the command has come forward and they have made the presentation to us. Now, maybe, really it is up to us to get the government to respond to the request that they have made, rather than asking them to go around and try to get a meeting with the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, because they have already done that through us.

[10:00 a.m.]

WAYNE GAUDET: Mr. Chairman, I am kind of confused. Is it our job basically to go see the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to put this formal request in front of him and his staff to more or less do a follow-up, or is it for us to support this initiative from the Royal Canadian Legion? Maybe if you could provide us with a little bit of direction here, please.

THE CHAIR: Our position is to support the Provincial Command with their request for the license plate and we can do this by letter to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

JOHN HOLM: You're not the first person who is confused when I speak about what I am trying to say. (Interruption) It happens to a lot of people a lot of the time. I thought that what I was proposing was really doing just what you said, indicating our support for the presentation. But just taking it a step further, because we would be supporting it by sending it on to the minister, and we're showing additional support by saying that we would like Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to respond to this request and do an action to actually set up the meetings to try to see if they can't advance the process to the next stage.

THE CHAIR: If I may, today we are honoured to have two members from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations; also with their response to us we can observe at that time what their position is on this because we already have people here. It seems favourable for them to be here at this time. To have other meetings needlessly at this time, do you really think we need them? We'll put this proposal ahead.

JOHN HOLM: With respect, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that we have representatives from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations here but they certainly cannot on their own

make those kinds of decisions. Those decisions and how we advance from this stage are made from the higher-ups and you can't get any higher up than the minister. All I am saying, in terms of what I am proposing is, let's go to the top, let's have the instructions come from the top. We can't give directions to the staff. We don't have that authority. They could take back this request, and so by this motion we could be asking that they take it back, because they can't on their own say that we're going to meet and that we're going to determine whether it is or isn't viable. They're going to have to be given that instruction from their boss to hold such a meeting and to determine the viability of developing such a plate. That's all I am suggesting. I am not trying to talk about any needless meetings because there are a lot of questions that still have to be answered and that can only be done by future consultation.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Holm, do you have a motion?

JOHN HOLM: No, I was supporting the motion of Mr. Gaudet and I was wondering if you might be willing by way of a friendly amendment to forward this on to the minister with the request that the minister take the next responsibility for the next step to try to advance this a little further. That's all I am saying, and it's in full support. I am not trying to argue against Mr. Gaudet's motion because I think it's a good motion.

WAYNE GAUDET: I think the committee agrees that this should be forwarded to the minister responsible for consumer services. The question is, who should do the initial contact? Is it the responsibility of this committee to forward this presentation over to the minister or is it our responsibility to support this initiative brought by the Royal Canadian Legion?

THE CHAIR: What is usually done, my observation in the past, in the two years as Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, is that we support their presentation and then we forward their submission over to the minister for action.

WAYNE GAUDET: I will amend my motion. My motion is for the members of this committee to forward the presentation made by the Royal Canadian Legion to the minister responsible for business services and request that the minister's office does a follow-up with the Royal Canadian Legion with regard to this proposal.

JOHN HOLM: I second that.

THE CHAIR: We have the motion, we have a seconder. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

If I might ask something and I know the answer to it, but maybe there are some people around the table who know the answer. Could you explain why they have Nova Scotia/Nunavut, why Nunavut is part of the Nova Scotia Provincial Command?

JERRY PYE: He explained that at the start.

THE CHAIR: Oh, did he?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: It's the second last paragraph on that first page. The reason for it is in the last paragraph.

DAVID WILSON: I think it's because the Speaker of the Nunavut Legislature is from Glace Bay.

THE CHAIR: It was my understanding that they attempted to join the Quebec Legions first and they were rejected. You are right about that, the Speaker is from Glace Bay, and I have met him.

JOHN HOLM: I think it might also have something to do that there are close ties between Nova Scotia and Nunavut. Mr. Hatcher could explain better than I, the Nunavut stone in the cenotaph out in Sackville which was laid a couple of years ago. It's a very unique cenotaph, we have stones from all around the world and every province and territory in Canada where men and women from our forces were from, and fought and died. If people haven't visited that cenotaph, it's just as you turn into Lower Sackville, go out and visit it. It's very unique. The stone from Nunavut was laid in a ceremony about two years ago.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: The one thing about amalgamation is that it won't allow us to have the largest membership in Canada, but it's going to allow us to have the largest territory, from one end of the country to the other.

THE CHAIR: Before we go on to the next presentation, I believe Mr. Chipman has a question.

FRANK CHIPMAN: Just something I am just going to throw at you. I don't know what your membership is, is your membership decreasing or declining?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: We're in the fortunate position in Nova Scotia that through the work of Clarence Dawe, our Past President, we have been able to hold our line on membership, and the last four years in Canada we won the top award for membership. We are putting a drive on this year, a special drive for members. It's open now that any citizen in Canada can become a member. They have sort of a two year waiting period, they can attend meetings, participate in all the functions but they can't vote or hold office. Once they've been in the Legion for two years and have shown to the Legion that they are interested, then they can become a full pledged member. So, you might as well say the door is wide open right now for membership. To answer your question, if you're referring to all of Canada, it is dropping, the membership is dropping, but in Nova Scotia we are managing to hold our own.

FRANK CHIPMAN: What I was leading to, and as I said it's just a suggestion, it may be something you might want to look at. Firefighters have to belong to fire departments to receive their plates and farmers and fishermen have to belong to an organization - the Federation of Agriculture with farmers - in order to get their plates; it might be something that you might want to look at. It would certainly be a benefit to increase your membership if the requirement to get these plates would be also a requirement to belong to the Royal Canadian Legion. It might boost your membership and boost your funding.

VIC BARNES: Sounds like a good idea. (Laughter)

FRANK CHIPMAN: I will just throw it out there.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: The one thing about this license plate, you really don't have to be a member of the Legion to get it. As long as you're a veteran and qualify under that, but it is a point that could probably lead to - especially with the veterans who are now serving.

FRANK CHIPMAN: You probably get dormant memberships who would come back, and I am just thinking of past members of the Canadian Armed Forces and there are probably veterans out there who don't belong to the Legion now. It would be a way to get some stimulation back in.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: The biggest reason for our decrease in membership is the fact that our World War II veterans and our Korean veterans are reaching that age now where they are passing. Our Legion magazine that comes out every two months or so, in one particular month the magazine is devoted to just the names, there are that many across Canada. It's scary. So far, we've been fortunate enough, and hopefully under Clarence's guidance we will increase the membership this year and win the trophy again.

FRANK CHIPMAN: And the other point, I guess, is you could almost act as a screening process for anyone who had proof that they were a member of the Armed Forces?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: That's right, yes.

FRANK CHIPMAN: You could be the governing body.

THE CHAIR: I believe we have another presentation.

VIC BARNES: Yes, sir. Our next speaker is Clarence Dawe, the Immediate Past President.

CLARENCE DAWE: Thank you, Comrade Vic. Mr. Chairman and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee, first of all, I apologize for not having a copy of my remarks because I had them with me and I was up in Iqaluit, in Nunavut, for Remembrance Day

Ceremonies. I just got back to Sydney and I had to boot it down here by car and I didn't arrive here until late last night.

The problem I would like to bring before this committee again is one of our petty beefs that we've been having with the Nova Scotia Government, the VLT machines. I would like to give you the present situation with our VLTs that are in our branches. I would like to clarify the point of our share of the take in that the lottery people keep insinuating we receive 21.4 per cent of the take and the government gets 79 per cent. Well, if you look at who pays the bills and the expenses of these machines, you will see that the scale is tipping in favour of the province, that we do not receive our fair share.

They're saying 21.4 per cent is our take, but when you put in the factor that we had to pay to put in the computer line and pay for that monthly, we have to have a person in our branches who replaces the paper in the video machines, does the paperwork, the rolling of the coins and deposits them in the bank for the government to take their share, we have to do all that and in reality when you look at it, our share of the take is really only around 10 per cent because the government gets their 79 per cent. There's no doubt about it. That goes in and they take their 79 per cent of the coins that are raised, but we have to pay all the bills and this goes on monthly.

Why we are bringing this up to you again is because this is constantly brought to our attention by our branches throughout Nova Scotia. They are always after us, well, bring this to the government and see if you can get a fairer share for us. Well, we've been doing it. We've been doing it since I've been on this committee and we just want to bring it back to you and they always state to us that before the government took over the VLT machines, we had the grey machines, the ones that the government said were illegal. When we were under that system, we were getting 60/40. We were getting 40 per cent of the take which was a lot better to us than what we're receiving right now, 10 per cent, and one doesn't have to be a math scholar to figure out the percentages when you're only getting 10 per cent and you see in the lotto reports the amount of money that is taken in by the government from these machines. They're going to be the fat cats and we are the lean ones.

Another part of our problem pertains to the lotto people and if you look at this chart, this was sent out to us after the fact of when it was done and, again, it's another cut into the revenues that our branches receive. If you look at the number of tickets from the old system up to the new, we lost 50 tickets in a batch. The revenue drops by \$25. The cost is the same, \$200, but the prize payouts are dropped again, our net return is down, and our profit margin again drops by 19.16 per cent. Our branches are saying, well, how could you let this happen? Well, we were not consulted. This was sent out to us at the same time it was sent to our branches and it's a done deal here and although the Royal Canadian Legion figured there should be some discussion before any changes are made, we're not asked for any input. They just take what they say they're going to take and that's it.

We wish to make it known to the government that in future any discussions pertaining to the VLTs, or the other lottos, that they bring the Legion into it before this is done. We, the officers of the Command, have to bear the brickbat from our branches when they say you're not looking after us and how come you let them do this - didn't you make a presentation? - but we haven't been asked to make any presentation with the lotto people.

We've asked that this committee, in discussions with the Minister of Finance, say to the lotto people, in future when you have any dealings with your lotto and your VLTs, and if they're going to make some adjustments, please let the Legion Command officers address the issue before people get it first and say, well, again you're doing nothing. You members of the committee can remember when the past three times I've been before this committee, that has been our presentation. We've been asking for a fairer shake on the VLTs.

THE CHAIR: Excuse the pun, but it seems to be an ongoing battle.

[10:15 a.m.]

CLARENCE DAWE: Well, that's what our membership keeps telling us so we have to keep bringing this forward.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I believe it was about a year and a half ago we met with the Minister of Finance?

CLARENCE DAWE: Right, yes.

THE CHAIR: Anyway, I am going to open up the floor for questioning. I see a newcomer to our committee, Mark Parent, the member for Kings North, has joined us and he has been raising his hand for the first question. Go ahead.

MARK PARENT: I deeply apologize for being late, but I wanted to ask you a question following up on that because I had understood that the Legion Command was going to be notified and asked for their response to any sort of changes that were being considered. That has not been done you're telling me?

CLARENCE DAWE: No. We got this same readout that our branches received at the same time. There was no discussion.

MARK PARENT: That wasn't what was supposed to happen, I can assure you. Anyway, thank you, sorry.

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, perhaps you could fill the rest of us in on what was supposed to happen.

MARK PARENT: They were supposed to have discussions with the Legion Command.

DAVID WILSON: Who was?

MARK PARENT: Any changes that are happening with the VLTs are supposed to be discussed with the Legion Command. That's what we decided as a committee, didn't we? (Interruption)

JOHN HOLM: That's what we requested.

DAVID WILSON: A request, but certainly we can't decide on behalf of Atlantic Loto. I don't think we did.

MARK PARENT: No, but any changes that we are planning as a government, isn't that what we decided as a committee? Is that the recommendation we made? Maybe I am getting mixed up.

THE CHAIR: We are a committee that makes recommendations and we met with the Minister of Finance last time, the Provincial Command and I was also present at that meeting. We are not the government.

MARK PARENT: No, but did he not accept our recommendation, I thought?

THE CHAIR: I'm not sure. Did you get a letter last time, Mr. Dawe, from the Minister of Finance after that meeting or what transpired after?

CLARENCE DAWE: He did tell us at the last meeting I went to that he was going to consult with the lotto people and get their facts, and some of the facts I just gave you people here this morning, but we haven't had a reply back on it yet.

MARK PARENT: Okay, I'm sorry, I jumped ahead.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I didn't know coming in last gave you the opportunity to pose the first question. I didn't know that at all. I thought it was a matter of introduction or I would come in last quite frequently maybe. However, Mr. Chairman, the first time that the Legion was before us - we want to make this clear - was because there was not enough revenue being generated through the VLTs and the Lottery Corporation was considering extracting a number of VLT machines or shutting down a number of VLT machines from the Legion. Then this committee decided that on the face value of that we would write a letter explaining that this was a source of revenue to the Legions and that the Legions ought to be given special consideration. At that particular time there was consideration given to the Legion in that no VLT machines have been removed from any of the Legion facilities across Nova Scotia. That's the very first presentation that came forward.

I am interested to hear that the Legion is concerned with respect to the reduced cuts from its share of the revenues from VLTs, because remember approximately about a year and a half ago the proprietors of all VLTs within their facilities received a 5 per cent cut; that was the result of a decision by the Lottery Corporation. You used to get 26 per cent, I believe, and then you were cut down to 21.4 per cent, as you have stated. Now the unfortunate part of it is that the proprietor assumes the cost of the operation, of all the maintenance and repairs and the computerization and the installation of the rolls that are going in the machines, the tickets that go in the machines and so on.

My concern is, that you say you are generating revenue of 10 per cent after those expenditures. How much revenue are you generating? Are you able to tell us that, per individual Legion and as an overall generated source of revenue to the Legion, can you tell us that? The other concern I have is that if in fact you have had correspondence with the Lottery Corporation on this issue, have you gone to the Gaming Foundation and asked the Gaming Foundation for any funding or money to assist the Legions with respect to their operations as well? There are a number of questions here: one, can you tell me the amount of revenue; two, can you tell me if you do have correspondence that has gone to the Lottery Corporation on behalf of the Legions, and if this committee can be provided with that; and three, have you made any approaches to the Gaming Foundation for funding and assistance?

CLARENCE DAWE: Number one, we don't have the report on every branch per se, but if that was necessary we could get the branches that have the VLTs to give us that information for this committee. Your second part was . . .

JERRY PYE: Have you approached the Gaming Foundation?

CLARENCE DAWE: We have had meetings with the Gaming Commission, and they always tell us the buck stops with the Minister of Finance, that's who we have to bring it to. We came to you in our previous presentations, and you people have supported us, and we did have a meeting with the minister afterwards.

JERRY PYE: And finally, with respect to my last question, with respect to your bingos, I know some of your Legions, not all of them but some of them have bingo operations, and reading the last report that came from gambling in Nova Scotia reported, shows that bingo operations, overall, are down some 16 per cent. I am wondering if your bingo operations are down as well. That is a direct result, in my opinion, of the installation of VLTs, which are competing with those dollars.

CLARENCE DAWE: Overall, all of our branches have suffered. Our sales of liquor have dropped, the bingos have dropped, and another part that Comrade Hatcher is going to be discussing, the cost of the fire marshal's report that put our branches in quite an uproar. My own branch personally, it costs us \$270,000 to renovate it, to bring it up to the Fire Code just

to run a little bingo. We have a lot of branches that are on the brink of collapsing with these heavy renovations. They have to be done right now, right away, according to the fire marshal.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, finally, if Comrade Dawe could provide me or the committee, if the committee's interested, with the financial information with respect to the projected revenues that you receive from the bingo operations and the gambling operations, and possibly if you could provide that from individual Legions, as well, it might be appropriate.

CLARENCE DAWE: We can do our best for that, yes.

JERRY PYE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr. Dawe. We have another question from Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, I am very interested in why the Minister of Finance hasn't replied to the Legion on this issue. As Clarence has said - I have been on this committee for well over two years, and Clarence this is about your third presentation. I'm getting sick of hearing you talk about VLTs. (Laughter)

CLARENCE DAWE: I'm sick of talking about them.

DAVID WILSON: And I meant that in a good way.

If you met, Mr. Chairman, with the Legion, with the Finance Minister and the undertaking was for the Finance Minister to get back to the Legion after he had talked with lottery officials, then if that hasn't been done, I would be very interested in finding out - and I think so would other members of this committee - why that wasn't done, and why the Finance Minister has not replied and what, if anything, he is doing on this issue. I think he should report back to this committee.

THE CHAIR: Are you making a motion at this time?

DAVID WILSON: I will make a motion to that effect, that we request of the Finance Minister, whether it be in writing or whatever the case may be, that he provide us with an explanation of what he has done to date, what his department has done to date, regarding the issue of VLT machines in Legions across this province, and that we would like to be brought up to date as to where that stands right now.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Mr. Chataway, did you want to speak to the motion?

JOHN CHATAWAY: No, I would just like to ask a question. The question is . . .

THE CHAIR: The motion is on the floor.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I realize this, and I would like to get more information before I vote on the motion.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make an amendment to the motion?

JOHN CHATAWAY: I would just like to ask Mr. Dawe a question. When did you last present these figures, et cetera, to the Minister of Finance or the people who are conducting that? Have you ever had a conversation . . .

CLARENCE DAWE: We had a presentation to the Minister of Finance regarding the VLTs.

JOHN CHATAWAY: When was this?

CLARENCE DAWE: Over a year ago. Actually we had a meeting with this committee, we had an appointment with the minister, and . . .

JOHN CHATAWAY: These are the same figures, they have not changed since that meeting?

CLARENCE DAWE: Those figures you have in your hands, sir, we just received them last week.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Well, I would think it would be very wise to request somebody from the Gaming Commission or something like that, or the minister if he's available, at least sit down and present this viewpoint to them to see what reaction they have, basically to get more depth on it. If they are not aware of your very great concerns, then they are not going to do anything. Once you tell them your concerns, I would think they could be worked out. Everybody knows the Legions are very important buildings in Nova Scotia and certainly deserve everything that can be done. The first thing is to request, and I would support a motion saying we should sit down with the foundation and then discuss these figures.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chataway, we have a motion on the floor.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Repeat the motion, please.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson, for . . .

DAVID WILSON: Word for word?

THE CHAIR: . . . the benefit of Mr. Chataway, would you mind repeating the motion?

DAVID WILSON: To the effect - I can't repeat it word for word . . .

THE CHAIR: That's okay.

DAVID WILSON: . . . that we contact the Minister of Finance and his department and ask the minister to explain to this committee, after having already met with the Legion and our . . .

JOHN CHATAWAY: This is a new thing. It's only been a week out. It's a new . . .

DAVID WILSON: No, it's not new. They've already met, they met with the chairman of our committee.

THE CHAIR: Rather than getting in a discussion . . .

DAVID WILSON: I didn't start the discussion, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Anyway, rather than getting in a discussion . . .

DAVID WILSON: There is a motion on the floor.

THE CHAIR: Stick to the motion.

JOHN CHATAWAY: The motion being . . .

DAVID WILSON: With all due respect, Mr. Member, when you're named the chairman, I will answer to you.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion there, Mr. Wilson. Please repeat the motion as closely as possible.

DAVID WILSON: If the member would still like the floor, I'll be glad to give it to him.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Mr. Chairman, I would very much like the motion repeated as best as the member can.

DAVID WILSON: If he'd be quiet, I'd repeat it.

THE CHAIR: That's what we're doing.

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, the motion was that the Minister of Finance be contacted and asked why he has not replied to the request from the Legion, and from yourself after that meeting, as to what's being done and an update on the status of the VLT machines in Legions across this province, and as to where they stand right now with their request for the

Minister of Finance to look into this matter with the Atlantic Lottery Commission - that is somewhat to the effect of what I said, anyway I think Jerry seconded it.

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

The motion is carried.

I believe we have one more presentation.

VIC BARNES: Yes, I would like to introduce Jack Hatcher. He is going to speak - it seems sometimes that some people are trying to shut our Legions down, and we are continually fighting to keep them going, so today Jack Hatcher will speak on that.

[10:30 a.m.]

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of one of the problems that we are experiencing in our branches across Nova Scotia. Due to the fact that our branches hold bingos and serve meals for functions, they have come under the scrutiny of the officers of the provincial fire marshal and the building inspector for annual inspections, and rightfully so. In some cases these departments have approached branches with very large lists of repairs that they state will be required prior to a new licence being issued for that branch to continue its operation.

Unfortunately, in some cases, this has placed a very large burden on the branch and has required some to approach local financial institutions to borrow sufficient funds to accomplish the repairs as directed by the inspector. In some cases, this has resulted in the branch having to borrow anywhere from \$10,000 to \$250,000. Some branches are now feeling the crunch with this additional debt and are on the verge of being forced to close their doors. If the inspector from either department had informed the branch of the necessary changes to the building and provided the branch with sufficient time to complete the required repairs as per the Building and Fire Codes, the branches would not be in the position of having to close their doors.

For example, we would like to suggest that the inspector's office provide the branch with a list of repairs in order of priority of completion and that the branch be given sufficient time to complete the repairs annually. It must be clearly understood by all parties that these repairs could take up to five years or more to complete. However, with the inspector and the branch working closely together, the repairs could be completed in accordance with the safety and security regulations and in order of priority.

Ladies and gentlemen, we respectfully request that the Fire Marshal's Office and building inspectors of the province be requested to provide the Royal Canadian Legion branches with sufficient time to complete the necessary repairs that they discover without

undue financial burden. I would just like to expand on that a little bit, ladies and gentlemen; we are not trying to get away with bringing our buildings up to code. It seems like over the last two years we have had 20-odd branches that have been hit with major repairs. They have gone for years, every year getting a clean bill of health with some minor repairs to be done, and those repairs have been done. All of sudden, two years ago, they came in and said we want walls rebuilt, we want this material taken out and while you are at it, we want your electrical upgraded to code and we want your washrooms upgraded to code, and you have two months to do it.

In some cases, ladies and gentlemen, branches just cannot do that. They just do not have the funds to do it. We can't figure out why, all of a sudden, they are hitting the Legion branches. As Comrade Dawe alluded to earlier, his branch was one of them and it caused major problems with that branch, in particular. And it is going all across the province: Bedford was hit with it, Waverley was hit with it, I think five or six branches in Cape Breton were hit with it.

All we are asking is that somebody get to the fire marshal and the other inspectors that are going out and ask them to take it easy. Yes, tell them what they need to be brought up to code, but don't give them two months to do it. They are going back to the licensing authorities and telling them this and, of course, the licensing authorities are coming back out and saying, when you bring your building to code, we will give you a licence. Our bingos are gone, our kitchens are gone; the whole works.

That is my presentation, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for your time.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that presentation. I will open the floor up to Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I must say, Comrade Hatcher, that is going to be the first time that I am going to have difficulty in accepting a report, simply because I don't profess to be an expert in the field of upgrading with respect to the fire marshal's reports. I like to assume that the fire marshal and his or her department have taken the appropriate action for good cause and for legitimate reason, particularly when, in fact, a facility is housing x number of people.

My concern is the onus of liability. If in fact there is a recommendation from this committee with respect to creating a laxing of the regulations or the required, specified time to repair a facility to accommodate the interest of the organization, then I have some difficulty. As I have said earlier, I am not an expert in this field, but I wonder who assumes the liability should a catastrophe occur and cause the death of a number of individuals as a result of not meeting code or regulation and that it is in the findings of an insurance policy or something that comes forward.

So you can see where I'm at with respect to that. I have continuously relied upon, in my career as a politician, the experts in the field to provide us with that kind of information. I'm sure that the experts in the field, Mr. Chairman, have given very serious consideration,

before they would shut an operation down, as to what needs are required to meet the minimum standards. So I have some very serious difficulty. If the Legion is prepared to put in writing that they are going to assume the liability, then there might be a reason for movement or a way that we can flex some muscle. But even under those circumstances, I would like to see the reports of the Fire Marshal's Office as well as legitimacy from the Legion with respect to protecting its interest. That's where I stand on this one.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chipman.

FRANK CHIPMAN: You mentioned you wonder where all these recommendations come from. I think what I have heard, and what we hear over and over again - it is because of Westray, and we all know what happened there. We won't point any fingers, but anyway. I guess my concern is if there is something that is outstanding, if you have a leaky propane valve in your kitchen where you are cooking and people are around there smoking, you are going to repair that automatically. I mean, you're looking at something that's immediate and is life-threatening; you are going to repair that. You are looking at something that is not as - could you give me an example of something that you feel could be put off for five years?

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, if I may address that, what has happened is it seems like over the years, we have got a clean bill of health every year with, as I said, minor adjustments that we have had to make in our buildings. We certainly do not want to take a fire marshal's report and say, well, we are not going to do that or we don't want to do that just for the sake of not doing it, but it seems like it is just the last two years that they have been going in, Legion after Legion, and within months they will hit four or five Legions. They give them this long list that has to be done and it has to be done before their licence is renewed.

All we are saying is, please, we know we have to bring our building up to code now that you have given us this list. Can you extend the time element in here? Can we get our licence so that we can keep going and generate more funds so we can do these repairs? But they are saying no. The licensing authority is saying no, unless the Fire Marshal's Office and the health people say that your building is up to code, we can't give you a licence. But this is all of a sudden. If the building is not up to code, it must not have been up to code last year when they did the inspection. Why didn't they come out that time and say, well, look, you need to bring this up to code or bring that up to code?

FRANK CHIPMAN: I think what it is is that any minor things, any facility that has access to the public, stores or whatever - could you answer a question? - when you mentioned the five years, Mr. Hatcher, I think it was \$298,000 you had to spend. Could you give me an example of something you would put off for five years, because you said in your letter that you would like a five year time period. There are priorities that are life-threatening that you are going to actually have to fix right away, but what type of things, under this \$298,000 of renovations, could you put off for five years?

JACK HATCHER: For instance, renovating washrooms. That could take some time to do, but that is included. You have to bring them up to code, which includes wider doors and wider this and that sort of thing.

FRANK CHIPMAN: The fire marshal said you had to repair the washrooms?

JACK HATCHER: No, the building inspector would do that one.

FRANK CHIPMAN: Right, and maybe that needs to be clarified. If it is something that is through the Fire Marshal's Office, I would assume it would be life-threatening, some type of wiring or faulty chimney, a thing like that. (Interruption)

JACK HATCHER: New ceilings, yes, change all the tile in the ceilings and that sort of thing; wall panelling, take the wall panelling off.

FRANK CHIPMAN: Is that the fire inspector or is that the building inspector?

JACK HATCHER: No, fire, because a lot of the older Legions, as you probably may be aware, had panelling on the walls. Well, that panelling now is not fire retardant and rightfully so, it should be replaced. To come in two months prior to the licence coming up and say we want all your wall panelling and fire retardant gyproc put up and it has to have fire retardant paint put on it and all this stuff, it's costly and yes it has to be done, but all we're asking for is to relax some of the regulations that we can do this over time - I am sure Legions would put it in writing that they will do these repairs in a timely manner.

FRANK CHIPMAN: If you don't have the funding at the time, then you are in difficulty?

JACK HATCHER: Yes, we've had branches that just aren't able to get the funds.

THE CHAIR: If I may ask a question. Would it not be better for the Provincial Command to have a meeting with the fire marshal in regard to this? Have you ever had a meeting with him personally?

VIC BARNES: I can give you an example of what happened out my way a few years ago when I was president of the branch in Kingston. We were faced with one of these, ours was \$60,000 to \$70,000, a good Legion, a big Legion. We didn't have any problem with it. Our problem was they gave us 30 days, all right, and there was a unit that had to be put in over the stove. We could not get the unit in. We ordered it immediately and the electrician came and said look, it is going to take awhile to get this. So it came up to the 30 days and I wrote a letter to the Fire Marshal's Office and to this day I have never received a response, and all we did was ask for a few extra days until that unit arrived. We never got a response. I mean they're

coming in and they're saying do this and then you never see them again until - well, they've changed things now because they've threatened to take our licence, but back then they didn't.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: One of the troubles with our branches is that any money that we make goes back into the community. So at the end of the year the branch doesn't have a heck of a lot left in its fund as a result. It's looking after its obligations to the community, such as the youth and the seniors and so forth, as you know, so as a result we don't have the type of funds to draw from. I have to attend a meeting next Tuesday night in Cape Breton. The branch is going to close. We might have to take the charter away. There is no mortgage on the building and the bank won't even give it a loan. They've had to go out and spend \$60,000 for repairs and they can't meet that commitment now. They continued to build it up. In fact, they had an overdraft on the loan. So, as a result of this, here's a community that needs this building in the worst way because it's the centre in that community; everything goes on in this Legion.

JERRY PYE: You don't have a contingency fund or a building fund set aside in each Legion?

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: No, in this day and age we're just lucky at the end of the year if we have \$100 or \$200 left over. This is the same with the VLTs. Whatever money we make on VLTs goes back into the community. It's not ours to keep. We can't build up a fund, and this is the problem; if we're going to continue to do the work in the communities, the number of man-hours we spend and the amount of money . . .

THE CHAIR: If I may, in regard to this and the inspections and so on - and this is my opinion; I am not speaking for the committee because they can voice their own opinions - I feel this committee is in a precarious position right now and with any requests that you people make and time limits on changing to the - I realize the position you're in, but if we make that a request and something did happen, then of course it would fall back in our laps. I think that maybe we're drifting away from our position and the function as a committee.

FRED MOMBOURQUETTE: Would it be possible, Mr. Chairman, if you made a request to the different departments that they meet with us, we would gladly meet with them. Through your committee, as the member just said, the committee, Vic, we're not as apt to get a response as you are. If you asked them if they would meet with us, we would gladly meet with them at any time.

THE CHAIR: Yes, could I have that put in a motion?

JOHN CHATAWAY: I so move.

MARK PARENT: I will second it.

[10:45 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chataway made the motion and Mr. Parent seconded it. Are you ready for the question? Would all those in favour . . .

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman . . .

THE CHAIR: Go ahead then.

DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman, before you move the motion, I had requested some time to ask some questions. I put my hand up and you recognized me.

THE CHAIR: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: But then I am not in favour of the motion. I would like to ask a few questions if I may. I don't know the code. I don't know if any of us around here do. I don't know the regulations as they pertain to - it's not just Legions, this is happening to charitable organizations across this province because I've run into it in situations back home myself. I don't know what leeway the Fire Marshal's Office has in terms of when they walk in and say this is wrong and that's wrong, do you have 30 days, two months, one year, six months, I don't know how the fire marshal does that. I would suggest that if there are some strict regulations there, he's probably following it to the letter of the law, so to speak, and that there may be, I don't know, some room to manoeuvre in terms of depending on what's wrong with each individual Legion. That's it, I don't know enough to comment. I am concerned, as Mr. Pye suggested and the chairman has suggested, that there is a liability issue there if we take it into our hands. Having said that, I would support the motion as well.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I just realized that I think it's a very good idea to sit down with the Fire Marshal's Office. I am sure that you will be presenting the facts that there are 20 Legions that have been affected and, basically, you don't want to detail every last one, but you really want to know that the fire marshal has to realize what a great difficulty it is. I am sure the fire marshal, whether it be 30 days, or 60 days, or how many days he has, I do not know either, with my good friend across the way, but the thing is they have to bring it up to certain standards and things like this and sometimes the standards do change. Across Canada this is the National Building Code and things have changed, but basically everybody wants to make sure they have a safe building, but they can't do it. Bring those points up, and maybe I am naively optimistic, but the fire marshal will say okay, you guys are talking the right way, let's go in this direction and basically the most important thing is to sit down and have a very good meeting with him, and all the best.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, if I just maybe try to clarify one thing. What we're running into here is that the fire marshal will come in and he'll say this is what I want done, and that's probably 30, 60, 90 days prior to a licence coming up. Then he sends a copy to the licensing authority and the licensing authority will say, well yes, you have 60 days prior to your licence coming due, we can't give you a new licence until you bring it up to this code that the fire marshal or the building inspector has said. So there's where our problem lies. It is not all the fire marshal's fault. We do expect the fire marshal to do his job and tell us where to bring our buildings up to code, it's getting between the fire marshal, the building inspector and the licensing authority. That's where our problem lies.

JOHN CHATAWAY: As an intention to do this, yes, that's good.

THE CHAIR: The motion on the floor is a request from the Provincial Command to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to write a letter to the fire marshal requesting a meeting with the fire marshal with the members of the Provincial Command.

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

The motion is carried.

Is there any other discussion? We're running out of time here.

VIC BARNES: Mr. Chairman, as Chairman of the Committee of Nova Scotia Command, I would just like to express our gratitude and thanks that we were able to meet with this committee, and I am sure that some of the things that went on today are going to be handled the way we want. We are very pleased and happy with it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. It is always a pleasure to have you people in. This will only take a few minutes, if you'll just stay with us. Committee business: Walter Callow Wheelchair Buses organization. There is a question about how much money and what government departments gave money to the Walter Callow Buses. At that time it was suggested there were about three departments, but there was only one department and that was the Department of Transportation and Public Works. They gave a total of \$10,000 towards the new bus, which they have received, and Darlene and I went to their function last week.

On January 17th we have the Juno Beach Centre Association with Mr. Doug Shanks wishing to meet with us. So the next meeting will be January 17, 2002.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

I ask for adjournment.

MARK PARENT: Can I ask one more thing. I spoke to the people at Camp Aldershot about a possible visit and they were quite open to it. So if you would like me to investigate dates - I think it was mentioned after the spring session that we might be interested in going up to Camp Aldershot - I would be happy to do that if the committee so desires.

THE CHAIR: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Yes, January 17th, the Juno Beach Centre Association with Mr. Doug Shanks.

DAVID WILSON: I move that we adjourn.

THE CHAIR: The motion is to adjourn.

We stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:52 a.m.]