

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Committee Room 1

Royal Canadian Legion

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Michel Samson (Chair)
William Langille
Cecil O'Donnell
John Chataway
Jerry Pye
Gordon Gosse
David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)
Harold Theriault
Stephen McNeil

[Stephen McNeil was replaced by Keith Colwell.]
[William Langille was replaced by Brooke Taylor.]
[Gordon Gosse was replaced by William Estabrooks.]

In Attendance:

Mora Stevens
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion:

Victor Barnes
President of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Steve Wessell
Chair of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Tom Waters
Nova Scotia Zone Commander



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEB. 26, 2004

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
Michel Samson

THE CHAIR: Welcome to this morning's Veterans Affairs Committee meeting. I would like to welcome our guests who are here today. I'm wondering if our guests would introduce themselves to the committee members and then we will have the committee members introduce themselves following that. Mr. Barnes.

VICTOR BARNES: I'm Victor Barnes, President of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command of the Royal Canadian Legion.

STEVE WESSELL: Steve Wessell. I'm Chairman of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

JACK HATCHER: Jack Hatcher, Honorary Treasurer of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

TOM WATERS: I'm Tom Waters. I'm the Assistant Editor of The Torch, also Zone Commander for Halifax.

THE CHAIR: Welcome, also, Mr. Waters. I am wondering if committee members would introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Welcome all committee members. We did receive a request from the Legion to come in and make a presentation to us, which we are certainly pleased that we were able to reschedule following last week's significant snowfall here in the Halifax region and other regions of the province. I'm pleased to say Cape Breton was spared in this case, much more rain than snow, but just the same it was quite nasty weather.

The floor, basically, is yours, Mr. Barnes, for your presentation. I believe you wanted to discuss with us some of the youth programs that the Legion is undertaking and I am sure afterwards there will be some questions, some discussion and I believe we have a few matters to deal with after that, but the floor is yours.

VICTOR BARNES: Mr. Chairman, members of the Veterans Affairs Committee, as President of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, I would like to express our gratitude for allowing our committee to meet with you today. We are here today to ask for guidance and assistance for our youth programs. We have three speakers with us today who will speak on four separate youth programs. These programs are the Legion training camp, youth sports, the Call to Remembrance and cadets. I will start this session by speaking on the Legion training camp, then Jack Hatcher will speak on youth sports and our cadet program, then Steve Wessell will speak on the Call to Remembrance Program and then I will make the closing remarks.

So without further ado, the Legion training program. I'm going to give you the background of it as much as I can. In the Fall of 1961, the New Brunswick Command of the Royal Canadian Legion extended to Nova Scotia Command an invitation for 20 students from Nova Scotia to attend their leadership camp. This camp was to be held at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton during the summer of 1962. The results of this 1962 participation were so commendable that Nova Scotia Command requested and were granted permission to send 15 students again in 1963.

Having participated in this program for two successful years and having evaluated the results, it was finally decided that Nova Scotia Command would set up its own leadership training program for an estimated 60 students. The Command looked for 30 girls and 30 boys who would be 15, 16, or 17 years of age during the year of the camp. The student must have completed Grade 10 or Grade 11 and planned to return to school the following year. The first camp was held at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, in the summer of 1964. This camp was so successful that a second was held at the same university in 1965.

In order to have a change of locale, it was agreed that the program should be moved to other areas in the province when, and if, accommodations became available. Subsequently, camps have been held at the Agricultural College in Truro, St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish, and the number of students who now attend the camp is 42 girls and 42 boys.

The purpose of the camp is to offer the student an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Elements of instruction that are provided to these students are: leadership development, problem solving, dance, communication skills, public speaking, theatre, liberal arts, athletic skills, music and drama. This allows the individual to develop public speaking and communication skills, to learn motivational skills, to be able to organize groups to conduct a specific task or pursue a course of action for the benefit of the group.

The ultimate goal of the camp is to help the student develop his or her skills so that he or she will make a potential difference in any team and/or organization in which they may be involved, whether it be school, church, community or whatever. The design of this program has proven that young people involved gain tremendous insight into their own abilities and develop skills which will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Successful candidates from this program have gone on to become successful lawyers, doctors, teachers, and leaders in numerous levels of employment and government.

The students and parents are invited to the branch of the Royal Canadian Legion that sponsored them during the September meeting following the camp where they give a short talk on their time at camp. The parents are also invited to say a few words if they so wish. The students and their parents are also invited to attend the Remembrance Day ceremonies where they can participate in the laying of wreaths and attending the banquet.

The main cost of this camp is covered by Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. However, the local branches contribute towards the total expense by paying a student's registration fee. The branches may also assist in the transportation of the student to and from the camp and a little bit of spending money, but camp is well conducted by eight professional teachers from various schools throughout Nova Scotia who provide instruction and assistance to the 84 students annually. There are also two chaperones on hand throughout the camp. The camp is 10 days in duration and the students are covered by group insurance while in attendance.

In order to attend this camp, students must be recommended by their high school. Final selection is made by the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command Leadership Training Committee and the camp director. Due to the rising cost of this camp and especially the renting of the university facilities, we are having a difficult time meeting the commitments. This camp is unique and the only one in Canada. This year marks the 43rd year of existence.

When I say it's the only one in Canada, the camp in New Brunswick is a sports camp, ours is not.

As I have stated in the above paragraph, we provide instruction in dance, theatre, music and liberal arts, and we have been advised we may be eligible for some funding from the provincial government. One of our major expenditures is the renting of a theatre, which is a vital necessity for these students. The annual cost of renting a theatre for eight days is approximately \$5,000. This is a very significant portion of the annual cost of \$65,000 for this camp. In addition to this, the cost of uniforms, supplies - pens, paper, pencils, bristol board, scissors, glue, markers, ribbons, et cetera - accommodations, food, refreshments - milk, water and pop - medical supplies, sporting equipment, dance equipment - record players, CD players, music, records, CDs, as well as lyrics - water coolers, fridges and numerous other equipment is required for a camp of this magnitude.

We are very proud of the accomplishments of the students who complete this camp, and we are afraid of losing this worthwhile training experience. If we don't get assistance of some kind, this camp cannot continue due to the rising costs of everything in this day and age. Each student is requested to critique the camp on completion, and enclosed are some of their comments from the 2003 camp.

That basically explains the leadership camp. I will now turn it over to Jack Hatcher, who will speak on the sports and cadets.

THE CHAIR: I'm just curious, for committee members' purposes, do you want to wait until the very end for questions, or would you rather deal with them now? Apparently there are different subjects each time. I leave it to the committee's discretion, as to how they wish to deal with this. Are there questions right now that they wish to ask, or shall we wait until the end?

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I think it's appropriate to allow the presenters to present their reports for us.

THE CHAIR: Please continue.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to address our track and field program, if I may. The Royal Canadian Legion track and field program dates back to the early 1950s and has continued yearly since 1957. The present format of the camp was adopted in 1975 and has operated, with improvements, to this date, for the past 29 years.

The camp is six days in duration, plus two days' travel. The cost of this camp ranges in the vicinity of \$450,000, with Nova Scotia's share being \$40,000-plus. Each year the provinces can select up to 38 athletes to attend this camp. In addition, they may send two coaches and four chaperones. In Nova Scotia, this is accomplished at Legion trials in July. Approximately 200 athletes from across Nova Scotia participate in this event. Athletics Nova Scotia organizes these trials and does the actual selections.

In 2003 the meets were held in Kitchener-Waterloo. This was the best year for our athletes. Out of the 38 athletes, 21 were first-year athletes. During the competitions our athletes won 25 medals, and if you want to count the relays, it's 40. That's how I usually do it, because it boosts up our medal count. Athletics Canada doesn't do it that way, they count a relay as one medal. This was our best year since 1991 in Toronto where we won 21 medals, the highlight being Jenna Martins setting a new national record in the 400 metre with a time of 56:21 in the under-15 years, beating an 18-year record set by Olympian Cheryl Allen in 1985. The athletes also accomplished 28 personal bests.

The sportsmanship shown by the Nova Scotia athletes can only be described as overwhelming. These young people not only cheered on their teammates but also other teams. This enthusiasm soon spread throughout the camp, being noted by long-time Legion coaches

and Athletics Canada staff. Postcards received from 30 of our 38 athletes suggested they had experienced the best week of their year, while the remaining used words such as "great" and "fun" to describe the sports meet. The highlight of the games was making new friends. That was emphasized a number of times during the camp.

[9:15 a.m.]

It is worth noting that the majority of Canadian track and field Olympic medal winners in recent years have attended the Royal Canadian Legion track and field camp. During the Los Angeles Olympics all Canadian medal winners in track and field attended this camp.

Gentlemen, before I close I would just like to note that Athletics Canada puts a great emphasis on the Legion track and field. This past year, for the two-day clinic that we put on every year for the athletes, they sent 10 of the top coaches in Canada to help out with that function. In closing, I would like to say that up until the 1996-97 fiscal year, Sport Nova Scotia helped to fund this program and deemed that we no longer qualified for assistance from them. So we've lost that funding. We're in dire need of funds for this program. As I announced to Athletics Nova Scotia last night, this will be the last year to send 38 athletes unless we get extra funding, we will probably have to cut it back to almost half. That's where we stand as far as our track and field program goes. Do you want me to go on with the cadet one, too?

THE CHAIR: Sure, Mr. Hatcher, please continue.

JACK HATCHER: It's a short one, but it's very important. The cadet program within this Command is small, however, it must be counted in our youth programs. In this province our Legion branches sponsor over half of the 90-plus cadet units, and that's a feather in our cap, by far. In addition, our Command sponsors the Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence in this province, making available a medal to a deserving cadet in each unit across the province.

We also make available to each cadet league \$1,000 to offset the costs of programs that advance the well-being of the cadets: i.e. air cadets have an effective speaking competition and the Army cadets have a small rifle shooting program, both of these programs lead to national competitions, and the sea cadets run a bosun whistle leadership program, conducted at their summer camp. The above programs cost this Command approximately \$5,000 annually.

Mr. Chairman, that is my report on the track and field, and the cadets. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Hatcher.

STEVE WESSELL: Mr. Chairman, committee members, good morning. My name, again, is Steve Wessell. I would like to take a few moments of your time to introduce you to

another of our Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command youth programs, Call to Remembrance. The Call to Remembrance Program is an educational quiz program designed for junior high and middle school students in Nova Scotia with a format based on the old Reach for the Top quiz show.

The idea to create this program began in Holland in early 1995 during a Legion Pilgrimage of Remembrance by veterans from Nova Scotia. The veterans were amazed at how knowledgeable the Dutch children were regarding their liberation by Canadian troops during World War II. Upon returning home, these same veterans set in motion the start of this quiz program with covered subject matter based on Canada's participation in World War I, World War II, Korea, and local military history. Topics such as the Gulf War, Afghanistan, NATO and our peacekeeping missions have since been added to the program. This program was first presented in Windsor, Nova Scotia in late 1995, with five schools participating, with students from Grades 8 and 9, although participation in the program is now open to any student enrolled in Grades 7, 8 or 9, or, in the case of a middle school, Grade 6.

Since those first tentative steps in Windsor in 1995, the Call to Remembrance Program has grown to include schools from Yarmouth to Sydney and most places in between. Due to the size of our regional school boards in our province, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command utilizes the schools located in each of our 15 zones to arrive at a regional winner in each zone, with all regional winners advancing to a provincial playoff in May of each year. Prizes, including plaques, certificates and cash are awarded at three levels: gold, silver and bronze levels. The cash prizes are to be used for the betterment of the student body as a whole through the purchase of CD-ROMs, books or educational equipment for the school.

Each school team consists of a maximum of six players, plus a coach, and presently 35 to 40 schools in eight different zones are participating in regional competitions across Nova Scotia. This equates to approximately 200 to 240 students in competition, not including the unknown number who help out at the individual school level.

Many hours of volunteer labour and money are donated by individual Legion branches in each zone across the province, in order to stage a regional competition. For example, each zone must have an organizing committee, they must prepare question packs, organize judges, timekeepers, scorekeepers and a moderator, to mention but a few. Each regional committee could easily spend 500 to 600 volunteer hours preparing for and running a competition, and spend upwards of \$1,200 to \$1,500 on prizes, plaques, certificates, administration, lunches for students, et cetera. If we multiply those figures by a low average of eight of our 15 zones participating on a yearly basis, the Legion expends approximately 4,000 to 4,800 man-hours and \$9,600 to \$12,000 across the province in regional competitions, to help educate our youth.

As I mentioned previously, all of the regional winners are drawn together in May of each year to compete for the provincial championship. Therefore, at the Nova Scotia/Nunavut

Command level of our organization, is our Call to Remembrance provincial committee. The logistics of bringing together 8 to 10 teams from across the province to Halifax, for a two-day competition, requires considerable organization, as you may well imagine.

Our provincial committee expends upwards of 900 to 1,000 man-hours in preparation for each competition. Approximately \$8,000 to \$9,000 is budgeted annually to cover the costs of equipment and repair, rental equipment, venues, administration, food and lodging, et cetera. If we do our math, ladies and gentlemen, the volunteer hours expended and the money invested in this program over the past eight years is considerable, but well worth the educational experience and the knowledge gained by the students who have participated.

I personally have been involved with the Call to Remembrance Program for the past seven years and occasionally I will run into a student who participated years ago. They remember the program, the experiences they enjoyed, the veterans they met, and they're always quick to thank the Royal Canadian Legion for that opportunity. They are usually asking me when we will start a similar competition for the high school students, which they have now graduated to become.

Presently, our Call to Remembrance Program is floundering somewhat and this is despite the fact that the volunteers are still able and the students are still willing to learn and compete. It is simply due to the fact that funding to continue the program is much harder to come by at the branch and at the provincial level, due to the Legion's growing commitments to our veteran and senior communities, and the ever-increasing costs of maintaining a Legion branch, including but not limited to the skyrocketing cost of insurance in Nova Scotia.

We have made great progress in the last eight years with this program and as of last year, our Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Myra Freeman, has pledged the ongoing participation and support of her office, to the continuing development of this program. Also, last year, our Legion's national president pledged that with Nova Scotia's assistance, we would endeavour to introduce this program to students across Canada, through our National Remembrance Committee. I might add that this is a goal that we, here in Nova Scotia, do not shy away from, but our program in Nova Scotia must continue to flourish to accomplish this goal.

As you can see, we have the right program, we have the interest and the co-operation of the students, the Legion has the drive to continue, but all will be for naught if we do not have the funding to continue to develop. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Barnes.

VICTOR BARNES: As you have just heard, we are in dire straits, due to the rising costs of all of our programs and we need assistance as soon as possible. Over the years this Command has taken great pride in the organizing and funding of these four youth programs, at

a cost of approximately \$125,000 per year, as pointed out by Comrades Hatcher, Wessell and myself.

We find we can no longer support these youth programs financially at this level and must ask for assistance outside the Legion. The alternative is to cut back on the number of youths we can support, or cancel the programs. Our youth programs have been in existence for many years and we cannot afford them anymore. It hurts us to have to ask for assistance, as we have always been able to fund our own programs. We are extremely proud of that fact, but we also understand that pride goeth before a fall. Any assistance you can give us will be most appreciated.

Mr. Chairman, committee members, we would like to thank you for this meeting with us today and on behalf of my comrades here today, and the members of the Royal Canadian Legion, we thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you all for your presentation and providing us with typed copies of them, which will certainly be of great benefit to all committee members. Are there any questions from the committee members? I guess we will just go all around.

Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I think everybody is very impressed by the presentations you made because basically, of course, all Legions are run by volunteers and we're looking at four of you right now, that's for sure. It's very important that you're doing this. I think everybody is well aware that Nova Scotia has 3 per cent of Canada's population of our Armed Forces and people doing great work all over the world are about 25 per cent of all the Forces. The best thing is to do what you want to do and you are doing it for the youth and it's very good.

I think you used the figure \$125,000, you would like to have some assistance with. Have you people talked to the Office of Health Promotion, or Sport and Recreation people?

VICTOR BARNES: We have committees formed but we don't know who to talk to and this is why we are basically coming here. We know there are organizations that can assist. We have been told by some of the schools that there are funds out there, especially with the leadership camp, that we should be able to attract; however, we don't know how to go about this and we need some help with this.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Mr. Chairman, I think we could give it. I think it would be very wise for a committee to sit down with Health Promotion, it used to be the Department of Health and now they have two ministers, one is the Minister of Health and there's also a different minister, the Minister of Health Promotion. Basically, many of the things you are doing in these programs certainly should be listened to and that budget has increased over the years, they started off and now I think in five years it is about \$15 million.

You have very good proof that you have a very good product and basically, I would think that would be one of the ways, I don't know if the committee feels the same way but you should certainly do that. I would say ASAP, if that is possible.

The other thing, I think, Mr. Barnes, Victor, you mentioned the various courses. Of course, I'm from a rural riding or it's suburban, or whatever, and I have some very good friends who are farmers. You know, all across Canada, agriculture is only learned because of 4-H, and here, we are basically taking these sports events and things like this. The way we are getting a good team of Canadians, and in Nova Scotia as well, is through these sports events. Certainly, you should go ahead and keep up those programs, my goodness, it would be great.

[9:30 a.m.]

VICTOR BARNES: We love them ourselves. As I was telling you, we have some dedicated people behind these programs but it's getting ludicrous. This year, we faced a \$6,500 increase in just the university fee, that's only for one program, and the rest are going up as well. We have come to the point that we just cannot afford it anymore and we're losing Legions now because of insurance, and everything is hitting us at the same time. The smoking, that's another one that's hitting us as well. We are trying to deal with them one at a time but we thought our youth program was just about the most important program we have right now that we are in dire straits with.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I know there was a reception here at Province House for the Canadian Olympics, with teams from all across Canada. The Nova Scotia team got a prize for being the most improved team, just like you were mentioning, too. A big award was there for 1985, but the Nova Scotia team beat us. Anyway, I don't want to take all the time, but certainly I'm sure that we would like to do whatever we can and the urgency is very apparent.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Colwell.

KEITH COLWELL: Yes, I, too, want to thank you for coming in to see us. I'm a comrade as well and have been for some time. I think the Legion does outstanding work in the community and it's unfortunate that a lot of the community doesn't understand the work the Legion does and the many people they help. I know I've called as an MLA my local Legion a few times for individuals and they've been only too willing to help and have made a major difference to, particularly, seniors in your programs that you have, through your funds there and that is greatly appreciated, I can tell you, by the community as a whole.

It's very disheartening for me to see some of the Legions closing down and some of the other things that are happening. I think we're going seriously backwards when that happens in this country. I believe as politicians that we've got to do everything we can to help you maintain the programs you have and maintain your Legions that are so important and the people who have worked so hard and have done so much for our country, the veterans. But it's very, very

difficult.

These programs that you've described here today, I was aware of a couple of them but not all of them. The cadet organization, I know I've helped on several occasions and made space available for them and that's an excellent program. I know some of the kids who have gone into that who, if they hadn't gone into that would have been in serious trouble with drugs and all kinds of other things. They did go in it and it gave them the discipline they needed. If you look at that as an investment, what the province has saved on that, trying to rehabilitate a child after they've gone the wrong way on the road, it's a fantastic investment you're making.

VICTOR BARNES: We've had a lot of good reports from schools as well with our leadership training camp. They say it's unbelievable how the students act when they return the following year. They've said they're unbelievable. They've said that it helps the whole school. So then everybody wants to go to the camp. We can't take everybody, but we take our 84. We would love to increase it. I think there are 92 schools in the province, we would like to get a student from each school, but that's pretty hard to do. So, we're scrambling to get what we do. But we love the program. I've never, in my born days, met such a dedicated group of teachers that we have doing this for us. They are out of this world. They don't get paid very much, believe you me they don't, but they say they don't do it for the money, they do it for the love of the kids. That's a wonderful thing, as far as I'm concerned.

I will extend an invitation to any and every one of you who would like to come to the passing out of the camp, for this year, which would be July 4th, and if you wish, I can send a letter to each and every one of you giving you an invitation to attend. Myra Freeman has one. She was there last year and I'm hoping she's there again this year. It's pretty nice.

KEITH COLWELL: That would be quite a privilege to go to that actually.

VICTOR BARNES: And you will have dinner as well, supplied by the school, of course, paid for by the Legion.

KEITH COLWELL: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if it would be in order to make a motion that on behalf of our committee we send a letter off to the appropriate ministers, and there have been a couple mentioned here, in support of the Legion's request for funds. I would like to make that motion.

THE CHAIR: I think what we can probably do is, as soon as all the questions are over, maybe have a more detailed discussion at that point on this. I think we've all had experiences with organizations seeking our direction and advice on looking for funds. I think if we all pooled our resources together we might be able to come up with some interesting suggestions here as to how, as a committee, we might be able to assist here and the proper direction of this. We certainly don't want to see the Legion get lost in the abyss of government in looking for funding. So I think maybe after all the questions are done we can discuss that motion in more

detail, but certainly that motion is in order.

Mr. O'Donnell.

CECIL O'DONNELL: Could you tell us what percentage of the overall budget of the Royal Canadian Legion goes towards these youth programs?

VICTOR BARNES: Any idea, Jack?

JACK HATCHER: No, not right off the top of my head but I can certainly get that information for you.

CECIL O'DONNELL: Is each Legion requested to give a certain amount to these programs or is it just volunteer whatever they can come up with?

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, just volunteer whatever they can come up with. We've asked each Legion if a school selects a student to go, they go to the nearest Legion to see if that Legion will support them. If that Legion can't afford to support them, well, if they come to Command we will find a Legion that can. It's to be noted that we don't get very many students from the Halifax-Dartmouth area and I know Jack's branch in Sackville will support four to five students. So, we bring them in from somewhere else and that Legion supports them. We're expanding. I have three Legions in the Valley that will support five students or more and that's pretty nice.

STEVE WESSELL: I might add with regard to the Call to Remembrance, each local branch is asked to contribute towards the funding of the regional competition. Although all the funds with regard to our provincial competition come through our Provincial Command.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Thank you, gentlemen, for your presentation. I just had a thought there regarding the leadership development training camp. Mr. Barnes, you indicated that a theatre is of vital importance to the program. I can understand why it would be very important, but regarding that \$5,000 cost, it seems a bit excessive and I'm curious as to where the camp is going to be held this year and whether or not we might be able to perhaps present another option for the Legion?

VICTOR BARNES: We've just been through all of that. We've been having meetings with Acadia and with Truro. We've selected Truro again this year, even though that theatre is costing us that amount of money. They're giving it to us for half price. We've been able to negotiate that much with them.

BROOKE TAYLOR: The half price being?

VICTOR BARNES: It would cost \$10,000.

BROOKE TAYLOR: So \$5,000 is half price.

VICTOR BARNES: That's half price.

BROOKE TAYLOR: For eight days, that's \$625 a day.

VICTOR BARNES: We need that theatre for eight days and the students use it off and on all night. You've got to understand that at the end of the camp, the last two evenings there are two shows. The students are broken into four groups, each group has to put on a stage show, completely done by themselves. I've been chairman of the camp for seven years and I won't give it up, because I really like it. As president, I was supposed to give it up but I wouldn't. I hope I can stick with it for as long as I am around. You've got to see what these kids do to believe it. You just have to see it to believe it. It blows your mind away, some of the shows that they've put on.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Does the theatre have to be on-site? It's not logistical, practical to travel like a half-hour to . . .

VICTOR BARNES: No, it isn't, no.

BROOKE TAYLOR: And you couldn't have it in like an elementary school that has a stage or anything like that? You're just being practical.

VICTOR BARNES: There you have a travel problem. We like to keep the students on campus. You don't like to get them away, it's pretty hard. We take them out on a big picnic, where they do races and all kinds of things like that. We organize buses to do that and a local Legion set up a big hot dog, hamburgers or whatever have you. Last year they had strawberry shortcake for the kids. It's all part of it. But it has to be in one group.

We were almost on the verge of going back to Acadia. The thing that swung us is that Truro is centrally located for the whole province. If we went back to Acadia, then it takes a five-hour trip for the kids from Sydney to get over to Acadia. Do you understand?

BROOKE TAYLOR: I understand.

VICTOR BARNES: So, we selected and this year, as part of the deal that we struck with them, we have to have a five-year contract. Now, we have stipulated that the five-year contract is fine, with an increase of, I think, 3 per cent each year. However, if we can't afford the program, it's going to be written in that that's it, it's over. Do you understand where I am? We can't commit to five years if in two years we can't afford the program anymore, but then we have to pay them. So, we've written that into the contract, but as I say, it's getting hard.

BROOKE TAYLOR: It sure is.

VICTOR BARNES: That was a \$6,500 increase this year. It just about smeared us.

BROOKE TAYLOR: We should, as well, Mr. Chairman, I believe Mr. Colwell's motion has some merit and we're going to discuss it later but - and I'm being serious here - there may be some programs in Ottawa as well that we may feel compelled to sort of revamp that motion a little bit to maybe go after some federal departments. I'm not sure if there are any sponsorship programs or anything available up there, but there may be an opportunity.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, many have made excellent comments with respect to the contributions that the Canadian Legion provides, not only to Nova Scotia but across the country. Fortunately I have had the opportunity each and every year to, at the end of the summer camp for the sea cadets out at Camp Harris, attend their summer dinner and to watch the individuals who have come through that program, and the comradeship and the relationship to each other and how they're able to work within the community on such a program. I have some knowledge with respect to what the Royal Canadian Legion does and how it participates, particularly around the sea cadet program.

The concern that I do have, though, is a long-standing concern that I know the Legion is looking very hard at attempting to address, and that's the issue with respect to Legion members - the fall in the Legion membership - who in fact pay dues, those dues carry on these particular programs and so on. I don't know if the Legion has actually touched base with the Canadian Armed Forces, because many of the individuals in the Canadian Armed Forces are not necessarily members of the Legion nor do they participate in the Legion because there are a whole host of other interests out there in the community. That said, that's an issue I would like to know if, in fact, the Legion is addressing and how they're addressing it to make every member of the Canadian Armed Forces a member of the Legion by way of dues or something of that nature, or if you can do that, I don't know.

The other issue is with respect to the competing dollars of the province. You know that everybody comes to the province expecting competing dollars, and there is a big demand upon the purse. Having said that, I do know that you said in 1996-97 that prior to that you were receiving funding from Sport Nova Scotia. You didn't indicate how much you were receiving from Sport Nova Scotia, but I do know that, in fact, they had cut your funding off, and that's what you've said.

With respect to the motion that MLA Colwell is going to be bringing forward, there could also be, within that motion, a reconsideration by Sport Nova Scotia to reconsider your application when you reapply to make that application. You can comment on these. The other issue around the rising costs of skyrocketing insurance is a major cost with respect to the

Legions because of the liability factor that the insurance companies want you to compete in. The closing down of some Legions means that's going to be a reduced membership, and also the Legions in the rural areas, because of in-migration to the metro area, are losing their members, so they slide in here leaving those Legions in almost a disastrous situation in order to stay open.

The other thing is with respect to the video lottery machines and the revenues that are generated from the video lottery machines. I can say this clearly, government has gotten into the gambling business, so the Legions, like any other charitable organization out in the community that used to generate revenue from casino nights and those events that they used to put on, can no longer compete with the government, because it's cash upfront and its flow-through money right away.

[9:45 a.m.]

So you do have a difficult environment in which to work in, unlike some 15, 20 years ago, there's absolutely no question about that. I, as a committee member, have to say that I'm looking at a possible way to help you, from this committee, to make sure, and as I think MLA Taylor mentioned as well, that this is not only exclusive to the Government of Nova Scotia but to the federal Government of Canada, tapping in on some funding programs. You're here asking us where you tap into those programs today.

The other issue that I do have is the most important one, and I would like your comment on it because it falls in line with the survival of the Legions, and that is the one that I've previously tapped on, with respect to Legion membership and how one becomes a Legion member, and those who participate in the youth programs, the track and field programs, and the cadet programs, if in fact they have to be family members of people in the Armed Forces or if they can be any citizen of the province, because those will be dollars from all citizens of the province, and how they fit into those programs and how they become a part of it. I've asked you a lot of questions.

VICTOR BARNES: Yes. I'm going to go back to the first one, and I think I will turn it over to the PR chairman, I think he has the answer pretty pat.

STEVE WESSELL: Well, I hope I have your answer, Mr. Pye. With regard to membership, as you well know our membership is now basically open. Any Canadian citizen who would like to join the Legion can, putting it bluntly. With regard to our military, ever since we've had our Dominion Convention in the year 2000 in Halifax - we had Legion members from all across Canada coming in - our relationship with our local military has grown considerably. They helped us out a lot with regard to that convention, with regard to parades and facilities, venues for our convention.

Since then we have developed a new situation with regard to our military, it's called the

Military Member at Large Program, where serving in the military across Canada can become almost like a floating member of the Legion. They're not necessarily tied down to one Legion branch where they pay their dues. Because of our military moving around so much, hopefully we're thinking that during their military time they can visit branches across Canada as a military member at large, and then once they've either maybe retired or settled down in a certain area they can join a certain branch. We've made that option available to our military members.

Locally, we support our military through our DND Family Days, which is every year. We have a large participation, financially as well as PR-wise, with regard to the DND Family Days. We have a booth down there where we give out as much information as we possibly can, to our military families. We participate financially, as I said, to the tune of approximately \$5,000 a year to that program. We also help, financially, sponsorship of DND's Falls Lake facility. We're trying as hard as we can as a Legion to get our military involved from their youngest, not just the retired members but all members of the military.

JERRY PYE: Are Legion membership dues mandatory for Armed Forces personnel?

STEVE WESSELL: Mandatory, whether you're a Legion member or not?

JERRY PYE: Yes, whether you're a Legion member or . . .

STEVE WESSELL: No.

JERRY PYE: . . . just a member of the Armed Forces. That's how the Legion has grown out of the Armed Forces environment.

VICTOR BARNES: It used to be the fact that once they retired, they came to the Legion looking for disability . . .

JERRY PYE: Absolutely.

VICTOR BARNES: . . . because we had the people there to do it. We still have the people there to do it, and we're still funding that program, which is quite an expense as well. I would say we have one of the best people in Canada working for us right now. He's an ex-RCMP intelligence officer who is doing our DVA business for us, and he's pretty good, but he needs more work. This is what we're after.

The kids today don't understand what we're about. If they have to go in front of a panel, let's say for a pension, this member goes with them. Otherwise, if they're not with the Legion, they go by themselves and it's pretty difficult to face a panel like that. If you have the Legion guy sitting right alongside you and he does the questioning for you, you pretty well don't have to say anything. It's really a relief on their behalf. They don't understand that, unfortunately, until they retire. Now it's changing because the military is doing it while they're in. So that's

helping them a lot, too, and that's cutting the Legion out.

JERRY PYE: My final question is to Mr. Wessell. Are there any ongoing fundraising programs or any new schemes within the fundraising ventures of the Legion to generate additional revenues, for you to continue on with the programs?

STEVE WESSELL: Well, we're developing a stronger membership base, or we're trying to develop a stronger membership base. That's why we've opened it up as wide as we have. If I may, with regard to our sponsorship letters . . .

VICTOR BARNES: You can if you like, I wasn't going to.

STEVE WESSELL: We've recently sent out dozens of letters to corporations, asking for possible sponsorship as well for our programs, something we haven't done before.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, if I may just address one of Mr. Pye's questions, with regard to the grants that we received from Sport Nova Scotia, it was no secret that this was up until the fiscal year 1996-97. At that point we received \$3,100, I believe it was. I went back five years prior to that and it was averaging out around \$3,000 a year.

VICTOR BARNES: Every little bit helps.

JERRY PYE: It sure does.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Theriault.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Thank you for your great presentation. I commend you, I commend anybody who tries to help the youth of this province. There's not enough of it, especially in the rural areas. The youth seem to be lacking things to do, something to keep them busy. So I commend you for what you are doing. I just wanted to bring up - Mr. Taylor brought it up - about approaching the federal level Veterans Affairs. Have they been approached, especially the Department of National Defence, Public Relations Office? I believe there's going to be new money in that office April 1st, and I believe this is a public relations thing that's happening here. I'm just wondering if you have approached Veterans Affairs for funding from Ottawa?

VICTOR BARNES: No. (Interruptions) Go ahead.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, through you, my understanding is that Veterans Affairs will not touch youth, as far as programming goes. They strictly stay with our veterans.

HAROLD THERIAULT: So they consider this not public relations?

JACK HATCHER: As far as Veterans Affairs?

HAROLD THERIAULT: Yes.

JACK HATCHER: I'm quite sure you will find that Veterans Affairs will not go to youth at all.

HAROLD THERIAULT: What do they consider public relations?

JACK HATCHER: It's strictly dealing with our veterans and the veterans programs that are in existence or are coming up. I could stand corrected on it, but I'm quite sure that you will find that Veterans Affairs will not touch youth.

STEVE WESSELL: I might add, Comrade Jack, that the only thing that Veterans Affairs does, just through the Call to Remembrance Program, is they supply us with some study material.

VICTOR BARNES: They help us in other ways, mind you, with our fall prevention. Veterans Affairs has gotten involved with that, and I think they put \$10 million out across the country, however, Nova Scotia's amount was \$150,000, I believe was the total amount they gave us. We formed a committee, and as a matter of fact Jack still sits on it, I was on it when it began. When we had our first meeting with them, they really weren't interested in the Legion until DVA said, this program does not go unless Nova Scotia Command of the Royal Canadian Legion is involved as one of the primary parties. It kind of shocked all the health people in the province.

So Jack and I were there at the first meeting, and we sort of blew their minds away. Every subject they brought up, we were already involved with, all across the province, almost every Legion, and they couldn't believe this. Jack still sits on that committee with them and, as a matter of fact, the Group of Nine as well. That's the only way we can get DVA involved, they won't touch youth.

HAROLD THERIAULT: That is very interesting, that Veterans Affairs won't recognize the youth as public relations. That's very interesting, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: I want to thank you for your presentation. I have just a couple of questions. Some of my questions have already been asked, so I won't ask them again. A little bit to deal with the track and field Legion trials and meets. You stated that Sport Nova Scotia supplied you with about \$3,100 when it was cancelled. Was that funding just to cover the cost of sending athletes to the national meet or did that help with the trials that you have in the province prior to the national meet?

JACK HATCHER: You must realize I'm young and the program goes back a long ways.

My understanding was that it was for the overall program, it wasn't slated for any one particular phase of the program.

DAVID WILSON: I think I know the answer to this, but has Nova Scotia ever hosted the national meet?

JACK HATCHER: No, they haven't. There are two tracks in Nova Scotia that qualify for the program, which have to be eight-lane tracks, and I understand that is Met Field and Beazley Field in Dartmouth, but there are no accommodations. So what do you do with 500 athletes, busing them back and forth, say from a university?

VICTOR BARNES: And their families, because they all come.

DAVID WILSON: I think sport, especially track and field which I was involved with when I was younger (Interruptions) It's true. I must relay to you that the Legion trials and Legion meets were always something you strive for, especially with young athletes. It's an important program, definitely. I think sport plays an important role with the youth, bringing them up and keeping them out of trouble. My question, for the Legion track meets, I understand that Mr. Wessell just stated about corporate donations, that you're just starting that, have you had any corporate donations for the athletic meets or the track meets at all? Is it solely funded through the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command?

VICTOR BARNES: Solely. Just to make another note on the track and field, every province in Canada has been asking when they're going to meet in Nova Scotia. For years they've been asking, but we do not have the facilities. We've brought this up to this committee before, mind you none of you members was here then. There's never anything that's been done about it. Can you imagine the money coming into Nova Scotia with that track meet here? I just don't understand why there are not facilities available for it somewhere.

DAVID WILSON: Maybe we should seek a proposal for a large hotel in Sackville. (Laughter) Accommodate them right next to the field. I just wanted to thank you again. I'm sure we will have a great discussion here to try to help guide you guys to hopefully get some funding for this because they are important programs. I just want to thank you again for coming out today.

VICTOR BARNES: Thank you, sir.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Estabrooks.

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: A couple of questions, as a graduate of the UNB program, which I thoroughly enjoyed, you point out there's a very distinct difference between the UNB leadership or the UNB athletic, very oriented towards athleticism. Are they in financial problems also?

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, I think they're worse off than we are, actually, from what I've been hearing anyway. They've had to cut back on a lot of their programs.

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Secondly, it does concern me - and I recognize, of course, Tommy Waters, a legendary involvement in the Legion that I'm a member of - what I heard earlier, prior to the meeting, that of the 84 young people who go to the leadership camp that there are very few young people coming out of the HRM.

VICTOR BARNES: That's true.

[10:00 a.m.]

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: I would like to sort of ask a few questions around that, if I could. I know why I went to the UNB camp, because my hockey coach, Archie Clarke, basically sent me there to get punished, I think, and they punished me and I deserved it. What I'm trying to say to you is that the connect between the schools, that schoolteacher who has some commitment and involvement and says to the Grade 10 or Grade 11 kid, boy, that kid would benefit, because Grade 12s don't go, they go back to their school, but you get the Grade 10 or Grade 11 kid and you say he or she should go to the Legion camp. I guess I could ask this, if you could give me sort of a breakdown, statistically, across the province, of the 84 kids who go to the camp at the Agricultural College, where are they from?

VICTOR BARNES: I could safely tell you 50 per cent are from the Valley, and I will tell you why. I'm not here to brag about it, but when I was the zone commander in the Valley I took it upon myself to visit every school and talk to all of the teachers responsible. Most of the teachers teaching at the camp come from the Valley, and that's an added plus. We used to get 16 students from the metro area; we got two last year. The year before, I don't think we got any.

Some of the problem, I believe, lies with our own people not doing their job. I hate to say this, but I have to call a spade a spade. It's up to the zone commanders to visit the schools. We send an itinerary and a schedule out to the schools every year, every school gets one, but they probably set it aside, I don't know. As far as I'm concerned, it's up to the zone commander to visit the school and say, okay, have we got some students for the camp this year? I grant you, there are more jobs in this area, so it's a little harder to get students than it is in the rural areas.

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Summer jobs you mean?

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, summer jobs. But, still and all, we can get them. I mean, in the last week before the camp, we have so many cancellations, it's unbelievable because the kid suddenly got themselves a job and can't go to the camp. So we're scrambling to fill it in and where do I go to get the fill-ins? I go to the Valley. I have to, because I know I can get them, but I can't seem to get them from anywhere else.

STEVE WESSELL: In addition to that, too, the itinerary of a high school student nowadays is three times what it was when I was in high school and probably more than that. But there are so many different programs that are available for high school students right now, including, as Vic said, part-time employment; as soon as school is over they're expected to be working part-time and our camp falls right at the end of the school year.

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: If I may, one more, Mr. Chairman. I want to talk about the Call to Remembrance Program. I know you mentioned this when you were talking about this, Steve, but is it not a natural growth process that it move on to the high school level? I know that it involves more money, but I've been fortunate enough to be in high schools on Remembrance Day - not on the day - to recognize the events in these schools, and I know it's not just in the schools that I represent, but there is a tremendous interest in the program, because of coming out of the middle and junior high school program and the natural growth to extend it to the high school level. Is that in the future, is that in the cards?

STEVE WESSELL: It always has been to expand the program to that level but our first and ultimate goal was to spread it across Nova Scotia, number one, and have mostly all, if not all, of our schools involved in this program, because at the time when this program was developed there was no Canadian history taught in our schools at all. Due to the efforts of the Royal Canadian Legion here in Nova Scotia, we have since gotten Canadian history being taught in our schools here in Nova Scotia as a result of that. As a result as well, New Brunswick has also picked up on that and now they're starting to teach Canadian history in schools in New Brunswick. But we wanted to progress this through the schools of Nova Scotia at the junior high school level to start with, because the program and the study material that was developed and that we have right now is basically directed at a junior high school curriculum, it's not a senior high school curriculum right now.

It could develop that way, yes, but we also wanted to, at our Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command level, to progress this to other provinces. Now, with the small program developed in P.E.I., it's not based on the same situations that we based ours on, they actually do it at a high school level with the same material. I find that a little hard to grasp because it's a little below a high school level curriculum. But we would like to get this as a national program and develop it that way before we move to a higher level.

VICTOR BARNES: Just to go one step further with it. I want you to know that through our program and through meeting with this committee in the past is how we got the teaching of the military's past history and Canada's history taught in the schools. We brought it to this committee, a former committee, and that's how it came about, but up to that point, it wasn't being taught and we have this committee to thank for that. I'm sure we do.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, committee members. I have a few questions. First of all, I can certainly say that for a small county Richmond has always had a very active participation

in the camp. I know many of our youth in Richmond County have participated over the years, in fact I know one family, the Campbells, I believe all four boys went to camp on a regular basis. I think they went two to three times each as they were growing up. So there's certainly a great level of interest from our county in the participation of the camp.

We have a number, you have presented us with four different programs here and some cost figures. I guess one of the challenges is, do we have an overall figure as to what exactly would be the request coming from the Legion to this committee today? Have you broken it down to one overall number as to what would be required to assist you with these four programs?

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, I believe it is in the hand-out and it's \$125,000, I believe is the figure.

VICTOR BARNES: That's our cost.

JACK HATCHER: That's the overall cost to Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: I guess the question is, out of that overall cost, how much are you short, I guess, from your traditional financing amongst your own branches as to what your request would be to the province or to any other of the funding agencies?

VICTOR BARNES: As far as the university camp goes, I would be happy if we could get the \$5,000 to pay for that theatre. That would be a great help.

Now, the school up there indicated to me at the last meeting I had with them that there was funding available and we should be tapping into it. Now, it was through one of the programs, liberal arts or something like that, I'm not just sure which one it was but she said the funding has never been touched, that lady, Melanie, from the university up in Truro.

JACK HATCHER: That's last week.

VICTOR BARNES: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, could we maybe, do you have the name of the person - that would be at the Agricultural College?

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, the lady in charge, Melanie, I don't know what her last name is.

BROOKE TAYLOR: I think we should pursue that particular program, if she's aware of something that we are not, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: No, and the whole purpose that I want to start this discussion, I encourage committee members, we've got a number of MLAs around the table here who have worked in these kinds of situations and whatever I think we can do to brainstorm here, I think is what we're trying to pull off.

So, you're saying for the camp the \$5,000 for the theatre would be . . .

VICTOR BARNES: It would certainly be a help or anything, you know.

THE CHAIR: Let me just clarify again. At this point in time, the Legion is receiving zero funding from the province for any of its programs, is that an accurate statement?

JACK HATCHER: Yes.

VICTOR BARNES: I think, as Jack just figured out, an overall figure of \$15,000 would keep us out of the hole, as it stands, that's for all our programs.

STEVE WESSELL: Can I mention the fact, Mr. Chairman, that with regard to the Call to Remembrance, as I mentioned in my statement, the regional branches for all their regional competitions put forward anywhere from \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year to help fund that Call to Remembrance Program in their local areas. We usually, I can say in our zone, the Halifax-Dartmouth area, we usually put a levy of about 25 cents per member per year, which is not a lot of money, to help fund this program. That can range, depending upon the size of the branch, anywhere from hundreds of dollars to only a few dollars but it all gets thrown into the pot and the program works.

With the loss of funds at each Legion branch because of our smoking policies and because of our sky-rocketing insurance, these few hundred dollars that a branch might put in towards this program is all of a sudden they're looking at that saying, well, gee, this could be another few hundred dollars that we put towards our insurance costs or whatever. The programs that we fund are starting to look like extravagances rather than something that we have to do and that shouldn't be.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I think that the request is a reasonable request. We understand now that we have a number to it, it's \$15,000. We've also acknowledged that there are avenues in which to tap into some revenue by MLA Taylor's comment with respect to the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and getting in touch with them to find out where it's at.

Re sending a letter off to Sport Nova Scotia and the Health Promotion Minister to ask to reconsider providing funding and even if that's \$3,000, that amounts to \$8,000 of the \$15,000 and we haven't even tapped into the federal government or other agencies within government.

So, what I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, and I'm only offering this as advice, is that we look at the avenues available before we make any strong commitment to the Legion and then send them off a letter advising them, because they came to us asking where they could tap into funding. Therefore we do some research as to where the funding might be available for them and then send them a letter telling them the avenues in which they can make application.

THE CHAIR: I appreciate that Mr. Pye, that's one of the challenges we have as a committee. While we are a Veterans Affairs Committee, most of the committees, whether it be the Resources Committee, or whether it be the Public Accounts Committee, or some of the other committees, you can identify a ministerial department that goes with the committee. In our case, unfortunately, because Veterans Affairs is a federal responsibility, we don't actually have a provincial minister responsible for Veterans Affairs, which may be an issue for this committee to raise with the government, to be able to identify a certain department so that we, ourselves, would know we have at least got a deputy minister and staff that we can forward requests to on behalf of the province, which is one of the frustrations we do face here. That is why we are all kind of trying to put our heads together to see what different departments could be applied to. There is Education, which has different programming, under Culture, there are different avenues there, we do have a Youth Secretariat, but I'm not sure if they actually do have funding available for different programs. So it's a matter of us trying to figure out which specific departments to go to.

Before I recognize Mr. Taylor, the regional director of Veterans Affairs did appear before us at our last committee meeting, and they did provide us with some information on their youth programs. They do have quite an extensive list of programs and materials they provide, but from what I can see here, it does not appear there is any pool of money available for programs. They appear to have established their criteria for youth programs and they have obviously put the funding toward providing some of these different programs, and we can certainly provide you with a copy of that if you haven't received that yet.

I still think Mr. Pye and Mr. Taylor are correct, this committee should pursue Veterans Affairs, the Department of National Defence and even Human Resources Development Canada has a division dealing with heritage and there's Heritage Canada also that could all be avenues we could be approaching here on your behalf. It's a matter of us being able to sit, and it might even be an idea if this committee would want to strike a subcommittee that would maybe have as its task to try to contact some of the different departments and explore what possibilities are out there, rather than having the full committee involved, it might be more productive and more efficient if we did have a subcommittee, and I leave that for the committee to decide.

Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: First I would want to point out I'm substituting today for my colleague, the honourable member for Colchester North, Bill Langille. I think it would be

helpful to have the name of that person at the Agricultural College, as I mentioned earlier, that indicated there is a program and we can try to pursue that, be it provincial or federal. As well, I think it would be of some value to have - I think Mr. Hatcher you indicated that funding was cut off in 1997-98 . . .

JACK HATCHER: It was 1996-97.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Yes. Obviously you received some correspondence at Central Command about that, do you have the actual document? You received that notice by way of writing, I trust?

JACK HATCHER: My understanding is that a letter came from the minister advising us that we no longer qualify but I would have to go back and see if the secretary could find that information.

BROOKE TAYLOR: I think if we had that letter to back up, if it's a subcommittee or whoever it is exploring this issue, then the present minister appropriate should be copied that letter and as well, I'm told by our very capable staff, that Tourism and Culture has a great booklet that explains funding and what programs are available, we could certainly provide that to the Legion. I think what you need is some assistance, and we don't want to speak and take no action. So I think, Mr. Chairman, you have an excellent idea with the subcommittee and we might be able to facilitate the application process, if it comes to that - I don't want to get the cart too far ahead of the horse. We should have that letter, if it's possible, gentlemen.

JACK HATCHER: Could you give us the phone number and I will have that call made to you this afternoon with that lady's name. I can get Frank to do that.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Heather is with our caucus and she would certainly, if it's with the indulgence of the committee.

JERRY PYE: It should go to the clerk of the committee.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Whatever you feel is appropriate.

JACK HATCHER: Can I just leave the subject for a moment and make something known. When we have a convention - and this year our convention is in London - we have what is called, a Nova Scotia Night. It costs us \$7,500 to put this night on and it is just about the most entertaining thing there is at any convention and everybody wants to come.

However, we're having problems getting some stuff from Nova Scotia Tourism and Culture; I don't know why. We're advertising Nova Scotia when we go to this thing and the tables . . .

[10:15 a.m.]

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: What sort of stuff?

VICTOR BARNES: Anything, the tables are lined with things, but we're having trouble getting them. We used to get . . .

JERRY PYE: Like lapel pins, flags . . .

VICTOR BARNES: Yes and the big Bluenose posters.

STEVE WESSELL: We have also asked in previous years if Nova Scotia Tourism and Culture would like to send a representative there and actually have a table. We haven't quite managed to get anybody interested enough to come to one of those, either.

VICTOR BARNES: I mean we pack a Legion, you can hardly move in the place, it's such a big do - this Nova Scotia Night - we are the only province that does it and everybody wants to be there.

THE CHAIR: When you say London, is that . . .

VICTOR BARNES: Ontario.

THE CHAIR: Just for clarification, because I think a couple of our committee members were trying to figure out how we could encourage the government to send some MLAs from the committee along to your meeting.

VICTOR BARNES: It's the same thing, in another month or so, April, I'm going back to Iqaluit. I would love to have some posters of the Bluenose and things from Nova Scotia to take up there and give them. The last time I went up I had to buy it all, do you understand? And those people are interested in Nova Scotia.

STEVE WESSELL: At our previous convention in Edmonton in 2002, we were told by the Legion we held the venue at, we hosted upwards of 800 people from across Canada; they were all Legion members, of course. It might not sound like much, but when you only have just over 2,000 delegates from across the country that are going to a Dominion convention, 2,000 to 2,500, when you get 800 or 900 of them showing up at Nova Scotia's event - where you might have maybe 50 to 100 showing up at a very large gathering of another Command, even Ontario - we're hosting 800 or 900. We are doing it on behalf of Nova Scotia, and Nunavut now.

VICTOR BARNES: Most of them show up, I'm sure, for a bit of Nelson's blood, we give them black rum in a shot glass, that helps. (Laughter)

STEVE WESSELL: But we would gladly accept any help from Nova Scotia, I mean we get it, mind you, but it seems to be like pulling teeth to try to get it.

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, we have a heck of a time with it.

THE CHAIR: I think that's quite bizarre and we might want to look at a motion to deal with that. I'm just thinking offhand, even if you were given stuff like Nova Scotia flags as door prizes that could be given out throughout the evening.

STEVE WESSELL: That would be great.

VICTOR BARNES: They see these pictures of the Bluenose on the wall and everybody wants one. I know that we spread them all across this country but that is nowhere half of what we need.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Colwell first.

KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Chairman, I think we should put this subcommittee together immediately to deal with all these issues of the Legions. There are many funding issues and I think the funding agency that Truro was telling you about was probably the Canada Arts Council, I would bet that's who it was. There is a lot of experience around this table that could help the Legion pursue funding at all different levels, municipal, provincial and federal. As well, on the items for your convention, I know personally I have supplied a lot of stuff for that in the past and it was a pleasure to do that; I know I gave a pile of pins and flags and some other stuff. I give credit to the members of the Legion who come forward and say it's not quite enough yet, and they always get some more, so that was always, I thought, very positive.

VICTOR BARNES: It disappears so fast it is unbelievable.

KEITH COLWELL: Yes, and it's good PR for Nova Scotia, it's excellent PR. I think that is the sort of thing we should be doing.

I make a motion that we form a committee, probably a three-member committee, that would do that, and maybe the Chairman could be one of the representatives on that committee, to work with the Legion on an ongoing basis - not just an initial basis - to do this and move forward with things that, as politicians, will help the Legion and help our province.

VICTOR BARNES: Hear, hear. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: That motion is in order also. I will go to Mr. Chataway first, before further discussion.

JOHN CHATAWAY: This is just a question about what we were just talking about, when you get 2,000 members - have you people ever talked to Clearwater, or have you ever

talked to any people in the aquaculture business? I know that basically it's not just in Lunenburg County, but Clearwater is very good in promoting their lobster and all that stuff. Also, aquaculture businesses in Nova Scotia, they're not just Nova Scotian but Atlantic Canadian, they are very generous, just sit down and talk to them. It's very good.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I want to speak on the motion put forward by MLA Colwell. I want you to know that this is historic, this is uniquely different than what the Veterans Affairs Committee has been accustomed to. This is the first time that I know of where a subcommittee has been struck, of the Veterans Affairs Committee. The process is that we receive the information from our witnesses or presenters, and we then compile that information and we have a staff member of the committee go in and do the research and bring that information back to the committee as a whole. The committee as a whole works on the information that comes forward and brings it forward.

I support the subcommittee, I want you to know that, but the subcommittee has to make sure that all the information the subcommittee searches out eventually has to come back to the main committee, so that the main committee finally gives final approval and that the subcommittee doesn't walk off with a mandate thinking that it has a mandate of its own, not to come back and respond to the committee.

The other thing is . . .

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Are you volunteering to be on the committee, Jerry?

JERRY PYE: I'm saying also, Mr. Chairman, that when we do the research of this information and so on, we have to make sure, and I know that we will make sure, that the information is information that can be accessed immediately, because they're going on with their program this year. That means it needs to be explicit within the mandate of this committee. How long is the subcommittee going to last? I heard comments with respect to not only this issue but other issues that are brought forward for the subcommittee. So now we're forming a subcommittee of the committee that might be looking at things, whatever happens at the Veterans Affairs Committee in the future. (Interruptions)

Well, the Veterans Affairs Committee usually deals with mostly Legion issues or they fund around veterans who are in the Armed Forces. So I want to make that clear, that maybe I would ask the honourable member if in fact it's not possible to have an ad hoc committee of the Veterans Affairs Committee just to deal with this issue, and then that ad hoc committee comes back with its final recommendation. Then that committee dissolves, and if there's a need for a future committee to go into it - I'm just offering that.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Just on the motion, the member may not be aware but on occasion different standing committees have formed subcommittees, and it's a given, it's understood that the subcommittee reports to the standing committee. That's not a concern that I have with this committee. I think that principle would follow, and I think the mover of the motion understands that very clearly. I guess the mover of the motion, again, may want to clarify, but my understanding in support of the motion, which I am fully in support of, is that it would deal exclusively, only, with concerns of the Royal Canadian Legion. Is that not the intent?

KEITH COLWELL: That's right.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Yes, I just wanted that clarified, Mr. Chairman. That certainly puts my mind at ease. I think it's a very good motion, and I would like to see unanimous support around this table for the motion.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, dealing with the issues at this committee meeting of February 26, 2004, that's what the committee would deal with, just these issues and not future veterans' issues. So it wouldn't be an ongoing subcommittee, right? Therefore it would be an ad hoc committee.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I would prefer Mr. Colwell to speak to . . .

JERRY PYE: I just want clarity with respect to that, Mr. Chairman. If it's a committee, it's ongoing. An ad hoc committee deals with the issues that were presented before the committee on February 26, 2004.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Colwell.

KEITH COLWELL: I think the issue of government dealing with - since there is no minister, there is nobody directly in Nova Scotia who deals directly with veterans' issues, except this committee, which I'm very pleased is here. One of the groups that we have to deal with, and when I say have to, it's a pleasure to deal with, is the Legion. The important work the Legion does in our communities, not just for veterans but for many people outside of that as well, and important things that they do for everyone in the community, the children, the seniors, everyone.

I think it should be an ongoing subcommittee of this committee that's set up. The committee could change the membership or structure at any time they want, to deal with ongoing issues. The Legion has ongoing issues. We've heard three or four issues here today. I think a subcommittee of this committee can help them resolve those issues, because there's

funding that I'm personally aware of and I'm sure everyone sitting around in this room is personally aware of, we've helped other organizations. It's just a matter of all we have to do is say here's where you apply, here's what the process is, and maybe just critique the application you put in just to make sure it has a better chance of getting approval. Nothing more than that. Then as other issues come up, that subcommittee could meet with the Legions, get those issues brought up maybe quicker, maybe suggest some things from our political experience. That's all I'm talking about here, our political experience to help a very important organization in our community. The subcommittee would stay as long as this particular committee's structure is in place, until the next election.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, if I could have one more comment on that. The only reason why I say it should be a subcommittee is because when the Legion wants to make presentations before the Veterans Affairs Committee, it might be said that maybe we should send them off to the subcommittee first because the subcommittee can address their issues. I don't want that to happen. I want to make sure that the Legion has full presentation of the elected or appointed members of this committee by their respective caucuses. That's what I want to make sure happens.

THE CHAIR: I think the fact that we find ourselves in the political situation that we do find ourselves in is that this subcommittee would have a representative from each caucus. I think that as members of caucus, we all realize that we're not given an independent mandate to go out and make decisions solely. As elected members, we always consult with our own respective caucuses on any issues which do come forward. I personally don't see that being a concern, that this subcommittee is somehow going to become a rogue committee and go out on its own with its own mandate.

I think any time the Royal Canadian Legion is going to request to come before this committee, I don't foresee the day, as long as I am chairman, that we would send them off to a subcommittee first. I think we have always shown tremendous respect to the Royal Canadian Legion and that will not change. Any concerns that they do have, we would want the entire committee to hear first, before making any decision to delegate any instructions to the subcommittee. For the record, I think we can certainly add that.

JERRY PYE: As long as it's on the record.

THE CHAIR: As to what's been raised today, the fact that we've had four or five different issues that have been brought forward to us, rather than waiting for this committee, which usually meets once a month, at the rate it is right now, to deal with issues, I think, as has been suggested by Mr. Colwell, it would be much more productive if we had a smaller group working on these issues in conjunction with the staff here at the Committees Office to deal with that.

If there's no further discussion, from what I've been hearing, I've scribbled down here what I think is the motion from Mr. Colwell. I will read it, and if there's any discussion on it at that point, we can make any changes.

The motion is: Be it resolved that a subcommittee of the Veterans Affairs Committee be struck to address issues brought forward to the committee by the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

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

The motion is unanimously carried.

I think we have that on the record now as the motion. Mr. Colwell, you did make an earlier motion. Do you still want to pursue that motion? (Interruptions) Sure, well, we're an easygoing committee here, we're very flexible.

[10:30 a.m.]

KEITH COLWELL: I think the subcommittee will address those issues, just as long as we can really work with the Legion to help them get through some of these difficulties.

THE CHAIR: I think that discussion has been made clear, that the whole purpose - the initial motion was to, I believe, indicate support, to try to help find some financial assistance to the Legion. I believe the fact that we've struck this committee, as the discussion has shown its main intent is now to work towards helping identify some possible funding for the Legion. So I don't think the motion is probably required. Mr. Colwell has indicated he would withdraw the motion, so that motion has been passed.

Is there anything further from you, Mr. Barnes, or any of your colleagues?

VICTOR BARNES: No, sir, I would just like to thank this committee and the committees that have preceded you. We've had tremendous response with our highway, our licence plate and the programs being taught in the schools. It is just fabulous as far as the Legion is concerned. We really enjoy the chance to meet with you and bring these things forward and we're looking forward to the next time that we can get together. If the committee or anybody at any time needs to talk to somebody at the Legion, you can call Frank Fudge at the Legion and he will get a hold of me or whoever is handling that particular subject.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Given the opportunity because we are here until 11:00 a.m. and if it's okay, I would like you to maybe update me and, Mr. Chairman, you may be more aware

of this, it's relatively recent. The Last Post provide gravestones, et cetera, and I understand from what I read in the press, they were about 10 years behind in Nova Scotia. Has that been rectified?

VICTOR BARNES: From reading the news, it looks like it has. The Last Post Fund doesn't include the Legion with anything, they're strictly on their own, they don't tell us what they're doing, they don't tell us how much money they get, we have nothing to do with them whatsoever, they're sort of on their own.

JOHN CHATAWAY: It's sort of an insult as a Nova Scotian. Here they are sitting in Ottawa, oh, well, they only have 3 per cent of the population, they just forgot how many Nova Scotians have joined the forces.

VICTOR BARNES: I think Mr. Wilson said there were 180 across Canada, wasn't there, when you did your investigation? So we weren't the only ones.

JOHN CHATAWAY: We had 70 in Nova Scotia, they were 70 behind.

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, it was terrible. We had at least one-half. I think it's being handled now and I'm hoping that the Last Post Fund will change. I don't know where they'll get the funding.

STEVE WESSELL: The funding for the Last Post, I believe, was in the newspaper as well. Federal money, only \$5,000 finds its way towards Nova Scotia to deal with this matter in Nova Scotia. That's outrageous.

VICTOR BARNES: I will say one thing, to get on that for a second, Nova Scotia is a small province, but by God, they know we're around when we come to conventions and everybody follows Nova Scotia's lead in just about everything, the licence plate, the highways are going all over the country, the education system, and they're all following our lead. That's something that we can all be proud of.

STEVE WESSELL: I might add, since we've developed our veteran's licence plate here in Nova Scotia, and I presented that, it must have been a couple of years ago now, that we have over 7,000 plates on the road here in Nova Scotia already. Our plate is a great design. New Brunswick Command of the Royal Canadian Legion has a plate on the road now, Newfoundland has a plate on the road now, P.E.I. has a plate on the road now, Ontario is developing a plate, I think they may have it on the road already, and I've been in conversation with B.C.-Yukon Command to get a program started there. So because of the efforts of this committee, it's almost struck its way all across Canada already.

VICTOR BARNES: So, we are leaders, no question about it.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I have a letter from the Premier to John McCallum who is no longer the Minister of Defence in Ottawa and he points out - have you got this letter?

THE CHAIR: Yes, and Mr. McCallum is now Veterans Affairs, I believe that's who it's written to.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Did everybody get the Premier's letter, but if you wanted a copy of that, there it is.

The other thing that's been mentioned and the fact that it was mentioned in my riding and many people referred to it today is the change in insurance rates. It is not unique to Nova Scotia. Many Legions across Canada have a real problem and I know the one in Chester, for example, it was \$3,500 last year, it's \$10,000 this year. Can you update us at all about what the national executive of the Legion is doing to handle this problem? It's a problem that has to be dealt with.

VICTOR BARNES: I don't think they've been involved. They certainly haven't been in touch with me on anything to do with this. We've sort of been dealing with it ourselves, thanks to Mr. Wilson and another, Mr. Stoffer, was it? At a meeting we had with him and I wound up speaking on TV, which I don't like, but anyway, we got some action from that. We had two or three insurance companies call us and tell us that they're interested in talking to us. I said, well, come on in, we'll meet with you at any time.

The problem that concerns me about it is, we've been trying for quite a long time to get one insurance company to cover all four Maritime Provinces, all the Legions, and if this could happen, I mean, everything could come down. What bothered me more than anything was to see the increase down the Eastern Shore from \$3,400 to \$11,000 for an 80-member Legion. Then somebody said to me, as a matter of fact, Rick Grant said, can't they increase their dues? Well, how much in dues would have to be paid by 80 people to cover \$11,000. I mean, it's ludicrous.

Anyway, the Honourable Ronald Russell has requested a meeting with us. It was supposed to be last Monday but now it's March 22nd; because of his commitments and our commitments, this is the first time we can meet and that's on the insurance.

JOHN CHATAWAY: So, you are meeting . . .

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, it is happening. The other business, and I hate to mention this, where I made a mistake. At our last meeting and I indicated that we weren't interested in a holiday for Legion day. Well, unbeknownst to me, it got passed at the convention. I don't know where I was at that point in time, maybe I had just been elected and got all excited, I don't know. There is a meeting with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities and somebody coming up, this Monday, about the . . .

MORA STEVENS: The Minister of Environment and Labour.

VICTOR BARNES: That's it. About that day, so I'm extremely sorry about what happened and what I said that day. I sent you all a letter, I hope you forgive me for that.

THE CHAIR: We have received that and I believe, in fact, as Chairman, that was letter was sent to all MLAs not just to the members of the committee, it was actually sent to all the elected members of the House.

VICTOR BARNES: I was awestruck when I found out.

STEVE WESSELL: It was just an oversight, that's all.

VICTOR BARNES: Yes, but I don't like that.

THE CHAIR: I guess I should point out to you, as you may be aware, there is actually legislation on the floor of the House right now; barring a new Speech from the Throne this session, the bill will still be on the order paper, which would call for making Remembrance Day a statutory holiday. So, hopefully now, with the representations made by the Legion and the indication given to all caucuses that bill may actually be passed this session. So, there is an opportunity this coming session for that actual change to take place. So I wish you well in your meetings with the minister.

Mr. Pye, did you have something?

JERRY PYE: Yes, just one final question to Mr. Hatcher. I do know that at a previous Veterans Affairs Committee meeting this issue arose, the issue with respect to full- service stations in the Province of Nova Scotia. I don't know if you've ever received a response from this committee with respect to that issue.

Also I know that you're a member of the Group of Nine, as well, in the Province of Nova Scotia who passes information on to the Senior Citizens' Secretariat. So I'm wondering, just briefly, what is happening with respect to your recommendation to ask government to look into providing at least all service stations with full service bays for veterans and persons with disabilities and seniors?

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, through you, to Mr. Pye, that is ongoing with us and it was high on our priority list and will remain there until we come to some resolution on it. I am also pursuing it through the Group of Nine. They will be pursuing that also.

THE CHAIR: If I could provide an update for the Legion and for members. Discussion did come up around this committee regarding - as you may or may not be aware, we have one provincial rest stop which was built just outside New Glasgow, I think Westville is the actual

community where it's built. We subsequently, as a committee, became aware that a second provincial rest stop is going to be constructed on the Cobequid Pass. I believe, if I am not mistaken from the information we got, it is in Thompson Station. I think that is the name of the community.

Discussion did come up at this committee that being that they were provincial rest stops, which we have now subsequently discovered, we did receive the actual agreements from the Department of Transportation and Public Works and those agreements indicated that for both of the rest stops, Crown land was signed over to the developer along with I believe it was a grant in the amount of \$200,000 which was given to the developers to establish these rest stops. The concern that our committee had throughout the discussions was being they are provincial rest stops, why is the province not making it a requirement that if there is going to be fuel service that it should at least have minimum requirements to provide full service pumps to deal with the issues raised by seniors, people with disabilities and others who just are not comfortable using the self-serve.

So we did receive the correspondence and I think if members have reviewed the criteria which was set out by the government for anyone who wishes to operate one of these provincial rest stops, there is nothing that does make any reference to fuel service. I do note that in one of the references that was made that if there is going to be any food service provided that they are to follow provincial guidelines. So it does address that issue but it doesn't specifically speak to that. That is where we are on that and I don't know if the committee wants to deal with that issue now. Mr. Colwell, you are next on my list but that is the information we have received on that issue to date. So our committee has been looking into that issue also.

KEITH COLWELL: Yes, two things I would like to do. I would like to address this issue and I would like to come back to the insurance issue afterwards. I would like to make a motion that those two rest stops are provided by a letter from this committee to the minister responsible and copy to the Legion and any other seniors' organization that the new provincial rest stops have to have a minimum of full service gas pumps at each stop.

JERRY PYE: I will second that motion, Mr. Chairman, if I can make a friendly amendment that it be a full service bay at each of those stops because that will be, too, and remember that it is mandatory for them to meet the compliance guidelines when building the physical structure, that they must make sure that is accessible. The ramps must be accessible to enter the building, the ramps must be accessible to the washrooms, yet it is not a requirement for them to provide full service to the individuals. So by this motion we will be making that happen, hopefully.

THE CHAIR: Before we get to specific wording, is there any further discussion on that specific motion? If I understand correctly, I think the intent, what we are trying to say, is for the two existing memoranda of agreement that there is with the developers that we ask the

minister to seek to add in there a requirement that there be full service fuel service provided because I believe at both of them there is - there is fuel service at the one outside of New Glasgow, I know for sure, I have stopped there. I believe the one in Thompson Station, I would suspect that there will also be fuel service provided at that one. So I think we are saying for the two agreements now, seek to have this amendment added in there and is it safe to say that also for any further developments of provincial rest stops that this be added in as one of the requirements.

JERRY PYE: Also, it's not a bay, it's called a full service pump island station.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I don't know if we want to add that specific language in there or put minimum requirement . . .

JERRY PYE: No, that is not necessary. That's right, yes.

[10:45 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: . . . to at least give the intent. I wouldn't want to see that language would be used to somehow try to prevent it. So I think, if it safe to put it into words, that the motion would be: Therefore be it resolved that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs calls upon the Minister of Transportation and Public Works to seek an amendment to the existing memoranda of understanding with the two developers for provincial rest stops to add in a clause which would require where fuel service is made available at the provincial rest stops a minimum requirement be established for provincial rest stops a minimum requirement be established for providing full service fuel service?

JERRY PYE: Yes, full service fuel service.

THE CHAIR: To address the issues raised by seniors, Legions, veterans and other concerned Nova Scotians. Second, that it also be resolved that the Department of Transportation and Public Works of the Government of Nova Scotia make it a mandatory requirement that for any future provincial rest stops that in their agreement, if fuel service is to be provided, that minimum requirements be established for full service fuel service.

JERRY PYE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Now, that was a tongue twister. That is the motion. Are there any comments on the motion? Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Mr. Chairman, did you ever receive, in the interim from the Minister of Transportation and Public Works, did he ever reply to that original request?

THE CHAIR: Yes, in fact all members of the committee should have received the two

actual agreements.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Yes, I did. I do not have my copy with me but basically just exactly what did he say in that? What was his response?

THE CHAIR: Well, basically the minister provided us with the actual agreements which shows that Crown land is to be given to the developers. I believe the amount of money is a \$200,000 grant for the establishment of the provincial rest stop.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Which was specified, the \$200,000 then was specified for just the value of the land?

THE CHAIR: No. My understanding is that the land is made available. Then there is also a grant in the amount of \$200,000 to establish what the province wants, I believe in this case is accessible washrooms, water service. It is actually broken down in there what the minimum requirements are. I think picnic tables are, there is a requirement for five picnic tables, if I am not mistaken. So I think what concerned the committee is that out of all the criteria that was listed, that was required, there was no mention about addressing the issue of full service for actual gas pumps for people with disabilities. I think what the committee is saying today is we would like to see that added in there.

JOHN CHATAWAY: The province, to this date, have not, basically, given assistance to anybody putting in a gas pump, it's just the rest stop right?

THE CHAIR: The assistance is specifically for the rest area itself but we do see in the agreement that it does make mention that if you are going to provide any food service or vending services, it must comply with provincial regulations so there already is some talk about other services. I believe what this committee is saying, let's add in a clause that says if you are going to provide fuel service, let's make sure there is some full service available to address the concerns that have been raised. (Interruption)

THE CHAIR: The question has been called for. Would all in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is unanimously passed.

We will certainly forward off that motion to the minister responsible.

Mr. Colwell, you had another matter.

KEITH COLWELL: Yes, on the insurance issue. You are probably not aware but the universities in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and maybe Prince Edward Island joined together to get insurance and what I can do after the meeting, I can provide you, not today, but

probably tomorrow with the name of the people who organized all that so you might talk to them. They substantially cut their insurance down. They cut their insurance costs by \$2 million per year. Now they are, of course, a major employer but even so, they managed to do that and I can give you the names of the people who organized that.

VICTOR BARNES: Much appreciated. The thing that really gets me about that insurance is the liability insurance leaping like it did and to my knowledge, there has never been a claim on liability insurance from any Legion. So what are they jumping the gun for? We train all of our bartenders.

BROOKE TAYLOR: And they do a good job. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: I just want to bring something forward that I brought forward at our last committee meeting when Veterans Affairs Canada was presenting. I made mention to the grave marker of a veteran who is laid to rest in St. Mary's River who is on a waiting list. Veterans Affairs thought the only backlog or the only reason for delays would have been the weather and as we have become aware, there are numerous veterans in Nova Scotia and across Canada who are waiting for proper grave markers. I would like to maybe make a motion today that we send correspondence, as a committee, to the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada to ensure proper funding is allocated to cover the backlog of these grave markers, and to ensure proper funding is there and available for future use, to make sure this backlog doesn't happen again. I would like to make that motion.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Thank you, Mr. Colwell. I think the motion is fairly self-explanatory. There has been some correspondence we have all received that has gone out and I believe that with this committee - considering it was first raised at the committee hearings - that that would not be a problem. Is there any further discussion on the motion?

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

The motion is carried.

The motion was unanimously passed and we will certainly be sending off correspondence in support of that. Are there further matters?

JERRY PYE: There is one further matter, Mr. Chairman, and that is the appointment of the subcommittee.

THE CHAIR: We can do that at the end.

On behalf of this committee, as chairman, I certainly want to thank you gentlemen for

coming here again today. As you pointed out, this committee has been a busy committee in the past and it continues to be a busy committee now. I can tell you our meeting with Veterans Affairs Canada was most interesting and created more media than this little committee has probably seen in the past from the Last Post Fund, to youth programs, to a senior in Richmond County, a veteran we are trying to get a gym membership for, and these are some of the issues we have dealt with. I think this shows just how important the committee work is for us, as elected members.

Too often, I don't think our own constituents appreciate some of the work that goes on here, or more importantly, how one person's issue which might be seen as a small issue can all of a sudden balloon into an issue which affects a whole host of people and I think we have seen this in our last few meetings. It has been a very productive relationship that we have had with you, as a Legion, and I think with the work of the subcommittee, which hopefully we will establish its membership today, we're going to have an even closer working relationship and I look forward to many more positive achievements in the future that lies ahead.

I thank you again for joining us and never hesitate when an issue does come up, just indicate to the Committees Office and we will be more than happy to set aside time as soon as possible to have you back before us.

VICTOR BARNES: Thank you very much, sir. I just want to drop another one on you for a second. As you know, we're losing our World War I vets very rapidly and it is in the planning stages, I do believe, for a state funeral for the last one. I just thought I would leave you with that. We don't know where he will be from but it's something to look forward to.

THE CHAIR: Sure, and any details you have on that . . .

VICTOR BARNES: We will keep you updated.

THE CHAIR: I don't know if discussions have already taken place with the Protocol Office but they tend to handle any of those issues when there is going to be a major state funeral. Our provincial Protocol Office tends to be the first contact is letting all elected members know when arrangements are made.

VICTOR BARNES: It's just something Dominion Command is working on right now.

THE CHAIR: I believe Colleen MacDonald is our Chief of Protocol for the province and you may want to let her know these discussions are taking place so her office can prepare for this type of organizing that is going to take place that certainly we want to make sure all elected members here in the province will be prepared to possibly participate in that.

VICTOR BARNES: I think we have seven left in Canada.

STEVE WESSELL: We have one here in Halifax, actually.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Just one in Nova Scotia?

STEVE WESSELL: The only one that I'm aware of and actually it's a female, a World War I nursing sister, Alice Strike. She's in Camp Hill, is she not, Tom?

VICTOR BARNES: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Did you say 107?

STEVE WESSELL: She's 106 or 107, yes.

THE CHAIR: Good.

STEVE WESSELL: She will be 107 in June.

VICTOR BARNES: Well I think the Legion should do something about that, so we will do something on that, as well.

THE CHAIR: I think it is safe to say what we could do as a committee is maybe send a copy of Hansard over to Ms. Colleen MacDonald at the Protocol Office just so they are aware we have had this discussion and hopefully they can pursue that with you.

We have a few organizational matters to deal with so we will reconvene in two or three minutes to deal with those matters.

VICTOR BARNES: We're on our way to a funeral, so thank you very much for your time.

[10:53 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:54 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: I believe our first matter is we have passed a motion dealing with striking a subcommittee. I'm wondering if there should be a discussion on how many members the committee feels should be on this subcommittee, and then we can work our way towards selecting membership for the committee. Mr. Colwell.

KEITH COLWELL: I would suggest we have three members, yourself as chairman continuing as chairman, and two members from each of the other caucuses.

THE CHAIR: That would be the government caucus and the NDP caucus.

KEITH COLWELL: Yes.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I so move the name of the honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's to be our member on the subcommittee. Would you agree, John?

JOHN CHATAWAY: Oh, yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye, you're the senior member of the NDP caucus, do you wish to make a motion first or are you going to let your young colleague get the jump on you?

JERRY PYE: I'm going to let the rookie make the motion . I don't think there's any such thing, after a few months of being in government, as a rookie. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: I will remember that when there's debate on the floor, Jerry.

JERRY PYE: I'm sure you will.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson. (Interruptions)

JERRY PYE: No, Bill has been sitting in for the member, Gordie Gosse. He's a fill-in. (Interruptions)

DAVID WILSON: Are you interested, Jerry?

JERRY PYE: Sure, I will take it on.

DAVID WILSON: I recommend Jerry represent our Party.

THE CHAIR: Thank you Mr. Wilson, no arm-twisting involved there. If I'm not mistaken, just for the record, we will have myself as Chairman, the member for Richmond, the member for Chester-St. Margaret's representing the government caucus, and the member for Dartmouth North representing the NDP caucus. I believe we can probably talk at some point, privately, about setting a meeting. I would suggest that we meet informally, I don't believe we need to have Hansard involved in our meetings so that we can be productive.

I believe it will be safe to say that we will report back to the full committee at our next regular meeting to provide them with an update as to what our activities have been and the different matters we have worked upon. I think Hansard will show some of the different issues we heard about today from tourism-related issues with the Nova Scotia evening and some of the other matters that did come up, especially assisting them with locating funding, which I think has been one of the major issues we've heard today. We can certainly talk about meeting.

In regard to our next regular meeting date, are there any suggestions from committee members? I don't believe we received any requests from any groups, but are there any issues arising out of our Veterans Affairs Canada meeting or any other matters that the committee members would like to see on a future schedule at this point, or would you rather wait, go back

to your respective caucuses and then we can possibly have some discussions amongst the subcommittee members, who I would suggest be the representatives to go back to their caucuses to see if there are any other outstanding issues which we would like to bring forward to this committee?

If there's no problem with that, I would recommend that we not set a specific date to meet again at this point, but that we have some discussions through the subcommittee as to when would be an appropriate time to meet again and possibly what witnesses we may want to see before us. Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: I assume that we're just informally getting together, the three people, plus Darlene - I hope you can be there. We will have some chores, possibly, for you, but we don't need Hansard, I don't think.

THE CHAIR: I would agree, I don't believe that's necessary. We can meet, if it needs to be, on short-term notice, and we can have Darlene available to us, to be able to map out a strategy as to how we're going to proceed with this.

JERRY PYE: I concur.

THE CHAIR: Very good. Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: I just have one thing, it's not earth-shattering or anything. Many of our Legions - not all but many of them - provide bursaries to students and usually it's based on a student being in need and normally a family member. I think it would be really nice if this committee considered, in fact moved forward and sent letters to the Legions. It would just be a standard letter, you would just have to change the addresses, to those Legions that year after year provide bursaries to students in need. I think it's something to explore. You could get the information easily from Command, likely.

It might be nice, Mr. Chairman, if you signed the letter on behalf of the committee, just recognizing the outstanding work that these Legions do in our communities to help students who are in need, to help them further their education and careers, because they are young people; as area MLAs, sometimes we're aware of that and sometimes we're not. I think for the committee, an all-Party standing committee, to do that, it would be good and certainly would be appropriate.

THE CHAIR: I think that's something that maybe the subcommittee could possibly explore directly with the Legion. I'm sure we could even look at having a certificate drawn up, which we would present not only to the recipients but even to the sponsoring Legions.

BROOKE TAYLOR: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: I think what was pointed out today, I believe there are about 70 cadet corps and about half are sponsored directly by the Legions. It would be interesting to see who is sponsoring the other half. It may even be an idea that we would maybe send a certificate of appreciation not only to the sponsoring Legions - I know in my case, in St. Peter's, I believe it's the Lions Club that is the sponsoring group for that local corps of the cadets. It probably wouldn't be a bad idea to send off a message just to tell them that they're appreciated for what they are doing. I think it's something the subcommittee could maybe explore further and report back to this committee.

One of the matters - and it's unfortunate Mr. Langille is not present here today because I think the matter was raised with him, in fact I received a phone call from a member of the government caucus, who I'm not going to name at this point, raising concerns. The individual who contacted him is the same one who contacted me. There remains concern out there over the issuance of the veteran's licence plates; more importantly, the criteria that is currently in place provincially for who can get a veteran's licence plate.

I know there was an appetite amongst the member from the government caucus - and I'm not sure if discussion did take place at caucus, which I did recommend to him that he have, and that Mr. Langille, as a member of the committee and a former chairman, could possibly bring that forward, because I know there was an appetite to possibly have this committee review whether a change should be made in those regulations which are currently there. One of the things we might want to do, Darlene, is maybe find out exactly what the provincial policy is, send a copy of it to each chairman of caucus.

I would encourage members to make sure that it is raised with their caucuses and that discussions take place, so that when we do meet again as a committee we can maybe have a full discussion on that matter. I think it's fair to say it's a non-partisan issue, it's an issue that touches the hearts of a number of veterans who have been quite upset about this, yet at the same time it's a matter of wanting to be fair and reasonable in this. I would encourage all caucuses, once they do receive the actual policy which will be sent to the chairman - and we could probably do a cover letter, Darlene, that maybe explains a little bit of the discussion that did take place here, the concerns, and then that discussion can take place amongst the caucuses, so that when we do meet, if it does come to an issue of a motion or a vote, we have a better understanding of where each of our caucuses stand on the issue. Mr. Chataway.

JOHN CHATAWAY: What was the proposed change?

THE CHAIR: The concerns that have been raised, right now my understanding is that anyone who has three years of military service would qualify for a veteran's licence plate. A number of veterans have raised the concern that they believe that to be considered a veteran, it would be through wartime or peacekeeping efforts, that just basic service in the military should not fall under the term of veteran. It's a contentious issue, and I think we're all aware of that,

so let's be honest with the issue. It's something that a number of veterans who have served in combat are very upset about, and it's an issue of, do we want to reopen it and maybe look at making changes and then comes the question of what actual changes or wording would we want to look at.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Correct me if I'm wrong, if during World War I, World War II or Korean or military service, if you were there, you get to be a veteran right away, it doesn't matter how long it goes. But if you just join the services and don't get posted to a dangerous spot, et cetera, you have to wait three years before you get that, is that correct?

THE CHAIR: I believe the requirement, if I recall how it's worded . . .

JOHN CHATAWAY: You have to have three years in before you . . .

THE CHAIR: Three years of service, but it doesn't require it to be peacekeeping or in a combat-type situation, which I think is the contentious issue. Basically you could spend your three years at a military base here in Canada and you would still qualify as a veteran to get this licence plate.

JOHN CHATAWAY: Of course, if you were in a dangerous spot, any time at all, period.

THE CHAIR: I believe so, without having seen the specific policy recently. That is the most contentious part for the veterans who have raised the concern on that. Again, I think a full discussion at the caucuses would be appropriate so that when we meet again, if the issue does come up, we can make a decision on it. Mr. Taylor.

BROOKE TAYLOR: How many plates did the presenter say . . .

THE CHAIR: I thought he said 7,000.

BROOKE TAYLOR: I thought that's what he said at the time, and I think that speaks for itself, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I think that's where this concern came from. Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: I think it all centres around definition. I think it's very important if it's centered around definition that we have input from the Legion, of course, on this issue, because it was first brought to our attention at the Veterans Affairs Committee, which I served on, by the Legion. I think it's very important to have that input as to how we define who's going to be the recipient of a veteran's licence plate in the province.

THE CHAIR: And I think it's fair to say that it might be an issue that once we've maybe had a fuller discussion, that the subcommittee, again, may be able to have informal discussions directly with the Legion in order to see what their reaction to that is. If I'm not mistaken, when

Mr. Langille was here, I don't remember if he said it was the definition used by the Legion or the definition from Veterans Affairs Canada - and Hansard will show - I think he said it's the Legion definition they went with, which is what was there. I don't believe Veterans Affairs Canada considers you a veteran after three years of military service in a non-combat situation. I don't see them recognizing that. There was an actual definition, it wasn't just drawn up by this committee. I believe a definition was taken from either the Legion itself or from Veterans Affairs, but that's something we can look into when we have further discussions.

Other than that, I apologize, we've run over by about 10 minutes. I think it was a very productive morning, and the committee remains a very productive committee. I look forward to the next time we meet. We will be in contact with the members of the subcommittee to meet in the near future to deal with some of those issues. Other than that, we stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:10 a.m.]