

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Committee Room 1

Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Gerald Sampson (Chair)
William Dooks
William Langille
Cecil O'Donnell
Jerry Pye
Gordon Gosse
David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid)
Harold Theriault
Stephen McNeil

[William Langille was replaced by Gary Hines.]
[Gordon Gosse was replaced by William Estabrooks.]
[Harold Theriault was replaced by Russell MacKinnon.]
[Stephen McNeil was replaced by Danny Graham.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Victor Barnes
President

Jack Hatcher
Honorary Treasurer

Frank Fudge
Provincial Secretary



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2005

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR

Gerald Sampson

THE CHAIR: We're a couple of minutes past the appointed hour so we'll call the meeting to order. We welcome our guests here this morning, the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and Mr. Vic Barnes, Mr. Jack Hatcher and Mr. Frank Fudge. Having said that, what I should do, probably, is make note that Russell MacKinnon is standing in for MLA Harold Theriault and Danny Graham will be coming shortly to stand in for Stephen McNeil and Gary Hines is standing in for MLA Bill Langille. The rest of the committee remains the same. (Interruption) Mr. Estabrooks is standing in for Gordie Gosse, how dare we fail to recognize that honourable gentleman. He introduced himself as Mr. Gosse when he came in and that led to the confusion, and they look so much alike. (Laughter) I can't tell those NDPers apart to tell you the truth. They kind of all look alike.

We'll turn the meeting over to our guests from the Royal Canadian Legion and welcome to you.

VICTOR BARNES: Thank you, comrade. Mr. Chairman, and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Victor Barnes, President of the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to meet with you again and to express the concerns of the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. Our past has been a rewarding experience as I am sure the future will be. As this year has been designated the Year of the Veteran, I have appointed a chairman to look into ways we can celebrate. When a program is finalized, I will see you all receive a copy of dates and times of the different events. This morning we have several subjects to bring forward, so without further delay I shall begin, followed by Comrade Jack Hatcher and then by Frank Fudge and after Comrade Fudge, I will make closing remarks.

Again, it is a pleasure to meet with you to raise the concerns of the aging population in Nova Scotia and in particular the concerns of our province's veterans, seniors and their families. My three areas of concern and focus today include the needs of caregivers; the on-going need for housing options, particularly for those in rural areas of the province; and the need for improved palliative care services in certain parts of Nova Scotia.

The Needs of Caregivers. While there is a prevailing myth that Canadian families abdicate their responsibility for older members, this is far from the truth. The majority of older persons in Canada requiring care are supported by their spouse, their daughter or their daughter-in-law. These people are the unsung heroes of our communities. They offer their services out of love, but the fact is that they save the government countless dollars through their expertise and commitment. What do these caregivers need in order to continue providing services?

1. Training. In order to understand the progression of various conditions and diseases, family caregivers need information and training about administering medications and mobilizing assistive devices and community resources;

2. Support Groups. This option allows those who are feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities of caregiving to meet with others to share stories and strategies and provide one another with support. The programs cited cost very little to operate but do require an ongoing commitment from the government to organizations like the Caregivers Association of Nova Scotia and the VON Volunteer Programs;

3. Day Care Options. While this option exists to a limited extent in Nova Scotia, funding is still not available through a provincial program that ensures sustainability, as a result there has been little growth in this cost-effective option for care;

4. Respite Care. When one is responsible for 24-hour care seven days a week, respite care is a requirement rather than a luxury. Too often the stress of caring for a family member has resulted in a crisis and the health of the caregiver is compromised and the person they are caring for ends by being institutionalized. This crisis can often be averted by providing the caregiver with time away from the duties of caregiving. While the Home Care Program offers limited respite, 10 hours of respite per week still leaves the primary caregiver responsible for covering the remaining 158 hours per week. This can take its toll on older persons who are caring for their life partner and have minimal family support. An increase in the number of respite hours provided each week and an option of an occasional weekend or a week-long break is a requirement for persons who have taken on this caring role.

5. Access to Equipment. Many older persons need specialized equipment in order to be cared for at home. This equipment can be as simple and inexpensive as bath bars or as costly as electric beds. This simple requirement may make all the difference in the life of a caregiver. While some required items may be available on loan, the number of programs loaning equipment is decreasing due to liability issues. The cost of providing

care to a loved one should not have to include the purchase or installation of equipment when the cost saving to the government is so significant.

The Need for Housing Options. As the population of Nova Scotia continues to age, the need for housing for older persons increases. We know that women outlive men and rural women are often left with family homes that they are unable to maintain. The problems of heating, snow clearance, lawn mowing and ongoing repairs lead older women to look for housing alternatives. Unfortunately, accessible, affordable housing is in limited supply in rural Nova Scotia and this means that older people, women in particular, must leave their home communities in search of appropriate housing. It is widely recognized that social networks are an essential component of successful aging and requiring older persons to leave their communities and friends severs lifelong ties with friends, clergy, physicians and other persons important to the lives of older Nova Scotians.

The Royal Canadian Legion has taken this concern seriously and is actively pursuing the development of a housing complex in Beaver Bank that will support persons as they age. We invite the Province of Nova Scotia to acknowledge this as a growing need and respond by developing more subsidized housing units that will support older Nova Scotians to age as close to their home community as possible.

Palliative Care Options. Supporting people to die in comfort is recognized as an important component of health care in Nova Scotia. In spite of this, there are still health districts that do not have formal palliative care services. District 3, for example, currently has a part-time palliative care nurse and a physician who consults on palliative cases. While this is a good start, it is inadequate for a rural district with 80,000 residents, a high percentage of whom are in their senior years.

This district has a small committee that has pursued the option of building a free-standing hospice. They have committed to building the hospice if the government will provide 90 per cent of the funding required to operate the facility. Throughout the world, a free-standing hospice is recognized as a high-quality, cost-effective way of delivering palliative care. In a province where the residents could benefit from this option it has the wholehearted support of the Royal Canadian Legion of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

We understand that there is some willingness on the part of the provincial government to provide funding to cover some of the operating costs of a free-standing hospice. We urge the provincial government to take this on as a pilot project. Allow this initiative to establish a model that can, if successful - and it will be successful - provide a template for delivery of palliative care in other rural areas of Nova Scotia. I thank you.

THE CHAIR: You've just heard the presentation from Mr. Barnes. Does anyone have any questions on that presentation before we move on?

JERRY PYE: Thank you, Mr. Barnes. I do note that you made a very important request with respect to seniors' housing, particularly in rural Nova Scotia. When I was down the South Shore about a couple of weeks ago, actually I had met with a number of

seniors in the outlying communities around Liverpool, Bridgewater and in that general area. I was absolutely surprised to see approximately an 80-year-old woman who, in fact, had indicated that she had put her application in some four years ago for seniors' housing and still didn't have a facility available for her. In fact, you're absolutely correct, she may even have to move out of the community and she lived in the lower part of the Liverpool area and may have to move to Bridgewater in order to get a facility. It's a very, very important issue.

The need for care and you talked specifically about care, but in-home supports there's a real need for many seniors and veterans as well in the communities and that doesn't only exist in rural Nova Scotia but it exists in the metro area as well. It seems to be that a decision has been made by the government - and I shouldn't say by the government, because that's wrong, so I'll take that back - by the providers of the home care services to reduce the number of hours of home care that people have been accustomed to receiving and they're losing that as well.

It's a very good report, Mr. Chairman, and I don't know if this is the appropriate time to bring this up but I would say to you that I would so move, if it's okay with my colleagues on the committee, that this report from Mr. Barnes be sent to the Minister of Health.

THE CHAIR: You're making that a motion?

JERRY PYE: I so move.

THE CHAIR: You've heard the motion from Mr. Pye and seconded by Russell MacKinnon, is there any discussion on the motion?

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

The motion is carried.

Mr. MacKinnon.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Mr. Chairman, a few questions for our presenters and I thank them as well for their presentation. You focused on rural Nova Scotia. Do you have any statistical breakdown or figures to show where the greatest need is in rural Nova Scotia, do you have it county by county or do you have it in certain regions, particularly for veterans?

VICTOR BARNES: I don't have that information. I could probably get it. Mostly the information I have is from down in the area that I come from because that's where we're trying to put this hospice in, which would be the first one east of Montreal. If we could get this underway as a test project and then get them spread around Nova Scotia, where they're sorely needed, it would be a great help. A hospice, I don't know whether you know it, is a

place where a person goes to die. They go to die in peace and they go to die with their family, because their family can visit them 24-hours a day. Do you understand where I'm coming from? It is sorely needed, sorely needed in this province. I can only speak of my district right now but we want this to spread everywhere.

[9:15 a.m.]

RUSSELL MACKINNON: You indicated that the provincial government was prepared to fund this project, is that correct?

VICTOR BARNES: No. The committee itself is trying to elicit funds to put the building up. That's already underway.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: How many will it house?

VICTOR BARNES: I think it was 10. They would have their own room, there would be a kitchen, the whole lot for them. It's all laid out in the former Hansard. I got a copy of it the other day in the mail.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: The total cost?

VICTOR BARNES: Of building the hospice?

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Yes and operating.

VICTOR BARNES: I think it's up around \$5 million but that cost is going to be supplied by the community. What we're asking the government to do is to commit themselves to paying 90 per cent of the operating costs. If you stop to think about it, I don't have all the figures with me but it's about \$179 a day to keep a person in a hospice versus \$1,100 to \$1,200 a day to keep that same person in the hospital. There's a big difference.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: How many veterans are there in the province who would be in need of this type of institution that you could safely argue? I know you're speaking for your area.

VICTOR BARNES: Veterans and seniors I'm speaking but I really don't know how many there are in the province. I know it's growing constantly.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: And is the federal government contributing a certain percentage into this as well?

VICTOR BARNES: Through Veterans Affairs they would, yes.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: What percentage of the \$5 million would they put in?

VICTOR BARNES: I don't expect they would put anything in the \$5 million because that's being raised around the communities. They have gone to all the businesses

and everybody else around the community and to the individuals, we're all contributing. That's how we're trying to get the building up.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: Again, thank you for your presentation. It just shows and emphasizes the work that the Legion is becoming involved in. I understand with the increased cost and the burden on the Legions across the province and I'm amazed to see that you're in here not just advocating for veterans but you're talking about needs for caregivers, you're talking about seniors' housing, daycare options. It just shows, and I hope it reflects over to government that this is an important issue and it's something that we really need to address, especially the housing needs. I think I've heard it and every MLA here in the committee knows that seniors want to stay in their own community.

I'm wondering if you can just expand a little bit on the Legion's initiative on developing the seniors' complex, is it, in Beaver Bank, could you elaborate a little bit on that?

VICTOR BARNES: You could probably help me here, Jack, but there is the existing hospital out there. Right now, I think it's just the Scotia Nursing Home and they came to us with this project. They approached us and we just leaped right aboard it, because it's sorely needed. What they're going to do is to expand this hospital out there, and there will be three phases of the hospital. If a person and his wife were to move into one section of that hospital, they would get a two-room apartment or a one-room apartment, whichever they wanted, one or two bedroom. If one of those persons got very sick, they could just be shifted to another part of the hospital. They would still be together; if it was the man, the man would be in another part of the hospital, the woman would still be there and she could visit him. Then when it turned bad, there is still the third section that they could go into. So they could go through the whole thing right in that one facility.

This is what has been brought forward to us. We have another meeting coming up on this very shortly. We're extremely interested in it and I think, to be completely honest with you, they approached us for this and it's a good idea and we got on it because they can get a lot of free money, apparently, from the federal government, with the Legion involved. This is basically why we're involved. We don't have the funds to give them to do it. But we are going to be allotted so many beds for veterans and it will be up to us to keep those filled. A lot of it is just in the beginning stages but it's a start. It's going to take a while.

DAVID WILSON: I definitely commend you for getting into the housing issue, especially in Nova Scotia. Right across the country, it's an important need, so I commend you on that.

The other question is, as I said in the opening, you kind of expanded your role as a Legion in the communities across the province. One thing you mentioned was about access to equipment and that. I know that a lot of the people in our communities have needs, especially with equipment, disabled people or seniors have been coming to the Legions.

What kind of effect is that having on the programs you deliver when you have people in the community coming to the Legions for this equipment?

VICTOR BARNES: We're able to supply quite a bit of equipment, some of our Legions have an awful pile of it. I know my own Legion has 15 wheelchairs and they go to anybody, you don't have to be a Legionnaire for them. If you're a sick person and you need a wheelchair you get it, you just sign for it and it comes back. The Kentville Legion, I don't know how much, I forget - \$20,000 they spent for just one hospital bed for severely disabled people who can't move and have to have special things.

All of the Legions across this province are supplying different things in different ways like TENS units to the hospitals, buying hospital equipment, just as much as they can. I think you'll find the Legions are involved in just about every faction there is when it concerns health, seniors, veterans.

DAVID WILSON: That's great, I think it's something this committee needs to maybe do a little more to promote the diversity of the programs that the Legion provides, you're not just there for the veterans, so I commend you on that. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Gentlemen, welcome here this morning, I'm very pleased to hear what you have to say. I'm a representative of two Legions, the Gaetz Brook Legion and the Ship Harbour Legion on the Eastern Shore. I have quite a relationship as quite often, as MLA, I have to call on the Legion for support for the community when government is not able to meet certain social needs.

The last meeting we had Veterans Affairs Canada here, I had questioned at that time about the support they were giving to veterans or veterans' spouses and/or families. They had told me - they gave me their cards, and unfortunately I didn't bring them, but you probably have them - that they have the liaison officer in every zone and if there was an issue in which we couldn't deal with, that we were to contact the liaison officer.

I have at times, actually, contacted the liaison officer and we've met in the hospital with a veteran and worked through that process. I think they worked fairly well and we did achieve a certain goal of getting this gentleman from one - you know, the whole scenario. My question to you is, what is federal Veterans Affairs lacking, what aspect of their work is not fulfilling the needs of a veteran, their family or their spouse? In other words, do they not already provide funding for a veteran if he or she needs to go to the hospital? Do they not already supplement that? I'm a little confused on what they don't do that is lacking in the process. Do you understand what I mean?

VICTOR BARNES: Yes.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Like snow shovelling. On the Eastern Shore one of the biggest things we have with the veterans and their families, because of their age and because of

their health condition, they are unable to get the shovelling done. When a veteran on the Eastern Shore wants to go to the nursing home, they go in whether they be a veteran or not. Does Veterans Affairs not pay for that cost for the veteran?

VICTOR BARNES: A portion thereof. If a veteran goes into the hospital - I have a lot of dealings with the veterans hospital in Middleton and I have for years and I've sat on their board. They get a pension and so much of their pension has to be paid in and the rest is paid for them. So they're allowed quite a bit of money left over for themselves, it depends on what it is.

How it's run is the lowest province in Canada or the province that requires the least from the veteran, is the one they use as a plan for all hospitals, do you understand where I'm coming from? They all have to pay so much and the last I heard it was around \$700-some-odd for each one. That comes out of their pension and the rest they're left to keep. Mind you, there is still lots of stuff that needs to be done.

You were talking about VIP, Veterans Independence Program. They have quite a few people on the Veterans Independence Program, they've just revamped the program, I think this is about the third time in two years they revamped it again and it included the ladies. At one point in time, if the man passed away, the lady was stuck, everything went with him into the grave. Now they have left it with the ladies.

In cases where a person doesn't qualify for the Veterans Independence Program, you will find if they contact the Legion, the Legion will get somebody out there to do it for them. I know that's what happens out my way, I know it happens out Jack's way.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Just in conversation, it seems to me that the local Legions are filling the gaps. To me, there should be a strong policy in which manner that the veterans and the spouses of veterans should be treated. We almost should have that policy there that when there's an issue we should be able to say okay, I know this issue would be covered under Veterans Affairs, bang, clear as mud to me. Unfortunately, that's not the way it is because I'm always searching to find out what is covered, what isn't covered, so of course . . .

WILLIAM ESTABROOKS: Clear as glass.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Mud is the other one. The thing is I always have to go back to the Legion to have them fill in the gaps. I'll just tell you a little story, as well, that disturbed me not too long ago. I was speaking . . .

THE CHAIR: Mr. Dooks, if we could be rather concise, we have two other presentations and I don't want to cut anybody off but if we could just make the questions as concise as we could so we can move along.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I seem to be on a roll this morning, I apologize for that. Here's the question, I would like to know exactly what Veterans Affairs

Canada provides for our veterans and our veterans' spouses? I would like to know what are the main problems that our veterans are facing so that I could identify them and work with that? If it's housing, if it's show shovelling, if it's whatever because I'm so unclear about that whole issue. So, as a Provincial Command or Dominion Command, you must have the five basic issues in which Veterans Affairs is not serving you well.

VICTOR BARNES: All that information is available through Veterans Affairs, sir. If you wish, I'll get Frank to obtain copies. If everybody else would like copies, we'll get everybody copies because all of that information is available. It is constantly changing because we are constantly going after them for change. We have a convention coming up and have resolutions that go to our convention, that eventually go to the Dominion convention which is next year, and they go after the government from there and VAC. So we're constantly after them, constantly looking for changes.

Another big change that just came through not too long ago - especially good for veterans - that a veteran with a pension, I believe, over 48 per cent - a war veteran now has all medical expenses paid for them, but I'm waiting until they include ex-service personnel in that and then I'll have everything paid for.

There is still a lot of things that I find hard to deal with, a lot of things they won't listen to you on, I could tell you a few stories, even on my own case.

[9:30 a.m.]

WILLIAM DOOKS: Those are the stories I'm looking for because these are the stories that I hear in my constituency and this is why I'm rather confused this morning. When I hear certain stories, I like to know that indeed the people are following appropriate policy, if those things are in place for the veterans, whatever. I'm just going to be one second and then I'll shut her down.

THE CHAIR: Don't forget to thank your producer, George Canyon, and the Lord before you finish, Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I do respect you, sir. A veteran passed away in our community the other day, a very well-respected person. His wish was to have the Union Jack draped over his coffin. The Legion made that possible. At the end of the ceremony, the Union Jack was presented to the veteran's spouse. Later on, the Legion that had ordered that particular flag from a place was billed for that flag for that veteran. Of all the things I've heard and all the things that we've tried to do, to me that was very disrespectful. As a matter of fact, they would want the Legion to go to the spouse and pay for the flag but instead the Legion, in their good graces, will pay for the flag themselves. These are the stories that are still out there.

VICTOR BARNES: We're always doing that, sir.

WILLIAM DOOKS: But you understand how that sounds.

FRANK FUDGE: Mr. Dooks, to answer one of your questions, one of the problems that we are having with Veterans Affairs is the lack of counsellors. We do not have sufficient counsellors in this province to take care of the veterans. The counsellors we have, their clients are double and in some cases triple of what is required. If you're going to pursue anything with Veterans Affairs, possibly that more money would come into the areas so that we can have more counsellors to look after our veterans and the seniors, as well as reduce the areas they have to travel. Do you realize that some of our counsellors from the Sydney office have to travel as far away as Antigonish and Sheet Harbour to take care of the veterans in that area?

VICTOR BARNES: That's a resolution that we have going through to Dominion Command from this Command.

FRANK FUDGE: That is our biggest problem.

WILLIAM DOOKS: This is what I was trying to search out and I thank you for that. Because if we have enough counsellors then, of course, they will be able to deal with veterans' issues a lot better. Thank you very much and this time has been well spent, Mr. Chairman, because that was the answer I was looking for, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. MacKinnon would like to have one short final question.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Mr. Chairman, I crunched the numbers on the \$179 a day times 10 times 365, and the total revenue would be about \$657,000. I would think that the operating cost would be much more. So maybe you want to comment on the differential there. Secondly, there is a lot of pressure on Legions because of declining memberships, as veterans pass on. That has an impact on the revenues, obviously, and your ability to raise money. I noticed that Legions are relying a little more on some of these VLTs than they did in the past. What's your thought on that?

VICTOR BARNES: My thought on VLTs, sir, is I hate them. I don't want any part of them and I wouldn't use one, I wouldn't put a penny into one, but that's my opinion. If the VLTs disappear, we all know they're going to go underground, I don't think that could be stopped, regardless, and then nobody will get any profits from them. If the VLTs disappear, so are a lot of the Legions. I'm really sad to say that it has come to the Legions that they have to use that money to be able to continue supporting the organization in the communities that they're giving their money to. That's going to come to a stop.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: And the \$657,000 - well, the \$180 a day . . .

VICTOR BARNES: I don't want to get into too much in figures because I really don't know them that well. But as I said, I think all those figures are in that last Hansard, the one that I received in the mail the other day.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Okay, sure. That's fine, I can take it on notice.

VICTOR BARNES: I think all those figures are in the back of that because there was that much in the back on the hospice. It had every detail possible in the back of that.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: That's fine, I'll take that.

THE CHAIR: It's in the annual report I believe it was. I would just like to ask a couple short ones myself and then we'll move on to the next report. I would like to commend you on your initiative to create a hospice. When you have your convention or you go to your district Command meeting, or wherever, and you're going to put resolutions through, I think the word that government seems to be focused on in the last few years is "partnerships" and if you're raising \$5 million in your community, then I believe it behooves the federal government to come onside and the province to come onside with their dollars too, because there aren't too many projects out there today that the community is putting in \$5 million. So I commend you for that, sir.

VICTOR BARNES: I like your train of thought, sir.

THE CHAIR: The other one, on the VIP program. It's something that I've run into personally with a constituent in my area and the lady's husband, who was a veteran, never applied for the VIP program, so now he is deceased and she is elderly - he was deceased at a young age, she just said he was too proud to apply for anything. They have never been on the program, so she tried to apply and they said, well, since you were never on the program, you can't get on the program. But she is definitely the widow of a deceased veteran.

VICTOR BARNES: We're trying to change that, sir.

THE CHAIR: So I hope maybe that's something that you can change. The final thing, sir, kind of bothered me. In Section 5, about ". . . required items may be available on loan . . . due to liability . . .", a problem with insurance. I am dealing with that now, insurance with the school boards for our gymnasiums after school and whatnot, not being available. I'm wondering if a letter to the insurance brokers - and I'm not picking on them, but . . .

VICTOR BARNES: We are.

THE CHAIR: . . . when I contacted the insurance brokers in Nova Scotia, here in Halifax, they were only too willing to co-operate to try to help to create a new policy, to create some kind of an amendment or a rider on policies and work with the school board. I'm bringing the school board and the insurance brokers together at a meeting coming up shortly, so I'm wondering if either we write a letter to the insurance brokers and have you meet with them - I mean if you can't loan medical equipment to somebody without liability insurance, there is something wrong somewhere.

I'm just wondering if maybe the insurance brokers would - and I'm sure they would - co-operate with the Legion and try to resolve that because that one there sticks in my craw

and if I can't loan you a set of crutches or a wheelchair or you're going to get in trouble by loaning my sick brother or relative a wheelchair from the Legion and you're going to be held liable for that, then I believe that's something we better address. I'm just wondering what does the committee think, should we write a letter to the Insurance Bureau or ask somebody to meet with us, or how would you like to have that done?

Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, if I could make a comment. Assistive devices or technical aids is something that should be administered by the province with the support of agencies and if the Legion happens to be one of those agencies, then I think there should be some sort of a letter sent off to the minister responsible for implementing a technical aids program with the assistance of agencies out in the community. That would be my advice to you rather than going directly to the insurance companies. If that were appropriate then other members of the committee can certainly discuss it but I've been involved in this issue for a long time. I've actually asked a government of the day to set up a pilot project with respect to technical aids and assistive devices. The government always, at that particular time, indicated that there were not enough resources.

Fortunately, maybe, in this budget, with the additional revenues from the offshore and the additional health dollars that come through the CHST transfers then, in fact, there is the possibility that they might entertain a program but if we as committee members were to send off a letter saying that we have heard from the Legions of Nova Scotia with respect to some of the concerns that they have around technical aids, wheelchairs, crutches or whatever the items might be or assistive devices, then you might want to talk to the Legions about this and I think that that's the first step and there might be some room for movement in there.

So I just offer that as some advice but will not make it as a motion; I think some other member should make it as a motion.

THE CHAIR: We'll discuss it. Maybe if we do arrive at the point where we decide to send a letter, maybe with the permission of the Legion ask that the Legions be included, to utilize all the equipment that they presently have and that's quite a valuable monetary input by the Legions to assist the province in doing this.

JERRY PYE: I just want to elaborate that it would go further than the Legions, in fairness, it would go to the Red Cross, and I've often wanted this technical aids program to be administered by disabled persons so that they best know the kind of technical devices and assistive devices that the individual would need, because each individual is specialized to a special need. Just because you have wheelchairs doesn't mean that it's going to fit the needs of that individual who wants a wheelchair. There are some special and particular needs with respect to design. That's all I would offer, as some advice.

THE CHAIR: You would be the authority on that, Mr. Pye, yes. Does anyone else have any comments? Mr. MacKinnon.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: If I could, by extension, Mr. Chairman. One other thing, by sending a letter off to the appropriate minister and department, it will force the province to have better accountability for their inventory. I believe if anyone around this table were to check with the Department of Community Services, they are not able to tell you how many wheelchairs they have in their inventory, when they send out to various clients and so on and there is no longer a use for that chair, they don't keep track of how many wheelchairs are owned by the province. I think this may help, not only the Legion, but all those who are in need.

THE CHAIR: Is the committee agreed that we should send a letter out on that and be proactive in the approach to doing that?

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye, you brought up the subject and you're the authority on it - well, you have actual experience because of your physical condition and maybe you would consider making the motion or any one of the members can do so too.

JERRY PYE: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. I had not intended to make the motion but I certainly will make the motion, in the swiftness of time, for the committee. I would so move that a letter be drafted to the minister responsible. You all know the contents of the letter.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Pye. Mr. MacKinnon has raised his hand that he will second the motion. 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.

Thank you, Mr. Barnes, for your report. We will now move on to Mr. Jack Hatcher, Honorary Treasurer.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, I guess I will be going to the other end of the spectrum, from seniors to youth. My report is a follow-up to the report that I gave just a little over a year ago to this committee.

The National Track and Field Championships will be held in Edmonton, Alberta, August 5 to August 12, 2005. This will be the 28th year of our national competition which is open to young athletes aged between 12 and 17. With the full support of Dominion Command and Athletics Canada, the event has proven to be a stepping stone for young athletes to Canada, Commonwealth, World and Olympic Games. This year, again, we hope to send 38 athletes, four chaperones and three coaches to this event at a cost of \$63,500. In addition to this, the athletes pay for their uniforms and necessities at an approximate cost of another \$11,250.

It is noted that since the games in August 2004, there is hardly a week that goes by without media reports indicating Nova Scotia track and field athletes excelling in breaking both provincial and national records, with most of these athletes having attended the Legion National Track and Field competitions. Next year, in 2006, the nationals will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, and it is doubtful that this will be able to sponsor the number of athletes as in past years.

Over the past year we have gone out to businesses and the provincial government requesting assistance to offset these costs, with no favourable response. We are asking again for your suggestions and support in finding some type of financial aid so we may continue to send these young, Nova Scotia ambassadors to the Legion National Track and Field Program. Other provinces, Mr. Chairman, seem to be able to do this, why can't we?

It is upsetting to the Legion people and to some of these athletes at what it costs and the costs seem to be escalating every year and we just can't keep up with it. I know the last time we were here, you people asked us to approach businesses and we did that, with no response at all. You suggested that we go to Sport Nova Scotia, we did that and they came back and told us to go to Athletics Nova Scotia. I sit on the board of Athletics Nova Scotia and there is just not the funds there to help support this program. This is a very important program and if you have been reading the sports pages in the newspaper, the last six months or so, you will note, as I've said in the report, that Nova Scotia athletes are excelling and we are not supporting them at all. Mr. Chairman, that is my report.

[9:45 a.m.]

VICTOR BARNES: If you just look at it for a minute, if we lose these sports that the Legion is supporting solely, it's gone, there will be no more athletes from Nova Scotia going to any meets. We're the sole supporters of it and we can't afford it anymore. We're barely hanging on.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, I gave out a little brochure that's put out by Legion National, it's a good brochure, it's a bit outdated. I think this brochure came out in 1994 but it still gives you all of the pertinent information required for the program.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Jack. The first person who would like to have a few questions is Mr. Graham.

DANNY GRAHAM: I don't have a mic, so I'll just lean in to Mr. Pye's mic, thank you. Welcome this morning. I've enjoyed the presentation and this element of it, in particular, is of great interest but first, I think you should be congratulated for the work that you've done in this area. We have a proud history in Nova Scotia of athletics of all varieties. You've managed to support the athletics, the big "A" athletics for some period of time. We recognize your limited ability to continue to do it without some recognition or support. It's wonderful that you've been able to do it for as long as you have.

Mr. Chairman, in the spirit of the letters that we have spoken about this morning and in the spirit of trying to find some constructive support and help for this, I think it would be valuable for this committee to send a letter off to the Minister of Health Promotion urging him, on behalf of this committee, to strongly support, or examine ways to strongly support, the initiatives that you're undertaking. The Office of Health Promotion has spoken extensively about enhancing its commitment to sports and athletics and this is precisely the kind of thing it would appear that fits under that umbrella. Whatever we can do as committee members, and I'm sitting in for one of my caucus colleagues today, I think may help in some way. So this is a constructive suggestion to try to provide some support and I congratulate you.

Mr. Chairman, I would put that in the form of a motion that a letter go off to the Minister of Health Promotion, searching for ways to strongly support the activities, financially, and ensure that this long tradition continues with the partnership of the Legions as we go forward.

THE CHAIR: That motion was seconded by Mr. Pye. Any discussion?

Mr. Estabrooks.

BILL ESTABROOKS: I think that it would be appropriate, Mr. Graham. Would it be appropriate that we ask Health Promotion to at least designate funds for the uniforms of these kids? I'm taken aback by the fact - if I look back many years ago, when I went to the Legion games, I didn't pay for my own uniform. If I may ask that question, is this now typical across the country? If you look at these athletes, they have to dig into their pockets for \$300 to wear a Nova Scotia uniform and he wears it once. In other provinces, that's not the case, is it?

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, if I may. As you go across the country, you'll find that it differs in every province. Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and I believe B.C., the uniforms are provided by the Legion and different phases of the Legion. In Alberta I know that the Ladies Auxiliary and in Ontario the Ladies Auxiliary provide the uniforms for the athletes. Nova Scotia has a Ladies Auxiliary but they're not connected to Provincial Command where in the other provinces they are. I don't know about Newfoundland and P.E.I., where they get theirs, but I know those provinces.

BILL ESTABROOKS: If I may, and it's up to the mover of the motion, but I would think that we should request - a friendly amendment, Danny - that the Office of Health Promotion provide the uniforms for these young men and women who are representing our province.

DANNY GRAHAM: I would welcome that friendly amendment under the circumstances. I would like to have a sense, I think the number was 50 or 60 athletes at a cost of \$300 per uniform.

JACK HATCHER: There would be 45, because the coaches and the chaperones would have to have the same uniforms. It would be 45 total. It would cost approximately \$250.

THE CHAIR: Are we limiting ourselves when we request this money from Health Promotion asking if they will provide the uniforms, are we giving them a way to limit the funding that they would supply?

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Mr. Chairman, if I may. That's a very important point. Although the friendly amendment is quite admirable, we must not forget that the Gaming Corporation provided \$4 million to the Gaming Foundation to help with health promotion and healthy living and healthy lifestyles. That money is not being used for the purpose for which it was intended.

I think it would be unfair to lock our guests here into just providing the funds for that because that hardly begets the interest on that money for a certain percentage of the year. I think the government would be getting off extremely easy, notwithstanding the fact that the funding that's provided to the Office of Health Promotion, which is the overseer of Sport Nova Scotia and Athletics Nova Scotia. I'm not so sure this amendment would be in the best interest of the issue in general. That's not to take away from the spirit of what you're intending. So I'd be a little reserved about supporting it, to lock us in on that.

THE CHAIR: Okay, we're back to Mr. Graham and then Mr. Estabrooks.

DANNY GRAHAM: Just to respond to the suggestions that have been around the table, I think that this puts something more concrete on the table. Mr. Pye and I were just speaking about the concern that the Office of Health Promotion may see this as a limit. I think any letter that we would send forth would suggest that this is a minimum, it's not intended to limit the level of overall co-operation that they should do. I think that may have been the spirit in which the suggestion came forward from Mr. Estabrooks.

BILL ESTABROOKS: I would withdraw the friendly amendment with the advice of Mr. MacKinnon because it would tie the hands of potential dollars. But I think it is of some significance that it's drawn to the appropriate minister's attention that this is an example of what has been happening, that these athletes, coaches and chaperones have to provide their own uniforms. That's an embarrassment. So I would specifically want, if I may, Mr. Graham, to withdraw it as a friendly amendment. Let's coach it in terms of overall commitment to these kids.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Estabrooks. If I might add my two cents' worth, with my dealings - and some of my colleagues are tired of me mentioning this - but I have three champions in my constituency: one is a champion gold medal boxer, one is a gold medal weightlifter, and the other lady is out West, she's No. 13 on the list, you have to get

to No. 12 in order to be paid for on the National Speed Skating Championships and to go to the Olympics.

That girl, had she gone with Saskatchewan and skated for Saskatchewan, it would have been all expenses paid. But because she's loyal to Nova Scotia, she's out there in Saskatchewan, she takes four hours training in the run of a day; then she does four hours in college; then she does four hours work; gets about four hours sleep; and then comes back down to practise again. The very athletes that she's living and practising with, this is their full-time job. They practise all day long, then they have physiotherapy and the best of coaches.

This kid is trying to raise money and go to college at the same time and compete with professional athletes - for being loyal. So if I can't get money for winners, how can we get money for anybody else? I must finish by saying that I read in the paper that the Office of Health Promotion, the first initial funding to the new sports complex down in Port Hawkesbury was \$500,000. I understand there was a couple more hundred thousand given the week that it opened. I quote that because if they have that kind of money to give to a new facility, and rightly so, it's from the Office of Health Promotion and this has a walking track and two ice surfaces and that's great, but what about the rest of us?

So I have no qualms and that's why I say, let's not restrict our request to the province for that. If we've got athletes out there paying their own shot, paying their own travel, buying their own uniforms, it's downloaded right down to the very basics onto the parents and enough is enough. If the money is there, let's have it fair for everybody, that's my take on it.

VICTOR BARNES: I think, sir, if some of you were to see the actions of these kids who go out West and go to these sports organizations, it would shock everybody. They paint their noses blue, they come out wearing Nova Scotian flags, they cheer on every other province in the place, it's the only organization that does it. You have to be so proud of these kids who go out there. You know, they don't complain about a darn thing and they just represent Nova Scotia better than anybody I've ever seen.

THE CHAIR: And like a flag they are left to blow in the wind, though, that's the problem.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, if I may. Just to add to what I've already reported, it's to be noted that this province, to the best of my knowledge, has two fields for track and field that will meet Olympic standards, Met field in Sackville and Beazley field in Dartmouth. However, the facilities that go with those fields leave a lot to be desired.

I have attended the last six years at nationals for the Legion and every year people say, when can we come to Nova Scotia? It has been pretty near 20-odd years since they've been in Nova Scotia. We cannot accommodate 400 track and field youths for a competition

in Nova Scotia. The two fields we have in Dartmouth and in Sackville do not have any accommodations or there are no accommodations handy enough to look after that many athletes. We should have our own field - wherever it happens to be - in Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Final comments to Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I think what Mr. Hatcher brings before the committee is an issue that could best be addressed by the Halifax Regional Municipality, with respect to providing the recreational services and facilities. I think we should send a letter off - and I so move - to the Halifax Regional Municipality, citing the discrepancies that Mr. Hatcher has indicated to the committee, with respect to the conditions of the recreation facilities and ask HRM if, in fact, they are committed to upgrading the facilities so that we can entertain some of the sports activities put on by the Nova Scotia Legions.

THE CHAIR: Before we can entertain that, we have a motion by Mr. Graham, seconded by yourself. Mr. Wilson would also like to speak on that motion.

DAVID WILSON: A comment on the first motion. Definitely, I've seen the need over the years and it was not too long ago that I was involved with track and field. It wasn't that long ago . . .

BILL ESTABROOKS: You were a pole vaulter, right?

DAVID WILSON: Unfortunately, I didn't make it to the Legions but I was fortunate enough to make it to the Canada Games.

BILL ESTABROOKS: Did you pay for your own uniform?

DAVID WILSON: We did not pay for our uniforms then and it's just appalling to know that the funding, especially toward Sport Nova Scotia and Athletics Nova Scotia had really dropped and they're unable to meet the needs of our young athletes in the province. It's just appalling to me and I definitely want to support this initial motion and definitely look forward to a response from the government.

THE CHAIR: If I could just make a comment - I'll make the comment after the motion.

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

The motion is carried.

My comment is when I did meet with Sport Nova Scotia, I was informed that their total budget was \$24,000. I was also informed that there is in the vicinity of 66 legitimate organizations involved in sport in Nova Scotia and 66 organizations vying for a \$24,000 budget, which doesn't allow Sport Nova Scotia to give at least \$1,000 to any one of these organizations.

Also, I understand that they get \$2,000 given to the Nova Scotia Boxing Commission and out of that \$2,000 there is something like 70 boxing clubs. It works about to be in the vicinity of \$60 to \$70 for each club, that's the reality of it when it comes down to figures that I have been told. Unless somebody else can dispute those figures, that's what I'll stand by. So there's the situation and like I said, I'm fighting the get active, healthy living and the very facilities that we have - our gymnasiums and whatnot - close them on one hand and go use them on the other hand. That's where I'm coming from on that.

Are we finished on that? Mr. Pye, you wanted to do something? Mr. Graham.

DANNY GRAHAM: On that \$24,000 figure, I think there may be a different figure out there and you and I can have a discussion about that later on.

THE CHAIR: That came from the gentleman at Sport Nova Scotia on South Park Street, I went to his office. Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Did we support the motion that's on the floor?

THE CHAIR: Yes, we just cleared that motion on the floor, we just voted on it. You were talking about sending a letter?

[10:00 a.m.]

JERRY PYE: Yes, and I already so moved. I think the clerk might have made note of the motion that I originally put forward. It was just to send a letter to the Halifax Regional Municipality, address it to His Worship, as a matter of fact, also citing both fields that were mentioned here today.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: As I second that, Mr. Chairman, we would be sure to cc a copy of that letter to all HRM councillors. I've heard complaints where letters have been written to the Mayor's office but the councillors, for whatever reason, have been excluded on particular issues.

THE CHAIR: The mover concurs with that, so that's fine. You've heard that second motion. Any discussion on the second motion?

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

The motion is carried.

Thank you, Mr. Hatcher, for your report.

JERRY PYE: Will committee members see a copy of those letters prior to the letters being sent out?

THE CHAIR: If you so wish we can, before I sign them. We can bring them to the next meeting or they could be e-mailed to the members of the committee.

JERRY PYE: We might want to contact you with respect to language changes or some suggestions. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will do that then. What we'll do, when you receive an e-mail copy of the letter, I'll ask that we put a five- or three-day maximum to respond.

JERRY PYE: Three days.

THE CHAIR: Three days to respond and with no response, I'll sign the letter as it is drafted. If we get responses we include them and then I will sign it. We'll move on to Mr. Fudge.

FRANK FUDGE: Mr. Chairman, just to explain my report, don't be afraid, I'm not going to read the whole thing. The only thing that is pertinent about the report is the last five pages will be a confirmation between SOCAN, myself and Dominion Command. The 21 pages in the middle contain references that you can review at your leisure and I will address the first page, which you already have in front of you.

In 1997, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command - then Nova Scotia Command - met with Mr. James Siller of the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada, SOCAN, to discuss the problems between the branches and SOCAN. The problems were that some branches were paying the costing of SOCAN and others were not. They requested that Command instruct our branches to make the normal payments to SOCAN.

During this meeting we requested that SOCAN understand that the Royal Canadian Legion is a non-profit organization and we requested that steps be undertaken to recognize this. SOCAN's stand was that the Legion develops a profit across the bar and therefore are in the same category as bars and restaurants across the province.

Upon conclusion of that meeting and several other meetings since 1997, the end result was still the same. We have written letters to the head office, Mr. Rock, without response right up to today; we have had Dominion Command send off letters to SOCAN with the same results.

In a letter to Dominion Command we requested that they pursue SOCAN with the intent that they recognize the Royal Canadian Legion is a non-profit organization that provides numerous services to the community. In 2004, Dominion Command of the Royal Canadian Legion approached SOCAN once again, to request that they reconsider the category of the branches of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Mr. Laurence Godfrey of SOCAN - you will see on the last five pages the communication between them and the Royal Canadian Legion, Dominion Command - was quite receptive to the Royal Canadian Legion becoming eligible for licensing under Tariff No. 21- which is special community events and you can see it on the next page, Paragraph 3, especially agriculture societies or similar community organizations which are non-profit. He was quite receptive to the idea; however, to date it has not been approved.

We would like to request your assistance with Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command to encourage SOCAN to recognize the Royal Canadian Legion as a not-for-profit organization and understand that we give our money back to the community to support our veterans and the community itself.

We hope that they will understand and recognize that we should be licensed under Tariff No. 21. That is the gist of my report. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Frank. Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: This issue has been floating around a long time and most of us, as MLAs, have dealt with it one on one with our Legion. I would like to quickly make a motion in support of their request on that. I don't know how much debate we need on that. We know it's wrong for them to charge the Legion and we recognize the work the Legions do in our community. I so move the motion.

CECIL O'DONNELL: I second the motion.

THE CHAIR: A motion has been made by Mr. Dooks, seconded by Cecil. Discussion on the motion. Mr. MacKinnon.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: I would like to make a brief comment on that. If we're hoping to help wean Legions off VLTs, I think it's only appropriate we find methods that are consistent with the motion that's before us here today. I think SOCAN should be aware of that, particularly with all the social ills that are associated as you and Mr. Barnes have indicated. I wanted to put that point on the record because VLTs are a very serious issue, I know I keep coming back to it, but here is an excellent opportunity. Legions are doing something good for the community in so many ways. I know fire departments in my constituency - I have 14 volunteer fire departments - and now they are being, in some cases, for lack of a better phrase, harassed by SOCAN on this issue. It is very difficult to be a volunteer organization of any nature in this province these days. I think we owe it to these individuals and their organization today to support this motion.

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

The motion is carried.

Any further discussion to come before the committee? Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: I would just make a comment since I have Mr. Hatcher, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Fudge before us. When I did some outreach a couple of weeks ago, I attended a Legion and this year being the Year of the Veteran, I noticed that Veterans Affairs sent Members of the Legislative Assembly a packet of pins - I believe there were some 50 pins in the packet - honouring the Year of the Veteran. However, when I attended the Legion,

the Legions had not received any of these and it was the first time that they had actually seen them.

Since the Legions are closer to the veterans than we, as politicians, are, I would have thought that the Legions would be the first to receive such lapel pins or honorary mementoes to veterans, so they could have at least had the opportunity to hand them out to them before their elected official handed it out to them. I'm wondering, is there a reason for this? I think I will pass to you, Mr. Barnes.

VICTOR BARNES: I don't think they want us to take their thunder. I don't know what else to think. (Laughter)

JERRY PYE: You can have mine.

VICTOR BARNES: No, we'll get some in the end, I'm sure. You see in front of you a design that's there on a piece of paper and this is a pin that we are putting out to recognize our veterans. Those pins will be issued only to veterans; we've ordered 10,000 of them, at no charge to the veterans. The buttons that I passed out, we've ordered 30,000 and those are for the school kids, that's who they will be going to. We just brought some today to let you see what they are and let you know what it is we are going to do with the school kids. The rest of it, I will let you know in due course. As the chairman, we have a meeting this afternoon to do with some of it, I think.

JERRY PYE: I just wanted to bring this to the attention of the committee because I think it's most unusual that we, as politicians, would receive those veteran lapel pins before veterans actually had them in their hands. I certainly think it's a slight to those veterans in the community and I don't think there's a need for us, as politicians, to grandstand on such important issues.

FRANK FUDGE: Mr. Chairman, just to provide some information to you, the Royal Canadian Legion across Canada will receive 17,000 pins to be distributed across this country. So you can imagine 17,000 being divided by the 10 provinces and the two Territories, we're not going to get that many.

We, in Nova Scotia - that pin that you have in front of you - are purchasing 10,000 of these to give to veterans, that's all we can afford. We're only going to give them to the veterans, not to the executive members or to spouses or anything else, just to the veterans.

VICTOR BARNES: Bearing in mind there are 400,000 members in Canada, 30,000 in Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Anything further? I have one final closing bit of information. Mr. MacKinnon.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Mr. Chairman, I'm not a full-time member on this committee, I'm just filling in today, and it's a question that may have been answered

already. I see our distinguished guests here today with the issue of which I'm about to ask and that is their medals. There has been an issue, quite a bit in the news lately about the sale of medals by family members.

VICTOR BARNES: I can tell you, sir, that we're dead set against it.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Okay, I just wanted to hear your thoughts on it.

VICTOR BARNES: We are certainly against it.

THE CHAIR: Finally, on behalf of Vic Barnes, he has a book that he would like to give us all a copy of and it's a book dealing with Alzheimer's and it is authored by his daughter.

VICTOR BARNES: My young sister.

THE CHAIR: Oh, I'm sorry.

VICTOR BARNES: This is quite a book. I have a copy, I hope I can get everybody in. I only brought 11 with me, I think. Anyway, my young sister married a veteran, an older man than she was, who went through dementia and then went through Alzheimer's, and died eventually of Alzheimer's. So she kept a day-by-day record of his whole existence throughout and she wrote a book called *The Long Way Home: A Journey Through Alzheimer's*. All the profits from the book go to the Alzheimer's Society. She doesn't get a penny. I got the book to the Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia to help her out. As a matter of fact, I got the book in every province in Canada by taking it up to the Dominion Command and turning a copy over to the presidents to take to their provinces.

It's a pretty fabulous book, if you want to read it. I would suggest you read it because you're going to have a lot of your constituents that are going to be in trouble and are going to need this book, believe you me, and it shows you what's going to happen. It's a day-by-day curriculum, shall we say, of everything that she went through and he went through and it can only help you with your constituents. It's not going to cost you anything, I paid for them myself, so they're free. The book sells for \$19.95 and they can be picked up at the Alzheimer's Society, but I have some that I would like to pass around.

THE CHAIR: To the committee members, while the book is being distributed, if I could just have your attention. We don't have any witnesses to come before the committee for our next meeting. Is there anybody here who may want to make a suggestion of somebody who may want to come to the next meeting?

JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, can I make a comment with respect to the publication of this book first? I think that you know that it is very nice of Mr. Barnes to provide members of this committee with a copy of the book, but I think that this book is expensive and the money that is generated goes to a very good cause, the Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia, I would imagine, and if that is the case, we can expense this item through our

legislative expenses, constituency expense account, with a receipt. I think it's only fair that we put that money to good use by giving at least \$20 to the book. I'm certainly prepared to suggest that we, as committee members, do that.

THE CHAIR: How does the committee feel?

[10:15 a.m.]

WILLIAM DOOKS: Mr. Chairman, I think that's a lovely suggestion but I think that we can deal with that independently on our own, but thank you for the suggestion. I don't think it's necessary for a motion of the committee. (Interruption) Well done, Jerry, thank you.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: Mr. Chairman, not being a full-time member of the committee, but I'm looking forward to talking about some issues that affect veterans in Nova Scotia, I believe that it would be a good idea to invite SOCAN to come before this committee to explain why they are putting pressure on Legions and Legion members across this province when it is quite obvious that they are an extremely important, valuable, volunteer organization and with all the aspects that are related to the Legion. I think it would be important for SOCAN to come and explain their side of the situation. It's quite obvious that this committee has already made a decision in that but it would be interesting to hear why SOCAN has taken the position that they have, because it not only affects Legions, it affects volunteer fire departments and many other volunteer organizations across this province.

Again, to go back to the point I made, it is extremely difficult to have volunteers and volunteer organizations continuing, particularly in rural Nova Scotia. As I've said, I have 14 volunteer fire departments and they're at the breaking point in many cases. I have two Legions, Louisbourg and Port Morien and as the Provincial Command well knows, particularly in the Port Morien situation, it was not a pleasant situation.

VICTOR BARNES: It's working well now, sir.

RUSSELL MACKINNON: If it wasn't for the fact that so many people in the community made pledges of considerable sums of money that the Legion would have been closed and we're so fortunate that it did not. So I would suggest SOCAN come before this committee.

Another potential witness or witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs to come and give some explanation about the reduction in staffing within that department. Because that was another issue that was raised here today. We're understaffed in that department, I think this committee deserves an explanation.

So I would move both of those as potential witnesses. It's entirely up to the committee.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: Just on that, I'm wondering if you could clarify the response, are you guys waiting for a response from SOCAN to put you in that category of Tariff No. 21? Is that where it's at now? They haven't definitely said no. The only thing I fear is if we call them, they'll just come and say, yes, we will. So would it be appropriate to get the letter out and hopefully get a reply quickly and maybe address it, bring it forward?

FRANK FUDGE: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, a nice letter from this committee to encourage them to place us in the Tariff No. 21 area would be quite beneficial. That would help out possibly.

THE CHAIR: We may have a motion on that in that letter.

JERRY PYE: It's already been moved.

THE CHAIR: So what's the wish of the committee then, do we invite representatives of SOCAN to come before the committee for our next meeting?

JERRY PYE: No, Veterans Affairs.

THE CHAIR: Veterans Affairs first. Let's do that.

VICTOR BARNES: Can we be a fly on the wall?

THE CHAIR: Absolutely. You can be a fly in the room, never mind on the wall, we'll give you comfortable seats in the room.

VICTOR BARNES: Thank you, sir.

JERRY PYE: It's open to the public.

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if your committee realizes it or not, but when they or somebody from their family goes out and rents a hall for a wedding reception and they're having music, they pay, in addition to the hall rental, an additional \$57.55 plus tax that goes to SOCAN.

THE CHAIR: If there is nothing else to come before the committee, then we stand adjourned and we'll be notified of the next (Interruptions) Oh, I'm sorry.

VICTOR BARNES: In closing, I must say again how much it means to Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and to all the legionnaires to be allowed to express our concerns to your committee. We fully realize that we are the only province with such a committee and for that we are truly thankful. Again, our sincere thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Vic.

We stand adjourned.

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