

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, May 10, 2005

Committee Room 1

Year of the Veteran

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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

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Office of the Year of the Veteran

Bob Fowler
Deputy Minister Designated to support the Minister Responsible for the Year of the
Veteran

Norma MacIsaac
Communications Policy Advisor

Communications Nova Scotia

Janet Sullivan
Communications Advisor



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2005

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
Gerald Sampson

THE CHAIR: It's 9:00 a.m. We'll call the meeting to order at the appointed hour and we'll welcome Mr. Bob Fowler, Deputy Minister designated to support the Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran; the other lady is Norma MacIsaac, Communications Policy Advisor, and with that we can ask the staff to introduce themselves.

I would imagine it's Janet Sullivan, Communications Advisor, coming in through the door. Welcome, Janet, and welcome to all three from the government and maybe we could begin with the introductions.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: We'll turn the meeting over to our guests and ask Mr. Fowler, or whoever is in charge of the presentation, to give us their presentation.

BOB FOWLER: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for the opportunity to be here on behalf of the Honourable Cecil Clarke, Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran. What I would like to do today is take you through a little bit of - most of it will be things that you're well aware of as members of the Legislature, but also have an opportunity to, hopefully, discuss with you a little bit about other ideas you may have that we can bring to this important year of celebrating the Year of the Veteran and certainly the events over the last week or 10 days, both in our own Legislature and also on television with the events overseas and the events last week of VE day, I think bring to all of our minds and hearts the significance of this year and the importance of that to all of those who served our country so well and those who did not come home from that.

One of the primary purposes that Veterans Affairs Canada has set out for the Year of the Veteran, in addition to a chance for the veterans to celebrate and us to celebrate them, is also the notion that we need to find a way to engage youth in the ongoing celebrations. You would know from the event in our own Legislature on April 27th, we had a class from QE II there, as well as the students, the young people who are part of the society that is committed to the memory of veterans and what veterans did for our great country and for the world. So it's very important and one of the things we focus on throughout this is how do we keep engaging youth, and obviously you, as MLAs in your communities, that's a part of this that I know is of particular importance to you and significant.

What I would like to do today is take you through a short slide presentation that you have in front of you that will set out the things that we've done or events that have happened so far, and talk a little bit about maybe some things that we're trying to look at and I would hope garner from all of you some ideas you have that we should take forward for government. I do want to point out that there is no office really for the Year of the Veteran. Government made a decision to appoint a Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran to focus our activities and, I think in beyond just a symbolic way, indicate that we are proud of our veterans and want to be proud of that celebration with those veterans.

As you would be well aware, as I understand it, we are the only Legislature in Canada that has this committee - and that's something we should celebrate as well. The decision to create the minister responsible, the Premier's deputy asked me if I would work with Minister Clarke to support him in my other hat, as Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, where in fact, as you would be aware, our relationship with the federal government is managed and/or a lot of the central activity takes place.

Norma MacIsaac, on my left - your right - is in fact a communications policy person with Intergovernmental Affairs and is working with me to work on that. Norma has responsibility for some government departments, but also brings to our office a perspective on strategic communications, which has been a tremendous asset to it. Janet Sullivan from Communications Nova Scotia has been the quarterback, the cheerleader for many of the things that we're going to talk to you about today, particular things like the Web site and some further ideas around communication.

So without further ado, what I would like to do is take you through the presentation. I'm going to ask you to focus on the banner. I'm going to talk about it a little bit more. That is the banner for our Web site that I'll speak to in a moment or two. March 6th, the first significant date, we're the only one that has a minister responsible. We've had calls from a number of departments, interestingly, and my Intergovernmental Affairs colleagues across the country have gotten wind of it and have called me and said, oh, what do you know about it? Well, I know quite a bit about it actually. And the quote from the minister, "It is important that we take this opportunity to salute our veterans and to remind ourselves of their sacrifices in service to our country." Minister Clarke.

We have a steering committee put together, as I said, there is no office but the locus of responsibility rests with Intergovernmental Affairs. You will see other offices involved.

The Premier's Office, obviously, because the Premier has committed a significant amount of his time and his interest, and on a weekly basis asks Minister Clarke and I what's going on and what's happening. He has been very generous with his schedule to participate in events like VE day in Halifax, as opposed to his home community. We have the Speaker involved as well, because some of the things we have been doing involve Province House and activities around it. Hopefully, over the year it will involve more activities there. Energy, largely because that's Minister Clarke's home department and so his executive assistants there are supportive in terms of activity. Of course, his secretary there would, in fact, field many of the inquiries that come to that office. Our own office I spoke about.

The Protocol Office, which is part of Intergovernmental Affairs, is very engaged as well in terms of the organization of functions like the one we had at Province House 10 days ago; Communications Nova Scotia I spoke about; Transportation and Public Works, in terms of their relationship with the Legislature and so on, in terms of things you would notice in the lobby, things like the positioning of the Veterans Affairs plaques and other things; and, of course, the staff of Province House. That's sort of the group we bring together to periodically meet and discuss issues which we can then take forward to the minister.

You may recall - and this didn't get much press in terms of the daily press - in early March we participated in a ceremony around an antique bell commemorating the North Atlantic convoys, the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, which is in essence the HMCS Sackville, which we see down by the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic all Summer. The group that is entrusted with that vessel and what it stands for, along with colleagues across the country, in co-operation with the Navy, took an antique bell that they actually found out in Victoria, a brass bell about this big and about this high, and redid it and commemorated it to the convoys that left from Halifax and St. John's, Newfoundland.

Nova Scotia presented a crystal bowl, with the Nova Scotia Coat of Arms on it, to the Trust. The Trust then took it across on two Navy vessels and presented it to the Lord High Mayor of Londonderry, Ireland, as a lasting tribute to the convoys, because Londonderry was one of the arrival points on the other side. They, in fact, are entrusted with the bell now for a period of time. That bell will then move on to Liverpool, England and then come to St. John's, Newfoundland, and then back to Halifax. Periodically, over the next number of years, it will move amongst those four cities as a lasting memorial to the convoys. So there we go.

That's a picture of me and normally I try never to get my picture in the paper, but that particular day the minister wasn't available at the last minute and I was asked to present it. I'm presenting it to Dusty Miller, the former Rear Admiral of the Navy here in Halifax who is the Chairman of the Trust.

We had the official launch on April 27th, a resolution in the House by the Premier declaring 2005 as the Year of the Veteran; statements by the Speaker, the Premier, Minister Clarke, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader in the House of the Liberal Party; a reception at the Red Chamber for veterans attended by Legion members, MLAs, youth

groups, members of the Dutch community, and you as well, Mr. Chairman, you will see on our Web site your picture is now on there presenting the resolution.

Here are some pictures that we have just added in, these were the veterans. There were comments by some folks that there weren't as many veterans there as we would have liked. We invited a number of veterans but it's very difficult for a number of them to get out, so when you looked around the room you saw a lot more Legion members - many of whom, by the way, are veterans as well - so there was some comment on that. We're working actively now to try to make sure that on an ongoing basis we get as many veterans out to these events as we can.

Another picture, with the youth again, stresses the importance of youth in terms of the lasting memorial to the Great Wars and the Korean War and the sacrifice veterans make.

You would know that day we also launched the Year of the Veteran Certificate of Recognition. I believe in your package is an application form and you can also find that on our Web site. You can also request forms from Access Nova Scotia. We've now produced in excess of 200 certificates and there's about 20 requests a day coming in. One of the questions we're looking at - depending on how that sustains - is what advertising we might consider doing. I do want to point out I'll come back and talk to you a little bit about money later on.

That's gone very well and is much appreciated. There was a question, as well, as to whether those certificates could be awarded posthumously and we've agreed to do that. There was no question about that. (Interruptions) I'm sorry, we skipped the Book of Remembrance.

You would know that the Book of Remembrance is in the foyer of the House at the Hollis Street entrance. The pages are about to go out to the schools so the young people can learn, hopefully with some guidance from their teachers and others, about the significance of signing it and the meaning behind their signatures. We've also had requests from the Legions, I understand, for pages and so on. That will be a lasting tribute to the veterans that will be available in Province House. The plan would be that at the end of the year, we present that book to the veterans. Where it would reside in the long run hasn't been decided, but it could well be that it stays in Province House. It would depend in some ways on where the veterans would like to see that lasting memorial.

The Web site was launched April 27th. Again, a lot of good work here by the folks in Janet's shop and our Web masters behind the scenes too. At the time they were very busy, to take this on for us, to work on the banner at the top. Again, I should point out, everything we do in Nova Scotia we do in consultation with Veterans Affairs Canada, so that we're sure we're not infringing either on the Government of Canada's plan for the Year of the Veteran, but also making it very Nova Scotian in terms of our own identity in that process. I shouldn't say identity - our own commitment to the celebration of veterans. They have been extremely co-operative.

I would add, though, just for your information, one thing that is very difficult for us is to actually find out who the veterans are. Under all our privacy laws and everything today, it's not easy for us to get lists of veterans. The Legions are very forthcoming with their membership but they don't necessarily represent all veterans. So we're exploring ways and as recently as this weekend - Mr. Dooks, I believe you were with the Premier this weekend when he was at Camp Hill and there are obviously a lot of the vets in the Camp Hill facility and others across the province. The Premier's comment to me afterwards was that we need to find a way to continue to get out to the actual veterans, particularly those who can't get out to events.

Again, the Web site, we're excited about that. It has a photo gallery - I don't know if you've been in and seen it yet, but it has a growing photo gallery. If you as a member in your own constituencies, came up with events and wanted to take some digital pictures, or for that matter any pictures, we can scan pretty much anything, but digital would be better, I guess, right?

[9:15 a.m.]

JANET SULLIVAN: That would be perfect and also if you have any events that you would like to include on the Web site, you can send them straight to me and we'll make sure they get posted.

BOB FOWLER: So again, we think it's important. We're encouraging veterans to go in to look and see what's happening, and so if you have things, please don't hesitate to contact either Janet directly, or my office, and we would be happy - I should have added the certificate program is being administered actually out of the Premier's Office because that's where, in conjunction with Protocol, all the other certificate programs are done. So that's where that's being coordinated. Jo Anne Fisher has sort of been the lead person on that, so between any one of us, if you get information to us, we'll do our best to make sure that it's properly represented in terms of the celebration.

Now you would know that in the foyer of Province House there is the first of a series of posters up. We're waiting right now. I don't believe we have . . .

JANET SULLIVAN: I think the second one is there.

BOB FOWLER: There's a series of five posters prepared by Veterans Affairs Canada and we have them on tripod stands in the lobby on Hollis Street. The plan will be, or one of the things we're considering on an ongoing basis is, where will those posters stay beyond the Year of the Veteran? They're rather nicely done, and so is that something we would want to see left in Province House as an ongoing tribute? Those decisions haven't been taken yet but again, you'll see over the next six months leading up to November 11th, the other three posters as well. So there will be a series of five of those.

So the Book of Remembrance is available April 27th through November 11th. We will work both leading up to the Summer. We're assuming there will be, we're told by

various communities and by many of you that there are a number of events over the Summer months. We want to capture as many of those as we can in terms of that Book of Remembrance. We had the Battle of the Atlantic ceremony and unfortunately the weather in Nova Scotia for both May 1st and May 8th, did not co-operate, so some of the public participation of those events wasn't necessarily as great as we would have liked but the decision was taken by the military and the Legions and others to do those ceremonies indoors.

There was a tribute on May 6th to veterans in Shag Harbour, a local event obviously. The next big event on the radar is the Royal Canadian Legion Convention in Sydney Mines on May 22nd and May 23rd and that is a significantly large event. On May 14th to May 16th, a Time to Remember, a musical tribute in Truro. June 5th, a D-Day ceremony in Bear River. These are the ones we know about. Now you may know about others and that's why it's important for us to hear about events that you know about. We're happy to put them up on the Web site. A tribute in Cumberland County, a tribute to veterans, supper and concert, in Shag Harbour again. On August 19th, the Korean Veterans Reunion is another very significant event, of course, in terms of the Korean veterans.

That's basically where we are today. Mr. Chairman, I do have the letter signed by you on behalf of the committee to Minister Clarke and I gather there was discussion at one of your last committee meetings about establishing a grant program to assist communities and organizations with programs. I haven't had a chance yet to talk to the minister about that, and it would, in fact, create the need for a pool of money. I can tell you, quite honestly, what has happened to date is, through the good graces of various government departments that have had some involvement with this, we've paid the bill so far. Intergovernmental Affairs has taken a portion of its budget that we might have used for some other things, and dedicated it this year only, so that we can do some things; not that things are that expensive, but whether it's a fact that there has been a huge request from the Legion and others for our own Nova Scotia pins, the flag and the Bluenose and things like that. So there are costs to all those and they're in volumes that otherwise we wouldn't have had. We're finding a way to do it at this point.

If we were to consider getting into a grant program, we'd have to decide how much money would we want to allocate to it, what do we think the need would be, what would the criteria be and how big could they be? Are we talking \$1,000 as an incentive grant, are we talking something more significant? We're working very actively to provide some advice to the minister on that in terms of what we might be able to do. I'm sure he then would consider that and your request as part of that.

We have some other things that we are looking at on an ongoing basis. We keep getting suggestions quite regularly for things we might do. I don't have anything more specific to announce other than to say I'm sure as we hear from - like the letter from the committee and other things that we will consider doing as the year goes on. Obviously it leads up to and culminates with Remembrance Day as being - it's not the end of the calendar year - the most significant event towards the end of the year.

Janet or Norma, is there anything you wanted to add to what I've said?

JANET SULLIVAN: No, I don't think so.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Fowler. Maybe now we'll open the floor for questions. Mr. Gosse is first to bring forth a question.

GORDON GOSSE: Thank you very much for coming today. The presentation was lovely. The biggest complaint I have as an MLA is about the veterans' pins commemorating the 60th Anniversary of World War II. I know Veterans Affairs Canada only ordered 70,000 and that seems the biggest complaint is getting those pins out. I'm just wondering if the minister responsible for Veterans Affairs is going to be able to attain some more pins for the committee or anybody else in Province House?

BOB FOWLER: We have made representations both locally and to Ottawa for more pins. My understanding is they're considering minting more pins for that very reason. I think it just totally outstripped their wildest dreams of how many pins they would want.

GORDON GOSSE: They were gone in a month.

BOB FOWLER: Yes and we actually received far more than we were initially allocated. People wear them very proudly, as I note most of you are wearing them. My colleague to my left says they - oh, it's on your coat? Norma doesn't have one so I have to try to find one for Norma.

At any rate, I'll take that under advisement and I can assure you we are because that is a very common request. (Interruptions)

GORDON GOSSE: I'm just wondering if the minister is going to go to the convention in Sydney Mines, which is his riding anyway?

BOB FOWLER: My understanding is both the Premier and Mr. Clarke will be in attendance at the event, absolutely.

GORDON GOSSE: Very good. Also, I see lots of pictures, but I didn't see the picture for the Veterans Affairs Committee that day on the Web. I'm wondering if it will be on the Web site?

BOB FOWLER: There are a number of pictures on the Web site.

GORDON GOSSE: There was a picture of the whole committee.

BOB FOWLER: Did we take one that day of the whole committee? So we will get it. It will be on the Web site.

GORDON GOSSE: I wouldn't mind a copy of it myself. (Interruptions)

BOB FOWLER: Okay, absolutely.

GORDON GOSSE: I think it will be nice for our offices or whatever else.

BOB FOWLER: Absolutely.

GORDON GOSSE: That's all. I think it's been a good year so far. I know in Cape Breton there have been lots of things. On the issue with the convoys, a couple of times now I've been at different functions - I was at the unveiling of the Victory Nickel and that was really good. I managed to take some nickels back to Cape Breton for some vets. Even in the speech over there, they talked about the convoys, as you just did, from Halifax and St. John's.

BOB FOWLER: And Sydney, sorry.

GORDON GOSSE: It's always left out. I just don't know why.

BOB FOWLER: Thank you for correcting me. We'll make sure it's not.

GORDON GOSSE: Well over 300 convoys.

BOB FOWLER: Yes.

GORDON GOSSE: Many boats sunk, the Caribou.

BOB FOWLER: Absolutely. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

THE CHAIR: Bob, just in support of what Gordie was just saying about the pins, there's been a tremendous amount of pins made apparently. We've been instructed they've gone to the district Command offices. I've informed the Legions of that and the lady who's the president of the Legion in Baddeck has told me she has contacted the district Command office and the district Command office has no knowledge of any pins. So I'm getting requests from Neils Harbour Legion, north of Smokey, the Baddeck branch which is a very large branch, Manning MacDonald, the MLA, is requesting pins for the Ashby Legion which is a very large Legion and they have no idea where to get pins. Apparently all the pins have been distributed, but nobody seems to have any. So where Gordie mentioned the pins off the reel, I thought I would bring up my question in support of that to see if there's any possibility of finding out where those pins have gone, are they holding them off for a special celebration or are they lost in a drawer somewhere or something?

BOB FOWLER: We'll follow up on that as well, I hadn't been aware that the Command had them, but I will follow up on that.

THE CHAIR: I'm getting requests as chairman of the committee for pins and there are no pins to be had. Mr. Langille.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have the application for the certificate, Bob, but could we get a blank certificate supplied to us so we could show the people out there what they look like?

BOB FOWLER: I don't see any problem with that at all, Mr. Langille, I'm sure we can.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Just two other minor things, I know you're doing a good job and I really appreciate what the Premier has done in appointing Cecil Clarke as Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran. The military museum in Debert is a private society. As you know, Debert played probably one of the most important roles in the area as everybody was sent from that staging area in the Army through to Halifax, down by train and that's the reason that we have Veterans Memorial Highway on Highway No. 102 because that is the route that they took, but the federal government never recognized, or do anything, about preserving the military history in Debert and it was a military camp just up until a few years ago.

Although everybody practically across Canada went there and in the staging through to Halifax for its troop deployments, this military museum which was started by a group of citizens there - they have never gotten any help from the federal government or from the provincial government. I've gone through the Minister of Tourism for the last five years and the staff comes up, well, it doesn't meet the criteria. I've toured the museum and they have a lot paraphernalia there of the veterans. If it wasn't for them, the history of that area would be lost. They also have the tours of the Diefenbunker there too which they maintain.

I guess my request is, is there any way that - you're talking about grants and that, because that would certainly seem to be an excellent place to give a grant through the Year of the Veteran to that museum. In fact, I will be asking Minister Clarke if he'll come up and take a tour of that place. I don't want to take up too much time, I will just go into something personal. My wife's grandfather was killed there by a propeller prop, he was decapitated, and when I was there at the museum, there was a picture of him and a story on how he met his death there - in that museum. I had never seen the man before but, anyway, just little things like that.

The other thing is, in 2003 we proclaimed Peacekeeping Day as August 9th and I'm just drawing your attention, I realize this is the Year of the Veteran for the Second World War. However, the Dominion Command - and as you would know when we were doing the licence plates, we had to come up with who is a veteran. A veteran is anybody who has served in a war, whether it be one day or not, but other than that, a veteran is a person who has served for three years in the military. As our veterans get older - and the Korean War veterans are coming onside - we have our peacekeepers now who go to hot spots all over the world and maintain the peace and August 9th has been proclaimed Peacekeeping Day in Nova Scotia, but it was done with very little fanfare and very little publicity. I have my doubts if the Command down here even knows that we have a Peacekeeping Day because the whole Navy, the Atlantic Command of the Royal Canadian Navy is stationed here in

Halifax, but yet nobody does anything to recognize our peacekeepers, except this military museum which I attended, they have the peacekeepers there, but there's little fanfare.

We have the Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Centre in Cornwallis and I don't know if anything goes on in there, but here is the peacekeeping place in Canada, maybe the world, right in your area and Lester B. Pearson, of course everybody knows what he did for the peacekeeping and the Suez Canal. I don't mean to go on, but I think that something should be done on August 9th to recognize our peacekeepers. I'm just bringing that to your attention. I think I have before.

[9:30 a.m.]

BOB FOWLER: Thank you, we'll follow up on that, Mr. Langille.

THE CHAIR: Mr. O'Donnell.

CECIL O'DONNELL: Thank you. I don't have a question, just a comment. I see on your Web site where you had a tribute to our veterans in Shag Harbour on May 6th. Well I attended that meeting and I would say there were probably 250 or better people who attended that. Probably 30 veterans turned out, but I did notice one thing - and you referred to it - that we only probably had maybe a dozen youth attending. So there is something that we have to promote to get the youth involved, but outside of that I thought it went very well.

BOB FOWLER: Even that information in terms of adding it to the Web site, just the fact that there were 250 people and 30 veterans, I mean, that's significant when you think of that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Cecil.

Mr. Bill Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, just a couple of comments as well. On a personal level I can't get over the awareness that the Year of the Veteran is bringing to both myself, my family and my community, and to our province. I have always been very respectful of Remembrance Day and as a small child attended the monuments with my family. This is certainly bringing a brand new refreshing awareness and we all have stories and we've had people who have been involved in the effort. In saying that, when I talk about awareness, these pins that we talk about - and I'm going to support both my colleagues in the other Parties - it's a must that we have them. So I would ask you to put a real energy forth to getting them. Even this morning at Tim Hortons, I was spotted and the conversation was about my pin. I did have a couple. I was very fortunate and I did give it to the person who had asked the question. So they are important. I do believe that this committee is very important and I do believe, Gordie, that our committee should be on the Web site to give people information to contact as well.

To bring it back more or less on a community effort when I talk about awareness. Three cadets, we talk about our veterans, our Korean veterans and peacekeepers, but we have had very disappointing news, very sad news this week of three cadets from my riding, two have lost their lives and one is in the hospital in very serious condition. The sadness is that Sunday coming is the cadet review and it's where the community is invited to watch the cadets put on their show, their program of what they've accomplished throughout the year. I just wanted to mention them today. Even as a cadet, they are part of this whole process of supporting and promoting democracy. So I thought I would just bring up Cadet Calvert and Cadet Dunphy, who lost their lives, and Cadet Snow who is in the hospital. I just wanted that for the record.

I am enjoying the different events. I have had an opportunity to be at many of them, with the Premier, Sunday, and also down at Pier 21, and apparently there's a function going on tonight - I don't know if I'll be able to attend that one or not. These are my comments, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you for your efforts. I know in discussion at Pier 21, MP Savage mentioned the involvement of the province. Also, Minister Regan mentioned Sunday that this was the only province to have a minister appointed to the office. I think these are good things, I think they're healthy things. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Bill.

Mr. McNeil.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your presentation. I guess first off, I would also like to congratulate the Premier and the province for being the lead and making a Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran. Long before I got here I think it's important to recognize members who have sat on this committee, who began to recognize veterans before it became the Year of the Veteran. I know Mr. Langille was here when they did the highway, the licence plates and those who sat on the committee prior to me being elected really began to show the lead and it's why, I think, the province is actually leading the country now. It's actually a tribute to those members who were here doing that before.

You mentioned in your presentation about the Book of Remembrance going around to schools. Is there any way to get a schedule of when that is going to be going to different parts of the province?

BOB FOWLER: Actually the way it will be done is the pages will go - so the pages can be filled out any time. They're actually being sent out to schools this week. They would fill in their two, three, four, five pages, and they would then come back to Halifax and be inserted in the book. So it doesn't have to be dependent on the book moving.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: I think it would be important to allow members of all the Parties to know when, or if they're going now, and it is a way for members to add their support to that and send a letter to the schools and the principals. I can't speak for other members, but I have a good relationship with the schools in my riding, and it's a chance to

send a note expressing how important we feel it is, as part of the government. As long as we know they're going out right away, that would be great. We could do that at any time.

BOB FOWLER: I'm sure we can do that to make sure all MLAs are aware of that.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Is the province doing a paper advertisement about the certificates, are they putting any ads in the paper?

BOB FOWLER: We haven't made that decision yet. We're exploring a number of possibilities, and we've asked for advice from CNS about the most likely medium that people would see, and our advice at this point tends to be cable TV, I understand . . .

JANET SULLIVAN: EastLink.

BOB FOWLER: EastLink.

JANET SULLIVAN: Yes. Protocol had great success . . .

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Well, it would be great, except for ridings like mine . . .

BOB FOWLER: Who don't have it.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: But I'd be more than willing, if you can give me a generic thing, I will pay for the advertising out of my office to put it in the papers in my riding. This is an extremely important issue, and any veteran we can recognize we should be doing that. I will be doing one out of my riding, and if there's something that I need to put in it I would appreciate you getting that information to me quickly.

The other thing that I notice in the events - and I think Mr. O'Donnell mentioned about one in Shag Harbour and the great turnout - is the province doing any functions outside of HRM? I know the Legion is doing the one in Sydney. Is there anything that's going to be taking place in the Valley? Obviously the closer these events are to the veterans, the easier it's going to be for them to get to them. For somebody from Yarmouth, it's not an easy trip to come to Halifax and go back home that day, and the same for the people in the Valley.

You talked about Peacekeeping Day. CFB Greenwood recognized Peacekeeping Day, I was there last year and spoke at it. I don't need to tell you about the military presence in the Valley, from Aldershot to CFB Greenwood to Cornwallis, which is closed, but it played a significant role in wartime, so I'm just wondering if the province is planning to do anything down that way.

BOB FOWLER: There are no, what I'll call . . .

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Not to mention it is the 400th Anniversary of Annapolis Royal, which is the birthplace of this great province and country.

BOB FOWLER: There aren't events that I'm aware of that the province itself would be sponsoring. I think at this point what we've heard from yourself and other colleagues is the importance of local events, and requests that may come, I suppose, either in addition to the local MLA, to the minister and/or the Premier to attend the events and what their schedule would permit in addition to accommodate that. But as I know it right now, there are no events planned in terms of moving around the province, at this point.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: You call tell the Premier for me that if he wants to do an event in my riding, I'll fill in for him if he can't make it. I'll just make sure I mention his name. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: Thank you for your presentation. Just a quick comment. I had the opportunity last Friday to attend a function at the Legion in my riding. It was the Call to Remembrance competition, which was amazing because it was a group of junior high students from schools all over the province who competed, and their knowledge of our military history is unbelievable. Out of the 60 questions I heard, I think I may have known the answer to five of them. Just a suggestion, maybe you could get in contact with the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. I know they had a lot of pictures, and I believe the winning team was from Bridgewater this year, they beat out Eastern Passage. It was amazing, and I think we really need to promote their involvement in this, maybe it might entice other schools to look at getting involved with it.

BOB FOWLER: I must admit I haven't looked at the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command Web site. I don't even know that they have one, I presume they would. I don't know whether they would have the pictures up. We've made an offer to the Legions, to any of the groups we've met with, send us what you have, we would like the photo gallery to be significant.

DAVID WILSON: I will speak to the president in the next couple of days and pass it on to him.

BOB FOWLER: But we'll follow up with that as well.

THE CHAIR: On the local level, I think about Halifax Harbour and Sydney Harbour with the convoys. My father worked at Oxford Battery, which had the 16-inch gun emplacements down there and I can remember as a kid, my father wanted me to get in the barrel of the gun to take a picture of me but I said, no, daddy, the gun might go off. So he sat me on top of the barrel, it was like sitting on top of a culvert that goes across a road, and took a picture. I was probably three or four years old, but there are things on the local level that maybe Minister Clarke could highlight during the Sydney Mines celebration, like Oxford Battery.

Sydney Harbour is basically like a wedge of pie. And there were concrete gun emplacements all the way through into the harbour, and then you have Fort Petrie and

whatnot. So I'm just wondering if there is a possibility of, I know the time is short, but if there could be some local persons discovered, who actually manned those batteries. They were gun emplacements, concrete bunkers, embedded right into the walls of the shore of the harbour that go around there and things of that nature.

Sydney Harbour was gated, whether people know that or not. There was the large cable gate that went right across from one side of the harbour to the other and it was floated. The steel gate was held in place by huge concrete blocks that, I don't know, probably five to seven tons in each one. My oldest brother helped mix the cement by hand that made those things and what floated the gate was these giant steel balls that you see around, when you go around and you see these happy faces written on these big giant floats, and there was a large ring on the top and on the bottom where one was fastened to the top of the gate for fastening purposes.

[9:45 a.m.]

My father told me the story of where the Newfoundland ferry would come in and out each night to and from Newfoundland. I guess the skipper decided one night that he was tired of stopping at the gate each and every night, being inspected and whatnot, so he decided he would just proceed right through the open gate until they fired a shell over the bow and he wasn't long stopping. It was mandatory, so discipline was the order of the day. I remember a lot of those things as a kid, but I was just wondering if possibly Minister Clarke could have some local historian - they have that wonderful James Tobin in Sydney Mines with the railway museum - or something there, and archives, and he may be somebody who could research some local information and maybe they could announce that or have some people there present who manned those facilities during the war. Anyway, I just thought I would throw that out for general information.

Cecil O'Donnell left, he has a veteran waiting to meet with him over at the Legislature and that's why he exited the meeting. I just wanted to put that in for his benefit. So that's all that I have and Mr. Gosse has one more.

GORDON GOSSE: Just on your comments there about the blocks and everything else, it was my father-in-law who took the guns down anyway and the fortifications in the harbour - Sergeant Major Wesley King. My dog runs those blocks every weekend, they're still there, you know, and those types of things, but going back to different things Minister Clarke could do. Cape Bretoners volunteered for World War II, the highest rate of volunteers per capita in the whole British Empire - I'm a history buff - and different things like the sinking of the Caribou off our waters, the Battle of the Atlantic was the longest running battle, those types of things.

But back to the certificate, I will tell the members what I did. I went to my Legions and I asked the Legion presidents for the name of every veteran in the Legion, so I'm going to get the whole membership of all three Legions and I'm going to submit them for a certificate and I'm going to give them to the Legions. That's what I'm going to do.

BOB FOWLER: Could I just speak to that point? It's a great idea, but we are being very cautious and we're using a database to manage this. We don't want to give two certificates because that kind of looks like we don't have our act together, so you may find there are people who already have one.

GORDON GOSSE: I know.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: We would never accuse the government of not having their act together. (Laughter)

GORDON GOSSE: I'll tell you, I'm going to do a resolution in the Legislature today about Sydney Steel - which this government is quite familiar with - because it produced one-third of the metal for the war effort, from 1939 to 1945. There were 750 ships built in Quebec and another 250 built in Pictou from steel from Sydney Steel. So I'm going to do a resolution today in the Legislature on the men and women of Sydney Steel.

BOB FOWLER: The production numbers out of Sydney Steel during the war years were incredible, absolutely amazing.

GORDON GOSSE: So that's the resolution that I'm going to do today in the Legislature.

WILLIAM DOOKS: The women operated the . . .

GORDON GOSSE: The women, yes. So I thank you for coming in today to clear up some things for us. I think it will make our jobs a lot easier when people come into the Legislature. This pin is actually going to be painted on my office as soon as the weather warms up. I have an artist who's going to come in and put this on my building.

JANET SULLIVAN: Could you send me a picture?

GORDON GOSSE: I'm going to have it done between my office and - my office is adjacent to Evelyn Davis' office, whose family were survivors of the Holocaust. So between our two buildings I've got Bernard Siller, who's an artist, who's going to put this on the building as soon as the weather warms up. It's already in the making.

THE CHAIR: It sounds very good, thank you, Gordon.

Bob, one final note from myself, it's a suggestion you can throw by Minister Clarke, where he's from Sydney Mines. I think it would be a minimal cost if they did want to make some sort of display or remembrance of the war effort around Sydney Mines, maybe at the cenotaph, of these blocks that Gordie was talking about. There's hundreds of those at the Indian Beach in North Sydney that are used as part of a breakwater and one of those could easily be extracted by an excavator, take it to Sydney Mines and put it on display and maybe one of these large floats that float at the net. What a war museum that would be. It's just a suggestion that popped into my mind now. We swam off of those blocks as kids for

years and things like that, and it's part of the history of the harbour and of the war. There's no need of a large financial contribution to make that monument, but a steel block - the large chains are sticking out of them and you could easily fasten the float to it. It's just a suggestion. He may think of it, he may not.

BOB FOWLER: I'll certainly pass that on to the minister.

GORDON GOSSE: Maybe the next time one of those mines pop up in the water - occasionally they still pop up - maybe we could put one of those over in the Legislature.

THE CHAIR: No, we have those on a daily basis. You probably haven't been there when they go off, Gordon. (Laughter)

Is there anything else to come before the committee for our guests?

If not, we'll thank you for coming, for the informative presentation, and take our concerns forward to Minister Clarke on our behalf. Thank you very much.

BOB FOWLER: Thank you very much and we'll keep you informed of any other progress. I know Minister Clarke has other things that he's heard suggestions on and we'll keep you informed.

THE CHAIR: We should decide on when our next meeting is and who should come. Should we hang in for five minutes to see when our next meeting is and who we should invite or who we shouldn't invite? (Interruptions)

Where it's the Year of the Veteran, we usually meet once a month or every month and a half. Are we not going to meet over the Summer and then maybe make sure we meet in October, and then if there are any activities going on, we can do it before the end of the Year of the Veteran? (Interruptions)

Bill, is September good for the next meeting? And then it will give us an opportunity to do anything before the Year of the Veteran ends? (Interruptions)

We'll put it off until we do the schedule for (Interruptions) We'll do it for October.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:51 a.m.]