

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Thursday, November 17, 2005**

**Committee Room 1**

**Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

## **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**

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

George Aucoin  
President

Jack Hatcher  
Treasurer

Angus MacDougall  
Committee Member



**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2005**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**9:00 A.M.**

CHAIR  
Gerald Sampson

THE CHAIR: We'll call this meeting to order. Welcome, gentlemen. Maybe what we'll do for the rules and regulations, we'll start with introductions.

ANGUS MACDOUGALL: My name is Angus MacDougall, I come from Glace Bay, Cape Breton. I'm the Zone Commander for Zone 4 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

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

GEORGE AUCOIN: George Aucoin, President, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen, and with that we'll ask that you begin your presentation.

GEORGE AUCOIN: Good morning. There are two items, No. 1 and No. 2, on the sheets that have been photocopied and placed in front of you.

The Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command goes on record to have the Remembrance Day Act as is, and that November 11<sup>th</sup> is not to be changed to a national holiday but will stay as a Day of Remembrance. The reason why I put that in there, whether it's the right place or not, is because we've had a lot of questions brought up at our full council meetings and during the year we get phone calls on this, what's right and what's wrong.

THE CHAIR: George, how about if we stop right there, and we'll ask the committee to discuss No. 1 first. We'll discuss that and then afterwards we'll go down to the veteran licence plates, if that's okay.

Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Thank you, committee members, for bringing that forward and for clarifying that. It was understood in our last meeting here - my colleague, Bill Langille, brought that up - Mr. Chairman, I think we were to write a letter. Was that not the direction we were going to take on that, to whoever, stating that that was to be clarified? Didn't we address this at our last meeting?

WILLIAM LANGILLE: If I may, we did discuss this at a meeting, but I don't know of any letter we might have sent out, Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: I thought we had already sent a letter out. My comments are very short on that this morning. Thank you for clarifying that, because it's certainly an issue. It has been an issue for all Parties in the House and for people in the community. Mr. Chairman, I'll let you continue with the conversation.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: I would also just like to say thank you, and I commend you for your stand on this. I have always stated, for the last six years, that the Remembrance Day Act in Nova Scotia is probably the best Act in Canada. I stand by that. I think it's a terrific Act. I think it was well thought out when the Legislature of the past brought it forward. I thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: Mr. President, as well, I want to thank you very much for bringing this to our attention. I do know that it was brought before this committee by the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command at one time; however, there was no clarity with respect to whether this was to be a national holiday or who endorsed or whatever. I guess it's quite clear now from a national conference and from calls coming to your office that the majority of the veterans don't think it is necessary to have this as a national holiday.

I want to put my two cents' worth in, Mr. Chairman. I do believe that it should be a national holiday. As a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I would still support Remembrance Day being a national holiday across the country. But again, that is just my own personal opinion.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Gosse.

GORDON GOSSE: Mr. Chairman, on this motion or whatever before the committee, I think we dealt with this before as a statutory holiday. I think that's the name that was on it, a statutory holiday. I do know the concerns of the Legion, and I support the motion as it stands, as a statutory holiday. That's what we were looking at before. They didn't want to make it a statutory holiday. I think I remember my colleague saying they wanted to leave the Remembrance Day Act as it is. I think that's what they want. You do hear a lot of debate about this. I think what has concerned the public is that if they make it a national holiday that a lot of people will be packing their bags and heading out for long

weekends and stuff, and there won't be very many people attending the services at the Legions and stuff. I do understand the concerns. I support the motion.

WILLIAM DOOKS: But it's not a statutory holiday. (Interruptions)

THE CHAIR: So you're supporting leaving it as it is?

GORDON GOSSE: As the Remembrance Day Act that's already in the Legislature.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

[9:15 a.m.]

DAVID WILSON: I want to thank you for coming in and clarifying, once again, this contentious issue. As a member of the Calais Branch in Sackville, I know that amongst the Legions themselves there has been some division on where to go with this. I think that no matter what our personal opinions on this committee are, one of the things we've done since I've been on the committee in the last couple of years is to try to take direction from those people who are making the decisions or have to deal with issues around veterans. I think direction from the Command is how we as members of this committee make our decisions. We weigh heavily your opinions and your decisions when it comes to, especially, Remembrance Day.

I want to commend you for coming forward again, and for making it clear that you would like it to stay as it is now. I know, for myself, I will respect that, and I support that decision. I congratulate you for coming in and clarifying that with us. Who knows, we may be back at this some day down the road, but for now I appreciate you coming and expressing your concerns with it.

THE CHAIR: Mr. McNeil.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thanks for coming in. That was going to be my question today, around the issue of Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday. It had been brought to my attention a lot over the last week by a number of my constituents who believe it is already a statutory holiday. Many Nova Scotians believe it is already a statutory holiday. I've been on record as saying that I believe it should be, because I believe it is, outside of Christmas and Easter, a day that as a province and as a country we should be recognizing over and above all. But I will certainly support the wishes of the Command.

Part of the rationale the Legion was using behind not making it a statutory holiday was because they were afraid people would use it as another holiday, they would go on vacation. It was interesting that November 11<sup>th</sup> fell on Friday this year. You would have thought that if there was any time Nova Scotians were going to take it as a holiday, it would be on a long weekend. I have four Legions in my riding, and every one of them had huge turnouts. Annapolis Royal, Bridgetown, Lawrencetown, over 300; Middleton, over 800 at their celebrations.

So the idea that Nova Scotians would take it as a holiday, I'm not sure that holds as much weight as it maybe once did. I credit the Legion, because the Legion has done a tremendous job of educating young Nova Scotians around the Day of Remembrance and the importance of Remembrance Day by going out early, getting into schools and keeping it to make sure that on November 11<sup>th</sup> Nova Scotians go out and celebrate our heroes.

I'm just curious about the reasons why you want to keep it not as a statutory holiday, but as a Day of Remembrance. Is it around the fact that you're afraid Nova Scotians will make it a holiday, or are there other reasons?

GEORGE AUCOIN: The reason for it is that I take a lot of phone calls in my office on this, two weeks before Remembrance Day and right up to today, and they seem to have the same message, the same trend. They say that if, as you mentioned, it's made a holiday everybody would take off for the weekend. For the majority of the people, that's the reason they're saying it.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Langille.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, Remembrance Day has to be celebrated on November 11<sup>th</sup>. That's the way it stands in Canada right now. Now if we brought in a statutory holiday for all Nova Scotians, that would mean four out of seven days would be a long weekend. If it fell on a Monday, it would be a long weekend; if it fell on a Friday, it would be a long weekend. Now under the statutory holiday, if it falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, that means you're going to have to give somebody a day off. So it's not celebrating Remembrance Day, what you're getting is a holiday, a long weekend. That becomes a problem because under the Canadian law, as it stands now, Remembrance Day has to be celebrated on Remembrance Day. It's a Day of Remembrance. Just for clarification on that, if it falls on a Saturday or Sunday and it was a holiday, for people working, they would have to get that time off on another day.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Chairman, if I may, no one is suggesting - November 11<sup>th</sup> will always be Remembrance Day, whatever day it falls on, just like December 25<sup>th</sup> will always be Christmas Day. If it falls on Saturday, it's still Christmas Day.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: But people would get another day off.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: True.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: That's what I'm saying. That's not what remembrance is all about. It's about a Day of Remembrance on that particular day.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: I don't think it's our place to debate, although I'll put my two cents' worth in. I just want to say that I do and will honour the respect of what the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command has brought before the Veterans Affairs Committee. I think it's

important to recognize that statutory holidays can have provisions crafted in them, and that we have the legal expertise, both nationally and provincially, to guide us through that process. If, in fact, Remembrance Day were to be a statutory holiday, then there can be provisions crafted within that piece of legislation that say that statutory holiday pertains only to November 11<sup>th</sup>, whether it falls on a Saturday, Sunday or Monday. The provisions can be crafted to deal with that. I don't think that in itself is a problem.

And I want to say that I agree with the member for Annapolis, in Nova Scotia it has been somewhat of a holiday for some time. Many Nova Scotians have not left to go elsewhere, they have gone to the cenotaphs in huge numbers to recognize the contributions veterans have made here in Nova Scotia. I think that stands nationally as well. I believe the veterans and the Legions in this country have such a great organization that they do the legwork that brings out the people on Remembrance Day. I don't think that legwork will fall by the wayside simply because it's a statutory holiday. That's my reason, Mr. President, for supporting it as being a statutory holiday, even though I will acknowledge what you brought before the committee.

THE CHAIR: As chairman, maybe I should pass on my opinion and add to the divergence of the opinions here this morning. I promote November 11<sup>th</sup> as Remembrance Day. I have four Legions in my riding. I've had several of them wanting to put on a celebration for the Year of the Veteran, coinciding with November 11<sup>th</sup>, Remembrance Day. I personally said no. I said, if we have a celebration for the Year of the Veteran, then it will be a veterans appreciation afternoon or evening, specifically for that. Remembrance Day, I've said the focus for me is a Day of Remembrance and that's what we focus on there. I go along with the Legion to leave it as Remembrance Day and not a statutory holiday, that's where I was coming from.

I must commend the Legion for the fact that I find in recent years there appears to be a resurgence in Remembrance Day attendance and education, especially of the young people. The Year of the Veteran has really helped to bring that forth, so I just agree with the Legions to leave it as it is. My Veterans Appreciation Day, if we're going to hold it in the afternoon because a lot of the veterans are elderly and whatnot, and we're in extreme rural areas, it's getting late in the year, they'll be held in the afternoon, preferably on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, whatever the Legions decide.

I commend the Legions because there seems to be a resurgence, whether it was the Year of the Veteran that did it, but it's growing more and more. Like I said, the crowds are turning out more and more each and every year. I just want to leave the day as a Day of Remembrance, personally. We can see a divergence of opinion but yet we're all in agreement to support the Legion in what they decide.

GEORGE AUCOIN: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Is there any other discussion on that? Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Obviously everyone has passed their opinion, and I appreciate that, but I would like to know what the mechanism will be that we will forward the recommendation of you guys and also this committee to bring it in to this, at least in the near future. Last time it was brought up, but yet we're addressing it again today, so would we like to write a letter or pass a motion?

THE CHAIR: As chairman, I was going to ask with the divergence of opinion around, and yet we're all agreeing to support the Legion, I was going to ask for a motion that we would pass or defeat or whatever . . .

STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

THE CHAIR: Sure.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: I'm not sure that's necessary. I think number one, the Act is already in front of the Province of Nova Scotia, it's what we have. There is a bill before the Legislature to make it a statutory holiday. If the government doesn't want it to be a statutory holiday, they just don't call the bill and things remain the same.

I think as a rural MLA, I have four Legions, I would like to actually have a general conversation with them if I'm going to pass a vote on whether or not to do that. I think that's a moot point, right at this point. Government just needs to ignore the bill that is in front of them.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Mr. Chairman, if I may. At our last meeting Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command sent a letter and that was given to the Veterans Affairs Committee. That letter was put in Hansard at our last meeting, the letter that they sent out, so it's already a matter of record.

THE CHAIR: Are we agreed then it is a moot point and we won't call for a motion? (Interruptions)

WILLIAM DOOKS: My point is, I don't agree with that but, of course, being a committee member will take the lead of the majority of the committee. I'm saying in no disrespect but with respect I was asking to put it (Interruptions) I don't think there was a motion but I just want to finish my comments, please.

My intent was just to bring closure on a committee level to that and I respect every member here going back to their Legion and doing whatever, but I was just taking, I guess, the thought of you gentlemen today to bring closure to this. The committee doesn't wish to do that now and we'll address it probably at another time.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.



JERRY PYE: Mr. Chairman, I think the government needs to be notified of the recommendation that has been brought forward to the Veterans Affairs Committee. If you would send off a letter with this recommendation as of today, unless that letter is already in the government's hands - is there a letter in the government's hands stating this very thing?

THE CHAIR: Yes, there is. At the last meeting.

JERRY PYE: If there is, that's fine, not a problem.

WILLIAM DOOKS: The point is, we're not bringing closure to this issue in this committee, that's all I'm saying. Maybe I'm on a path . . .

THE CHAIR: The fact that we have a divergence of opinion, yet we all agree to support the Legion and what they want to do and number two, there is a bill before the House, then that's record enough.

Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: I think by the comments of the committee, I can probably guarantee that we acknowledge your stance on this, a letter has gone to government but I don't think we need a motion on the floor to go any further. Government is aware of your stance on this and you've heard our comments. I think that's probably good for this committee that we have listened to your information, your stance and I don't think you need to have any worries that we'll try to revert to something different than what your wishes are.

THE CHAIR: Enough discussion on that? Are we satisfied to move to No. 2?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: George, No. 2, veteran licence plates.

GEORGE AUCOIN: Another contention, we get quite a few phone calls at the Command Office that some family members of deceased veterans are using their licence plate, they still have it on their car. They are even using it, they think they can park in the disabled parking spaces because they have a veteran licence plate. We'd like some sort of clarification on whether they can keep that licence plate. Access Nova Scotia would be the ones to say that, I suppose, once the member is deceased that the family can keep the plate themselves but they can't use it on their car, that's the problem at the moment.

In my community of Cheticamp, Cape Breton, I know of at least three people who are still using the veteran licence plates, but the three members are deceased and the family members are using their plates. I don't think this is quite right.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Dooks.

WILLIAM DOOKS: I believe to obtain a veteran plate the veteran must be in ownership of that vehicle, correct? So when that person passes on there's a process in which the estate has to change over the registration of the vehicle left behind. When you go to Access Nova Scotia, it's very clear that that's a veteran plate and that plate has to be removed and replaced with a new plate of the new owner. So what's happening, I think - and I stand to be corrected - people are not following the process, they're not changing over the registration of the vehicle, so they could be responsible for that.

My wish would be if that process did happen, that the family of that veteran could keep that plate in remembrance of the veteran. I think the way it is now in Nova Scotia, when you change registration of your vehicle you must send in your plate. There is no requirement for you to send in your plate, I don't think, unless you want a rebate for what's left of the registration of that plate. I think there's already a mechanism in place, it has to be policed.

In the second part of your note here, by all means, I don't think anybody would disagree with the family member keeping the veteran plate, that's quite a distinction.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr. Langille.

[9:30 a.m.]

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Mr. Chairman, if it is the wish of Command, is it possible to write a letter to the minister responsible for Access Nova Scotia to get direction on what they have to do now when a member is deceased, regarding the licence plate. I'm sure this is a problem throughout Nova Scotia; however, we can find out what the law is now and then if it doesn't satisfy the Command, maybe we can take action.

GEORGE AUCOIN: I'm happy with that.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Pye.

JERRY PYE: There's no sense being redundant, that's exactly what I was going to suggest, to send a letter to the Registry of Motor Vehicles through Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to find out the process.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: There are two points. On the second point in No. 2 about parking, it's actually against the law to park in accessible parking unless you have the designated accessible parking pass. On that point, there are ramifications, the RCMP, maybe a letter from yourself to them noting that just because a veteran licence plate - not that I want any veterans coming down and saying you shouldn't be trying not to let us park in places, but there are strict laws, so just because they have that licence plate they shouldn't be allowed to park there.

Just on clarification, when a veteran applies for these licence plates, what's the process? Do they need to go to the Legion to certify that they served? Is there a process, I'm not too sure?

GEORGE AUCOIN: Yes, a form comes into our office and they check the records to find out if this person is a veteran and they have to give a service number, whatever it is. Then they can go to Access Nova Scotia with that information and a signature from our Command.

DAVID WILSON: I'll agree with a letter being sent to the minister but I think what may happen is once the renewal for that licence plate has to go in - I think it is two years now, I believe - they are still going to need that service number. I would hope that would stop the issue of a veteran licence plate to a partner of a deceased veteran. I know that doesn't fix the problem immediately but that may in the long run, over a year or so, once they need to renew, it may limit the ability for them to keep those plates on the vehicle.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Gosse.

GORDON GOSSE: I just think, when I read the second part of the question, that licence plates for parking privileges, most veterans don't park in the wheelchair accessible one unless they have the permit itself. They're the same as every other member of society in Nova Scotia, unless they actually have the wheelchair accessible parking, they don't use that aspect of the licence plate for that. I think it is just in recognition of their service within the Armed Forces.

Sometimes what you may see is when a person passes away, and the licences are renewed every two years, if that person passed away and they had renewed the vehicle and it has only been six months, well there would still be another 18 months left on the plate before the person renewed the vehicle. That may be what you're seeing, so until that person actually - like my colleague, the member for Eastern Shore said - goes to register that vehicle, that's when Access Nova Scotia is notified that okay, we have to issue another plate. That is what you may be seeing happening is members pass away and the time that's left on that two-year period is still valid, I think maybe that's what sometimes is happening here. But we can bring this to the attention of the minister and have him look into it and report back to the Command.

THE CHAIR: Just a comment from myself, I know that when firefighters' plates come up for renewal there is a form the fire chief must sign before those plates can be renewed. I shouldn't assume anything but I would imagine when those veteran plates come up for renewal that that form would have to be re-signed by yourself? (Interruption) No, okay. Maybe the letter to the proper authorities will clarify that for us and when we get a response to that we could either ask that they forward a copy to you or when the response comes to the committee, we will forward a copy on to you.

So we will send a letter for clarification to Access Nova Scotia and probably address it to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

Is it agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Any other topics, George?

GEORGE AUCOIN: Yes, the topic on the next page, Veterans and Services Committee, written by Fred Mombourquette, Past-President of the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, from the Pictou area:

"We have a very serious situation in our Pictou County hospital at the present time and probably the same situation exists in most other parts of our Province. At the present time we have no pathologist operating out of our New Glasgow hospital which means our citizens who are required to have a transrectol (sic) ultrasound and a biopsy of the prostate (sic) gland must wait two months or more to receive a reply from their Doctor as to the results of such a test.

At the present time the procedure followed is the patient must arrange an appointment at New Glasgow Hospital, after the biopsy is performed it is sent to Halifax where it is examined and the report is then returned to New Glasgow, to wait for a specialist to come from Halifax to read it and make out the report.

As mentioned above all this is taking two months or more. Along (sic) time for someone to wait to find out that they have cancer and should have been on treatment two months ago.

The other situation at our Hospital is that the only urologist that we have, Dr. Ram, has been ready for retirement two or three years ago but has stayed on because there is no one to replace him. Now we hear that when he does retire or in the very near future anyone needing the services of the urologist will have to travel to the Truro Hospital. This includes everyone from Guysborough Co, Pictou Co., and other places closer to Truro than Halifax.

We hate to think of the waiting time that will be involved not only for our veterans who are in the age group for medical attention, but for our many citizens as well. It is hoped that this will be looked into and something done about this situation before it is too late."

Signed by Fred Mombourquette, Past-President.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone want to have any discussion on that? Mr. Langille.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: I think possibly the committee could undertake to write a letter both to the Honourable Angus MacIsaac, Minister of Health and also Premier John Hamm, because this is in his particular riding, expressing the concerns of the Nova

Scotia/Nunavut Command. Have you written anybody about this or is this just from Mr. Mombourquette?

GEORGE AUCOIN: No, that just came in recently.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: That would be the suggestion.

JERRY PYE: I agree, Mr. Chairman, I think it's important to send a copy of this memo that we have received from Veterans Affairs, along with an accompanying letter to the Minister of Health, and the Premier, representing the constituency.

THE CHAIR: That is going to be my suggestion, too, to make sure they receive a copy of the letter that was just read. Is everyone in agreement on that? Any further discussion on it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: And cc to the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, of course, that goes without saying.

THE CHAIR: George, would that be satisfactory that we send a letter off to the proper authorities and we will include a copy of this letter with it so that they are made aware of the reason for our letter?

GEORGE AUCOIN: Yes. Those are my comments for today. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone have anything else? (Interruption) That's what I'm going to bring up here.

At the last meeting we sent a letter to Mr. John Walker, Regional Director General, and it was regarding Mr. Haslund. He is retired from the forces and was receiving exorbitant bills and the family couldn't afford the bills and would like to have Mr. Haslund placed in the veterans' wing of the Camp Hill Hospital. Are you familiar with that one? We wrote a letter on that and the reply came back and we will give you a copy of it:

"I would like to acknowledge receipt of your letter, dated November 1, 2005, concerning the long term care eligibility for Mr. Ronald Haslund.

Unfortunately, Mr. Haslund's medical condition cannot be linked to his military service, and as a Regular Force Member, he is not eligible for long term care unless he is pensioned for a pensionable condition pursuant to subsection 21(2) of the *Pension Act*, Regular Force Service. Priority Access Beds, such as those in the Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Building, are reserved for eligible War Service Veterans only and as such, Veterans that did

not serve during World War II or the Korean War, cannot be admitted for long term care.

Mr. Haslund may apply to the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Continuing Care Branch, for placement in a community nursing home. Under the provincial legislation, effective January 1, 2005, eligible residents pay the "accommodation" portion of their long-term care facility costs. Additionally, the resident may have their daily charge reduced by undergoing an income test. Under the new provincial legislation, residents retain assets and income to pay for items of personal need or enjoyment.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to explore our website, [www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca) that includes information on the Veterans Charter, Bill-C45, which became law effective May 13, 2005.

I would also like to mention that effective November 3, 2005, Mr. Bernard Butler will be the Acting Regional Director General for the Atlantic Region. You may contact him at . . ." the phone number is listed there " . . . for further information.

Yours sincerely,

John Walker

Regional Director General, Atlantic"

So we will provide you with a copy of that and what we were going to do, with the committee's permission, is send a copy of this to Mr. Haslund, himself, or Mrs. Haslund, so that the family will know. We can give them a copy of the letter and give them a copy of the response.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Just for clarification, this lady came to my office in Truro about her husband, who was retired from the Navy. He spent his career in the Navy and became extremely sick and has been a financial burden on her. What she was trying to do was have him admitted into Camp Hill. I guess where I'm coming from here is I really don't follow the reasoning of Veterans Affairs Canada on this and maybe you can shed some light on it.

My concern is that World War II members and the Korean War members are getting older, of course, and will be using Camp Hill more and more, as they do now. What about 20 years down the road, as our servicemen now who are retiring, get older and get sick? Does that mean they're looking at closing Camp Hill down because they say these people cannot get into Camp Hill anymore? What are the long-term ramifications?

GEORGE AUCOIN: I spoke with the Dominion President about this last Summer, she was visiting in the Halifax area. I spoke to her and asked her to make a note of it. They should have some consideration to give to the long-term serving members, 25 or 30 years.

They could have served in peacekeeping six or seven times - they're not peacekeeping anymore, they're peacemaking by the way - and they're not entitled to go into Camp Hill. It's the same with other nursing homes or veterans' hospitals across Canada.

I said, it looks like the handwriting is on the wall that they'll close these places up and she was writing this down and making notes of it. I don't know if I'll be talking to her within the next few months, whatever, but I could make it a point to see if anything has been done about this. What has to be done on our part of it, the Legion on the provincial level should get a resolution in very shortly - the Dominion Command convention is in Calgary next year - and take the time to word it properly to see if there is anything in the mill about looking just to where you are talking about, 20 years, 15 years or less than that. These people who are serving in peacekeeping today in the Armed Forces, especially the peacekeepers, are veterans from the word go, so we have to do something about this.

I put a resolution in at our level, the provincial level, and it will go to the Calgary Dominion Convention next June. It's not an answer but it's . . .

THE CHAIR: The possibility of a solution.

[9:45 a.m.]

WILLIAM LANGILLE: This lady, I think, came all the way from Prospect - or in that area - to my office, it's not one of my constituency members, I think it might be Bill Estabrooks.

JERRY PYE: No, it's MLA Judy Streach's constituency.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: The thing that bothers me is we have a definition of who is a veteran under Veterans Affairs. You take our peacemakers - I'll have to get onto that word from peacekeepers - now they're seeing combat in places like Afghanistan and other hot spots around the world, they truly are veterans now. But this really concerns me about a long-term plan, I don't know if Veterans Affairs . . .

GEORGE AUCOIN: I'll just point to this, I thought of it now, members of the Armed Forces who have a disability, whether they're peacekeepers, or just ordinary Armed Forces, if they have a disability, that's the leg to get into Camp Hill Hospital, but not everybody has a disability of some sort that happened while you were in uniform. There is the leg for them to get into Camp Hill Hospital, so we can't confuse if this person here hasn't got a disability pension of either 5 per cent or 10 per cent, or whatever it is, he hasn't got a leg to stand on to get into the hospital.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: So the way it stands right now, what matters is that you have that disability pension to get out of the forces right now.

GEORGE AUCOIN: That's the avenue there.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: Even though when you get older and get sick you can't take advantage of being a veteran.

GEORGE AUCOIN: A lot of these people are staying in until they are ready to retire, at 37 years. I met someone at a funeral the other day with 37 years in who's ready to retire. To me, whether he's a peacekeeper or not, I think he's a veteran, seriously.

THE CHAIR: But the letter says specifically if it's not a service disability created by the service, if somebody retires from the service and becomes generally ill because of whatever, and it's not related to the years of service then they're not qualified to go into Camp Hill, that's what I get from the letter.

GEORGE AUCOIN: That's how it stands today.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: That's exactly right.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: As a committee member maybe what I would like to do is encourage you to continue on with your motion and hopefully bring this up at Dominion Command next year and just please, keep us advised of that progression of that resolution or motion, so we know what we can do down the road maybe to support those efforts.

THE CHAIR: Mr. McNeil.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: I just wanted to echo what my colleague said. I'm one of the fortunate ones in Nova Scotia, I have a veterans' wing at Soldiers Memorial Hospital in my constituency. Presently it's full and there's a waiting list of veterans, as the criteria is set out today. I think we do need to support the motion that you'll be bringing forward to your national convention. When that goes to your national convention we can see what the national body says, and then as a committee we can support that. No one would question that somebody who has served in the role of representing our country is a veteran, so we look forward to hearing back from you.

GEORGE AUCOIN: When we put a resolution in, it will be marked Provincial Command to Dominion Command through Veterans Affairs Canada, so that's where it ends up, on a desk at Veterans Affairs.

THE CHAIR: We're all in agreement with that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Any further business for our guests? (Interruptions)

WILLIAM DOOKS: Mr. Chairman, perhaps we can excuse our guests.

THE CHAIR: Yes.



[9:48 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[9:51 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: I'm going to pass around, to be signed by each individual, if you're satisfied with the annual report, so that we can have that. Then we'll collect it and give it back to . . .

GORDON GOSSE: I'd like to thank the Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran for supplying the faxes with "Compliments of Cecil Clarke, MLA", I noticed on the bottom of the paper.

WILLIAM DOOKS: As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, maybe the committee should congratulate the minister formally with his proceedings over the Year of the Veteran (Interruptions) I would like to send a letter congratulating Minister Cecil Clarke for his proceedings over the Year of the Veteran. I think Mr. Clarke has stepped up to the plate and made it a very responsible, compassionate and knowing time for our veterans and we certainly appreciate him allowing us to have the funding to support the Legions. I think it was a celebration, I think it was well done and I put that motion on the floor for discussion.

GORDON GOSSE: I'll second that.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: I think it should go to the Premier, not to the minister. I think the Premier is the one who showed the leadership in this and I think it should go to the Premier. I have actually, in my own constituency at the Legions, recognized the Premier and the minister on the Year of the Veteran. I don't recognize him on a lot of things but I did recognize him on the Year of the Veteran. I think the province should be extremely proud of the way we led the country in representing our veterans under previous chairmen.

WILLIAM DOOKS: Mr. Chairman, I'll change my motion to show appreciation to our Premier and the minister.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: I would just like to say, I was on the ad hoc with Cecil Clarke, I was really impressed first of all that they recognized that this was the Year of the Veteran and we are the only one in Canada that had a provincial Year of the Veteran Minister for this year only. Not only that, I think everything was handled very fairly, there was \$2,500 to each MLA in Nova Scotia, to give what you thought, to hand out the Red Ensigns, I know the people at my Legions were very impressed. I have three Legions and I divided it up, they each had different things: Debert had the Wall of Honour, Great Village wanted Canadian flags put on the graves, and Tatamagouche redid their kitchen. Each one of our Legions had different things.

To put the licence plate signs up at all of our border entrances, that's a big thing. I know some of you weren't on the committee when those licence plates - I know you were, Mr. Pye - were brought in but that was the first in Canada and that mushroomed right across Canada. Although they didn't adopt our flag, they put poppies on theirs. But that was a first.

Steve Wessel, who brought that to me, he ought to be recognized for that and I have been trying to have him recognized through the press, to do a story on it.

THE CHAIR: I think a resolution through the House would be a proper way for it.

WILLIAM DOOKS: There's a motion on the floor, first of all, to recognize the Premier and the minister.

WILLIAM LANGILLE: There were a lot of good things done this year in Nova Scotia. I know the MLAs appreciated it too, regardless of politics.

THE CHAIR: Is there anyone else who would like to discuss the motion?

GORDON GOSSE: As a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs I was actually very pleased with the government and the Premier . . .

WILLIAM DOOKS: Proud.

GORDON GOSSE: Okay, very proud of the government for appointing a Minister responsible for the Year of the Veteran, and taking leadership. It was great, there were all kinds of events in Cape Breton leading up to that, all over the Province of Nova Scotia. I think we still have a couple of months left and there are still some things to do. I agree with the motion to send a letter to the Premier congratulating him on his leadership.

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

The motion is carried.

STEPHEN MCNEIL: I would like to put another motion. Perhaps we could also send a letter to the Premier to try to emulate what he did for the Year of the Veteran for all the other things that the government has to deal with, then maybe we could all eventually agree on those too. (Laughter)

WILLIAM DOOKS: That motion is out of order, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Well a facetious motion is not out of order if it's given by a facetious person. (Laughter)

JERRY PYE: Approval of the next meeting dates.

THE CHAIR: Are they conducive to your schedules?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: We have December 8<sup>th</sup> then February 9<sup>th</sup> and there's nothing in between for January, we'll leave that open. Is that satisfactory?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: We have those two dates set.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:58 a.m.]