

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Tuesday, February 10, 2011

COMMITTEE ROOM 1

**Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations/
Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command**

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Gary Burrill (Chair)
Jim Boudreau (Vice-Chair)
Michele Raymond
Howard Epstein
Lenore Zann
Hon. Wayne Gaudet
Harold Theriault
Alfie MacLeod
Chuck Porter

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

Kevin Malloy
Deputy Minister

Aileen Waller-Hebb
Acting Director of Grants and Programs, Municipal Services

Marvin MacDonald
Executive Director, Municipal Services

Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Les Nash
Command President

Dave Blanchard
Member, Veterans Services and Seniors Committee

Jack Hatcher
Chair, Veterans Services and Seniors Committee

Brian Richardson
Command Service Officer



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2011

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
Gary Burrill

VICE-CHAIR
Jim Boudreau

THE CHAIR: If we could call the meeting to order, I'd perhaps begin by introducing myself. My name is Gary Burrill and I'm the newly-minted chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I especially want to welcome the new members in the reconfiguring of House committees. The new members of our Veterans Affairs Committee are Lenore Zann, Howard Epstein and Chuck Porter. We especially want to welcome those who are presenting material to us today on the subject of the Legion Capital Assistance Program, from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, and Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command of the Royal Canadian Legion.

I'm just thinking about the agenda before we begin. How would it be if we had a general understanding that we would proceed about our main subject today, giving it about an hour and three-quarters, between both presenters and our discussion with them, leaving somewhere around 15 minutes to deal with the committee business at the end. Would that seem fair to everybody? Ok.

Would it also be fair if we added to Committee Business one additional request, to make a presentation before the committee from the Corps of Commissionaires? Could we add that to the agenda? Agreed.

Our discussions in the last 15 minutes might be expedited if we change the order of those matters a little bit and put Correspondence before Selection of Witnesses. Would that be okay with everybody? Agreed, thanks.

Perhaps what we'll do is start out by introducing ourselves, perhaps beginning with you, Ms. Zann, if you wouldn't mind. Then we could ask our presenters from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to perhaps do the same.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Perhaps, Mr. Malloy, you could introduce yourself and the rest of the delegation.

KEVIN MALLOY: Certainly. Perhaps I can just start right into my opening comments, if that's easier.

THE CHAIR: That would be grand, yes.

KEVIN MALLOY: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Legion Capital Assistance Program. With me today are Marvin MacDonald, executive director of Municipal Services - Marvin is responsible for the overall management of the Municipal Services Division; and Aileen Waller-Hebb, director of Grants and Programs - Aileen's responsibilities include the design, delivery and monitoring of multiple funding programs, including the Legion Capital Assistance Program.

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Legions for the important role they play in our community. Legion members across the province have devoted countless hours to making life better for people in their communities. From New Waterford to Yarmouth, there are 114 Legion branches throughout Nova Scotia. They play a key role in supporting local projects, programs for seniors and youth, as well as activities related to sports, recreation, health, and education. Our Legions open their doors and facilities to school children and community organizations across the province so that activities and events can take place. Thank you for your continued commitment to our veterans, to our children, to our families, and to our communities.

Late last year members of the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command met with the provincial Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to address a number of their concerns. One of the main concerns expressed by the Command was the need for improvements and repairs at Legion branches across the province. Many of the facilities are 50 years old or more and are showing wear and tear. In response to these concerns, in July 2010, our department created the Legion Capital Assistance Program. This is a \$100,000-funding program available to Royal Canadian Legions across Nova Scotia.

A number of factors were considered in arriving at the \$100,000 budget for this program. Prior to the introduction of the program, we received written requests from Legions each year for assistance to do upgrades and repair work. The requests, on average, amounted to an annual amount just under the \$100,000 level. In addition, the department was requested to develop this program without placing a new budget pressure

on the province. We were able to do this by dedicating \$100,000 from our community grant program to be used exclusively for the purposes of capital improvements at Legions.

This application-based program provides funding for upgrades and repairs at Legion halls across the province. Newer building materials and technologies will allow for greater energy efficiencies and approved operating costs for the facilities. Eligible projects include structural repairs to meet building code requirements, roof repairs and replacements, window and door replacements, upgrades to kitchens and bathrooms, heating system improvements, and energy-efficient upgrades.

Legions can apply for funding to cover up to 50 per cent of the eligible costs, to a maximum contribution of \$10,000. Only one project per organization will be approved each year, with only one approval per organization in a three-year period.

Application forms and an information package on the new Legion Capital Assistance Program were sent to all MLAs and all Legions throughout Nova Scotia. In consultation with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command officials, we reviewed applications and awarded funding to 18 Legions throughout the province. The Legion Capital Assistance Program is fully committed for this fiscal year.

Along with the Legion Capital Assistance Program, Legions may also apply for funding through the Community ACCESS-ability Program, which is also administered by Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. The Community ACCESS-ability Program is a \$250,000 application-based program; it provides cost-shared grants to community groups for accessibility-related capital improvements. Eligible projects include ramps, barrier-free washrooms, power-door operators, audio signals and loops, elevators, lift-lever door handles, and light and colour contrasting for the visually impaired.

This fund contributes up to two-thirds of the direct and indirect costs of renovations, installations and/or equipment. The sponsoring organization is responsible for raising at least one-third of the funding for their improvement projects from other sources. The Community ACCESS-ability Program, the maximum grant available for individual projects is \$10,000.

Priority is given to applications which demonstrate that the improvement proposed is part of an overall plan and commitment to the inclusiveness of persons with disabilities. Eligible types of facilities include community halls, shelters, group homes, sport and recreation facilities, parks or playgrounds and, of course, Legions.

Recently we provided funding to Tangier's Four Harbours Legion Branch 120, for the installation of a concrete pad for parking by wheelchair patrons. We encourage other Legions to apply for funding under the Community ACCESS-ability Program if their project meets that program's eligibility criteria.

In closing, I would like to thank our Legion members for the tremendous work they do for our veterans, to promote remembrance and to support our communities across Nova Scotia. We look forward to continuing to work with the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command officials on the delivery of the Legion Capital Assistance Program. We would be happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. MacDonald and Ms. Waller-Hebb, were you wishing to add anything at this stage of the game?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: No.

MARVIN MACDONALD: No.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you. We're open for explorations or questions about this theme from the members of the committee. Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: Thanks for your presentation, some good information there. Just a couple of quick questions. I'm just kind of curious, you said there were 18 that took part and there are 114 Legions. Is the total 18 that have been awarded, but are there more applications that are pending?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: No, we received 20 applications; 18 were approved, two were ineligible. So that totally committed the funding program for this year.

CHUCK PORTER: What made the two ineligible?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: One had started prior to the approval which deems it ineligible and the other had received funding previously, it was a second application for that particular branch.

CHUCK PORTER: Within the three years, you mean?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: Within one year, they applied twice.

CHUCK PORTER: Just on that, how did you come up with the philosophy that three years was the applicable rule shall we say?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: Because there are 114 Legions we felt that it was an opportunity to spread the fund around and gave an opportunity for planning for Legions as well, that perhaps if they couldn't apply in the first or second year they could prepare for it in the third year and give more opportunity for more Legions to participate.

CHUCK PORTER: So the budget that you have to work with then would equal what? If every Legion applied, what would that give every Legion if they all applied?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: Not every Legion would apply, but I think if you did the math it's 114 into \$100,000, but we only had 20 applications this year.

CHUCK PORTER: All right, I think I'll thank you very much for that and I know I'll have more questions for the Command members once we get a chance to talk with them. Thanks.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: You're welcome.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau.

JIM BOUDREAU: Sort of a follow-up to MLA Porter's question with regard to the overflow applications. You indicated you had two that were - one was a reapply, but if in the event that you do get a larger number of applications - this year, for example, may be different, I'm not sure - what would happen to the overflow applications that would exist after the awarding process? Are they filed for reconsideration next year or are they required to reapply?

KEVIN MALLOY: I'll take that one. Most of the grant programs that we have at some point or another are oversubscribed, and by that I mean we receive more applications than we have funding available. What we do is go through a process where we look at the amount of grants that we receive, we take a look at our budget, and we'll determine if there are funds available that we may want to reallocate to this particular program on a one-off basis.

[9:15 a.m.]

We're not necessarily taking the grant amount and increasing it for the foreseeable future. All we're doing is saying within that fiscal year, we may have some funds available to help offset some of the oversubscribed applications. Assuming we're not able to react to all the applications that we receive, we would certainly keep them in the queue and we would respond back to the Legions to tell people that it's there, we're holding it, and we'll do whatever we can.

We work very hard through all of our grant programs to meet the demand wherever we can. It's not always possible, but we make best efforts in that regard.

JIM BOUDREAU: Just a follow-up then. My question was dealing with if there is a requirement to reapply the next year or just reactivate the existing application?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: We would request that they reapply because it's possible that the project they wish to undertake may have already been done. They're required to submit quotes with their applications so their costs may have increased, their priorities may have changed, so we request that they would reapply.

JIM BOUDREAU: Not being familiar with the process, I'm concerned about how much duplication might be required. If it was just to update quotes, and so on, and to revise figures, that's one thing, but if there's a lot of paperwork - and I'm not sure if there is - obviously one of the concerns is that individuals would find it a bit onerous to go through a rigorous application process and being unaware of this application process, I can't speak to how rigorous it is.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: It's not a particularly rigorous application; it's one page and there's a checklist of items they have to supply to us. If the project was the same as the previous year, all they would need to do is tell us and we could work with them if they found it particularly onerous, we're flexible.

JIM BOUDREAU: That's often one of the complaints I sometimes hear about application processes is that people feel intimidated by it. They go through it once and they sometimes get frustrated having to go through the whole procedure again. That's great, if your department is working with them to make it easier, that's probably very much appreciated by people on the ground.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: We do have a staff person that's dedicated to this program, so she works very closely with the applicants. If there are any questions she can help them in any way, so there's always somebody there at the end of the phone or the e-mail if there are questions.

JIM BOUDREAU: Just another question with regard to the 50 per cent ratio. I'm looking for an opinion here - is that something that has been problematic for some of the Legions as they tried to maintain and sustain their infrastructure in the communities? As we all know, numbers are shrinking, the ability to raise funds is very difficult, and I'm speaking more or less from a rural perspective where you do have those pressures outside of the much larger areas?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: We haven't had any feedback in that regard, whether it has been difficult or not to raise the funds. We only had the 20 applications and we hadn't heard that there was a difficulty raising the 50 per cent. Legion Command may have a . . .

THE CHAIR: Perhaps this is a matter we could take up when we look at this matter from the Legion's point of view.

JIM BOUDREAU: Yes, very good.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Theriault - excuse me, I'm out of order. Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: It's a very quick question and thank you very much. Obviously you're doing a great deal of work to assist the Legions. One of the things that you mentioned was they do also serve a younger population, as well, and they open their

doors to other community groups and so on. I'm not completely clear from looking at the application and from the list of things that were funded this year whether this program does support, could support, or has been asked to support any kind of recreational-type additions to Legion facilities, things that would facilitate either recreational activities or bringing in younger people.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: The applications that we've received to date were strictly for upgrades and that's the intention of the program, really - to upgrade their facilities. So it's new doors, windows, roofs, capital improvements to help with maintaining their buildings, to reduce heating costs, those kinds of things. We haven't received any inquiries in that respect so certainly if that was something that Legion Command wished for us to consider, we could certainly talk with them about it but it hasn't been brought to our attention.

MICHELE RAYMOND: But if you were to receive such an application, it wouldn't be necessarily out of order in this program.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: Well, it would depend on what the ask was.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Theriault.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Where did you come up with this \$100,000 grant? How did this come about and why only \$100,000, knowing that there are 114 Legions?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: We looked over the past number of years at the requests that we've received from the Legions and the average over the three years was under \$100,000. One year it was in the \$50,000 range - actually two years in the \$50,000 range, another one was just under \$100,000. We felt that we didn't have any new money to be able to spend on this and we felt that this was an appropriate range, based on past practice.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Does every Legion know about these grants? I have five Legions in my riding and every week I hear from one of them, looking for money. I didn't know about this provincial grant myself. Every week one of them is looking for help to do something.

I see a list here of all around the province and nothing in the Digby area for the five Legions. Of course, I guess it wouldn't matter if they applied anyway because the money is long gone. That was probably gone in the first week.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: It was. The application package was sent to every Legion, based on information we received from the Legion Command. We also sent a package to every MLA.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Is Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations working with the federal government? Is the federal government putting any money into this at all or is this all provincial?

MARVIN MACDONALD: It's all provincial money.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Are there other angles that we want to explore about any of this? Well, if not, are there any other things from the department's point of view that we want to make sure we don't omit?

KEVIN MALLOY: If I could just make a quick comment, Mr. Chairman. I think from the perspective of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, the programs that we try to put into play, to work with communities, to do things to better our communities, there's never enough money. We will do whatever we can to ensure that the demand that's out there is considered in our own budgeting process. The other day someone asked me the same question that we just had, is the federal government putting money into this program? I said no, but it's a reasonable basis for a letter to the federal government to say this is an area where you can support communities in Nova Scotia and all across Canada.

We're constantly looking for new funding sources. We're constantly trying to assess the level of need out there. We constantly try our very best to work with people who are directly affected by this and who can give us better information as to how to prioritize projects and what the need really is.

I guess in closing, we appreciate the feedback from the Command and from this committee and we will continue to work with whatever feedback we get, to continue to work to improve our programs. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: On another matter, Mr. Epstein.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: I apologize, I may have missed this, but how many applications did you receive?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: There were 20; 18 were funded.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Could you explain why the other two didn't qualify?

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: One project had started prior to approval, which deems it ineligible; the second one, Branch 151, had applied twice. Two applications.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: And \$10,000 is the maximum.

AILEEN WALLER-HEBB: That's correct.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Thanks a lot.

THE CHAIR: Is there anything further from any other angle? Well, we thank you very much for explaining this and giving us this background and that's grand, thank you. We're so glad to have with us the delegation from Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. If we could switch gears and think about how these matters of physical state of the assets of the Legions in the province, where that stands from the point of view of the Legions, that would be great.

[9:25 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[9:27 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: We very much appreciate having Mr. Nash and the rest of the delegation with us this morning. I've certainly noticed in the year and a half of him serving on this committee and reviewing its work that the Legion presentations have brought a lot of important focus to what the committee has attended to. So we appreciate you coming and bringing this matter into focus, from the point of view of communities and Legions.

Maybe I'd ask you to introduce yourselves and then we'll turn the floor over to a presentation.

JACK HATCHER: I'll handle that, they had to give me something to do. (Laughter) Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen. On my far right is our provincial president, Mr. Les Nash; to my immediate right is Dave Blanchard and he is our immediate past-president; and over there hiding in the corner is our Command service officer, Brian Richardson. My name is Jack Hatcher and I am the provincial treasurer.

Mr. Chairman, if I may, thank you very much for inviting us on this special topic. Comrade Dave has put a lot of work into it and I'm sure that you'll find it interesting. I think I'll ask Comrade Nash for some opening remarks.

LES NASH: Good morning. First of all, thank you for the invitation. As you've heard this morning and as we know, the last meeting here, when we presented the project for the capital assistance, we were very happy that it got off the ground. We know that it has helped some branches.

Yes, I've heard the question from Mr. Theriault that branches - did they all know? Well, it's a famous thing: you send a letter out and I know that you sent it out and we sent it out, so they all knew. But there's always that evil "uh-oh, we didn't get it." I guarantee you that all branches knew about it. Yes, it was the first year and we think that it went over really well and we're very pleased. We were asked to do a survey on some questions that the committee would like to have known and we had that survey completed.

[9:30 a.m.]

With that, I just want to thank you and I'm going to turn it over to Dave to give you the survey you requested. You all have a copy, I think, in front of you.

DAVE BLANCHARD: Thank you, Comrade Les. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. As you see on the first page there it just gives you a brief outline that we did. When we were contacted about this meeting this is when we decided that, hey, we came in here in last December's meeting and we were asked for facts that we could not supply truthfully. We were given the benefit of the doubt by this committee that represented us, so we thank you for that. Then we decided when we go back in again, we're going to take facts back to them to show them that this program is warranted, needed, and everything about it.

We sent a survey to all of our branches and we have 113 branches in the province. We had replies back from 84 branches, which would be 75 per cent of our branches, which all in all with some of the Legion branches and the way we operate, I thought this was a pretty good return. Anybody who has something to do with organizations like this, everybody doesn't snap their heels and say yes, it will be done. So this survey was taken from that 75 per cent - I have one more branch that sent in that's not in this survey, so we're a bit over the 75 per cent, but in saying that, their questions basically fell into the same line as what you'll see here.

All questions were not answered by the branches that returned the questionnaire for some reason or another, somebody doing it didn't know the answer so they didn't tick it off. That's the reason why the answers to the question range from a low of 67 to a high return of 84. As we go to Question 1, I've listed all the questions in this and on the returns, instead of giving the number of branches, we cut it down to percentages of branches which we figured was a little better way to do it.

Do you own or rent your building? Ninety per cent own them and one leases their building - that was on the returns we got back. Ages of the building, this is quite an important factor and we thought it might add a little more fuel to this grant system. As you see there we have one building that's 120 years old; 25 per cent of their buildings are between 60 years old and 70 years old; and 61 per cent of the buildings, some within that group, are from 40 years old to 70 years old, so it's not as if they're new buildings. Even if they were new buildings, they're still going to be after grants.

We have one building - just to pass it on to you - it's only two or three years old but for some reason their walls get cracks in them. They got a shoddy job, I think, when they did it with the contractor, but they have to put repairs into this building. In case anybody could be here, this is the branch in Liverpool and that's a comparatively new building. Another question was, was the building built as a Legion building? Well, 69 per cent of them were, 31 per cent weren't.

I'll go into Question 4 and basically let you know what these buildings were before, the ones that weren't built as Legion buildings: 19 per cent of them were schools; 11 per cent were ex-DND buildings - for example, the Legion building in Yarmouth was an old H-hut that was on the base in Yarmouth; 15 per cent of them were dance halls, or something similar to that; 11 per cent were private residences where they bought a house and made their branch out of it; 7 per cent were stores; and 7 per cent were churches. We have another 30 per cent - now these ones here are getting down to one specific thing: one used to be a blacksmith shop, a restaurant, a repair shop, a post office, a golf club building, a jail, and another one they didn't know what the building was, but that was how that one went.

Once we got those questions out we went into trying to get some history or facts and figures on what the buildings are like. As you can see here, Question 5: What is the condition of the building roof? Well, 41 per cent were good, 19 per cent were fair and 40 per cent were in need of repair. A few of these ones who are listed in that did get grants already this year where 20 grants went out. A few of those grants were for roof repair.

We went to the interior of the building, that's windows, doors, et cetera as you see, 32 per cent are good, 23 per cent are fair, and 45 per cent are in need of repair. Now this is one of our larger returns, we had 84 returns and that's where we got those figures from. Windows and doors are the main items in need of repair, a few require paint, siding, et cetera.

Then we went to the question of, what is the condition of the basement of the building, if applicable, whether it's mould, dampness. Out of 57 that answered that question we got 33 per cent good, 26 per cent were fair and 41 per cent were in need of repair. The most common problem, as we all may know in a basement, is dampness and with the dampness comes the mould. We did have one branch here a few years ago, the provincial Department of Health was threatening to close the building and this was because of mould. They went out and got their building fixed and hopefully everything is going good, I haven't heard anything more about it lately.

The other question was, what is the condition of the interior of the building, doors, floors, et cetera? As you see from 84 returns, 39 per cent are good, 36 per cent are fair and 25 per cent in need. Common problems are floors, doors and painting of walls.

Another question was, what is the condition of the heating system and air conditioning system? From 78 returns, good was 53 per cent, fair was 32 per cent, 15 per

cent were in need of repair. One reason why we might have a few less returns on this is, I think, some of these buildings weren't into air conditioning or their heating system or something like that, but the common problems were old furnaces should be replaced, a lot of the buildings have no air conditioning, period.

Question 10: Is your building up to fire code? Ninety-four per cent of them are up to fire code - some may be borderline but they are up to fire code; 6 per cent out of 79 returns aren't. Common problems are doors are not up to standard material, that is metal doors and whatnot that they call for now. A lot of them open the wrong way, in a lot of these older buildings the doors open into the room. They have to open out, they have to have panic hardware on them for the outside doors and things like that, that's what their problems are; wood panelling on walls which is not fire resistant. A lot of branches have removed that and put a fire retardant material on the walls. A lot of the branches did that and the reason they did was because the fire marshal threatened by saying, if you don't do it, you close your door. We had one that has no fire escape on the top floor, the Legion branch in New Glasgow, and basically they don't use the top floor of that building anyway. There are some other ones that had no sprinkler systems in them.

Question 11: Is your building up to electrical and plumbing codes? Out of 84 returns, 90 per cent were yes and 10 per cent were no. Common problems are that electrical and plumbing needs upgrade. There are a couple that cannot use their water for drinking or cooking, they have to buy their water and bring it in. This happens in some of our rural branches and I think one of the problems is there's a pretty high arsenic content in their water. That's the reason why - they use it for the toilets and that but they can't use it for other uses.

Question 12, with 78 returns: Is your building up to safety health standards? Ninety-two per cent said yes, 8 per cent said no. Again, the common problem for them not being up to safety standards is mould and these other couple that were in there with bad water.

Question 13: Could your building be more energy efficient? Ninety-seven per cent said yes, 3 per cent said no. The common problems are lighting, heating system, doors, windows, and insulation. A lot of them have 10- or 12-foot ceilings in them, which is a big job to heat, so they've got lowering of ceilings. Some of the branches have been in contact with Nova Scotia Power on this part that they're coming out to, they'll give you a pretty good deal. A lot of our branches are now in the process of having their florescent lights changed for much more efficient bulbs and everything. There is a subsidy that they can get for this, through Nova Scotia Power.

Question 14: Is your building wheelchair accessible? There were 84 returns, 86 per cent yes, 14 per cent no. Some branches have part of their branch wheelchair accessible, some of them may have the bottom floor, yes. To get an elevator to the top floor, it's real big money, not only building the elevator but you've got to have your

yearly inspections and they want just to carry that out, and the maintenance. So some of them may have only part of their building which is wheelchair accessible.

Question 15, we had 82 returns: Is your building on a septic system? Thirty-two per cent were yes, 68 per cent were no. On the 26 branches that have their own septic system, 17 are in good condition and nine are in fair to poor condition.

Question 16, we had 81 returns: Do you see any repairs to your building in the next five years? Ninety-eight per cent say yes, 2 per cent say no. Out of the 79 branches that will need repairs in the next five years, 39 will require major repairs and 40 will require minor repairs. Now that figure can be taken, you've got to figure out where the dividing line is between major and minor.

Question 17, with 73 returns: Are there any other problems with your building that have not been mentioned? We asked this just in case we missed something. Fifty-five per cent said yes, 45 per cent said no. Out of the 40 branches a lot of the problems are covered in earlier questions. Some of the problems that branches have are in their parking lot area that are in need of repair, replacing furniture, storage space and I think it is either the branch in Enfield or Elmsdale, they do still have a flood problem when the river gets high. They did have a serious flooding problem I think about five years ago, their whole basement was full of water. (Interruption) It has happened twice. They are working on it but as you know, this costs big bucks, so that was the answer on that one.

The last question we had was 67 returns: Do you have a security and fire alarm system in your branch? Ninety-six per cent said yes, 4 per cent no. Of the 64 branches that answered yes, six of them have a security system only and one has a fire alarm system only. Two branches have a security system in the bar area only.

Ladies and gentlemen, those were the questions and if you have questions, we will attempt to answer them, if we can.

[9:45 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you for presenting this very closely detailed bunch of material on this question. We'll begin the questions with Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for coming in to present because I know you have a number of very important institutions in a lot of often smaller communities around the province. I hope you'll forgive me if I ask a couple of very basic questions. You mentioned accessibility being an issue for some of them. Are many of your buildings two-storey buildings, involving staircases or needing elevators?

LES NASH: A lot of them are two-storey.

MICHELE RAYMOND: A lot of them are, okay, so those would be the ones that weren't built on purpose as Legion buildings?

DAVE BLANCHARD: No doubt, yes.

LES NASH: For instance, our Legion was built as a Legion and the problem we're having now is that to make it wheelchair accessible up to code, it is going to cost us over \$100,000 because we have to change all the doorways, we have to come up on the side of the building inch by inch, that kind of thing and that's where we run into the problem. If we do it, then we have to maintain it. If we don't do it, and I know right now we can't afford it, it's that simple. That's one case.

MICHELE RAYMOND: That's a building that was built on purpose and yet it is two stories. Certainly that is one of the great concerns they have with housing as well, we're not building to prepare for accessibility later.

Another thing, you mentioned very quickly something about a Nova Scotia Power subsidy for lighting changes. Is that the small business subsidy or is that something targeted to the Legions or to non-profits?

DAVE BLANCHARD: It's an energy policy. I know that it is non-profit organizations that can apply. What they do is send a qualified person out who will look at your lights and test your lights, whether they do an energy surge on it when they're on, I don't know. They in turn - a lot of our buildings have florescent lights and they have the old ballast blocks in them which they don't use today. This is what they are getting at. It is a fairly good program, a lot of our branches are taking advantage of it.

MICHELE RAYMOND: But it's not specifically targeted to the Legions, it's to non-profits in general, okay.

Another thing that I'm interested in, what about outdoor premises? You mentioned parking lots and so on but do any of your Legions actually involve outdoor activities, whether it be horseshoes or baseball or gardens or any of these things?

LES NASH: Yes, they do, quite a few of them. Many of them do.

DAVE BLANCHARD: As a matter of fact, this branch we're talking about that has the flood problem, they own the ballfield there and it's right next to their Legion and everything. They upkeep the ballfield for the community.

MICHELE RAYMOND: And that's just something they do for the community, so it's a volunteer basis, they don't charge rent or anything like that. Okay, well that's interesting.

DAVE BLANCHARD: We have other ones, horseshoe pits and different things like that.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Do any of the Legions receive support from the municipalities as well, when they are providing that kind of recreational . . .

DAVE BLANCHARD: I don't know, we're not aware of it.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Certainly it's a general service. Well thank you very much. I'm sure there are lots of questions.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Theriault.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This was a great report for that many people, that many branches getting back to you. I want to come back to the same question I asked earlier. According to this report, at least over 50 per cent of the Legions need financial help - maybe 60 or 70 per cent, if you want to go through every one of them and calculate it all out.

As I asked earlier, I mean only 10 to 15 per cent applied for this grant and here 60 or 70 per cent need help, so why aren't these Legions applying for this grant that the province has out? I don't know if you can answer that but I would say that probably the answer is that they can't come up with the money that they need to do the rest of the work.

DAVE BLANCHARD: That would be one of the reasons. Another reason is that when this program came out, it was announced in Bridgewater last September or sometime like that, if I'm not mistaken - a lot of the Legions didn't have their stuff together to make out the application form that had to come in. They mentioned here with the other group that was here about the application form - it is quite a simple application form, but there is certain information they have to know on it to know that this is a legit reason for a grant. Some were just too slow or didn't have their stuff together to get it in on time and basically, no doubt, they'll be coming at it again, you can rest assured.

LES NASH: If I can, like I was saying before, a lot of times what happens is it goes on deaf ears and the secretary, or whoever, may just put it aside and we know that happens with a lot of things. However, some of them may not have had the money and will be prepared this year. We thought at the time it was a pretty good turnout for it just coming out in September, this was all done by the end of December.

Of course, we have a lot of branches where some people know grants, they know this inside and out, and they're right on top of it where other people - the application is quite simple, I have to agree - are kind of leery of them and don't want to fill them out and they're waiting and looking for somebody to help them fill it out. We're working on those problems and we tell them to call us if they need help. That's part of the reason -

some have no money, but the other is they're a little leery of filling out forms. Some of these guys are in local, small communities and some are good at it and some aren't. We're working on that.

Actually, we were quite pleased with the 20 and I realize one put in twice and you run into this, that's why we're sort of involved and hoping that somebody is not trying to dupe the system, like if they let us know - and they do let us know who's getting them because you could get some people who are good at grants and send that in, they may not need us at all, it's hard to say. But we have to work with the committee on that too.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Maybe it's just as well because if the 50 per cent or 60 per cent of the Legions that need help applied, there's going to be a lot of disappointed Legions not receiving any money out of this. I'm going to get back to the federal government helping here again. At the end of this meeting I would like to make a proposal that we write to the federal government and ask them to help in this program, ask them if they could help Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations because when these applications start coming in, out of this \$100,000, if all the ones that need money send an application in, they're only going to get \$100 apiece out of it if they're lucky.

LES NASH: But in fairness they did say they would do 10 grants of up to \$10,000. Some of these are going to need a lot more than this, but this was just started off and the reason why they got \$18,000, some of them only needed say \$3,000 or \$4,000. I know what you're saying, it would be great if the federal government would chip in and then you could up the \$10,000.

HAROLD THERIAULT: At least I believe that they could try to match it, which would double it, and that's not a lot of money to try to help our Legions out in this province.

DAVE BLANCHARD: In all fairness, there is another grant out there from the federal government. Basically all the Legion has to be able to say and put down is that - this is through seniors - they do supply their facilities for seniors and that grant can go up quite a few bucks, up in the thousands. I know branches that are applying, my own branch is going to apply for something through it because they do come out with a lot of - the seniors there hold a seniors expo in Windsor and whatnot. But there is another program, in all fairness, so if you don't refer to it chances are they're going to come back and say they didn't do too much homework, they just want money - that's all I'm saying on it.

I'd love to see them come in on it and get more money into the pot, but there is another grant that is available and applications for that have to be in by April, I believe, and the grants come out, I think, in the summer, but that's through the seniors part of it. We have our Senior Citizens' Secretariat here in Nova Scotia that is involved in it.

HAROLD THERIAULT: And that's great, I'm glad that's happening by the federal government. I'm also saying that the federal government should be supporting this provincial program. At the end of this meeting I would like to make a proposal that we write to the federal government and ask them why they can't at least match this provincial program that we're trying to help the Legions, which is a federal responsibility to start with.

THE CHAIR: Well, that's what we'll do.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau.

JIM BOUDREAU: I have a bunch of papers on the go here. I've looked at the application and I've dealt with some of these things and I do concur with some of your statements up at the front table with regard to the fact that people feel, especially in the rural areas, intimidated by this application process. The application itself is a one-page application, however, with that there is a fairly significant checklist of things that the Legion has to provide.

As you indicated, if you're very good at doing the grant thing - which some people are and some Legions have those people and some organizations have those people - this could be sort of a piece of cake, but for others it's a reason just to throw it aside, throw it in a drawer and forget about it. That's a problem that we have to look at in the administration of this program. We have to look at how we can - and I say "we" as both government and the Legion - find ways in which we can help people pursue this.

If you look at your statistics - and they're very well done - it shows that 93 per cent of the Legions are over 30 years old, so they're not young buildings; 63 per cent are over 50 years old, and your statistics speak for themselves. As you go down through it, it's clear that most Legions are having some serious difficulties trying to maintain the buildings. I'm coming back to the question with regard to the 50 per cent. I kind of see that as a disincentive, especially if you have a lot of work to do, as you've indicated up there, Mr. Nash, when you were talking about making your building accessible; \$10,000 doesn't go very far when you're looking at a \$100,000 project. So in most cases, things will not get done.

So the 50 per cent thing can be somewhat problematic for some of the Legions and some of the community groups, especially if they don't have the ability to do the fundraising that may exist in other jurisdictions or other areas. So I'm just looking for your general comments on the 50 per cent, how you see it, how you think improvements might be made, just sort of throwing it out there for some commentary.

LES NASH: I think, to put it bluntly, we were happy that it got started and as you know, after everything gets started, then you can request more and prove that this was not

enough and some branches will apply and whatever. I still think down the road the grants will increase, I do believe that, and branches will ask for more. It's not perfect yet, but we're just glad that it got started.

Dave, you might add some comments there.

DAVE BLANCHARD: I might add on that to get them into it more, with the committee that was here, we would like to be able to sit down and talk to them and get a few suggestions that we got. The way it stands now, I think it was three times a year that you could apply for this grant, there were three times they went into it, but now it's once a year - which is okay, no problem. But if we know this is coming up and what there is, we in turn can get out to our branches, too. We will put the information to the branches.

[10:00 a.m.]

We'll also be having this May our provincial convention, which is every two years; this one is in Port Hawkesbury. This is something that can be brought up. All the branches are represented, basically, at that convention and that will be material they can take back from them.

Sometimes branches are a little bit afraid, they don't want anybody to know what's going on. I think you'll agree on that, they're a little secretive. On this grant, as we said, it's great, yes - \$200,000 is a lot better than \$100,000. But we're thankful for what we have but we would like to see more. However, on putting up the branch's share, there's also a part in there that made it a little easier on the branches - part of their share can be made up with self-help. If you've got a carpenter in your branch putting in windows, his bill would have been \$500, that goes in as "party" or "share" which is normal on a lot of these grants, that you can - it's just something to get out there.

No doubt some wrinkles can be ironed out in this thing to make it a little simpler and a little better. We've been into this for only a year so you can't expect everything to come in just like that, or we don't. (Interruption) Yes, it would be great if the grants could be larger because I'm sure, as you see from this survey here, there are a lot of branches out there that have to spend money and a lot of them are not in a position to, they haven't got the money to do it.

We've noticed over the years - Comrade Jack here, he's our Command treasurer - and the branches all have to submit financial reports every month. Well, we can see on those financial reports where profits are down, expenses are up, and some are coming in the red this month and some are in the black. Some are dipping into a few GICs to keep their heads above water and hopefully they will be all right. I guess this is part of the times too.

LES NASH: Mr. Chairman, I just want to point out something. Your committee kept saying 114 branches and they were right. We have 113 now because we lost a branch

here a couple of months ago and that has been since we last met. The branch in Eureka closed, so the numbers are right from what we gave last year. I suppose we were up to date on it and Eureka closed and that's why it's 113.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Where's Eureka?

LES NASH: Pictou County - don't ask somebody from Pictou County that or you're in trouble. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Ask him where Halifax Chebucto is. (Laughter) Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions as well. I think this was a very good exercise, so you have a very clear picture of where our branches really are and it's now on paper and you have something to work with. It points out a couple of things, the biggest one obviously being the need. How old the buildings are, where they began, a lot of them, and how they began - very important information.

It's interesting to look at the program and to Junior's point here, really - 18 were awarded grant money this year and five of them took half of it. So when you talk about the numbers of your 113 branches now, trying to receive assistance over the course of three years, it's highly unlikely, very highly unlikely even if all 113 applied, the potential would not happen in that three-year period. I don't know how you could ever do the math without increasing the amount so I'm going to be very happy to second Junior's motion when it comes to seeking more assistance, if we can, for this program specifically.

Dave, you're right, there is another program out there. I think that seniors one is around \$20,000 that you can apply for, if you're aware of it. That's the bigger case again, in some of the things that have been mentioned today.

Just a couple of quick questions. You talked about the - we've heard a decrease in membership. How is the membership? Is it actually down? If so, by what percentage and is it consistent across the branches or are there a few that stand out?

LES NASH: We got a report from Ottawa yesterday and actually in Nova Scotia we've held our own this year. I think that from the whole province, we lost only 67 members. We lost some and we got new ones in so we've held our own this year, I can say that for Nova Scotia. It's higher than we expected.

CHUCK PORTER: That's pretty good. There seems to be a fair number of new members around our branch. I've been a member for years and there are some new faces, which is a good thing. I often wonder how other branches are doing around the province, based on ours.

So funding is always an issue. We know that a lot of branches cannot match the 50 per cent. Yes, you can do some in kind but that will only take you so far. The reality is that you've got to have some money in the bank.

I know, and again I'll just speak to our branch, we used to do bingo eight times a week there. What other ways are there, David, to raise money or what things can be out there to assist Legions that are currently fundraising? You know where I am going with this - what kind of breaks can be given to them to help them save a few dollars and put towards the much-needed work that your documentation now proves is necessary?

DAVE BLANCHARD: On that, the three main sources that our branches have to bring in funds are, basically, what they make on their bars - which sometimes when you sit down and do the math, they don't make much there either - and, as Chuck said there, bingos and the VLT machines. We have to face facts and that's it.

Yes, they do other fundraising and they do get money from other fundraising but I'll speak specifically for my own branch in Windsor, I'm going to say that's where a good 75 per cent of our funds come from. The other 25 per cent, our branch members are putting on meals on Friday nights and different things like that. They try their best, and our membership dues, by the time we look at what it costs to do the membership, by the time we pay the per capita tax to Dominion Command and the branch pays the per capita tax to the Provincial Command, there's not much of a slice of the pie left for the branch.

The branches don't want to put their dues up sky-high because you just turn them off and there are people out there that you are just not going to get.

CHUCK PORTER: Are there any tax incentives, David, out there, or any one of you - Jack - treasury-wise that would help branches? Breaks? What's there? What would one be?

DAVE BLANCHARD: Yes, well one of them was at our last meeting we had here and it all adds up - that's the one on bingo. We asked if we could have the tax removed on the cookie jar. Now I don't know how many of you know anything about bingo but the cookie jar or toonie jar or loonie jar, all the bingo players put \$2 or whatever the house has, into it. They win all of that money, we don't get one cent out of it.

This builds so that over time it could be \$1,500 or \$2,000 but when that goes, we have to pay taxes on it and we don't get any of it. Through somewhere or other, I think at the committee then they misunderstood what we said because we saw the letter that was written to the minister who looked after this and they were asking for removal of all taxes from bingos.

That wasn't really what we asked for. If we have to pay taxes on what we're making money on, that's the rule of the land, basically. But on the cookie jar, where we make nothing on it, it is not going to amount to \$10,000 or \$15,000 a year for it but it will

give us a few hundred dollars more a year, if we can get rid of that cookie jar tax. That was one way we could do it.

Another way is, when the VLT machines first came in we made a pretty good buck. Then, as the years went on, they kept cutting down our profit and we had more expenses, we have to supply the insurance now, we didn't have to before, and those things there. We've lost about, what, I'd say about 3 per cent or 4 per cent, Jack?

JACK HATCHER: About that, yes.

DAVE BLANCHARD: Three or 4 per cent of what we originally had with Atlantic Lottery and they've taken it for something else, to do something else with. Again, that's how it goes. Those are just a couple of things.

CHUCK PORTER: But in every situation, in this book here, every dollar is going to count, obviously, for getting access to that money.

Just one final question, if I could, gentlemen, and it would be this and I'll just speak to our branch because I am aware of it and knowledgeable in that area. I know that we used to give money to community organizations, David. How much of that is still going on or is any of it still going on? I know we used to put money into vehicles for the VON and a number of different things. I just wonder not only given the times, but over the years with the decrease in the amount of funding through various things. How much decrease to the community?

DAVE BLANCHARD: I don't know. I mean we're still doing it, don't get me wrong. Just off the top, Air Cadets, Sea Cadets in the Windsor area, Army Cadets, there is around \$1,500 a year that is given to them because we do sponsor them. That's in the youth.

We also get Encounters With Canada, I think it is. There are students who are selected to go to Ottawa, which used to be the old Terry Fox Centre. They have to raise a few hundred dollars themselves, they'll make a request to the branches and 99 per cent of the time they get what they are after. There are different things like that.

LES NASH: Minor hockey, minor baseball, we're always giving.

DAVE BLANCHARD: Yes, and not only that but another big part where no, we might not be putting out the dollars and cents that we used to at one time because we haven't got it but, at the same time, I think there's about - I'm going to say there's an average of two things a week that basically go on in the branch in Windsor where the building is donated. It is donated, no cost, even though we have to heat it and have to put our cleaners in to whip a room down and set it up, so there is a cost to it. But if it's a mostly seniors group and charitable, things like that, yes, we will help them.

CHUCK PORTER: Thank you very much to all of you for coming and giving a presentation and the work you've done and for all that you continue to do for Legion branches across the province and our community organizations and so on. We really appreciate that so thanks so much for that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Porter. Ms. Zann.

LENORE ZANN: Thank you very much, gentlemen. It is actually very interesting to hear what you've got to say and this is a great questionnaire. I have just a couple of questions, have you ever had any of the Legions ever reporting problems with asbestos or anything like that, or have you already had that removed from all of them?

LES NASH: We went through that, didn't we, Jack? We didn't have that many but I think we went through that problem eight years ago or 10 years ago, something like that.

LENORE ZANN: So that's all been taken care of now?

LES NASH: We hope so, they haven't complained to us so I think they've all gotten rid of it.

LENORE ZANN: That's good. My Legion in Truro, I know you are well acquainted with it, it does an amazing service for our community by providing wheelchairs and scooters and things like that. In fact, I've had a number of times where people have contacted me who are in desperate need of something and haven't been able to get it through any other means except through the Legion. They really do an amazing job there. Do all the Legions in Nova Scotia do that or just a few of them?

LES NASH: Most will do it if they can. You have several in Cape Breton that do it, Windsor does it, another big one is Kingston and Lower Sackville. The larger ones can do it. Some of this, in turn, we used to get from the DVA when people passed away and they would give us the stuff - not us, but to certain branches, the bigger ones and it was there. Even if I need something up in Springhill, I go to Truro and get it. I have no problem getting anything I need there.

I don't know what is happening in a lot of the branches buying newer stuff now and I don't know if the DVA has stopped that, Jack, or they are going to send things to Crown Assets now or just turn it over in a lump sum, which bothers us a little because that's where we got a lot of the stuff but that's why they can do it. Truro does have a real good set-up and they had quite a bit of stuff. The big thing is having the room to handle it and they did have the room.

[10:15 a.m.]

LENORE ZANN: Once they get their new one then we'll have lots of room. (Laughter) What is the annual cost? Is there an average annual cost to run a Legion in Nova Scotia?

LES NASH: They vary. For ours, just as an example, heat and lights is \$5,000 a month, before you open the doors, because it's an old building and we're too big.

JACK HATCHER: We put out close to \$1 million.

LENORE ZANN: Really? You mean for all of them or just yours?

JACK HATCHER: One branch, the Sackville branch.

LENORE ZANN: Really? That's quite a bit.

JACK HATCHER: Within that we put \$100,000 into the community and that's not counting our free rentals, your free use of the halls and that. That's strictly cash.

LENORE ZANN: Right. So would you say, your main source of income these days, would you say it would be the VLT machines?

JACK HATCHER: With us it's a split between the VLTs and bingo.

LENORE ZANN: Have you noticed any problems with seniors with the gambling? Have there been any reports about people coming in and spending their pensions week after week? Has that become a social problem that you know of yet?

DAVE BLANCHARD: I know in our branch we've had not only seniors but some who aren't seniors. Sometimes the seniors, well that's one side of it, when you get the other ones coming in that are raising four or five kids at home, and they're blowing it, but there's only so much we can do.

LES NASH: I'm not the one to talk about it because I've been dead against it since it started so anyway, I keep quiet now.

DAVE BLANCHARD: You know one thing about it, our Ways and Means chairman looks after the bingo and looks after the VLT but at the end of the year, before the VLT machines came out, we used to make the same amount of money on bingo. We don't make the money on bingo today that we used to because a lot of the people who are playing bingo are now on the VLT machines and we're not getting them. It's just as Chuck mentioned, we used to have bingo three nights a week, now we're down to one and we're not getting the crowds. We still are making some money but when you look at it - and yes, at the end of the year when the report comes in, the VLT will bring in more than what the bingos bring in.

LENORE ZANN: And do you get to keep more if it's bingo or if it's VLT?

DAVE BLANCHARD: Oh, we get to take more if it's bingo, yes, a lot more.

LENORE ZANN: Really, that's interesting.

DAVE BLANCHARD: We got a lot better profit share with bingo than what we have with the VLTs.

LES NASH: It's not only the VLTs, you've got those crossword games, you've got bingo games, you've got this. All those things cost \$2 to \$3 or whatever. Well the seniors have so much so they're out and they buy that for a pastime because it is a great pastime. They are going out and, say they've got \$50 or \$60 bucks - when the time comes for bingo, that has probably gone on scratch cards where they're trying to win enough to go to bingo. I'm not the person because I hate them anyway and I don't play them either.

DAVE BLANCHARD: You can tell a lot of this with bingo players. I sell our main books at our bingo and we have two or three people there, they come in early and they go to the VLT. I can tell, when they come up and buy their books, how they made out on the VLT because if they're laying the money out I know they did good on the VLT and if they're just skimping through enough to play the night, they didn't.

LENORE ZANN: So really you have a mixed feeling then, about those VLTs. Yes, I know it's difficult, isn't it? There are fewer sources of revenue for the Legions and, unfortunately, this has come into our society and people seem to be hooked on it.

MR BLANCHARD: And we're the same as the rest of them - I guess we have to use them to survive, or help survive. You can look at that from right down to the government part, take that out of the equation.

LENORE ZANN: Do you have any young people approaching you to say, can you get more equipment, more games, more entertainment or more anything in there for the younger vets who are coming back?

LES NASH: In honesty, we're having a problem with that - we don't seem to be getting them to come. I haven't heard a whole lot about their own organization. They may be doing something but they don't have a branch and we'd just love to have them come in our branch and take over. Us guys are getting older and these guys need to fight for their group and that's what we would love to have them come. Now, some are but we just don't seem to be getting the numbers that we used to get from the military when they retired. We don't quite understand it.

LENORE ZANN: Maybe there's something we could all brainstorm about to try to think about what could attract them to come in. I mean obviously if there was equipment, even pool tables, I don't know.

LES NASH: We have that. I'll tell you, in fairness, Dominion Command has just struck a committee and they've got something like \$500,000 to look at the future and things may have to change from what we are. It will never change for the care of the veteran but things that we can do, like the inside, maybe change our ways. As you know and as everybody knows, drinking today is zero tolerance so you're not going to make the profits that you could make years ago on it. We may have to change our outlook of something inside and they're working on it. They should have started sooner, that's my opinion but anyway, we've got to start somewhere.

LENORE ZANN: I notice also that the ladies auxiliaries that make those dinners are getting older too.

LES NASH: We're not getting the new ones.

LENORE ZANN: You're not, are you, I know. It's a shame, really. I don't know if it's just a statement about society today.

DAVE BLANCHARD: I might say that with the people coming in and whatnot, there used to be one time in the Royal Canadian Legion that you had to be a veteran, or a child of a veteran basically, but now you don't. We have a membership category and it's a voting membership category, that you don't have to have any military affiliation whatsoever.

This was passed at Dominion, at our convention, just an order as our membership was going down. So it's now to the part that you don't have to have any of your relatives have anything to do with the military whatsoever and there's a membership there for you which is an affiliate voting membership and you have every right that any other member has when you join that. You don't pay any more, you pay the same dues. We have picked up a few people there.

LENORE ZANN: Well, I think maybe we should engage with all of our different MLAs and try to come up with some strategies of how we can start to get the younger people to start to join and what kinds of things they would be looking for there. Do you have very many dances anymore?

LES NASH: It doesn't work anymore. If you weren't in there at 8:30 at night, you didn't get in a few years back. I'm going back to probably 15 years ago but we still have our "brittle bone" nights that are working pretty good. I'm part of that so I'm not being . . . (Laughter)

Like I said, with young people now, if anybody knows any of them, they don't go out until midnight and the bars are now open til 3:00 a.m., so they don't go out until midnight. One time you went out at 8:00 p.m. and you came home at midnight or 1:00

a.m. I know because my daughters drive me crazy, they were going out at 11:30 p.m. - that's the time to be coming home, not going out. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: These are two subjects, Lenore - daughters and dances. I'm afraid if we get into them, we might lose our focus. (Laughter)

It seems to me there are three things that come out of the matters that you've presented that we need to deal with. There is the matter of Mr. Theriault's motion, the matter of your suggestion that it would be constructive to have a committee from the Command meet with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations before the second round of those applications go out, and then the third matter about the cookie jar tax.

I wonder if we could deal with these in reverse order. Through Kim's superior filing skills, we've produced the material that you presented in November 2009 and the letter that was sent from the committee in December 2009, and it's very clear here that what you've said is right. The precise request you made about the 2.5 per cent tax on the cookie jar income was rendered in the letter that went out from the committee as a concern about the 2.5 per cent tax with regard to bingos in general, and the answer came back about bingos in general.

We know that the committee, in fact, wished in our discussion at that time to speak about the cookie jar tax particularly and, if that's still the wish of the committee, I think it would be in order to have this matter re-pursued with new correspondence to the Department of Finance, dealing more precisely with the exact thing that we agreed to do in 2009. Would someone be willing to make a motion?

JIM BOUDREAU: I'd be willing to make a motion that we pursue this matter, as per the November 2009 discussion, and that we re-submit a letter to Finance.

MICHELE RAYMOND: I'll second that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Boudreau, Ms. Raymond. Would anyone like to speak to the motion? Mr. Theriault.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Where was this letter addressed to? Is it to Finance or to Veterans Affairs?

THE CHAIR: Finance.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Maybe it should go to Veterans Affairs and be cc'd to Finance. Veterans Affairs Canada has got to put some persuasion behind this here, I believe, to make that happen. The letter that came back from Finance is stating bingo in general. They don't care if it's the Legions in Nova Scotia or what it is, they're going to collect their 2.5 per cent on money changing hands and they don't really give a damn in whose hands it changes.

If Veterans Affairs would put some support behind this to the Department of Finance of Canada, I think it would make a difference.

THE CHAIR: I just wonder, Mr. Theriault, this is the proposal that the Legion made to the committee. What they had actually asked us to do was to communicate with the Department of Finance - the provincial Department of Finance. I wonder if what you are suggesting is maybe it would be useful to send a copy to Veterans Affairs but still do what the Legion asked us to do, to send our concern to our provincial Department of Finance because that's who is taxing them. Does that make sense?

HAROLD THERIAULT: Okay, but Veterans Affairs should be behind this, in support of it.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Would it be agreeable to the mover and the seconder that a copy of this letter go to Veterans Affairs?

MICHELE RAYMOND: A copy of it to go to Veterans Affairs is a great idea.

THE CHAIR: Okay, are there other comments on the motion? Does everyone agree with this motion?

It is agreed. Okay thanks, that's one.

Then two - I think you had suggested, Mr. Blanchard, that it would be useful if a Command committee could meet with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations on this particular issue of increasing the uptake of Legions. Would it be useful, from your point of view, if the committee were to send a letter to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, asking that such a meeting be organized and take place?

DAVE BLANCHARD: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: Would someone care to make such a motion? Ms. Zann.

Is there any discussion on such a motion? A seconder? Mr. Porter.

Any thoughts on this?

DAVE BLANCHARD: In all fairness to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, just to say, well, last Fall they sent us the list of the branches that had applied for this grant. Basically they asked us for our approval, which we sent back to them that, yes, we approve this. After that, the grants were made. They did send out a letter with how much each of those branches got. We did receive that information.

Basically what we're looking at is that we'd like to know what's going on, at least, with these. We'd like to have a little bit of input.

I know this morning when they gave their presentation here, that last grant that he was talking about, I never heard anything about that, that's all news to me.

JACK HATCHER: He's going to forward it all to us.

DAVE BLANCHARD: He's going to forward it all to us so, again, this . . .

[10:30 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: I think I gathered from your presentation that so much of your research and our discussion had been about the update, the percentage of Legions that had responded. The sense was, perhaps based on the looking into it that you've done, you might be able to offer some advice to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations that would improve that. That's the kind of a sense of one key thing for such a meeting. Is that kind of the sense that you have, too, Mr. Porter?

CHUCK PORTER: I would like to add to that, just exactly that a chance for some feedback, as well, from the branches and Command, which deals with the branches, and how this program is working - there could be tweaks and some ideas and certainly the presentation of this to them. The reality is that it's right here, to put that on the table for Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations in an effort to also make a pitch that, \$100,000 is great but we'd certainly take another \$100,000 if you have it.

It's your opportunity when sitting down with government officials to make that pitch and whatever else may transpire, by way of letters to the feds asking for money and such, that there's a lot of value in it but we think we can offer this to maybe help you more. That's all I really wanted to add to it, but that should be the gist of our letter, I think, maybe.

DAVE BLANCHARD: I must say that I think - now, don't quote me on this - there are two provinces in Canada, and Nova Scotia is one of the provinces, that has something similar - maybe not the same as ours. As soon as we got this, one of our first bits was, well, we've got to let Dominion Command know how we're being treated down here. (Laughter) They knew about it anyway because on their computer the word "Legion" comes up, anything comes out that's a program they have. They knew all about it but I think that's what it was and I forget what the other province was.

LES NASH: I can tell you that Saskatchewan is one of them.

DAVE BLANCHARD: Well, maybe that's it, Saskatchewan.

LES NASH: Ontario has something - it's a little different but it's something similar. I'll find out next week when I go up there, I'll get the whole scoop on it, but they do have something too. It's a little different but probably all comes out being the same at the end.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Thank you and actually that's really good to hear, that Nova Scotia is, in fact, supporting its Legions quite well already. We will certainly be happy to continue to do so. I realize that you are fulfilling a large demand and your numbers are sometimes under downward pressure, I guess, at times.

I certainly would like to say that perhaps we might encourage Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to talk with you about strategies for encouraging younger members, younger veterans, perhaps some support through municipalities for some of the other services that you're providing to people who perhaps aren't associated with the Legion at all. I think it's important to recognize that the support which is coming should actually be buttressed from other sources, as well, because you're certainly helping the recreational facilities of many municipalities. I would hope that's something that you can make some use of, and perhaps Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations might be encouraged to help you explore that.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau.

JIM BOUDREAU: I just want to come back to an issue - or come around to it, I guess - and it's the 15 per cent business again and the fact that if you look at the list, as MLA Porter pointed out, there are five that want the maximum. That basically takes up half of the grant whereas if you look at some other ones, they're very small, less than \$1,000. I'm just concerned about the fact that if this program is in place, how can it be improved to ensure that some of the Legions that may be experiencing significant cost pressures can do the things that they need to do? I'm concerned, how can we design something to help them reach that point? It may be problematic for some of the Legions.

For example, it was mentioned here that the Eureka branch has closed. I'm assuming that there are other branches that may be tottering on the edge at the present time, as well, and I know there are. So, you know, obviously some Legions are very well off when you can undertake a \$155,000 project and just get \$10,000 in there. That's a pretty significant expenditure and certainly in my area, I know the majority of the Legions there - if not all, actually - would not even be able to undertake anything of that magnitude and would be more in the very small range, especially the 50 per cent contribution. That's just something I'd like to put on the record.

LES NASH: And because some of them took the small grants, it's all they could afford. Maybe they do need the new roof that's going to cost \$50,000 but they don't have

the \$25,000 to go with it and they're only going to get \$10,000. Yes, some of that has happened but we're hoping this will grow.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Is there any other discussion on Ms. Zann's and Mr. Porter's motion? Are we all agreed then with the motion?

It is agreed.

Then there's the matter of the motion that Mr. Theriault wished to put before the meeting, calling on the federal government to . . .

HAROLD THERIAULT: The Department of Veterans Affairs, ask them to match this provincial grant with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations; just a simple ask. It's worth asking.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Porter, you had said earlier you wished to second that.

CHUCK PORTER: I'll second that, absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Okay, is there discussion on Mr. Theriault's and Mr. Porter's motion? Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: I'd certainly support that because it sounds like finding the 50 per cent.

THE CHAIR: Are we all in agreement with this motion?

It is agreed.

Is there anything else you can think of that we've overlooked, that we should add now?

JACK HATCHER: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I had two items that I was going to ask to have re-addressed but not today - maybe at an early date, at your convenience. One of them you've already done, which was the bingo tax. The other one was our veterans disability pension exemption. At another meeting I would like re-address that, if we could.

THE CHAIR: I would like to tell you, Mr. Hatcher, that there has been further discussion about this in the committee since the presentation and correspondence. There had been a concern similar to the question about the cookie jar tax if, in fact, what the department had responded about was the concern that the Legion had.

That correspondence and those discussions between the committee and the department, that's ongoing now. Thank you for raising that because that was probably the

key matter at that time and it was very important to the committee that that be addressed. Thank you.

JACK HATCHER: Good, thank you.

THE CHAIR: I'm sorry, you said there was a second matter?

JACK HATCHER: No, you already discussed the bingo one. That was the other one that I had on my little note here.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you. If there isn't anything else, we thank you for the research and the explanation, and also for taking us into two or three of these other important related matters about the lives of Legions and especially their financial underpinnings. So thank you again.

Maybe we'll just take two and a half minutes and conclude this part of the meeting, and then we'll come back to the rest of the committee business.

[10:39 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:44 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Turning to the correspondence before the committee first, I think Ms. Langille has got everybody copies of the three things. The first is the letter that came back to the committee in response to the information we had asked about following up on our meeting with the Veterans Ombudsman; that's the letter from November 8th. Was there anything needed to be added about that?

[10:45 a.m.]

KIM LANGILLE: I was just going to say, with regard to the Veterans Ombudsman's letter and the letter from Peter MacKay, members who were already on this committee would have already received that and I just passed out copies to new members, just so they would know what we were talking about. If you're looking for those copies you won't actually have them because you already received them.

JIM BOUDREAU: You mean the MacKay letter?

KIM LANGILLE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So we're on the Veterans Ombudsman letter for the moment. Is there any thought about this other than we should just receive this correspondence?

MICHELE RAYMOND: Could you remind me of the date of our original correspondence with the Veterans Ombudsman?

KIM LANGILLE: I don't think I have that here, it was shortly after they presented, so probably a week.

THE CHAIR: No, the letter includes it on October 7, 2010, we met with - it must have been within a week or so of that.

KIM LANGILLE: I would say, yes. I don't have that with me.

MICHELE RAYMOND: That was the letter to which we received the Peter MacKay response?

THE CHAIR: No, the MacKay letter is a separate matter. We're going to deal with the Ombudsman letter and then the MacKay letter.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Sorry, could you remind me what the Ombudsman letter was on? I apologize.

THE CHAIR: When the Ombudsman appeared before the committee there were a couple of informational questions about how what he was speaking about, I think, applied to Nova Scotia. So that letter is providing that information.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Sorry, I apologize.

JIM BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, it's possible because I am getting a little old - I'm trying to catch up with Junior - but I don't really have a grasp for the letters we're referring to. I don't know if anybody else feels - I'd like to get a copy of them again, please, if it's possible. The Ombudsman letter and the Peter MacKay letter, it just might be worthwhile - I don't know if anyone else needs it but I'm a needy person today, I guess.

THE CHAIR: Who doesn't have the Ombudsman letter?

KIM LANGILLE: With them, because you did already receive it.

THE CHAIR: In front of you?

LENORE ZANN: You mean this one?

JIM BOUDREAU: I don't have it in front of me, I guess that's the point.

THE CHAIR: Well, for whom do we need to produce a copy of the Ombudsman letter?

LENORE ZANN: Kim Langille, clerk - this one?

KIM LANGILLE: Yes, you got that one because you're a new member. Everybody else did receive it previously.

THE CHAIR: So this letter of November 8th just answers the question that came out of our October meeting with the Ombudsman. Is there anything further about this letter that we want to do, other than receive it as correspondence?

Is it agreed to do that, then?

It is agreed.

Then the second thing, does everyone have a copy or has had a copy of the MacKay letter? I want to say something about the MacKay letter first before we discuss it, a bit of background. This is in response to a resolution that the committee made at the time of the federal committee's proceedings about the Private Member's Bill regarding ending the veterans pension clawback. The distinctive thing about the resolution that this committee made was its tri-partisan character. The preamble to the resolution was built on a resolution which had been previously introduced to the House by Mr. Glavine, and then the resolution itself was moved by myself and seconded by Mr. Scott. So there was a tri-partisan, unanimous character about the resolution which was very important about it.

I would like to say that in the response that has come from Mr. MacKay, which you will recall reading it, includes drawing members' attention to what he regards as the inadequate voting record of a Member of Parliament who was associated with the initiative that we were wishing to support. I wish to say that I found this tone partisan and that in response to our tri-partisan, non-partisan motion, I regretted for the committee to receive a letter with this tone. I would like to propose that our committee express its regret about the partisan tone with which we have been communicated here in response to what was, importantly for us, a non-partisan or beyond-partisan resolution of the committee.

I wonder if others agree with me about this, that we might have a motion to this effect?

JIM BOUDREAU: Mr. Chairman, the reason I wanted to bring that letter back to my mind was I found the letter itself to be - there's lots of adjectives I could use but I found it to be rather offensive in nature. I do not need to know somebody's voting record on military spending and so on and so forth - that was not the intent of our letter.

Our correspondence - on the contrary, I felt - was an attempt to look at an issue from a strictly non-partisan position and to try to make some advancements. The response, on the contrary, was basically, in my estimation, out of context and certainly from my point of view not at all appreciated. I wanted to bring that up at the committee, I

would like to see more of the non-partisan stuff happen and I think it's time for us to adopt a certain level of political maturity in the country. So that's my feeling on the letter.

THE CHAIR: Are there other responses? Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: I'd have to say that I also found the general tenor and style of the letter offensive, no matter from what Party it came. It was interesting, as you say, not only was this a non-partisan or a tri-Party initiative from this committee, this is a committee which undertakes its work without really even having a specific mandate. I mean Veterans Affairs is, in fact, a federal business and Veterans Affairs is a very different matter from military affairs.

I note that our letter was, in fact, not addressed to Minister MacKay, I believe - is that not true? The letter was referred, which I also found surprising, given that our mandate is one which is from Veterans Affairs. We wrote to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, it was sent in a spirit of collegiality with concern for the welfare, quite specifically for the social welfare of people who have returned from military service whose concerns are quite simply not those of the military. We do not, in any way, pretend to concern ourselves with military affairs in the province.

As I say, I found this distasteful and surprisingly aggressive and it came from a quarter which hadn't been addressed, so if you'd like to add that.

THE CHAIR: Other responses to the letter. Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: Thank you. As I said earlier, I've been on this committee in previous years and actually this is one of the few committees - if one could say they enjoy committee work, this would be one of those. There is very much a non-partisan atmosphere in this committee and it is one of the reasons I was pleased to get back on it. At the same time, we probably cover some of the most important topics in the province, when it comes to our veterans and issues around Veterans Affairs.

Having said that, we've written many letters over the years and I guess most we probably get a response to. I can't recall every letter nor the tone of them but I think it is probably - how can I put it, I guess I'll just get right to the point - easily understood in this room, at the same time, how much more political the federal scene is versus the provincial scene, by way of everything they do, whether it is writing letters or whatever it is. I think also given the times, in minorities, always seem to have a major fight on federally - there's an election tomorrow, there's an election next week. all that has gone by.

I think, in all honesty, Mr. Chairman, we're not going to control what the feds are going to do, regardless of who is in government. I don't say that only because the Conservatives are in power federally, it wouldn't matter to me who was there. We write a letter, we open the door to see what might come back, I guess. We did get a response,

whether we like it or not, and I guess it is no different than any other response we might get that we might like or we may not like. At the same time, we're not going to control the responses. I think this committee should pride itself on the grownup way that we carry ourselves and why we carry ourselves in such a way in this committee and be pleased with that.

In my opinion, we'll take the letter for what it is, move on and continue to do what we can for our veterans.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr. Boudreau.

JIM BOUDREAU: I'm of the opinion that we should resubmit the letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. That's where it went, that's where our intent was and therefore, I'm of the opinion that we send it to the appropriate minister and department and we look for some kind of answer that reflects the question.

This is a non-response in every way, shape or form and if we are willing to accept that as a group, then so be it. But on a personal level and as a member of this committee, I'm not willing to entertain this kind of response and I think it's incumbent upon us if we're going to push an issue on behalf of veterans and we want to look for some kind of response that's consistent with the ask, then I think we have to follow it up.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Epstein.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: I apologize, I had to be outside the room for a moment and I came back in just at the point where I missed some of the comments and debate. If I understood Mr. Porter correctly, he seems to be suggesting that we just leave the matter alone at this point. I'm asking for clarity because it seems to me that if we are going to write back, as a committee, to the minister, that we should do so only if we are unanimous about it, especially if there's all-Party buy-in on this.

I'm not suggesting we make it a partisan issue. I'm suggesting the opposite, that we try and kind of focus on the issue again. If we don't have unanimity then I think probably we should just let it go at the moment. I guess I'm just seeking a little clarity. If we have full agreement maybe we can all look at a draft letter and make sure we're all onside, to make sure it hits the right tone. If we don't have agreement, then we ought not to proceed is my view.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Epstein as well. Two things - I'm fine with resubmitting the letter to the minister but you may recall as well Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn intended to come to this committee and had to cancel. Perhaps we should also be looking at inviting him back. His personally being here may be of great value, will be of great value, in my opinion.

It would be a wonderful opportunity for all of us to get a number of points across. Maybe we could write back to the minister stating that we did write you, for whatever reason it got passed to the Minister of National Defence, we're not sure why but again, we'd like to extend an invitation to you to join us in Nova Scotia.

If you want to write back to him with the same letter I'm not opposed to that either. I have no issue with that but I'd certainly like to see him here.

THE CHAIR: Just a point of clarification, Ms. Langille says that, in fact, a letter did come to the Committees Office with an explanation about why our correspondence had gone to Mr. MacKay. Do you have that there? This may save us pursuing that angle:

"I would like to thank the Committee members for bringing these two suggestions forward. Allow me to explain, however, that Bill C-201 falls under the responsibility of the Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of National Defence . . ."

This is a letter from the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn explaining why the correspondence was advanced that way, rather than dealt with at Veterans Affairs. Thank you very much.

CHUCK PORTER: So not much sense in writing the letter back, I guess, that clarifies that piece. I think, Mr. Chairman - if the committee is in favour - we should still extend that invitation to the minister to come on down to Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Porter, perhaps we'll return to that when we think about the future agenda, okay? Ms. Raymond.

[11:00 a.m.]

MICHELE RAYMOND: I was just going to say that I certainly appreciate what Mr. Porter is saying. I think it's absolutely true that we're not going to control or do anything. I certainly wouldn't intend to chide the minister for that response, particularly given the clarification that it was very specifically passed over to the Minister of National Defence; we don't know why.

I would be just as happy to leave it go. It doesn't really need a response, we can continue to deal with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, perhaps by inviting him in. If the committee would like later, I'd be delighted to second such a motion or put forward such a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have agreement to add 15 minutes to the agenda? (Interruption) Or the necessary time allotted to finish the business. Ten at the outside, is that agreed? Okay, agreed.

Any other questions about this correspondence? Ms. Zann.

LENORE ZANN: I'm sorry, obviously I'm new to this committee, but basically I just read this letter, but it seems like he's basically denying that. He says that it's simply not true, there is no clawback and that the nature of the CF and the RCMP pension plans and implications of Bill C-201 have been misrepresented. He thinks that there is a generous pension plan for the members of the Canadian Forces. What is our response to that?

THE CHAIR: The resolution that we had addressed speaks to the other side of this debate. These are the two prime sides in the debate and the resolution spoke to the other one.

LENORE ZANN: Right, so if we've already expressed our opinion and now he said no, he's denying it, so what is our response going to be? Just to reiterate our first . . .

THE CHAIR: That's the question. So I think it would be in order for someone to make a proposal about, I guess, Ms. Raymond, your proposal was that we follow Mr. Porter's lead and . . .

MICHELE RAYMOND: With the clarification that, in fact, this was passed over, I would say that we probably do follow this lead and I think we've stated our point. I'm not sure if we are really in a position to engage in the federal debate much further on this.

THE CHAIR: Is Mr. Porter's and Ms. Raymond's view speaking for the meeting?

Is it agreed?

MICHELE RAYMOND: Do we need a motion?

THE CHAIR: No, we just need to agree.

LENORE ZANN: So what is the idea? What are we going to do?

THE CHAIR: About the correspondence, nothing, that's the proposal.

LENORE ZANN: Do nothing?

HAROLD THERIAULT: We've done our job, we've got the answer back, that's it. You can write letters for the rest of your life and you'll get the same answer back.

THE CHAIR: The proposal is that we deal with the correspondence in that way. Just for clarity,

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The third piece of correspondence from Mr. Manuge, about the Supreme Court's decision opening the way for the LTD clawback issue to be heard in the higher court. Is there anything that needs to be done with this correspondence other than to receive it as it is?

MICHELE RAYMOND: Is this in any way related to what we have just dealt with?

THE CHAIR: No.

MICHELE RAYMOND: It is a different clawback, okay.

THE CHAIR: Do we agree to receive Mr. Manuge's communication just as correspondence to the committee.

Is that agreed?

It is agreed.

Then about our future agenda and those who we may wish to invite to present to the committee. Might I say first, I would like to propose that it might be helpful to ask representatives in Nova Scotia of those veterans organizations who have advanced the campaign against the pension clawback - that we sent the resolution about and Mr. MacKay responded about - that it might be helpful to invite them to come and present their issue to us and perhaps with the parliamentarians who they have done that work with. I wonder if that's a proposal that we could agree to pursue? Is it agreed to place that on the list?

CHUCK PORTER: That would be up to your caucus, Mr. Chairman, in my opinion.

THE CHAIR: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Thank you, we'll pursue that then. I want to add one other thing. As chairman, I had spoken yesterday to the CEO of the Corps of Commissionaires, who would like an opportunity at some point to come and present to the committee about their work, in particular, from the point of view of where new veterans fit in to the changed life of the commissionaires at the moment. This sounded like a promising thing for us to think about

to me and I wonder if we would have agreement to kind of place that on the list of things that we would like to have presented.

Is that agreed?

It is agreed.

Then we need to think about which matters on the list. Ms. Langille.

KIM LANGILLE: Can I just make one comment with regard to people or organizations that want to appear before the committee. The normal practice is for them to write a letter and that's how all the other committees do it. I just want to mention that. I know this has been brought by a different way, but I think it would keep things simpler if that's how we could approach it in the future.

MICHELE RAYMOND: You mean rather than soliciting?

KIM LANGILLE: You can solicit. I just think the normal practice is that if someone is interested to appear before the committee they write to the committee or a letter comes in, sometimes it comes to an MLA and then they bring it. Then it's approached that way and then you have the actual request in the file.

THE CHAIR: The point is that the commissionaires just called and we don't have correspondence, that's all.

KIM LANGILLE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Does everyone have the potential subjects list? I wonder since we've agreed to place the matter of the pension clawback on the list and this is very kind of timely for us at the moment, if this is a matter that might be good for us to advance organizing a presentation about?

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Is there an existing order of priorities or not?

THE CHAIR: No.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: No, okay.

THE CHAIR: Is that agreed that we try to organize that?

It is agreed.

Other proposals for bringing things on this list. Mr. Theriault.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Last year Mr. Gaudet brought up the tour of the bunker in Debert and it was agreed upon that we should do that last Fall, I believe. I think that may be in order for this Spring. I think that would be quite an experience for us to tour that place. Anyway, I just thought I would mention that again.

LENORE ZANN: Field trip?

HAROLD THERIAULT: Field trip. The one on the submarine was a great experience.

THE CHAIR: Is it agreed to kind of bring that forward then as number two on the list? Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: I don't want us to forget the minister, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, the invitation which could deal with a number of veterans issues, including the clawback question and a number of things as we've continued to write letters about, again, from this morning's issues. I would probably see that as important to get on the list, at least an invitation to see if he might want to come.

THE CHAIR: Yes, thank you. I'm sorry about that. Is it agreed then to issue that invitation and give that priority on the agenda?

Is it agreed? Ms. Zann?

LENORE ZANN: There are two things on the list that I'd be very interested in seeing brought close to the top two, the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society. Am I correct in that being the young people who have come back, the younger generation who have died overseas. Is this what this is, does anybody know? The Canadian Youth Remembrance Society?

MR. RAYMOND: I don't think so, I think they are the postcard committee.

LENORE ZANN: Oh, Canadian Youth Remembrance Society. I just wonder if they're the ones who . . .

THE CHAIR: We'll have to look into that to find out what, in fact, it is before we bring it forward.

LENORE ZANN: Because that would be interesting because I do notice when we have Remembrance Day celebrations . . .

HAROLD THERIAULT: Get some information on it.

LENORE ZANN: Yes, it would be nice to acknowledge our young people who are dying too. The other thing was the treatment of post-traumatic stress, I'm very interested in that as well because I think that's a huge issue for us right now.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: I was actually going to say the same thing. I've brought forward the question of post-traumatic stress syndrome in the past and I think I have now got a little bit more information. What I had been suggesting, and I don't know whether it is in the committee's ability or not - something that doesn't actually exist, possibly not even in Canada, but there are some very interesting initiatives being undertaken in the United States in the treatment of post-traumatic stress syndrome, sort of outdoor education and foundations.

I think they're having terrific success with it, particularly in light of some of the comments of Colonel Stogran. It might be interesting to have an opportunity to hear a little more detail about that and some of the exploration that we might want to be undertaking. I realize it's not directly part of Canadian programming at the moment but as an educational thing, it might be. There are a couple of foundations and I could certainly - I now know who one might make contact with, if somebody were to be able to come up to speak.

THE CHAIR: So the proposal is that that matter be brought forward also, for yourself and Ms. Zann. Is that agreed? Okay.

Are there other matters that we want to bring towards the front of the agenda?

HAROLD THERIAULT: I think that will hold us for a while.

THE CHAIR: That will hold us, okay, thank you.

We note that the next meeting is the 10th of March. Thanks, everybody, for your attention. Are we agreed to a motion to adjourn?

It is agreed.

The meeting is adjourned.

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