

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, January 12, 2012

Committee Room 1

**Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
Call to Remembrance Program**

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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

[Jim Boudreau was replaced by Mat Whynott.]

In Attendance:

Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Roger Purnell
Co-Chair, Call to Remembrance Committee

Joe Murphy
Co-Chair, Call to Remembrance Committee

Les Nash
Chair, Veterans and Seniors Committee



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2012

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR

Gary Burrill

VICE-CHAIR

Jim Boudreau

THE CHAIR: We'll call our meeting to order. As a first matter, we've been asked to begin the meetings of the committee in the new year with a word about the fire procedures in these buildings. I want to read this first, just so that we all know it: should there be a fire alarm, please leave the committee room and walk to the hall where the elevators are located. There are two exit signs, one to the left and one to the right of the elevators. Both of these exits lead to stairs which will take you down and out of the building. Once out of the building, please proceed to Parade Square. Please remain at Parade Square until further instructions are provided.

Now this is more than just a pro forma notice in the case of this building because, in fact, when you look at the elevators and look to your right, the door to the stairwell says in front of it, "Women's", so this is misleading. You are able to open that door and find a staircase, the women's washroom is beyond the case of that door - either side of the elevator, so check it when you leave if you don't believe me.

My name is Gary Burrill, I'm the chairman of our committee. We want to welcome the members of the Royal Canadian Legion who have come to talk to us today about the Call to Remembrance Program.

I want to explain to the committee, first, you will see in our agenda that there are four presenters mentioned here but we have three people with us today. That's because Mr. Robert Evans from the committee, yesterday lost his wife. So I wonder, before we begin the meeting, could we have agreement to ask the committee, as we open the meeting, to send a word of condolence to him on the committee's behalf. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Perhaps we could, for our guests, just introduce ourselves, beginning with Mr. Epstein, please.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: That's great. We have in hand the text of your presentation. We'd ask you to move into this material with us and then, following that, we'll take some time to talk to you about different dimensions of it. Please go ahead.

ROGER PURNELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to point out that after the presentation, my text will be available for every member, that's so that you don't read it while I'm talking. (Laughter)

CHUCK PORTER: You must have been a schoolteacher. (Laughter)

ROGER PURNELL: Thank you for the invitation to provide a presentation to you and your committee. Let me start with a history of the Call to Remembrance Program. The Call to Remembrance Program originated at Branch 9, Windsor, in Nova Scotia as the result of the Legion pilgrimage to Holland in 1995 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of VE Day. The veterans attending were amazed at how knowledgeable and appreciative the children of Holland are regarding the liberation of their country by Canadian troops.

On November 2, 1995, Zone 8 of the Royal Canadian Legion - consisting of seven branches in the Annapolis Valley - presented an all-day knockout quiz. Seven junior high schools participated with students from Grades 8 and 9. The event was highly successful. Another competition was organized in October 1996 and since then the program has grown to include other zones, along with a provincial competition.

The organization. Zone commanders in each area of the province are requested to bring interested parties together to plan logistics for the coming year. This includes Legion branches, cadet corps, school representatives, radio stations and cable television personnel. An invitation is issued to every junior high school and cadet organization in Nova Scotia. Each year, six to eight months is allocated as a time frame for school teachers, cadet instructors and all Legion members to coach the students on the information needed to compete.

An information package coordinated by the Royal Canadian Legion with information supplied by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dominion Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, regimental associations and libraries is issued to all participating schools and cadet organizations. This package has grown from the two booklets titled, *Valour Remembered: Canada and the First World War* and *Valour Remembered: Canada and the Second World War*, to include: *A Century of Service; The Battle of the St. Lawrence; Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields; Battle of the Atlantic; Valour at Sea, the Merchant Navy;*

Valour Remembered, Korea; Victoria Cross Recipients; No. 2 Black Construction Battalion; The Faces of Peace; and the Canada Remembers series: Uncommon Courage, Canadian Forces in Cyprus, Canadian Forces in Syria, Canadian Forces in Cambodia and recently Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

The concept is that of the quiz program similar to the long-running CBC TV program, Reach for the Top. Over time, a database has developed over 1,000 questions based on the learning materials provided in the kit. Each year, this database is expanded when new information comes to light. Each competition needs the students; the teachers or coaches; a moderator to ask the questions; a panel of three judges, which are normally Legion members; a scorekeeper, again normally a Legion member; and an equipment technician who normally looks after the equipment on the day, and the set-up.

Eligibility - any student who is enrolled in Grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 at the beginning of the school year. The cadet corps have only recently been invited to participate as of 2011. The team consists of four players with one reserve from the same school or cadet corps.

In reply to the questions from the moderator, the player who first pushes his or her button, which activates the lock-out system, is the only player allowed to answer. Players may interrupt the moderator at any time during the reading of the question. Except in the case of assigned questions, the players may consult each other prior to the activation of the lockout system. I hope you remember that because we're going to ask questions later.

Types of questions - the long-stemmed and snapper questions. These questions are open to any player on either team. If a player interrupts the moderator and is wrong, the question will be continued for the opposing team who will have sole right to answer it.

I'm going to ask comrade Joe Murphy to ask you ladies and gentlemen a question.

JOE MURPHY: Pay attention: Name two Canadian pilots who served with the British Air Service during the First World War. One of them should be very obvious - Billy Bishop.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Bomber Harris.

JOE MURPHY: Bomber Harris, no. W.G. Barker, Raymond Collishaw and A.A. McLeod.

Short snapper: What does VJ Day mean?

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Victory in Japan.

JOE MURPHY: Correct you are, two points.

ROGER PURNELL: I'm going to ask Howard to not answer any further questions. He's the only one who seems to know. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: The standing rule is that Mr. Epstein is always on our team. (Laughter)

ROGER PURNELL: Assigned questions - these questions, if used, are directed to individual players. The player to whom the question is directed is the only one eligible to answer. No consultation is allowed.

JOE MURPHY: Now you will notice that the assigned question is the same as the long-stem question. The reason that we went to assigned questions was we found that one or two players were always answering all the questions and the rest weren't getting a chance to answer, so that's why we went to assigned questions.

The assigned question is, which battalion of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry was first to serve in the Korean War? Anybody willing to take a guess? Pardon?

MICHELE RAYMOND: The 1st.

JOE MURPHY: If you had went a little higher and said the second, you would have had it right. The 2nd Battalion. Okay, do you want me to do the true and false questions?

ROGER PURNELL: Yes, go for it, true or false.

JOE MURPHY: Okay, another type of question we give the students is true or false. True or false - John McCrae's horse's name was Bono.

HAROLD THERIAULT: It sounds like it should be true.

JOE MURPHY: No, it's false. The name of his horse was Bonfire.

ROGER PURNELL: The next question is a "who or what am I?" question. These questions are open to any player of either team. Each team is allowed one answer for each clue given. Point values diminish with each additional clue given.

JOE MURPHY: This is a "what am I?" question. There are three clues. You will have a chance to answer the question after each clue. Clue No. 1, I escorted convoy SC-42 from Sydney, Nova Scotia, in August 1941. For three points, what am I?

HOWARD EPSTEIN: A destroyer escort. Do you need a class?

JOE MURPHY: No. Clue No. 2, I was a Canadian naval destroyer for this convoy. For two points, what am I?

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Is this the Sackville?

JOE MURPHY: No, you're getting close, though.

Clue No. 3, I divided my time searching for U-boats and picking up survivors during the 48-hour U-boat attack off Cape Farewell, Greenland in September 1941. For one point, what am I?

Okay, the answer is, HMCS Skeena.

ROGER PURNELL: You can understand how much work these young people put in to answer even a miniscule of the questions.

JOE MURPHY: We have 1,000 questions, aren't there, Roger?

ROGER PURNELL: Over 1,000 on the database.

Financing the competition. This is a grassroots program, which is funded in the most part at the zone or branch level. In 1995, the program in Zone 8 was financed by an agreed upon per capita contribution from the seven branches and cost about \$3,000. Since then, other zones have joined the program and have implemented the same per capita contribution. The cost is about \$3,000 per zone per year. These funds are for the zone play-offs only. The provincial competition is financed by Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and the budget for 2012 is approximately \$6,000.

The booklets which make up the information kits are provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dominion Command and Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. These booklets and other information have been included in a compact disc, which is also included in the information kit. The cost of this transfer of data and the reproduction of annual copies of the compact discs is funded by Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

The prize structure. At zone level, monetary prizes of \$300, \$200 and \$125 are given to the winning team toward purchases of computer supplies or library books. First place teams receive a keeper plaque, a finalist plaque, medallions to the students and coaches and a cheque for \$300. The second place team receives a finalist plaque, medallions to students and coaches and a cheque for \$200. The third place team receives medallions to students and coaches and a cheque for \$125. Certificates are issued to all students who participate.

At the provincial level, the monetary prizes of \$500, \$250 and \$125 are given to the winning teams, again, toward purchase of computer supplies or library books. The first place team receives a keeper plaque, a finalist plaque, medallions to the students and coaches, and a cheque for \$500. The second place team receives a keeper plaque, a finalist plaque, medallions to students and coaches, and a cheque for \$250; and the same for third and fourth, except they receive a cheque for \$125 each. This slide is the only one I could show a picture of some of the gifts that are given, if you like. These are the winners of zone 13 in 2008. This was Liverpool, Queens County.

The equipment needed to run this program consists of individual player lights and two different buzzer sounds. The studio layout provides for the competing teams to be seated one above the other on a raised dais with a moderator and scorekeeper in flanking positions. Only two sets of equipment are available in working condition at the moment; one at Windsor and the other at Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command in Zone 13, which is the South Shore, are presently obtaining quotes for the purchase of new equipment, which is estimated to be about \$3,000.

In conclusion, this program is dependent on the volunteer teachers, cadet instructors and coaches who find the time in their busy schedules to coach the students, to carry out in-house competitions, to select the individuals or team to represent their school or cadet corps, and to attend zone competitions, which are normally held in April each year and with the provincial competition held in May each year.

Funding is from the Legion branches, individuals and businesses, plus a partial portion of the Veterans' Service Recognition Booklet, which I'm sure some of you already advertise in, and the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command's annual sweepstakes, and recently our Poppy Trust Fund.

Finally, for your information and possible attendance, the following is a list of the dates available for the zone and provincial competitions for 2012. I've listed them up there and you'll get a copy of what I've just said here and hopefully you may be able to attend some of these competitions. There are more but these are the ones we have at the moment.

Mr. Chairman, we at Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command clearly feel that this program warrants the time, effort and financial support that we have directed towards it. Any effort on your part or that of your colleagues to promote this program further or to provide additional funding, would be a tremendous boost and most gratefully appreciated by not only the Royal Canadian Legion but by the coaches and most especially by the students, our future leaders.

Mr. Chairman, do we not therefore need to find the time to promote this program and its importance to our country's future leaders, our youth? Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for the presentation and the promotion of the program that you are giving this morning. Our floor would be open for responses or questions of the members. Mr. Theriault.

HAROLD THERIAULT: How are the students chosen? Do they have a background in the military? How do you go about choosing the students from each area to do this?

ROGER PURNELL: In most schools or cadet corps, the coach or instructor requests, if you like, at their social studies or at an assembly if anyone would be interested in this, and describes the program. We provide a kit to every school so they have that knowledge. I

have the books available here for you to look at if you wish, to give you an idea. Then they coach the students and then they have runoffs. They bring in each one, ask questions and they say okay, which is the better student to participate in a team or teams? Some schools have more than one team. Basically, that's how they are selected.

HAROLD THERIAULT: There's thousands of questions, like you said. I mean they need to know their history in the military, that's for sure.

ROGER PURNELL: It's a very in-depth program and you'd be surprised, if you've never been to one of these competitions, how knowledgeable these young people are and how committed the coaches are.

HAROLD THERIAULT: They must have a chance to study this before they compete.

ROGER PURNELL: Oh, absolutely, they've got about six to eight months. When we've sent out the packages to the schools or the cadet organizations, they work diligently, through the local Legion in most cases, and the teachers, to coach these students. You're right, they have a very committed student population.

HAROLD THERIAULT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: Thank you for the presentation. I guess I would say that being a member of Branch 9 for a good many years, I'm quite familiar with this program and those who put it together and continue to work at it. A wonderful program, there has been a lot of success with it and I think that it's something we certainly support, I know where I come from. I know I've been at the different ones and the banquets and such.

This is a great thing for our kids in school, I think it gives them something, you know maybe those who aren't quite so sports-minded and they're looking for something else to do as an extracurricular activity. There are a lot of people who are in the cadet program, of course, you've mentioned and we know, but it is an opportunity for those other kinds of kids who want something to do and who want to take part in something as well, to become involved, to learn a little bit and who do have some aspirations about - whether it's public speaking in some form or some kind of leadership, regardless of where that takes them into the future, it's all good, growing opportunities.

I think this is just a fabulous program. So with those few words, whatever I would add to that, Mr. Chairman, I don't know, maybe a motion after as to some degree as to how we can attempt to find support, maybe a letter to government, asking for some financial assistance but, more specifically, maybe a letter off to MLAs through e-mail even, to let them know that this sort of thing is happening in Nova Scotia and to support it as they can, if given the opportunity. So thanks very much.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps we'll entertain such a motion at the end of the discussion.

Ms. Raymond.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Oh, thank you very much. Please forgive me for arriving a little bit after you began your presentation.

Certainly it's a kind of learning and the sort of material that, I'm sure it's only too obvious, isn't that familiar to people even of my generation, let alone those who are growing up today. One of the things, I mean obviously you've had to put a great deal of work into putting the materials and the teaching materials together. Have you done that here in Nova Scotia or how did you do it? Did one person write the materials or do you do it by committee?

ROGER PURNELL: A bit of both. I mean the committee at Command and the local committees work very hard in putting together the questions for their zones and for the provincial. The paperwork, if you like - the booklets, the information kit - is selected by Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command as to what is appropriate. We put all of that on a CD, as well as the hard copies and it is up to the teachers to go after it. The preparation of the questions and answers is down to the grassroots people you sit at the table.

MICHELE RAYMOND: The study materials - I mean, is it a long narrative? I'd be interested to see. Is it a narrative of each of the wars or is it a . . .

ROGER PURNELL: The study materials are available, as I said, through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Okay, I get it.

ROGER PURNELL: There's this, for a sample. I know you can't see it on the recordings but these are made by the Department of Veterans Affairs, most recently we have these handouts which are for Afghanistan and Cambodia. Again, it's in French and English.

MICHELE RAYMOND: The DVA has put those together and you use them.

ROGER PURNELL: They put it together and we gained a lot of information from local libraries, of course, because they don't cover everything, and we create the questions and answers. Over a period of time, since 1995, the database has expanded, so grassroots.

MICHELE RAYMOND: It represents a terrific amount of work and thank you very much.

JOE MURPHY: Can I say a word?

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

JOE MURPHY: I'm the one who makes up the questions. For each game I make up 130 questions and pretty well we get up around about 115 to 120 in a 13-minute period, so that's doing pretty good.

From my own experience, I've learned a lot of history about Canada's military, a lot. When I was going to school, I thought it was the Brits and the Americans who were in the Second World War. Well, with this program, I found out different. I'll just give you one example of how sharp these kids are: in what year, what month and what day did the first convoy leave Halifax Harbour? The 16th of September, 1939 - that's the way they would respond. Sometimes you get only partway through the question and they buzzer and they answer the question.

MICHELE RAYMOND: What's the age range?

JOE MURPHY: Grades 6, 7, and 8.

ROGER PURNELL: Grades 6, 7, 8 and 9, so that's 12 to 15 years old.

LES NASH: You would know, Roger, that young fellow from Bridgewater that time who was so good and that's why we had to change some of the rules. He had a photographic memory, he just bang, bang, nobody else could get a chance to answer. That kid was unreal.

ROGER PURNELL: You could have three dummies next to him and he just knew everything. We had to change it, we had to take him off halfway through the competition and put the reserve on, to give the other teams a competition because, as you said, he had a photographic memory. He knew that data exactly.

It is a lot of hard work, but as your colleague said, it's rewarding. Our problem is it started off small; it went big and now it's starting to diminish. We're trying to resurrect this program in our schools and in our cadet organizations so that we can continue providing the historical education to our young people, because there's a lot of stuff in those books that you don't read about in normal papers or see in the glorified movies; this is fact.

MICHELE RAYMOND: It's not a style of learning that is used very much in schools at the moment, I don't think - question and answer. We've turned to the multiple choice primarily.

ROGER PURNELL: That's right, multiple choice. We don't have multiple choices.

MICHELE RAYMOND: Doesn't sound like it. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Mr. Whynott.

MAT WHYNOTT: I had the opportunity to attend - I think it was two years ago - the Call to Remembrance at the Calais Branch in Sackville a couple of years ago and it was phenomenal; it was great to see. I don't know if I missed this or not, but the group had done some sort of pilgrimage to Holland in 1995; is that how it all began, the idea?

ROGER PURNELL: Yes, the Royal Canadian Legion did a pilgrimage to Holland to celebrate - if that's the right word - the anniversary of VE Day. Whilst they were there, they met a lot of the students from Holland, the children, and you see it in all of the YouTube videos and all of this, how much they recognize our Canadians. You can tell that I'm a CFA, right? I served in the British forces. I've learned a lot and I support this 100 per cent.

MAT WHYNOTT: Do we see this program - is this right across the Legion, right across the country?

ROGER PURNELL: No.

MAT WHYNOTT: So this is just in Nova Scotia as far as you know?

ROGER PURNELL: We have tried to interest other provincial Commands interested in it. In 1997 we tried it as a Dominion competition to get them interested and they didn't think it was a good program to evolve. We're the only province . . .

LES NASH: Newfoundland and Labrador does it now. It started last year.

ROGER PURNELL: I apologize, Newfoundland and Labrador started last year.

LES NASH: Actually, we're going to challenge them this year. We just have to work out the details of where we're playing and who is paying what, but we are going to have a challenge.

MAT WHYNOTT: That being said, any other places in North America?

ROGER PURNELL: Not that I'm aware of. Newfoundland and Labrador is the only one that has taken up the torch.

JOE MURPHY: I did send a package to Saskatchewan.

ROGER PURNELL: Well, I know we sent one to New Brunswick and I know we sent one to Saskatchewan. However, they've not come forward with any . . .

LES NASH: They're interested, but . . .

MAT WHYNOTT: My question for you then, has the committee met with the Minister of Education?

ROGER PURNELL: Yes, we met last September.

MAT WHYNOTT: In 2011?

ROGER PURNELL: Yes.

MAT WHYNOTT: How did that meeting go?

JOE MURPHY: It was productive. The one question that I had for the minister was, if they couldn't find a teacher to coach the children, could somebody - a retired person, say, like a Legion member or retired school teacher, if they could come in and coach the team, would they be allowed to take that team to the provincial competition? She sort of indicated to me, no, it can't be done. That's where we're having a little bit of a problem is trying to get coaches.

MAT WHYNOTT: But other than that, it was a pretty positive meeting?

JOE MURPHY: Yes, it was.

MAT WHYNOTT: Good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Epstein.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: The materials that you showed us - the pamphlets and brochures that seemed to be published by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs - actually, first, all of that pile that you showed us, is that all from the Department of Veterans Affairs? I see you nodding, so the answer is yes.

The other point I wondered - is it their practice to supply these to the schools or is that not usually the case?

JOE MURPHY: When I was at the meeting with the Minister of Education, they did have some handouts from the Department of Veterans Affairs but this would be strictly for classroom instruction.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Yes, because of course, to a certain extent students will, in the normal curriculum, be educated a bit about the wars that Canada has been involved with, so that's right, of course.

What you're saying is that this stack of materials is not, as a matter of routine, distributed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to schools across the country, is that right?

JOE MURPHY: No, it's not.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: So if the schools are going to have these materials, it happens with the Legion as the intermediary, is that what happens?

ROGER PURNELL: At the moment it would be.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: And do you have to pay for these materials or do they come free, from the Department of Veterans Affairs?

JOE MURPHY: They're free.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Okay, so you have no problem getting hold of a sufficient number, is that right?

ROGER PURNELL: We can get hold of as many booklets as we wish. They have no problem supplying them. We collate it onto a CD because of the new, modern technology available to the students and it's easier for the schools to show that, copy that and utilize it with the students than to have them carry all those books around.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: That actually prompts another question, which is that even though the Department of Veterans Affairs might not distribute the booklets and pamphlets to the schools, is all of this material available on their Web site, or was it therefore necessary for you to put it on a CD yourself?

ROGER PURNELL: I'm saying that the material is available to the general public on their Web site, but you would have to ask them for it. It is not something that you would expect to find in local areas. You'd have to go to the departments and request that particular booklet.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: I think I must have missed this in your presentation, but have you now then distributed the CD to all the schools, I guess junior schools, in the province or just those that have expressed some interest in participating in the Call to Remembrance?

ROGER PURNELL: To as many schools and cadet forces that have shown an interest in the past. We have sent out the information with the hope that they would participate. It's up to the local zone commanders to contact the schools and seek their interest, if you wish.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: And how many zones are there?

ROGER PURNELL: Fourteen zones.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Do you have a commander in each zone?

ROGER PURNELL: We have a zone commander, yes. There is a zone commander in every zone and then there's a district commander above them.

JOE MURPHY: Two zones combined together have a district commander on top.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Did you tell us, because I don't remember, how many schools in Nova Scotia are now participating in this?

ROGER PURNELL: We didn't tell you because it fluctuates each year. As I explained in the presentation, there could be two or sometimes three teams per school. In Zone 13, I can comment and maybe even Zone 8 and Zone 9. We have had up to 12 teams compete for one position out of 10 branches but X number of schools, that's Queens and Lunenburg Counties, so in Zone 8 and Zone 9.

JOE MURPHY: In Zone 8 and Zone 9, I think last year we had 12 teams.

LES NASH: If I may, in Cape Breton our problem there is the cost to bring them up, like the braches. It costs a lot of money to bring eight kids up and keep them overnight for two nights and the branches are having a little problem with that.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Sure, I can well understand that. Mr. Murphy, did I understand you to say that you're the one who chooses the questions that are actually going to be asked in any of the competitions?

JOE MURPHY: Yes.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: I heard reference earlier to a list of about 1,000 or more questions. Did you also generate that list?

JOE MURPHY: Pretty well.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: You did it mostly by yourself?

JOE MURPHY: Yes. Every once in awhile I get after the committee and say, give me some questions.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: That's interesting. Again, could you tell me just how it is that the contact with the schools is initiated? I take it the zone commander will contact the schools. Do they phone up the principal? Do they drop in? Do they write? How does this get going?

ROGER PURNELL: In most cases the zone commander has a meeting with all of the presidents or their delegates of the branches in his or her zone. That information is pushed out to the presidents closest to those schools. Yes, the zone commander is involved; yes, the presidents and their delegates are involved. We try to get as many people from each branch to go to a school, including those who are not already participating, to see - as Comrade Nash said earlier - that the coach is finished in a school, how do we get another

coach or teacher involved? So we have to go back and try to coax, coerce, whatever, the coaches to run this competition.

It's a lot of hard work initially to try to get the schools or the cadet corps involved. Once you've got them, it's amazing how quickly it gets off the ground. It's finding the coach; that's the hardest part, the volunteer to do it.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: I'm sure you're right. Can I just ask a bit more about what goes on in other provinces? If I understood your answer to Mr. Whynott, it sounds as if this actual program is not in place in other provinces, although it may now be starting up in Newfoundland and Labrador. Is that right?

ROGER PURNELL: Correct.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: What kinds of programs exist in other provinces that link the Legion with the schools? If this particular program doesn't exist in other provinces, are there other kinds of programs that are there that form the basis for some linkage like that?

ROGER PURNELL: Through our Poppy Trust Fund we have the poster and literature competition - through our Remembrance program, I should say. Through our track and field we have a major track and field competition.

LES NASH: Other provinces - like Alberta has a youth group and they go up in the woods and take wilderness training. They do that in Alberta and Manitoba. That's their provincial sort of thing.

ROGER PURNELL: Across Canada, one project - the two I've just mentioned, that's basically it. The schools do get very actively involved - or the teachers in the schools get very actively involved in our Remembrance program, the poster and literacy competitions.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Thank you. That's very helpful.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Whynott.

MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you, I think this has been great. I would like to kind of support the idea that Mr. Porter had about our committee writing a letter to the minister in support of the program and providing the possibility of more information to her and maybe even a follow-up meeting with you and her. To open that dialogue again would be important.

I'd make a motion that the committee write a letter to the Minister of Education in support of this program and provide her with some more information and encourage her to keep that open dialogue over the course of however long the program continues. If we could do that, and then I do have one last question actually, if that's okay.

THE CHAIR: Is there any response to Mr. Whynott's motion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

MAT WHYNOTT: You mentioned when the program was first launched, you had quite a large influx of young people. Did I hear that correctly?

ROGER PURNELL: Well in 1995 it was just Zone 8 and 9, which is the Annapolis Valley. In 1996 onwards, the other zones or areas got involved and it slowly spread and became a provincial competition as well, where we had over 50 per cent, maybe 75 per cent of the province actively involved in the program.

It has diminished since then and for many reasons. One is the cost of bringing the students down from Cape Breton for two days, the lack of coaches. Those are the two main ones, and maintaining the finances of the program.

MAT WHYNOTT: The only reason why I asked that is just for your information. This is something that as a province we're dealing with, the amount of kids who are in our schools. In the last 10 years we've seen 30,000 fewer children in our school system, so I just thought that maybe with that diminished number of students, that might also be part of the equation there. Any thoughts on that?

ROGER PURNELL: I'd say that I don't think that is affecting the program because the grades are still the grades and it's the interest of the students. You need only five students.

MAT WHYNOTT: Okay, a fair comment. I just wanted to ask that question, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Are there other responses or questions of our guests? Well look, we want to thank you for putting all this in front of us. Some of us have been to the Call to Remembrance, some of us have just heard of it, so it's great to have the whole story in front of us.

Are there any concluding comments that you'd like to make?

ROGER PURNELL: I just have some of my presentation here. If anybody wants one, I will give you a copy, to the media or whatever. Other than that, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Nash.

LES NASH: It's great, as always. These two gentlemen do the Call to Remembrance so I don't have a lot to say, except that they do a great job.

The only thing I'd like to add is what happens is sometimes you get a teacher at the school who is very interested. Maybe it is the son of a military person or whatever. Then,

especially up our way, had a guy, he was great, but it happens that he retires this year. So when he retires, nobody wants to take it over.

Someday we may get it part of the curriculum in schools because we have been, as you know, fighting for years to get Canadian history in schools and we're getting there slowly. It's building a little bit each time. Someday we may get it as part of the curriculum of schools, which would make it really good. That's our hope down the road.

THE CHAIR: Well, thank you again very much for the presentation. I think we'll take a two-minute recess and then reconvene to deal with a couple of other matters that we have in front of us. Thank you.

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

[9:54 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: If we could reconvene for a few moments. You'll see on the agenda, the correspondence that the committee has received, the first three of these four matters are responses to the committee. The first from the commissionaires is some continuing information on questions that have been raised at the time of their presentation. The second, from Mr. Toews, has to do with this ongoing matter of the position the committee had taken, calling on the federal government to reconsider the veterans' annuity at age 65 question. The third is an update to what the people are doing who are working on that issue - they're from Mr. John Labelle - the current iteration of that campaign to end the veterans' annuity benefit reduction at age 65. These, it seems to me, are pieces of correspondence for the committee to receive. Does anybody have any other thought about it?

HOWARD EPSTEIN: Mostly, yes, they are information items, although perhaps the last one leaves a question outstanding. The last one, the correspondence with the Legion, I think the letter from the committee clerk essentially asked the Legion to review a draft letter and comment. I'm just wondering if comments were received back from them.

KIM LANGILLE: I was speaking to him about that just before he left. Yes, they're aware of it and they're looking to comment.

HOWARD EPSTEIN: That's fine. In that case, with the exception of that one, which I guess will return to the committee at some future date. We'll just take note of the correspondence, I think, really.

THE CHAIR: The fourth one here is just to let the committee know that this corresponds to this question that we've been dealing with for a couple of years, that it is ongoing and not lost.

Is it agreed, then, that we'll just receive these . . .

CHUCK PORTER: Do you need a motion, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIR: I don't think so - is it agreed? Okay.

Are we all square with the next meeting date for February 9th - is it agreed? Okay.

Is there anything else to come before the committee? Is it agreed that we adjourn?

Okay, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:57 a.m.]