

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Thursday, December 11 2014**

**Legislative Committees Office**

**Commissionaires Nova Scotia**

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## **VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

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Mr. Ben Jessome (Vice-Chair)  
Ms. Patricia Arab  
Mr. Stephen Gough  
Mr. Keith Irving  
Hon. Pat Dunn  
Mr. Larry Harrison  
Hon. Dave Wilson  
Mr. Gordon Gosse

[Ms. Patricia Arab was replaced by Mr. Lloyd Hines.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille  
Legislative Committee Clerk

## WITNESSES

### Commissionaires Nova Scotia

Vice-Admiral D.E. (Dusty) Miller (Ret'd),  
Chair - Board of Governors

Commodore Bruce Belliveau (Ret'd),  
Chief Executive Officer

Lieutenant-Commander Heather MacKinnon (Ret'd),  
Chair - Veterans' Support Committee



**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2014**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN  
Ms. Pam Eyking

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Good morning, I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am Pam Eyking, the chairman.

Today we are going to be receiving a presentation from Commissionaires of Nova Scotia. I am going to ask the committee members to introduce themselves for the record, by stating their name and their constituency. We'll start with Mr. Hines.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm going to ask everyone to make sure that their phones are turned off or on vibrate.

We're going to have a witness presentation, this is how the agenda is going to roll. Then we'll do committee business, correspondence and approval of the annual report. We're going to wrap up any questioning around 10:40 a.m., to allow time for regular committee business.

I want to welcome Commissionaires Nova Scotia today. I'm going to ask you guys to please introduce yourselves and we'll start with Mr. MacAlpine. Thank you.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We're going to start with your presentation. I believe, Mr. Miller, you were going to start today. Please go ahead.

VICE-ADMIRAL D.E. (DUSTY) MILLER (RET'D): First of all, on behalf on the Board of Governors, let me thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity to speak to you this morning. We're going to talk about our mission, our direction, and most importantly, about the men and women who comprise the largest, fully-qualified security force in Nova Scotia, our commissionaires. Many of you know them and see them all the time.

On behalf of our commissionaires, the majority of whom are veterans, I'd like to express appreciation for the continued interest of this committee in the welfare of veterans across Nova Scotia. We're well aware that this is the only province that has a Committee on Veterans Affairs; well done to all of you.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, of which you are all members, is integral to maintaining interest and focus provincially on veterans and veterans' issues, and there are a lot of them in Nova Scotia. We're delighted to have been invited back to provide this briefing because three years ago I was the chairman of the Veterans Standing Committee for our commissionaires on veterans and what we do for them and we made a presentation at that time.

I retired in 2003 as Vice-Admiral after 38 years in the Navy and I've been on the Board of Commissionaires Nova Scotia since 2004. I am here today as the Chairman of a volunteer Board of Governors of 16 Governors, representing Navy, Army, Air Force and RCMP. We're all ex-military or RCMP.

Our presenters include, as you've heard, Lieutenant-Commander Heather MacKinnon. She is Chair of Commissionaires Nova Scotia Veterans Support Committee, along with our Chief Executive Officer, Commodore (Ret'd) Bruce Belliveau, and Jerry MacAlpine is the Director of Business Development.

There are other members of the board present today. One is Lieutenant-Colonel Gord Davis - maybe he'd like to wave. He is the Past Chair of Commissionaires Nova Scotia, and our newest member on the Board of Governors, Commander Heather Armstrong.

If you examine the photos of the commissionaires on this slide, I hope you immediately get a sense of their confidence, pride and experience. These are critical traits that would be valuable in any security organization, but Commissionaires Nova Scotia is not any security company and these are not just security guards - they are commissionaires. We are exceptionally proud to employ these commissionaires and over 1,600 like them right across Nova Scotia. We hope to show you today how Commissionaires Nova Scotia works on behalf of veterans, what our direction is for the future and how the Province of Nova Scotia can continue to assist us in accomplishing our mission.

Commissionaires Nova Scotia nationally employs over 20,000 people in Canada and it is Canada's leading security services provider. Commissionaires Nova Scotia is one of 15 nationwide member divisions adhering to national standards of excellence. Our commissionaires are trained to meet or exceed the federal standards set out in Canadian General Standards Board for security officers.

Commissionaires Nova Scotia is also the International Standards Organization, ISO 9001 certified. That happened in 2008 and we worked closely with our sister divisions drawing on our collective best practices in the delivery of services across Canada.

Originally founded in 1937, Commissionaires Nova Scotia became incorporated under Chapter 86 of the Statutes of 1955 of the Nova Scotia Legislature – it makes us different from all the other divisions. They were established through various means, but ours is through the Nova Scotia Legislature. We are in every sense a uniquely Nova Scotian entity with a social mandate. Our mission statement defines us as, “. . . a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to seeking employment for former members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP in Nova Scotia.

Commissionaires Nova Scotia is in full compliance with the provisions of the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. As such, we employ over 1,600 commissionaires across the province from Sydney to Yarmouth and from Amherst to Halifax. We are the largest private employer of Canadian Forces and RCMP veterans in the province and we are the largest provider of security services in Nova Scotia.

The employment of veterans requires us to identify work opportunities in both public and private sectors throughout the province, and in a highly competitive marketplace competing with for-profit businesses, many of them headquartered out of province. As a result, we do hire and employ some non-veterans as commissionaires. This allows us to bid on contracts where there are insufficient numbers of veterans for the contract requirement. This allows us also to employ veterans where they choose to live and to continue to proudly serve their country and province.

We receive no funding from any source, other than contractual payments from our clients for services provided. Our annual gross revenue is in the order of \$38 million - all of it from clients in Nova Scotia. We return approximately 90 per cent of that revenue back to our commissionaires in pay and benefits. The remaining 10 per cent goes to necessary overhead like Workers' Compensation, infrastructure support, et cetera. Normally this percentage is around 20 to 25 per cent for a not-for-profit, so Nova Scotians are getting excellent value for dollars spent.

Except for a small levy that goes to our national office in Ottawa, all revenue generated in Nova Scotia stays in Nova Scotia. We also provide direct support to veterans in need - a clear instance of veterans helping veterans - and you'll hear more from Heather MacKinnon in that regard.

John Trickett of Marine Atlantic summed up our commissionaires work ethic nicely by pointing out that we do things right and do the right things. The motto of Commissionaires Nova Scotia is “Trusted, Everyday, Everywhere”. To that, we can add Mr. Trickett’s words - trusted, everyday, everywhere, to do things right and to do the right things.

On this note, I’d like to now introduce our CEO, Retired Commodore Bruce Belliveau, who will provide you with the direction and business challenges facing Commissionaires Nova Scotia. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Belliveau.

COMMODORE BRUCE BELLIVEAU (RET’D): Thank you. As stated earlier, I retired as a commodore after 32 years in the Canadian Navy, and I am a veteran. Commissionaires Nova Scotia is a not-for-profit corporation providing quality security services and is, in fact, the largest private sector employer of veterans in Nova Scotia - truly a success story. The mission statement, as Dusty has already said, is clear - our mission is to seek out good employment for veterans of the RCMP and the Canadian Forces.

One of my responsibilities to the Board of Governors is to set the direction for Commissionaires Nova Scotia in business terms to achieve our strategic objectives. To this end, we are focusing on building our business in the following areas. First, we want to become the choice for health care security in Nova Scotia. With the proposed amalgamation of the nine provincial health boards into two, Commissionaires Nova Scotia sees an excellent opportunity to become the successful security provider.

We have been proactive in getting a number of our employees across the province certified to meet the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety standards, the only recognized health security services standard that exists today. This will position Commissionaires Nova Scotia favourably at decision-making time by the province by having qualified local personnel available for the provision of security at health care facilities across the province. Currently we work at the hospital in Truro, in New Glasgow and some services at the hospital in Sydney.

Secondly, we want to become the choice for marine security services in Nova Scotia. Commissionaires Nova Scotia already supports a number of clients around Halifax Harbour and has a proven track record and significant professional expertise in providing marine security, including the Halifax Port Authority, the Ceres terminal, the cruise ship terminal in Halifax and at government facilities across the harbour. We’re looking to expand that and win other waterfront contracts here in HRM but also in Sydney and in other areas across the province. We believe we have the expertise not only to provide training but provide proper advice in marine security.

We want to become the choice for non-core policing services in Nova Scotia. A national survey was conducted recently and suggests that there is broad public support for non-core policing by private security companies to deal with the escalating cost of policing services. Our commissionaires have earned praise in many communities in which they serve and have broad support with the general public, municipal officials and front-line police officers who see them as a very good fit for their communities.

Currently we work with the Halifax Regional Police, we do bylaw enforcement in Lunenburg, Bridgewater, Chester, and recently won an RCMP detention guards contract for providing those services across the province. There are others that we currently provide in Stellarton, the dispatch for the Stellarton and Waterville police forces, as well as 18 volunteer fire departments in that region.

We also want to become the choice for security training in the province. We have a track record in expertise in security training. We adhere to the national standards for security set by the Canadian General Standards Board and we're the only company in the province that trains every security guard to that standard. We work with the Justice Department to help them develop the training standards required to meet the new private security and investigation legislation and believe that we are positioned now to provide that training to all who wish to be security guards across Nova Scotia and would look for that accreditation.

That's not the only training we provide. We can provide marine security training, first aid training under the Red Cross, non-violent crisis intervention training, security supervisor training and a host of others, as simple as staying safe for contractors operating in private residences, et cetera. We have a facility, we have the trained staff and we have the course curriculum ready to go. Our training centre is currently located in Burnside.

Lastly, we want to become the choice for the energy industry security services, as we see the megaprojects that are on the horizon for Nova Scotia. We're already involved in providing security for various windmill sites across the province as they're being constructed. We're working closely with the various LNG proposals that have been put forward for approval, working with the Fundy tidal power projects and of course we're members of the Maritime Energy Association, the only security company to do that, and getting great exposure and working with all the various companies that are looking to maximize their efforts from the projects that are upcoming.

That, in a nutshell, is our focus for the next few years, to try and grow the company, using those as a jumping board.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Belliveau, that was really interesting, a lot of good information there. Do we have any other witnesses?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: I still have more.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You're still going, wow, okay. It sounded like you rounded it off there, you were just taking a pause. Please continue.

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: On the slide there's a quote from Nova Scotia Power, one of our significant clients, which we just renewed a five-year contract with late last year. The quote says it all, "The service provided is consistently professional and the guards maintain an excellent relationship with visitors and staff." That is a theme throughout our client base.

The next thing I want to talk about is the first face of our province. If you are a visitor to Nova Scotia, who is the first person you are likely to interact with when you arrive in the province? Whether it is by land, sea or air, you are likely to meet a commissionaire first. We're at all three airports: Yarmouth, Sydney and Halifax. We're at the port terminals, as I said - including the cruise ship terminal here in Halifax. Cobequid Pass toll booths are manned by commissionaires, as are the toll booths on the bridge. So the chances of somebody getting into Nova Scotia without seeing a commissionaire are slim to nil. That's why I tell every commissionaire that they not only have a responsibility to meet our clients' requirements and to represent Commissionaires Nova Scotia, but they are also ambassadors of Nova Scotia. I think that's a very unique thing that commissionaires can say over and above any of the other security companies in Nova Scotia.

Dusty alluded to our commissionaires and I'll talk a little bit about them. Sixty-three per cent of our commissionaires are retired or former members of the Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Air Force or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Commissionaires Nova Scotia directly assist veterans with their transition to civilian life by giving them the opportunity to earn a reasonable living. Many people don't realize that most veterans leave the military with only a partial or no pension at all, thus the need. The other 37 per cent of our employees are non-veterans that include retired municipal police or other first responders, spouses, children or grandchildren of veterans and others who meet our strict standards.

Commissionaires Nova Scotia has approximately an 85 per cent employee retention rate - the envy of the entire security industry - which provides our clients with engaged, committed security professionals in avoiding the significant turnover common in the security industry. Commissionaires Nova Scotia provides our clients with services that are second to none, and our commissionaires are widely respected for going the extra mile for clients.

Here is a quote from one of our commissionaires, Norman Rapin, about the pride that they have in the duties they perform: "The key to our job which makes me 'proud' is that sense of duty and honour in keeping everyone 'safe'." For the majority of commissionaires who are veterans, they see this as a continuation of their service to Canada.



This slide gives you a small snapshot of the variety of places in Nova Scotia where our commissionaires live. I'll leave it up for a few seconds for you to view. Our commissionaires contribute a great deal to the province and many are deeply rooted in their communities as volunteers.

Commissionaires Nova Scotia at the moment manages 243 contracts - 132 are long-term contracts, over a year in length with extensions, and the remaining 111 are short-term contracts. Thirty-seven per cent of our contracts are with the federal government through the National Master Standing Offers and exclusively offered to Commissionaires Nova Scotia. The federal government does this through a right of first refusal, whereby all federal government security contracts must first be offered to commissionaires. The government passed legislation to enshrine this right in 1945 at the end of the Second World War and it has been in continuous existence since then, in tangible recognition of the debt that Canada owes to its veterans. Let's not forget that commissionaires started as a result of the demobilization after the First World War in Canada in 1925.

The remaining 63 per cent of our contracts are commercial, including provincial, municipal, private sector, hospitals, post-secondary institutions, ports and other businesses, which we compete for against all other security companies in the province.

Commissionaires Nova Scotia has four district offices located here in Halifax, Kentville, Truro and Sydney, making sure we are represented well throughout the province. This map shows the areas across the province where Commissionaires Nova Scotia has contracts and provides exceptional services to a diverse client base. This list includes sites in the MASH sector - municipalities, academic institutions, school boards and health authorities - in addition to provincial government departments, agencies, boards and commissions.

Commissionaires are standing guard at both the provincial Legislature and HRM City Hall. Commissionaires have been familiar faces at the Halifax Harbour bridges since 1955, the Halifax Stanfield International Airport since its inception, and of course at many Department of National Defence and other federal government locations - some since 1938.

Our clients over the years have been happy with the services provided and most recently indicated in our annual client satisfaction survey where 92 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with Commissionaires Nova Scotia's services and level of client support; and again 92 per cent were likely or very likely to recommend commissionaire services to others. I think we would be the envy of all our competitors, having that level of client satisfaction.

We don't rely on what we're doing today, we have a quality assurance program as well. Quality management plays a very important role in how Commissionaires Nova

Scotia values due process, due diligence and safety. This has resulted in not only successful audits but an improved safety record and is now embedded in the corporate culture of Commissionaires Nova Scotia. This has made our offices and workplace sites more effective and safe and our clients know that we deliver services and products that meet well-established, international, national and provincial standards. We are a learning institution looking to improve every day.

I'd like to leave you with this quote from a client at Shannex Harbourstone, "Above and beyond. Excellent." Above and beyond is the hallmark of our commissionaire service and something that our clients have come to expect. As mentioned previously, they are not just security guards, they are commissionaires and their sense of service and responsibility runs deep.

I'd now like to turn things over to Heather MacKinnon who will speak about Commissionaires Nova Scotia's involvement within the community of organizations serving the needs of veterans.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Belliveau. It's certainly impressive that you don't rest on your laurels, that was very informative.

Dr. MacKinnon, please.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER HEATHER MACKINNON (RET'D): Good morning, and thank you Bruce. Again it's very nice to be able to speak with you this morning, Madam Chairman and members of the committee. As mentioned, my name is Heather MacKinnon. I am a retired naval officer and a physician, currently specializing in veteran-related post-traumatic stress and occupational stress injuries here in Halifax. I have a general practice where 80 per cent of my patients are veterans. Many of them are commissionaires and I must say are the most delightful people to have as patients.

Our Veterans Support Committee has a broad mandate which is to examine issues involving veterans, to see where and if we can help in some way. We help in a number of ways, including, when sufficient funds are available, approximately every three years, providing supplemental funding to the dedicated Veterans Affairs Canada hospital beds assigned to veterans in Nova Scotia. This could be Lunenburg, it could be Camp Hill, Annapolis. We do this every three years, we donate money to the vets.

Back in the 1980s we established an investment fund to be able to provide these monies, which the veterans wings in the hospitals use to provide amenities for the veterans that the system does not normally provide, such as televisions, stereo equipment and lounge furniture. In the past 25 years we have distributed more than \$115,000 in this way to help improve the final years of our Nova Scotia veterans in these Veterans Affairs Canada funded beds.

A couple of years ago our board of governors allocated \$10,000 annually to the Veterans Support Committee to use as it sees fit, to provide immediate assistance to veterans in need. Half the amount - \$5,000 - is available to the Veterans Support Committee to distribute, the other half is used at the discretion of CEO Bruce Belliveau to provide help to any commissionaire who might need it; for example, to meet some unforeseen emergency medical expense. Recently we've used it to assist a commissionaire after loss of a home and all his belongings, due to a fire, and to assist another commissionaire in financial distress due to a serious illness.

Funds from the Veterans Support Committees' portion have been used to provide backpacks with essential personal items for homeless vets at Christmas - one was done at Christmas - provide food gift cards for them for this, it could be at Christmas. Both were distributed through the good offices of the Royal Canadian Legion, with whom we maintain close links.

We have helped the Walter Callow wheelchair bus organization purchase a new bus, assist the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, HMCS Sackville, to provide lunches for veterans, support the North Sydney Hospital Foundation in Sydney, assist and participate at Remembrance Day events and contribute to organizations like Paws Fur Thought, that provide service dogs to veterans to help with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Although we are a not-for-profit organization and it may seem to fly in the face of reason for a not-for-profit to make donations, we consider our responsibility to veterans as such a sacred trust that we have made this one exception to our rules to help our veterans across the province. I'd like now to turn our presentation back over to Bruce.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. It's certainly heartwarming to hear that you provide such practical support, but also just the value and the moral support in doing so that would be the result of that. We're going back to Mr. Belliveau.

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: You've heard this morning that Commissionaires Nova Scotia's mission is to seek employment for veterans of the Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We also know that the Province of Nova Scotia has contributed greatly to the well-being of veterans across the province, including the passage of Bill No. 24, which amended the Civil Service Act to expand the class of veterans given preference for appointment to the Civil Service and we thank the province for that.

We provide jobs for more than 1,600 Nova Scotians across the length and breadth of the province from Sydney to Yarmouth and from Amherst to Halifax. All board members, headquarters staff and commissionaires live in Nova Scotia and pay taxes in the province. We are proud to be an entirely Nova Scotian company.

Former members of the military and RCMP already have a wealth of security experience so we believe we offer a service second to none. It is in the public's best interest to have their safety provided by such a professional group of dedicated men and women as our veterans.

We would like to explore ways in which you, the members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, can continue to support us in our mission. First, we'd like to explore perhaps a privileged position for Commissionaires Nova Scotia with respect to provincial government security contracts - perhaps similar to what we have with the federal government. We would ask you to continue to advocate for the improved and additional services on behalf of veterans. The result - increased employment for veterans and constituents, and taxpayers' dollars staying in Nova Scotia.

We would be delighted to have your support to help our veterans continue to serve in their communities, their province and their country as commissionaires. Thank you very much for your attention to our briefing this morning. I'll turn it over to our Chairman, Dusty Miller, for the question and answer section.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Miller, please.

MR. MILLER: Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules by allowing us to help you become better informed on Commissionaires Nova Scotia. I hope you did learn something through the whole briefing - that we are not just a security company; that we are a family as well. I would like to emphasize again that we are more than a security company.

At this point, we would be pleased to answer any questions. Not all 1,600 are wonderful people, but I bet 1,599 are. (Laughter) Over to you, Madam Chairman, for any questions you might have of any of us.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That was a really impressive presentation and informative. I'm going to start the questioning now. I'm sure we have a lot of questions from that. I'll start with Mr. Irving.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Thank you, all three and a half, for your presentation. I do want to acknowledge, on behalf of all the committee, the impressive ribbons we see before us and the service that you have obviously given to this country and to this province. I want to start off, on behalf of everyone, to thank you for that and your continued service in your volunteer and professional roles and your security business.

I also want to inform you or share with you how impressed I am with the commissionaires in the Legislature who provide us not only the security through some difficult days, but they also bring a smile every day to that parking lot when we pull in. I want that to be noted.

I've got two questions, if I may. The first is around the service you're providing to a handful of municipalities. Municipalities are struggling financially, particularly around issues of policing. I'm interested in understanding how you have become part of a municipal force in terms of the services. There is a lot of consideration being given to the appropriate level of service that maybe we don't need the RCMP at every level to do every job.

I'm interested in terms of your providing bylaw services, has that proven to be more cost-effective than the municipalities hiring their own bylaw officers? If that's the case, have you been to the UNSM - the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities - to share those experiences, in terms of drumming up more business?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: Thank you for the question. Non-core policing has been a national project for Corps of Commissionaires of Canada. We did do surveys across the country and it kind of fell out of the series of forums that were held on the escalating cost of policing - the economics of policing in Canada.

If you look at it from the perspective that a constable costs between \$100,000 and \$120,000 a year when you take into account training, uniforms, equipment, et cetera, and salary, to have them doing parking enforcement, for instance, or other forms of bylaw enforcement really doesn't make sense. So it is a cost-efficient manner for municipalities to use commissionaires because the other part of it is, if you hire an employee then you are hiring them into your organization and you are doing the administration and the various benefits. If you are hiring a commissionaire, you are hiring somebody and paying one bill and we look after the rest. So from that perspective, it is cost-effective.

We are involved with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities nationally and we do involve ourselves with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities as well. I've spoken to the Association of Chiefs of Police here in Nova Scotia to give them the results of our surveys. We've contacted every municipality in Nova Scotia to participate in that survey process last year and we're now going back with the finalized information and showing them exactly what people think, the public thinks, showing them what municipal leaders think and what police leaders think. We've really identified the areas where most people are comfortable that private security takes over from a police service as a form of saving money.

We like to say that we're partnering with police services, we're not taking over from police services because clearly there's an issue with replacing constables. That's not our aim. Our aim is to enhance police services by getting constables back on the street, solving and preventing crime, while we do the lower-level issues.

We have 39 commissionaires working at Halifax Regional Police, for instance, doing all the backroom work - the police information system, inputting data, serving summons, a variety of duties that you don't need to have a fully-qualified constable to do.

Across Canada we've kind of set the benchmark for how we can do this type of service with police forces across the country.

MR. IRVING: Thank you, that's great. I really encourage you to be approaching municipalities as they struggle with these finances.

The second question I've got - and this may be a bit misplaced but I don't think it is. Given the tragedies in Ottawa that have made us pause and reflect about security, my understanding or observation is that commissionaires are not armed. Has that event caused some reflection with respect to the role of commissionaires in security, particularly around provincial and federal institutions? Is that an issue that is at the forefront or is that more left to RCMP, et cetera?

MR. MILLER: I think Bruce can answer that, too. I would just like to say that when those incidents happened, our CEO went out to all commissionaires to be heightened in their sense of looking around, what is happening around them and I think you are quite capable of explaining that we do security in a partnership way and that all commissionaires are pretty comfortable around firearms or somebody wearing a firearm. They just have to know what their job is with respect to being there with them. Bruce?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: The issue of armed security is a challenging issue. You would find in Canada that most private security companies only have armed security with respect to armoured car services, unlike in the United States where armed security is almost second nature, if you will, with respect to who can and can't be armed. It would be a very expensive prospect in Canada for security companies to provide that level of armed security, the training bill for the company, and then it would be significantly more expensive for the provider.

Most security guards provide perimeter control, access control and as we tell our commissionaires, they are there to observe and report. We work hand-in-hand with police forces whenever we do security.

I would point out that one of the differences that commissionaires bring as a security guard force is the calming nature of having somebody who has already experienced a crisis in their life prior to becoming a security guard. So the majority of our members, having past military or RCMP experience, have been exposed to crisis situations and our clients have become accustomed to expecting the commissionaires to be calm in crisis situations and bring back a sense of control and confidence to the client staff and that's what we bring.

From an armed perspective, there's very much a concern today with respect to what happened in Ottawa and what happened in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and if you have limited intelligence on an impending attack, then it's pretty damn hard to stop a committed individual from conducting an act like that. I would reiterate that our commissionaires are

there to observe, they will watch for the anomalies and they will report them quickly and we will get the appropriate response, provided by the appropriate service.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Belliveau. We're going to go to Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you for your presentation. I think I'd like to associate myself with my colleague's comments, especially on the work the commissionaires at the Legislature do for us. I think that definitely over the last session many of us got to know them a lot more. I always appreciate the opportunity to kind of find out what their background is, coming from a military family and both parents serving in the Navy, and actually both parents work still. My mother says she's never going to work again for Commissionaires Nova Scotia because she has hit 70 so she wants to retire. My father still goes to the airport, he does get the winters off to take a little vacation. We appreciate the work they do for us at the Legislature.

I have a couple of questions. I know that the federal government has a priority hire legislation and I don't know if it's separate from the first - I heard you say "first right of refusal on security". So is that two separate - you have a piece of legislation that encourages hiring veterans, which we do have and I just want to make mention of Bill No. 24 which was an Opposition bill and I appreciate the government looking at that and passing that - it got unanimous support of the House - from member Chuck Porter, actually, who is a colleague of mine, a former paramedic. I'll get into some of the health questions in a few minutes around health security.

Has that mandate on the federal side supported your initiatives to get contracts and get work really for the majority of your members who are veterans?

MR. MILLER: I'll start and then turn it to Bruce as well, if that's okay, Madam Chairman. The right of first refusal, as you've heard, is given to commissionaires across Canada so every contract that comes up, that is the legislation. Every contract that comes up is offered to commissionaires to say how much do you want to pay for this and what is a fair salary for our commissionaires, depending on what the job is. Then we collectively say yes or no, we'll do that contract. If it's no, then it goes to private competition. The agreement is a National Master Standing Offer which is legislated and it has words in it and we've all agreed that this is how it will be done.

What we suggested at the end of our presentation is, is there any reason why we couldn't have that with the Nova Scotia Government or provincial governments right across Canada? We think we have a compelling case to perhaps go one step further than the federal legislation and go for provincial legislation. It means competitors cry, well, it's not a competition. Yes, it is. Part of the criteria is to have more than 60 per cent of your workforce in that contract as veterans. I would say that if any private security company can do that, we'd be all for them.

We think it is worthwhile exploring with this committee - exploring the wording of those agreements and to see whether or not we could have it happen. Bruce, do you want to add anything?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: It is two separate issues. The priority hiring for civil service is separate from the right of first refusal, which was enshrined since 1945. It provides us with a base. Of course it was the federal government that first introduced bringing commissionaires on board to provide that security at federal sites across the country to give employment to the demobilized soldiers, sailors and airmen from World War I, and then it grew across the country. It started in Ontario and grew across the country.

The history of commissionaires goes back to 1859 in the U.K. after the Crimean War and Indian mutinies when commissionaires started in the U.K. It was for soldiers coming back from those conflicts with serious injuries. The first group of commissionaires, for instance, was eight one-armed men. They had all lost an arm in that conflict. Their duties were to hold horses because they had one arm that they could hold horses at the entrances to buildings, so it's interesting. We've come forward and now you look at the history and here we are again talking about Crimea and the Ukraine, so history repeats itself, but the premise of providing that employment to veterans hasn't changed from day one from 1859 until 2014.

That is the priority and the premise of commissionaires - to seek out employment for veterans. That's why the right of first refusal for the government, although it's only 37 per cent of our contracts - and that's because there has been an explosion in security requirements since 9/11. We used to have, I think, about 75 per cent of the market share of security in Nova Scotia. Now I think we're down around 45 to 50 per cent. That's not because we've shrunk, it's because the problem has grown so the security industry has exploded - people are requiring more security or wanting more security, and there is more work to be done in security clearly.

To answer your specific question, it's two related but distinctly different pieces of legislation.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I would think the end goal definitely with both of those is to support the transition and the transition support for our veterans. I think nobody would disagree with that.

I know you approached the committee today, but have you approached the government with any correspondence about having a first right of refusal for contracts in Nova Scotia or government contracts? It would be nice to have it for contracts in Nova Scotia, but I don't think we can go that far.



MR. BELLIVEAU: We haven't approached specifically. The last time Commissionaires Nova Scotia appeared before this committee they made mention of what we do, but didn't pursue that. I would suggest to you this is our kick-off to this.

We do have a tremendous number of contracts with the provincial government as it stands today. We have 14 sites here in metro with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal; three in Cape Breton with the same department; with social services; of course at Province House; the Lieutenant-Governor's residence. So we do have a tremendous number of contracts and the last thing we want to do is jeopardize the contracts that we have today. So this is the kick-off to us making this ask.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I just have a few more questions. I think we all understand that and by no means is this an attempt by you to limit other private companies from doing work in the province. If the federal government has something like this in place, I think it warrants at least the government looking at it. I think they may be open to it, with the acceptance of Bill No. 24.

I hope that maybe we'll be able to get a response from the government, which leads right into one of the topics that's very close to my attention is health care, being the former Minister of Health and Wellness, but also a former paramedic and the responses and the experiences I've had with commissionaires at the hospitals here in Capital Health.

I know and understand that it's through a private security firm now. With the amalgamation of the district health authorities, I would assume there are opportunities there. I don't know how all that will work. Maybe I'll ask the Minister of Health and Wellness a question in the next session on how contracts work when the amalgamation happens.

What is the timeline with the contract currently with Capital Health, for example? I know you mentioned you're in a couple of different areas - Truro, New Glasgow, Sydney. When is the current contract up for Capital Health, for example, because I know they are, I would assume, one of the areas where you'd love to get that contract back?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: I think that because of the amalgamation, there's a little bit of - confusion is the wrong word. I think people are being cautious right now about what's going to happen. So we're watching very closely and paying attention to the website that has all the announcements on the amalgamation and looking forward to it.

I don't know if it's going to be central procurement for across the province or not, it would make sense to me, but the contract at Capital Health, I believe, was probably a three-year contract with option years. So they're into their third year now.

MR. DAVID WILSON: My last comment would be to commend Dr. MacKinnon and the work you do. I think it's often not portrayed, the work that the commissionaires

have done not only on the charitable side of things but the health support, especially with PTSD with a lot of the members. In the last few months, maybe years, we've seen more awareness around PTSD, especially with our service personnel. It's something I'm trying to bring awareness around, first responders and some of the issues there, so I commend you on that.

I think if you're successful and if you continue to be successful as an organization, it definitely supports those who have some issues with PTSD. I think gainful employment can help with the treatment regimen and hopefully getting that individual - woman or man - back to feeling that they can contribute to society.

My only comment is to commend you on the work you do and I'm glad to see that there's such a wide range of services that you're providing your members.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Mr. Miller, you wanted to make a comment?

MR. MILLER: Yes, I wanted to just chat a little more about Capital Health. We had that contract for 14 years and we lost it for a couple of reasons. We've now gone into debriefs as to what happens and when.

Yes, we were a little more expensive than the bottom bidder but the bottom bidder was headquartered in Alberta, so the money that you're paying for that security company is going to their headquarters in Alberta. We found that the commissionaires were doing far more than just security duties. They would be showing visitors to Camp Hill to their rooms, they would be personable, they would be the way you see them at Government House. We're finding that the security companies have to hire more people to do the orderly things, as well as provide the security, and they are not personable.

I just had the mother of my next door neighbour say, I saw your picture in the paper, you've taken over as Chair of Commissionaires Nova Scotia. She said, I volunteered at Camp Hill for 30 years and it's a disgrace when I go in there now - the young fellow has his feet up on the desk, and he's wearing a yellow shirt but he is not personable, he doesn't do anything. I shouldn't lambaste another company; however, we were really quite angry that we lost that contract and it's provincial, Nova Scotia, within the power of the provincial government to try to make sure that doesn't happen again.

I think our briefing three years ago had the committee think that maybe we should pass a bill that says there's a priority. I think that was one of the starts of Bill No. 24, for what it's worth.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. BEN JESSOME: Excuse my tardiness this morning - the traffic was a disaster on the way in. I guess my focus would be around a comment that was made about the retention of commissionaires. What do you offer? What do you do specifically with sustainable retention at the top of your priority, in that sense?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: I think, quite frankly, the difference - if you look at the security industry overall, retention rates or attrition rates, if you want to look at them that way, are anywhere between 30 and 70 per cent. That's because most security companies hire young people who haven't decided what they want to do yet in life, so they're there for a short term. Therefore, they are rotating their people on a regular basis.

With commissionaires predominantly our employees are mature, disciplined individuals who have come to Commissionaires Nova Scotia, many for a continuance of their duty to Canada, but also because we don't pay minimum wage in Commissionaires Nova Scotia, which many of our competitors do. I don't want to deride the industry, but very much it's a bottom-feeder industry and not appropriately so, given today's environment. Security should have a much higher profile than it does.

We look at our people, most of whom are between the ages of 45 and 65, and they deserve more than the minimum wage for the jobs that they perform. That's one of the reasons that Commissionaires Nova Scotia is a little bit more expensive, but we provide a premium service as far as we're concerned, and there is always a cost to premium service. The clients who are looking for a premium service will look to Commissionaires. If you're looking for the lowest price, then you're probably not going to hire Commissionaires.

Our people respect the fact that we don't pay minimum wage; that we negotiate with our clients the best possible paying allowances that we can give them, but in a lot of cases it's just that continued sense of duty that veterans hold post-military and RCMP service and we foster that. We foster, as Dusty said, the family nature of the company, that we're all in the fold together.

One of the reasons that Commissionaires was initially stood up was it gave those demobilized soldiers a sense of belonging. It had a structure similar to the military with rank structures; it had a uniform that they were proud to wear, and it looked like they were still in the military. That was the rationale of Commissionaires initially. We still have a sense of that.

It's an organization of veterans looking after veterans. Our board of governors are all retired military or RCMP. I'm retired military. I look at my job as just a continuation of the duty I had when I was in the Navy, and that's looking after people I liked looking after. There is a real sense of that across commissionaires. That's one of the reasons that we maintain - and our attrition rate, the 15 per cent, is natural attrition. These are people who are finally deciding it's time to retire - for the third or fourth time some of them. That's why we are different from our competitors from that perspective.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dunn.

HON. PAT DUNN: I want to reiterate what Mr. Wilson and Mr. Irving said earlier, that we all believe you're a very commendable organization and we're very proud of your organization.

You made reference earlier in your remarks about entering Nova Scotia. As you were saying that, I started to think about it and you're certainly right - regardless if I walk into Aberdeen Hospital in East River Road in New Glasgow or at the Legislature here, they always seem to be a very friendly, professional group. I can also say I'm very proud of one of my daughters - she's currently a lawyer with the Armed Forces stationed here in HRM at the present time.

I'm just going to get you to maybe make a few comments with regard to recruiting. I thought you said 60 per cent of your commissionaires are veterans so is there a need for civilians to be part of that recruitment? How does your recruitment go and as far as supply and demand, as far as veterans being available to fill the positions that you have, if you could comment on that.

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: Thank you for that question. At the moment 63 per cent of our employees are veterans. Would I like that number to be higher? Absolutely. So as we grow the company, we target veterans, we present at the Second Career Assistance Network seminars that the military holds for people who are about to retire.

But there is a reality here with respect to veterans. The face of veterans has changed in the last couple of decades; veterans are much younger people now. If you get a soldier or a sailor or an airman or woman who has retired after 10 years' service or 15 years' service and has a young family, they're not looking for the wage package that Commissionaires would offer; they're looking for much more than that at that stage of their life. So we're really targeting people perhaps after their second career, for people who retire younger maybe, so from the 45-years-on point.

We do have an aggressive recruiting campaign on right now, as a matter of fact. We're targeting all the military bases in Nova Scotia. I believe there was a front-page ad in *The Chronicle Herald* across the province last weekend with respect to recruiting. In order to meet our contractual obligations, we do have to keep the numbers at a level that sustains the contracts, because sustaining the contracts is sustaining the employment of veterans. That's why today, 37 per cent of our employees are non-veterans.

We have a list of criteria they have to meet: they have to be first-responders; they have to have served in the security industry for over five years, so they could work for a competitor for five years and then be eligible to be a commissionaire; or having attended the Atlantic Police Academy, for instance. A pilot project that we brought in last year, we hold two of our positions at the Halifax Regional Police for graduates of the Atlantic Police

Academy that are identified to us by HRP as potential candidates for them to hire. We bring them in and give them a year's worth of backroom experience, as a precursor to being hired by the Halifax Regional Police, for instance.

Our thrust and focus, of course, is on veterans. Now the supply and demand is ebb and flow; some years there will be a lot of people retire from the military and move back to Nova Scotia, other years there won't be as many, so that becomes a balancing act on our part. We've been pretty consistent over the last few years to stay at around the 63 per cent or 65 per cent mark for veterans as our employees. I would toot our own horn a little bit that we have one of the highest percentages across the country of Commissionaires' divisions for veterans.

MR. DUNN: Following up on that, do you have any percentages with regard to perhaps present-day commissionaires who are working in Nova Scotia now and through your recruiting process, as far the numbers that you may have brought back to Nova Scotia that maybe wouldn't have come back, because of the fact that there was an opportunity for employment here, post-service like?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: I don't have specific numbers of those who would have moved back specifically because there was a job with Commissionaires Nova Scotia but there are commissionaires from other divisions who want to come home and transfer into Nova Scotia. Then we do our best to find employment for them.

I had a phone call from a Parliamentarian recently about a correction service guard in Alberta who is Nova Scotian and whose family is still here in Nova Scotia, who had enough of living in Alberta and wanted to know what opportunities were available in Nova Scotia. This particular Parliamentarian told him well, Commissionaires Nova Scotia is a good one; I'll call them and ask. We told him of course we're hiring, so here's a guy who is going to come back to Nova Scotia because we're going to offer him a job.

I don't have the details on how many would have done that but I do know - I spent 32 years in the military and lived all across Canada and abroad. In fact I retired out of the U.K. but I came home. There's an awful lot of Nova Scotians who come home after retiring from the military.

Maybe I can dispel the myth out there outside of the Maritimes that the reason there are so many military people who come from the Maritimes is because of the economy. I say no, it's because of our dedication and duty to service in our families. My father was in the Navy, I joined the Navy, my son joined the Navy. It's more about that and that's the reason why people come home to Nova Scotia, as well - it's about that duty to family as well.

MR. MILLER: I thought I'd take this opportunity to say just a couple of things about the national organization of commissionaires where you heard there are 15 divisions.

Each division has a chairman and four times a year, all of the chairmen comprise the national board for commissionaires across Canada and actually talk about this very subject. In fact, we have an Atlantic region board of commissionaires, a board of governors, which it just so happens in the rotation I am the chairman of that particular one.

Quebec has asked to join the Atlantic board, so we'll have an eastern board to discuss exactly those kinds of things - how do we make it easy for those who want to transfer between provinces and for the commissionaires to be able to do that. We also meet four times a year and we discuss all that kind of business and those kinds of questions. While we may not have the exact statistics, they happen and we're happy to have them happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dunn, did you have a follow-up question?

MR. DUNN: This question is for Dr. MacKinnon. You mentioned about 80 per cent of the people you're dealing with are veterans, but you mentioned the post-traumatic stress disorder. From the literature I read and from the media and so on, that is definitely on the increase over the past number of years. I guess my question for you is, over your career, have you seen an increase in this in your latter years as far as what you've been doing? The last part of that question would be, are the resources adequate to deal with that?

DR. MACKINNON: Is there an increase? I think it's more recognition. I think there were soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder from the First World War - it wasn't dealt with very nicely in those days. There has been post-traumatic stress disorder with every conflict in any country with any army. It's just now recognizable and it's acceptable, and it is also outside of armies as well, as you've seen yourself with emergency medical personnel.

I'm quite lucky in some ways because I do have some resources. I have Veterans Affairs - if we can get their post-traumatic stress disorder recognized from a conflict or some special duty area or something that happened to them within the military or the RCMP, then often we can get them recognized by Veterans Affairs and if Veterans Affairs recognizes them, in some cases, I can get psychologists provided for and psychiatrists, but it is a matter of getting those people on board.

With the provincial system, it's a little trickier because it takes a little bit longer to get health care support. There are so few psychiatrists - I'm going to say it this way - to get my veterans recognized that way. It takes a bit longer and they have to go in with everybody else and the psychiatrists are more focused on psychosis and more mental illnesses.

I want to say that with post-traumatic stress disorder, it doesn't mean people are finished, that's it, they're out the door, they can't do anything. They can have absolutely normal lives. There are people with post-traumatic stress disorder in very prominent

positions and they've just learned how to cope with it. It's a matter of educating people and giving them support. My goal with my patients is not to make them sicker and put them on sick leaves and disability. My goal is to get them feeling good about themselves and to get back in the workforce.

I have commissionaires, they might have post-traumatic stress disorder. That's a doctor-patient sort of privilege, but it doesn't matter because they're functioning fine. That's because they are working. They may be working at another job as well. They are working and it's the work that provides them their support. So my goal really is to get them back into the workforce or get them feeling good about themselves. It might not be in a five-day a week job or something, but something that gives people some meaning.

One of the things I know about commissionaires - not just the PTSD ones but the other people that I've had - they are just so pleased to put the uniform on again. I've heard that comment many times in my office with commissionaires that I have as patients, I am so happy to be wearing this uniform. They love the camaraderie, they feel like they are back in the Forces, they feel like they have a purpose. It's so good to have a purpose in life, it's good to get up in the morning and just be able to do something and not have to take another pill to get through the day. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you so much. Yes, a sense of purpose, indeed. Do we have any other questioning? Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: I just want to go back to this idea of the right of first refusal or how we would deal with some of the issues around that, in terms of provincial contracts. First of all, most tenders are driven by the lowest price and you're clearly losing that to, as you say, lower quality services. So is there room, I guess in your mind, that government could be structuring those tender calls in a different way that draws out the quality of service differences in a competitive bidding?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: It's interesting that when we go to respond to requests for proposals, let's talk about a commercial sense, there will be specific criteria that have to be met. Unfortunately what happens at the end of the day in many of these tender processes is that price becomes the only factor. They weight it so heavily that regardless of what you did with the other criteria wouldn't matter.

That goes back to my point that people who are looking for equality or a premium service will look to - I guess in any bidding process my first intention would be that you'd throw out the lowest bid and you'd throw out the highest bid because one is completely out of whack for price and the other one is that you're going to get what you pay for.

A lot of times companies will put out their request for proposals and their end state intent is what can I get for the lowest dollar, as opposed to meeting the specific - and I've challenged a couple of clients where we've lost a renewal, based on the criteria they set in

their proposals, which the competitor who won the contract did not meet the criteria that was set as mandatory. At the end of the day, they make choices based on what they can afford.

The way it works with the federal government, for instance, is each division puts in a budget each year through Public Works and Government Services Canada. They have an officer who is responsible for the Commissionaires' file. We negotiate what it costs, based on a CAS-level knowledge aptitude and skill level, and there are six of them, depending on what level of responsibility the individual has in the situation where they are going to work. It's a set table of costs for the federal government.

Over the last two years, we lost over 120 positions with the federal government across the province, due to the expenditure cutbacks. We said well they can't do that because they have to hire you. They said yes, they have to hire us but if they don't need positions filled, they just can't hire anybody else to fill them. So we lost a significant chunk of revenue and employment across the province because of the federal budget cuts.

The National Master Standing Offer is there so any government department that needs security and has to provide security for their offices, they have to do it through Commissionaires in accordance with that schedule. Recently the Treasury Board did a program review of the right of first refusal in the National Master Standing Offer and it was determined that it met the aims of the program but it also met - it certainly met the monetary aims of the program but it met the non-monetary aims because of all the things Heather discussed about what it meant to veterans to belong.

So although there's a premium for it, I think in the long run it has been seen as a better deal than every government department going out and trying to get three bids on every security contract across the country. That would be a horrendous amount of bureaucracy just to manage the file. I think that's the benefit in the end - you have a standing offer and you draw upon it. There are no questions to be asked about negotiating price. That's done once a year when the budget is submitted.

MR. MILLER: I just wanted to follow up on the Department of National Defence cutting back, a year and a half ago, 100 commissionaires who are providing perimeter security for the bases here in Halifax. The way they have made up that security is to put regular Navy, Army, Air Force personnel on the gates when there is a real requirement, which is kind of the same analogy as the police putting the police on bylaw enforcement when they are really paying for a police person to do law enforcement, not bylaw enforcement.

I've had a number of discussions with the admiral here about how that's false economy and you're going to be in trouble by doing that. Yes, they get the money out of a different pot so they could let go what we were providing, which was a very cost-effective perimeter security system. Now they've got sailors who like to come home and go home at



night who are on the gate. To me, that's just false logic somehow. I wish I could turn that around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Harrison.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Two things; I certainly want to thank you for my information pool base now - with respect to the company. Number two, you have certainly heightened my appreciation for how all this plays out. If you guys are any indication of what happens beneath, it's pretty good. I mean, my experience with commissionaires with the Legislature and so on has always been good. I certainly do want to extend my appreciation for that really.

My question is, what do you see now as the major challenge for the commissionaire company and how can we help?

MR. MILLER: The major challenge I think is hiring more veterans. The contract that we have with the federal government says there shall be 60 per cent veterans in a federal contract. So we ensure that we put non-veterans in the commercial institutions so that we have the veterans available to do those contracts. The more veterans we have, that's always a challenge, I guess.

The challenge is not only having veterans, but paying them a regular wage is what we want to do. We've seen examples of companies coming in - a security company coming in - hiring back all the commissionaires, but at half their salary and that's not fair. We don't think that's fair. Our challenge is to say, know you are hiring for the lowest dollar, which we've been talking about, but is that fair? Why not give the priority to a veteran who has served their country? Why not? That's why we're in this. We're volunteers making this happen. That's a challenge.

The bottom line is always a challenge. You know, you cut 100 personnel from your workforce and you have a budget and you're paying them and you're trying to maintain all of the services and facilities for your workforce - that's always a challenge. So we say, okay, what can we do? We'll increase our commercial business. So you might talk to Bruce. You heard the four areas where we are going after, very aggressively, and we want to be aggressive now. We've always kind of been in the background, but commissionaires are there.

Nobody actually knew there were 1,600 of them in Nova Scotia and 20,000 across Canada - that's more than the Canadian Army. That's incredible and I think it's time for us to say if you want quality service, you want that Sergeant-at-Arms in Ottawa to do the right thing, ex-RCMP, you want to have that kind of capability in your businesses, then you should pay for it with more than minimum wage, and that's a challenge.

So you've seen extra ads in the paper. Bruce went on CTV during Remembrance Day about what commissionaires are all about. We're trying to get the message out and one of the reasons we're here is to get that message out.

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: If I could just add to that, one of our strategic objectives in our strategic plan is to raise the profile of Commissionaires Nova Scotia. We used to be, we're commissionaires, you must love us, you'll hire us. In the competitive marketplace that we're in now, that's not possible. We have to be out there, we have to be advertising, we have to be speaking to people.

Let me tell you a little bit about the company itself and how we're structured and it will give you an indication. We talked about 10 per cent or so of our revenue goes to paying for overhead. I run a company of 1,600 people. In the *Progress* magazine that came out last month they listed the top 101 companies in Nova Scotia or in the Atlantic Provinces. A few years ago they stopped including not-for-profit companies in that list but if we were included in that list, we would be No. 7 for number of employees in the Atlantic Region and we would have been No. 47 for revenue. That's a big company.

We manage that big company with a head office staff of 43 people. That's the administrative staff, the paid staff, my training staff, and my operations section who do the sales and contract management - 43 people managing a company of 1,600 in a footprint across the province, not all in a factory which would be much easier to do.

It's a very low footprint from an overhead perspective. When we lose revenue like we did with the cuts at DND, I don't have any slack in overhead to cut any more to reduce my requirements. That's why growth is important to Commissionaires Nova Scotia and we need to be in this competitive marketplace growing or we won't be able to afford to sustain.

So helping us? Absolutely. I go back to the comments I made in my presentation about could the province look at a privilege position for commissionaires with respect to provincial security contracts and that would help. If we could secure the health security contract across the province, there's a couple of hundred positions right there, for instance.

I'm going to be giving a briefing to the Nova Scotia Community College next week as one of the short-listed companies that has been called to present our bid for the contract for NSCC across the province - we're already at five of their institutions but they've gone to an open RFP for all the institutions so we're going to compete for that. Again, it comes down to, do you want quality service or do you want the lowest cost?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Belliveau. I have a question but I'm going to wait until after everyone else is done, I guess. Mr. Dunn, you wanted to speak?

MR. DUNN: You've touched on this already and it's dealing with the process for bidding for contracts in the province, federally and provincially. Are you more successful

with federal contracts, with federal offices, or are you more successful with provincial offices or agencies within the province, or is it about the same?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: With respect to the federal contracts, it's automatic, it's guaranteed, we win. We don't bid, they do what's called a call-up against the National Master Standing Offer. For the provincial contracts we bid in competition with our competitors in the marketplace.

I'm pleased to say that we have been relatively successful in competing for provincial contracts, as you saw by the list there. But for instance, the hospital contracts, the NSCC contract, those are large contracts that we would like to take on and retain.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Dunn and Mr. Belliveau. We're going to go on to Mr. Hines.

MR. LLOYD HINES: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I sense that we're getting towards the end here so I did want to add my appreciation for your attendance here today. It certainly helped me understand who the commissionaires are because I really didn't know. I think it's a great idea that you're going to substantiate or harden your presence in the minds of people because - I mean, I didn't understand how your organization went.

I think that it is really an honourable way to recognize the service of veterans in a way that is useful and provides a good occupation for people and gives people a sense of purpose along with a reward at the end. I want to say that for a long time I've admired your beautiful piece of real estate that you have down on Hollis Street. I think that's one of the nicest buildings, so hold onto that. I see you've had it since 1967. That's a beautiful property.

I just have a couple of quick questions. Are your financial statements public? Money questions are always tough.

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: I'd have to ask my director of finance and get back to you on that.

MR. MILLER: Our finances are confidential and they go to headquarters for the national office, but I'm not aware that they're made public.

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: Part of the issue with that is that it would be sensitive commercial information. We have the National Master Standing Offer. It's a government document - not necessarily a public document - the schedule of charges, because that would be intelligence for our competitors.

MR. HINES: Are you a registered charity?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: We are registered as a not-for-profit corporation and have charitable status.

MR. HINES: Can you issue tax receipts for contributions or fundraising efforts?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: We don't do that though.

MR. HINES: Do you have that privilege if you would?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: We have tax benefit rights, but we don't issue tax receipts.

MR. HINES: Back to your work split there - did you say 37 per cent of your business was out of the federal side?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: Yes.

MR. HINES: Do you know what percentage is provincial?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: That's a very good question. No, I don't have it off the top of my head.

MR. HINES: I think you covered this for Mr. Dunn, but your provincial contracts are the result of competitive bidding?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: Yes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: It might be somewhat at arm's length from the commissionaires, but a comment made about less than 20,000 members of our Army?

MR. MILLER: No, we have 20,000 commissionaires across Canada, and our regular force Army is around 20,000 in this country. I was just making a comparison. It's about the same size as our Army - not the Navy and the Air Force combined. Not the military combined - they have around 70,000 - but the regular force Army that goes off to Afghanistan and comes back again, there are about 21,000.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Irving, please.

MR. IRVING: Just proceeding a little bit along in terms of the conversation about a provincial right of first refusal besides the federal one, one of the possible hurdles to get over there might be this whole issue of trade barriers between provinces, which we're trying to move away from - free trade. And I was triggered by your comment of an Alberta

company coming in. Clearly we would like to protect Nova Scotia companies, et cetera, but in the world of freer trade, this idea may be a bit harder of a sell, but I'm not saying it can't happen. That's the premise of the question.

This might be easier to bring forward if there are nine other provinces and three territories that proceed along the same route. Is that happening in other provinces? Are you the beachhead here?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: I'm not aware of the other divisions taking that forward. If you look at the split of divisions across Canada: Newfoundland and Labrador is one company, Nova Scotia is a company, New Brunswick and P.E.I. are combined as a company, there's one in Quebec, there are four divisions in Ontario, one in Manitoba, two in Saskatchewan, two in Alberta, two in British Columbia, and the northern ones look after the Territories. So it wouldn't be an individual division going to a province asking for that, they would have to do it in an amalgamated fashion, for instance. I am not aware if any of them have done that or not.

We are one of the larger divisions across the country in Nova Scotia with 1,600 employees, which makes us stand out, plus, as I said, we have a higher number of veterans than most divisions, a higher percentage.

Your question with respect to free trade is interesting because when they were negotiating the European Free Trade Agreement, many of our competitors are international companies - G4S, Securitas - and they don't like the fact that we have the right of first refusal with the federal government. They wanted that put into the European Free Trade Agreement and the federal government took that off the table. It was not on the table and not for negotiation or discussion.

The precedence is there to do it and not include it, from a free trade perspective at the federal level. How that would play out at the provincial level, it's not for me to say but I would think that yes, there would certainly be a lot of noise made by our larger competitors but I think there might be some smaller competitors who are Nova Scotian companies as well that would probably have potentially an issue with it, although I don't know how many provincial contracts go to the smaller companies in the province.

MR. MILLER: I think this is relevant here but if we have a contract that crosses borders or if there's a large contract in, say, Nova Scotia that we can't fully fulfill, we can go out to the other divisions and ask for assistance in that regard. We've done that in a number of cases.

There will always be either a lead division, where it is negotiated, like the RCMP contract, we are the lead division, or the guarding contract, we are the lead division and we are carrying that out in New Brunswick as well as Nova Scotia. So we have got this

arrangement that we are able to use commissionaires from other provinces for the contracts that we go after.

We either do it with a lead division or our central - we have a national office in Ottawa that their sole job is to coordinate. We have a federation of strong divisions and that's very tricky. It's not a Canadian federation where the federal government looks after all these things and the provinces look after different things - we have all of the provinces, the divisions, look after everything and the central office coordinates if there's something that goes between them. Maybe that's useful with respect to the trade barrier question that you came up with.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Miller. Mr. Irving, are you okay there? Anyone else have any further questions? We're all good. Mr. Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Madam Chairman, I don't know if this is an appropriate time but hopefully you'll just listen. I'd like to make a motion and hopefully get the support of the committee. I'd like to make a motion for the committee to send a letter to the Premier, the Minister responsible for Military Relations, requesting a response to the possibility to have a similar standing offer that would give the commissionaires the first right of refusal for government security contracts - just the possibility. That would be the motion I put on the floor for the committee.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is a motion on the floor.

We're going to have a quick recess.

[10:29 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:36 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We have a motion on the floor. With a show of hands, can everyone show me who is for the motion? Against?

It looks like the motion won't be going through. We can certainly take it under advisement.

Are there any further questions before we continue on? Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: I want to speak to the idea that has been put forward through the motion that was just defeated. It's really not the best place for this committee to start getting involved in influencing contract negotiations. So I think our feeling is that this would be best pursued and explored in a conversation through the various departments that are responsible for contracts and contract negotiations.

I hope you feel that we are certainly supportive of your organization and the work you do and the veterans, but the complexities of contracts and some of the issues that I raised with respect to provincial barriers, et cetera - that's probably best if you start that conversation with a letter to the government to begin that conversation. I just wanted to put that on the record.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I appreciate the comments from the government members, but as I said, I was hoping that you would recognize that the motion wasn't "we should be doing this", it was a possibility. I would have hoped that would have passed. I understand your position, but I feel that this committee is the committee and having served on this committee prior to being in government as a minister - I was disappointed I couldn't sit on the committee when I was a minister. Maybe we should make a motion to change that rule too, but I'm very glad to be back here.

I do feel it's the committee's role to try to move forward the agenda of organizations like Commissionaires Nova Scotia to support our veterans. That's really where the motion was coming from. You have my commitment to try to follow through and try to get a response from the government.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So if the witnesses would like to finish up with any closing remarks, we'd like to hear them now. Mr. Miller, please.

MR. MILLER: Thank you for making that motion; we didn't expect that to happen. I think there are three things that I wrote down here. One was, were our finances made public, and what our success rate was in the provincial bidding. The last one I've got a big asterisk saying, send a letter.

I think our organization should send a letter and we'd be happy to send it to the Premier, as opposed to a contract negotiation bottom line thing - with due respect, that will never go anywhere. We'll start at the top and we will say that we've had this wonderful encounter with your committee and we'll go from there. We can include a copy of the federal legislation and the National Master Standing Offer that we operate under, and perhaps who are in contract negotiations can take a hard look at it and say the federal government is doing this, what are the ramifications? How difficult is it for us, is it a non-starter or can we actually look at it?

I guess that's my follow-on to what has been a very successful hour and a half for us, to be able to bring to you what we're all about and why we exist and our commitment to the province and to veterans who have served the country.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Miller. Mr. Belliveau, have you got anything to add?

MR. BRUCE BELLIVEAU: No, that's it, thanks.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are you okay, Dr. MacKinnon? Okay. Well thank you so much and it was really an informative presentation. I certainly learned a lot today and my respect for commissioners has only elevated after today. It was such a pleasure to meet with all of you. I want to thank you for coming and hope to see you all soon, thank you.

We're going to take a quick recess.

[10:41 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:48 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm going to call this meeting back to order and we're going to move on to regular business. We'll start with the correspondence. You have copies of all the correspondence there in front of you. There should be one there from Honourable Julian Fantino - his response to the committee's invitation to appear at the March 2014 meeting.

The next one would be Honourable Tony Clement, his response to the motion passed at the February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting regarding changes to the Public Service health care plan for retired military personnel and RCMP officers.

The next correspondence was from Honourable Julian Fantino, a response to a motion passed at the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, regarding endorsement of a federal veterans advocate.

The next piece would be Honourable Michel Samson, a response to a motion passed at the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, regarding allowing MLAs to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies in their communities.

Our final one would be from Blair Beed on the Halifax Memorial Library.

Does anyone have any comments in regard to any of that correspondence? Mr. Hines.

MR. HINES: Madam Chairman, on the last item, having read that, I would move that the committee refer this matter to the Halifax Regional Municipality as it appears to be a municipal issue.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, so we have a motion to defer that to the Halifax Regional Municipality. Seconded by Mr. Jessome.

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



The motion is carried.

Are there any other comments? Mr. Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: On the correspondence from Minister Samson, it didn't affect me but it was my understanding through the week of Remembrance that there was going to be some time allotted - in the response - for members to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies.

If I recall, we were called back in the very next day. I don't know if it was an issue with members, getting back to Halifax - no, we didn't sit on Remembrance Day, we sat the very next day. I don't know if that caused any issues with members who were further away. For myself, of course it did not. Just maybe keep in mind for next year I would think - I know for one of my members there was an evening event he couldn't attend because he had to drive up.

I don't know for next year, to ensure that maybe - I thought the consideration would have been to have an additional day to allow members to get back to the city from wherever they're from. So just a cautionary note to maybe . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes, but it was unusual circumstances too. I don't know if we started early in the day on Wednesday.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I think we started a little later. My assumption was that we were going to have the following day off, but just for next year's session, maybe we can have a motion prior to it, to make sure that members do have that additional day because I think it's important.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Noon starts, from Cape Breton - I have the longest commute, but if it's noon I can get here. Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: I think it's a fair enough comment. If recollection serves me, the 11<sup>th</sup> moves around. The one time that it would really affect us would be when it falls on a Thursday and we are normally sitting at 9:00 a.m., so I would suggest that that's a discussion between the House Leaders in the various years. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any further comments? Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: I'll move receipt of the letters.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Anyone second that? We're all good, okay. Do we have any other business? Mr. Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Over the last little while one of the things that our members have been contacted on from groups and from individuals within our communities is around the protocol for the passing of a veteran, for example.

I'd like to make a motion here - hopefully it will have support - to call the Protocol Office before this committee to discuss the rules and procedures related to veterans' event planning and protocol surrounding honouring veterans who pass away, so that we can give what protocols the province is following when we have the death of a veteran and those protocols around it.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So you're looking for the outline of the protocol?

MR. DAVID WILSON: Yes, and I don't know how far ahead, it's not something - I'm not asking for the next meeting but if we could get that prior - well sooner than later, just so that I think the MLAs know what the provincial protocols are or what protocols the province is following when it comes to veterans' event planning and the protocol surrounding the passing of a veteran.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's a really good point. I think we're going to do an agenda setting meeting in January so we can bring that forth then.

Okay, we're going to set our next meeting and that is going to be January 8<sup>th</sup>. So the next meeting would be January 8<sup>th</sup>, the second Thursday of every month. Are we all in agreement with that?

Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Madam Chairman, I was just wondering about the annual report that I see on the agenda.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We're going to look at the annual report and sign off on that today too. Do we have approval on that?

MR. IRVING: So moved.

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

The motion is carried.

We're going to pass a letter around for you all to sign.

If there is no further business, we will get agreement for the next date and it was going to be January 8<sup>th</sup>. There will be an agenda-setting meeting then. Thank you everyone.

We stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:56 a.m.]