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COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, January 8, 2015

Legislative Committees Office

Commemorating fallen Nova Scotian soldiers from the Afghanistan mission

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In Attendance:

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WITNESS

Major Tim Dunne (Ret'd)



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2015

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Pam Eyking

MR. BEN JESSOME (Chairman): I guess we'll get started. I'd like to call today's Veterans Affairs Committee meeting to order. My name is Ben Jessome, I'm the MLA for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, filling in as chairman for the member for Victoria-The Lakes.

This morning we'll be receiving a presentation from our guest, Major Tim Dunne, with respect to commemorating fallen soldiers from the Afghanistan mission. I'd also like to take a quick moment to recognize his grandson, Sebastian, who will be joining us this morning.

I remind everybody to shut their phones off, put them on vibrate for the duration of the meeting. Also for anybody who hasn't been in here before, just to clarify, in the event that we need to evacuate the building, I'll ask that everybody leave here on the Barrington side of the building and get together on the Granville side of Province House.

I'll ask everybody to direct their comments through the Chair. I guess at this point in time I'll ask the member for Clare-Digby to begin and we'll do some introductions.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll just note that in order to get through some committee business, we'll receive the presentation and facilitate questions up until 10:30 a.m., when I guess we'll begin the remainder of committee business. Mr. Dunne, whenever you are ready.

MAJ. TIM DUNNE (RET'D): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to first of all thank you for giving me some time this morning to talk about what to me is an important topic and to also wish you the best of the new year as well.

I would like to begin by noting that I am not a native-born Nova Scotian, I was originally a Newfoundlander and joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1972 and served 37 years until my retirement in Halifax in 2009. My final four years were as a reserve force or a part-time officer.

My family and I moved to Halifax in 1991, where I was assigned as the Defence Department's Regional Director for Public Affairs and Communications for Atlantic Canada. Following a year-long assignment to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 and 1996, I returned to Halifax. My superiors in Ottawa wanted to reassign me to National Defence headquarters but I employed my most persuasive capabilities to have them leave me in place. Accordingly, I was assigned to the headquarters of Land Force Atlantic Area, the Army formation for Atlantic Canada, as a Senior Area Public Affairs Officer, a position I held until 2000, when I was assigned to the southern European headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Naples, Italy, until 2004.

Predictably, when I returned, my superiors wanted me to work in Ottawa for my final several years but I was offered a position with Communications Nova Scotia and was ultimately the Communications Advisor with the Department of Natural Resources until 2007, when I was asked to undertake the position of Military Affairs Advisor with the provincial Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. This position was significant; Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to create such a position and staff it with a public servant. I used to joke with the ministers for whom I worked, that this constituted the smallest ministry in the British Commonwealth - the minister and me. Other provinces - most notably Manitoba - tried to claim that they were the first, but I quickly disabused my prairie colleague of that misperception.

I retired from that position in 2009 with the feeling that we did some wonderful work with the enthusiastic assistance of my colleagues; we did a number of small things for Nova Scotians who deployed to Afghanistan, to make them understand that they were remembered and appreciated. We also worked with the Defence Department and military offices in Nova Scotia to identify actions and decisions that would support them.

We should be mindful that the Canadian Armed Forces is responsible for more than \$1 billion of the province's revenue annually but also while military personnel are assigned to Nova Scotia for specific postings, they quickly become integrated into the fabric of the province and the communities in which they live - Halifax, Eastern Passage and Greenwood in particular. There are also about 3,000 Reservists or part-time military members in Nova Scotia. On average, every 10 Reservists equal one person-year of employment, but more than that, there are a great many other advantages that these part-timers bring to the province.

When central Canada was paralyzed by the massive ice storm in 1998, the Army asked Reservists to assist with recovery from the impact of the storm. The local Army commander received literally double the number of volunteers that he expected. When Swissair 111 occurred on September 2, 1998, Reservists undertook whatever work was necessary. Some worked with me at our international press centre; some participated with the recovery of floating material in St. Margaret's Bay; others assisted with shoreline searches.

When Nova Scotia received 2,400 ethnic Albanian Kosovars in 1999, the Army called out Reservists to assist with the accommodation and temporary resettlement of these unfortunate people, and again, military Reservists assisted. When we underwent the blizzard of 2003, there was the same response. Similarly, as Canada went into the conflict in Afghanistan, the Reserve component was a major element of the Canadian expeditionary force. Some estimates put the Reserves consistently at 14 per cent of the total and at times, it may have been more. Successive commanders repeated that Canada would not have been able to meet their operational objectives without the assistance and support of our Reserves.

The role of the military affairs advisor was a busy one and one that attracted a lot of attention from the Canadian Armed Forces. Commanders and senior representatives of the Department of National Defence use Nova Scotia as an example to the other nine provinces to emulate. This introduced a period when senior military representatives in this province felt a close camaraderie with the province's leadership and even briefed Cabinet about the roles and operations of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force in this province.

Nova Scotia became the first Canadian province to pass job protection legislation for Reservists who deploy on operations with the Canadian Armed Forces. Every student has the right to return to a program of study without financial penalty, but our real work began when a Nova Scotian was killed in that theatre of operations. Until I retired from the position, the minister and I would visit the families privately to present them with the province's flag that was flown in that service person's honour at half-mast on the grounds of Province House. It was laid out in a handmade box and there is a picture of that box right here. This is the first one that was passed out. It was laid out in a handmade hardwood presentation box and given to families in their homes. Minister Murray Scott made arrangements with the Springhill Institute to have these boxes made.

I would also like to note that after I retired from the provincial Public Service, I maintained my association with efforts to recognize Nova Scotia's fallen soldiers. I became the Nova Scotia representative to the Highway of Heroes. Whenever a fallen Nova Scotian travelled on that highway, I provided a provincial flag that was flown from the Victoria Park overpass as a procession drove by. The highway's coordinator returned each of the flags to me and I would ask a notable Nova Scotian in the area of the family to present it to that family.

On a per capita basis, more members of the Canadian Armed Forces come from Nova Scotia than any other province. An estimated 12 per cent of the military is made up of Bluenosers. The number of Nova Scotians who made the ultimate sacrifice to our nation in Afghanistan is also disproportionate. With 2.5 per cent of the Canadian population, Nova Scotia service members represent about 10 per cent of the fatalities of Canadian military operations in that country.

Canada has recognized each of its fallen service women and men with ramp services as they departed Kandahar and returned to CFB Trenton. Ontario has recognized each one as he or she made that last trip down the Highway of Heroes. Manitoba has named lakes after those from that province who have died in uniform. Nova Scotia's fallen service personnel should also be recognized by this province in a manner that is respectful, appropriate and permanent.

Nova Scotia has 21 provincial parks. How fitting a memorial it would be to name these parks or the campgrounds or the picnic areas within those parks after those who have given their lives in that far-off country, fighting a war as their nation demanded of them? As a province, we should honour the memories of these Nova Scotians who made the supreme sacrifice on behalf of the nation that sent them and the province they came from.

Nova Scotians, like so many other Canadians, have answered the call when asked. When they joined the regular force, members of the Canadian Armed Forces understand and accept that they are subject to unlimited liability. They must serve when directed and where they are directed to deploy, regardless of the risks and dangers that may be present. This is not the same for Reservists. They can simply choose not to step forward, to voluntarily place themselves in harm's way, but they do, as they have so often, but when they do they join the profession of arms alongside their colleagues.

We now live in a different age than those simpler times when people generally answered the call from Queen, flag and country. So many no longer recognize the need for public and military service. Their traditional values of loyalty and courage and duty are never manifested in easy times, but demonstrated only by those who choose to step into the pathway of challenge, adversity and danger. These people who would be ordinary under normal circumstances provide a lens through which we can measure the gap between where we stand and where they have placed the bar and have that bar rest on the twin underpinnings of courage and sacrifice.

It is my wish - as I hope it is yours - that we recognize the sacrifice of the 13 Nova Scotians and the two who have adopted this province as home, who have fallen in the line of duty. By remembering them, we may give our younger Nova Scotians a beacon to allow them to also recognize not only the benefits, but also the responsibilities of living in Nova Scotia. Thank you very much for your attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Major Dunne. We'll proceed with questions at this point. The way I'd like to facilitate questions is by allocating a block of 20 minutes per caucus. We'll split up the remaining time once each caucus has had an opportunity to ask their questions, and we'll just move forward if you've exhausted your questions.

We'll begin with the NDP caucus.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I don't think I'll need 20 minutes. Sorry for being a little late. It's always congested down at the end here getting into Lower Water Street - to make it all the way from Sackville and take 15 minutes to go about a thousand metres.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess we'll get the member for Sackville-Cobequid to introduce himself.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Sure - David Wilson, the member for Sackville-Cobequid. Thank you for coming in to the committee. I've sat on this committee for a number of years and I've always appreciated individuals like yourself - organizations coming in and educating the committee members and members of the Legislature on some of the amazing work that these organizations do.

You had mentioned in your comments about ways the province could remember fallen soldiers. You mentioned the parks or picnic areas. From your organization or yourself, have you sent a request to the province at all to maybe do that? If you have, what kind of response have you gotten from the government?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, I'll jump in here - I forgot to remind people to wait to be recognized and direct your comments through the Chair.

MR. TIM DUNNE: When I was working as a public servant I did broach the subject, but as a public servant I had limited ability to speak more openly - as openly as I do now. More recently, about a year and a half, two years ago, I made a recommendation to the Premier's Office of the day, which was referred to the Minister of Natural Resources who replied to me and said that it probably, in his opinion, would be more appropriate for the communities where these people come from to do something locally.

I recognize the validity of what he said, but I also believe that these are not just Haligonians and Cape Bretoners and people from Yarmouth and people from Pubnico - they're also Nova Scotians. I still feel very strongly that the province should do something to recognize these people as Nova Scotia, as a province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The member for Sackville-Cobequid.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Chairman is being very official today. I've sat on many committees and I think this one has been the one that has been more relaxed. I appreciate the rules and I'll look at him, but go through the Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for entertaining me.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I think that's important. I can understand that view and definitely I think we've seen that over the last number of years. I bring up a gentleman who wasn't from my community, but lived there for quite some time - Corporal Paul Davis, who was killed in Afghanistan a number of years ago. In our community, for example, the elementary school that he went to named their gym after him. I believe this past summer, and I can't remember exactly where he's from down the Valley way, I believe they actually named a park outside Bridgewater, a really nice ceremony so I think we'll continue to have that.

One of the things that I will be asking the committee later on is to bring forward maybe as a potential witness, our Protocol Officer, to try to figure out what are the protocols in place currently when a soldier is killed. Are you aware of what provincial protocols or were you involved at the time when you worked with the government, to create provincial protocols?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I helped write them. As a Military Affairs adviser I was very familiar with it. At the time I had an agreement with the Canadian military that they would notify me when a soldier was killed, after the family had been notified of such, and our protocol was that we would fly a Nova Scotia flag at half-mast at the ceremonial flagstaff at Province House, for 24 hours. Then I would get that flag, I would get it as I got these handcrafted boxes - I had a former colleague at the Department of Natural Resources who very eagerly took these flags home, ironed them, made sure that they were immaculate and very presentable, and would lay them out in the boxes. Then the minister and I would personally visit the family home to present the flag in its box to these families.

The box itself was made voluntarily by an inmate at the Springhill Institution and he was very proud of how he did it. They were something to behold, they were beautiful, as you saw the photograph that was there. I believe that was the first box we presented, which was for Chris Stannix's parents and then we would do that. It was just an effort to show that the parents and the family members in their grief were not alone, that we shared their condolences, we shared their grief, and this is some tangible effort to show to them. Also there was a recognition in the Legislature of the soldier who was killed, there was a resolution read, so this was our provincial protocol. A very simple one but it was apparently in the reports, the feedback I received from families that it was very heartfelt; the response was very heartfelt.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I think that's part of why I want to hopefully get the commitment from the committee to bring forward someone from the Protocol Office, just

so MLAs know. I've been a member of the Legislature for almost 12 years, and I'm still not sure on what is appropriate, when we should ask for flags to be lowered. I think there's heightened awareness now, of course, after more recent events in Ottawa and Quebec.

Are you aware that - you mentioned that you and the minister would do this procedure and that there was an inmate but I would assume that that's not happening now, maybe the inmate is not there. Is there a similar program going on now? Are you aware that the flag - I know that the flags go at half-mast sometimes, are you aware that that is currently still the protocol?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I'm not aware. When I retired, I passed all those responsibilities over to my successor but I'm not aware that - in fact, I don't believe that it was happening quite the way it was. I took a very keen personal interest, being someone who was deployed. I served in the Middle East, I served in the Balkans and I've travelled with my NATO responsibilities to North Africa, so I was a lot more aware of the implications and the relationships that are formed by soldiers who deploy, I had more of an understanding for that. I don't know if that continued the same way when I retired from the Public Service.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Thank you. I don't think anybody is trying to back away from any responsibility, I think it definitely takes someone who is maybe more aware, more keen on the symbol of some of those gestures. I recall a colleague of mine who sent just one of our issued flags over to Afghanistan and how much that meant to the soldiers who were there. I hope that maybe through these discussions we can put a fire under somebody to continue on with those traditions.

In closing, I just want to thank you for your service, not only military but to the province through the Public Service. Hopefully this committee can continue on to make sure that we properly recognize any soldiers in the service that they provide. Thank you.

MR. TIM DUNNE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We thank you. I'd like to move on to the Progressive Conservative caucus, beginning with the member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your presentation. It's always heartfelt when you listen to stories with regard to the ultimate sacrifices of our members not only from Nova Scotia but from across the country.

You mentioned that a couple of years ago you made a recommendation to the Premier's Office with regard to honouring them within the community and so on. Was that the only time you made that recommendation? Did you have the opportunity before or since that?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I verbally made the recommendation when I was public servant but that was the only time I formally made it as a private citizen, as a private Nova Scotian. I'm not a security affairs and military affairs columnist with the *Chronicle Herald*, I've written about this several times in the *Chronicle Herald* in an effort to bring more public attention to the sacrifices that our people have made – our soldiers, sailors and Air Force personnel have made to these operations. I wrote a column on this very issue about a year ago. Those are the only times I've done that.

Having said that, I've always sought opportunities to push the idea out to anyone who would listen.

MR. PAT DUNN: Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up question to that. What type of reaction did you get to these columns, these articles that you were writing, from wherever?

MR. TIM DUNNE: Usually not much of a response at all. The only response I got was to the one where I recommended the renaming of the parks or parts of the parks, that I did a list of soldiers which I've attached to this as well. I was going through the Defence Department's list of fallen soldiers, I picked out those who were born in Nova Scotia, which was a sad, sad error, because there are some adopted Nova Scotians as well, people who have adopted this province who sadly didn't make it onto my list, which I have corrected subsequently. Those are the two who adopted this province, that Petty Officer Craig Blake and Sergeant Darcy Tedford. They were both born elsewhere but moved here and adopted Nova Scotia as home. That was the only response.

Normally I don't get a lot of response to columns. Neighbours and friends will talk to me about it but I don't get a lot of feedback from the general readership.

MR. PAT DUNN: You referred to a number of fallen soldiers there. One of them I knew, of course, Corporal Kevin Megeney from Pictou County, from Stellarton. I knew the family - the parents, the grandparents and so on.

I guess another question I have - you mentioned about the memory boxes earlier in your presentation. What is happening right now with regard to the memory boxes? Is that an ongoing project?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I really don't know, I don't believe so. I passed over all my flags to Intergovernmental Affairs - and there were a lot of them - but as I was retiring I also made an effort to go back and for every Nova Scotian who was killed in Afghanistan, before I took up this position I went back and I had a flag flown at half-mast for each of those people, so I passed those on to the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs as I was retiring. I really have lost touch with what happened to those flags afterwards.

MR. PAT DUNN: I guess to follow up that theme. Have you ever spoken to the families directly with regard to what their wishes might be with regard to fallen soldiers in the province, as far as honouring them?

MR. TIM DUNNE: Not on this subject. I have spoken to them, to several families in relation to the flag boxes, the memory boxes, but not to this particular issue.

MR. PAT DUNN: I'm going to at this moment just pass the microphone over to my colleague here and if there's time left, I might come back with another question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Thank you, sir, for your presentation. I have two family members of mine serving in the military currently, one in the Army, one in the Navy. I had a grandfather who was a Cape Breton Highlander so to hear you come and talk about honouring these fallen soldiers means a lot to me personally and I'm sure it does to every Nova Scotian.

The idea of the box with your flags sounds to me like a great idea. I'm just wondering if later on in the meeting we, as a committee, were to write a letter to Intergovernmental Affairs to see if we could have that continue, would that meet with the approval of you for the memory that you have created with them? Would you recommend that we do that, as a committee?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I would, and I would volunteer to write the letter.

MR. ORRELL: Again, we talked about memory of the soldiers. I know of one veteran, Mr. Mike Dulude, who was raising money to make memory boxes for the families. Is that something that would meet in the same idea of honouring the soldiers and could meet the approval of yourself?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I do believe it would be. I don't quite know what the memory box would look like or how it will be presented but I believe it would be important to make sure that rather than have things happen piecemeal, that there will be a single effort, as opposed to several organizations or several individuals making an effort to do this, that we all work on the same effort to do it once but do it well.

MR. ORRELL: I know myself, when my grandfather and grandmother died, my grandfather's medals and his Highlanders photo were passed on to me. My wife took them and had them put into a shadowbox, had the ribbons cleaned and had the branch Legion pins put in the shadowbox and I have that hanging in my rec room now, which to me is a great honour. I think that would be something that would be a good honour to the families of these people who have given the ultimate sacrifice.

I guess one of my other questions is, if we're not going to rename the provincial parks, is there any other way that we, as a province, could show these families and the individuals' memory how much they mean to us here for what they do for our province?

MR. TIM DUNNE: One possible way of doing that, sir, might be to have a roll call of honour that could be mounted permanently in the Veterans Room of Province House would maybe be another way.

MR. ORRELL: I know I've sat in on a few of the fire departments where they've done a roll call every year at their firefighter memorial and they ring the bell. That could be something we could do, as legislators, as their names are unveiled, it's a good idea, a great idea.

I guess I'm going to ask this probably knowing the answer to it, have you spoken to the families of the fallen, the loved ones, about their wishes and if this is appropriate for them, as a family, or what they would like to see done for these individuals?

MR. TIM DUNNE: Not about this particular individual idea. I've had some contact with some of the families, the parents of Kevin Stannix, Paul Davis' dad, I've talked to them occasionally or have written or emailed them but I haven't spoken about this particular initiative. This is something that I think should come from the province and if we were to have the idea vetted to the families, that we would do that officially, as opposed to having me as a private citizen do it. I have no influence, authority or cause to do that on behalf of anyone.

This is an idea that I believe is viable and would show a profound respect and regard for those who have fallen in the line of duty or have put themselves in harm's way and have fallen as a consequence, to show a profound respect for those people. But if the families would object to that, although I can't imagine why, then that's something that I think should be done more officially than through them by me.

MR. ORRELL: I guess I'll just ask one more question and then we'll move on and maybe come back later. Have you spoken to any of the groups, such as the Legions or the Army Navy veterans and so on and so forth about spearheading this project to move forward to keep them in the limelight, as groups as well as individuals, to try and process this?

MR. TIM DUNNE: Not as groups. I did an interview, not this past Remembrance Day but the one before, with CTV on the subject. The reporter that I worked with thought it was an idea whose time had come, but no, I haven't spoken to other groups as well because, again, I'm an individual and I'm very mindful of the fact that I'm a private citizen and not an official representative of anybody but me.

MR. ORRELL: Could we do that on your behalf?

MR. TIM DUNNE: Absolutely.

MR. ORRELL: I know the Legions in my area are very open to honouring fallen soldiers and people who actually do now serve in the military at this time. I think if we as individual MLAs were to speak to the Legion members in our areas, maybe bring that to the limelight and maybe push this process forward.

MR. TIM DUNNE: Certainly, I think that would be a wonderful idea. In fact, even further to that, I would be happy to volunteer to assist with that effort.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would just like to remind everyone to pause and wait to be recognized before beginning your comments. Now we'll move on to the Liberal caucus for 20 minutes.

The member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

MS. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Chairman, through you to the witness, I used to be a history teacher so I'm very curious if there's anything that can be more profound to make sure that who our fallen veterans were can actually be maintained through generations.

I'm going to clarify this a little bit. I have a family member who died in World War II and back in the 1960s, the mayor of Halifax at the time decided that he wanted to have all of the street names in the Westmount area of Halifax named after fallen Haligonians who fell during World War II. So you have this whole portion of the city where all of these streets are named after individuals. Now fast-forward two generations and unless you have a direct link to those people, they're just street names to you.

Have you had any conversations - or maybe it's a conversation that we can have - to ensure that there's more knowledge and more awareness of who these people were and why things would be named after them? Unfortunately, I know three of the names that are on this list. I know that there are three communities there are things that have been named for them and it has meaning to those who knew them, but already, even after a short amount of time we're coming up to generations where they're just plaques on a wall.

With Corporal Stannix - who I didn't know personally, but he is who our ferry is named after - there's going to be a point where the name is not enough. There has to be a way to actually ensure that their fight for us and their stories are told through the generations. You might not have the answer to this, but I'm just wondering if you would know of how we can do something that maintains and preserves that integrity of these people's stories.

MR. TIM DUNNE: There are a number of ways I can think of right off the top of my head. If we have something in the Veterans Room, we could have testimonials - a book of remembrance in there - of those who have fallen from all the wars or even just

Afghanistan. There was a book of remembrance at the House of Commons library in Ottawa that every day in a ceremony, a page is turned by one of the custodians. I don't think there's anything like that in this province.

We have probably more than any other province of Canada - I have noticed here that military service is not a factor of the economic conditions of the province. Military service in this province is a respected profession. People join because they want to be part of a tradition - to embody that spirit that was exhibited by so many Nova Scotians who have gone before.

Just a bit off topic, but I recall visiting the Moro River Canadian War Cemetery just outside Lanciano in Italy. These were people who died in the campaign, from the heel of the boot up to Ortona, in the Battle of Ortona. You walk through there and you are struck by the number of young Nova Scotians who gave their lives in that conflict over a one-month period. Again, we need to recognize these people as well.

I believe there should be some mechanism, some permanent script, some permanent plaque or writing that people could read - and more than just the Internet - to show that these Nova Scotians gave their lives for Canada and as Nova Scotians. They were wearing the hat badges of Nova Scotia's proudest regiments, and then also perhaps solicit assistance from the units themselves, the Nova Scotia regiments and units where these people came from, to assist with that effort.

MS. ARAB: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Mr. Dunne, for your presentation. This is such an important topic and I appreciate my colleagues' comments and questions on how we make this recognition and acknowledgement something that lives with us forever. I think that's something that's really worth giving some thought to.

I wondered if you wanted to comment at all on the National Day of Honour. I participated in that in Kentville. It seemed a little last-minute and I think there were some issues around how quickly that got sort of brought together. Do you have any comments on how that was handled or how we could encourage that to be done better. From my sense of the public's response to it, it was great but I thought we could do a better job at it. Do you have any thoughts on that?

MR. TIM DUNNE: The National Day of Honour is a recognition nationally of the people who were killed, not simply Nova Scotians. As such, it is something that I think is deserved but it's a very long ceremony and it is very demanding for a lot of people to be there while this is happening, it takes a lot of time.

I commend the people who put that together, I think it's a wonderful initiative. It probably could stand a little bit more pre-publicity, a little bit more promotion but I think the people who put that together are to be commended for their efforts.

Again, it's an example that the spirit, the wishes of so many people are that they want to recognize the sacrifices of the people who went to Afghanistan. It was not merely the longest conflict in Canada's history, it was a 10-year conflict. In World War II we deployed into southern Italy in 1943. That conflict was extended to almost double the length of time the Canadians were in combat in the Second World War because when D-Day happened, the war lasted only 11 months after that. The people who went to Italy were there in that conflict much longer, double the time, and they were called the D-Day Dodgers as a consequence because there were people who felt they got out from underneath the hard stuff that happened on D-Day. Italy was no picnic.

There's so much of an effort to try to recognize everybody who has done so much on behalf of this country and I think we're in danger of having too many individual efforts. There's a National Day of Recognition, I think there should be a lot more effort nationally put into it by all the organizations that want to participate but I don't think that should take away from something we do provincially as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: First off I'd just like to note that I'm privileged to be here for the first time. I'm not an ordinary member of this committee, I'm sitting in for Pam Eying and it is very interesting. It was actually one of the committees I asked to be on, but didn't get on.

Also just a little comment - I worked for the Department of Natural Resources for 30 years and actually looked after a large amount of parks. It was one of my last jobs and I do recognize the community comments that you had made regarding what you received as a response towards naming after fallen soldiers. I experienced some of those situations - not exactly for fallen soldiers, but other individual causes on naming parks and I saw how the communities reacted.

Working through those communities would be - if you could get some in-roads in them would be the option. I believe there are some parks already that they had noted were named after fallen soldiers. I'm also curious, if I could ask to get educated - I respect the comments that Mr. Orrell made with regard to the memory box and the perpetuation of that. I can't fully grasp the memory box. Can you take me through that once more, please?

MR. TIM DUNNE: How it was done?

MR. GORDON WILSON: From the start to the finish, what it is.

MR. TIM DUNNE: Well there is a picture I have up on the screen. There was an inmate at the Springhill Institute who would make these. I would provide the hardware that would go into it, but the institute would provide the labour and the wood to make it. It was a beautifully done piece of memorabilia.

The box measured, I would imagine, almost a metre square. It was quite large and it was intended to have presents. If you look at the picture, you'll see that a normal shadow box would have a glass or Plexiglas front. That one is closed because it was for someone who is deceased as opposed to someone who is celebrating a career, so it's not a shadow box per se. The inside of that box, the cover is padded so that the families can put medals and maybe the soldier's or the service person's medals, uniform insignia, and such on there as well so it will all be in one place.

I would drive up to Springhill and pick up the boxes as they were finished, bring them down and get them prepared. It took quite a while for each one to be finished. Then I would contact the family and make arrangements to visit the family at the home, and the minister - whoever the minister was at that time - and I would go out in the evening at their convenience and present it to them so that it was done very privately. That's basically how it was looked after.

MR. GORDON WILSON: So I would assume these boxes then would be - the families would be the custodians of them forever.

MR. TIM DUNNE: It would be the immediate family. There have been times - and Corporal Stannix from Halifax was one example. There were his parents and his fiancée. For that, I did two flags at the ceremonial flagstaff and had two boxes made - one for the mom and dad, and the other one for his fiancée. I wasn't too tied up on formality about this. This was designed to have people understand that we share their sorrow and that we sympathize with their loss, and if it required two or three boxes, the minister and I were happy to provide that.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I did have a question though in regard to the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil that happened. We haven't heard anything about that and I was curious - it came here to Halifax in October. Do you have any thoughts on where that should be housed permanently or your comments on that vigil itself?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I hadn't really thought about that. I believe that when you look at the memorabilia in and around Province House, maybe on the grounds or somewhere in association with Province House, as North America's oldest Legislature it would be appropriate. There is a monument there to the Boer War. There are some cannons on the grounds so perhaps on the grounds of Province House might be appropriate.

Also I'd like to underscore that there is a group of students in Yarmouth - the Memorial Club - who have shown great leadership, great initiative. I think it needs to be

recognized as well that when, as soldiers, as Nova Scotians died in Afghanistan, their families received a silver cross from the federal government but they also received a silver cross from the Memorial Club, from these young high school students in the Yarmouth area. There are several schools involved and they also have put together their own memorial.

I know there are also these individual efforts as well that should be recognized. I believe these students should be given a vote of thanks, a vote of gratitude by the rest of the province for their initiative, their spirit and their dedication to preserving the legacy of these soldiers, sailors and Air Force personnel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Good morning, Mr. Dunne. Happy New Year to you.

MR. TIM DUNNE: And to you as well, thank you.

MR. GOUGH: Again in reference to the National Day of Honour, I was just wondering, have you talked to Nova Scotians or other Canadians, and if so, what were their thoughts, if you could share that with us.

MR. TIM DUNNE: I have a large circle of friends who are either serving or retired military and we all support that initiative, we all agree with it. I haven't brought this subject up too far afield. I have talked to the Royal United Services Institute, Security Affairs - I am on the Security Affairs Committee, I'm the chairman of that committee - but the Veterans Affairs Committee for the Royal United Services Institute. They support this wholeheartedly and they think it's a good initiative and they would like to see it happen.

As for other services or their efforts, we haven't really recognized that as well, just within my own circles.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

MS. ARAB: Mr. Chairman, I have a couple more questions. I have one question that kind of flips away from what we've been talking about so I'm going to save that for a supplementary.

Going back to my first question and we were talking about the roll call in the Veterans Room, who would we include in that roll call? Is that something that we would open up to all native-born Nova Scotians who fought in every conflict, including adopted Nova Scotians? How do you envision that?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I've thought a lot about that. We have war memorials for the Boer War, the First World War, the Second World War and Korea. It appears to me that

Afghanistan is the forgotten cousin and that's what I'm concerned about. We have 15 people who came from this province into that conflict. Many of them were Reservists who had a choice, they did not have to go. They stepped up and volunteered to put themselves in harm's way, as Reserve members or part-time members of the Canadian military. That was quite an investment of time and effort because they had to agree to a very long training program, to begin with. These people go and we're looking only at those who have died but there are a lot more people who come back with other issues, but just looking only at those who have given their lives.

I don't think any of us would like to see Afghanistan sort of fall off the edge of the desk. I believe we all need to recognize that this was a 10-year conflict. We have never before been in a conflict that lasted 10 years. It took a particular level of dedication and devotion to service to volunteer to go into that conflict. Many people went several times and in doing so, they volunteered to go.

One of my friends had, I think, four tours in Afghanistan - none of them as a regular force officer, all as a Reservist. He volunteered to go back again and again. That takes a particular kind of dedication and I think that kind of dedication should be recognized. Those who have given their lives in that conflict, they went into that conflict knowing it was a combat operation and that there was a chance that they would not come back alive. The Highway of Heroes was named that because all 162 Canadian service personnel who had died in a conflict travelled that highway. I believe that at the end of it all we need to recognize that Afghanistan should stand alongside all four other wars that Canada participated in for its contribution to Canadian democracy, to peace and security for this country.

I would like to think that - when we participate in these conflicts, it's what I call projected defence. We engage our adversary there so that our adversary does not engage us here. To do that in Afghanistan took more than volunteering to go on a peacekeeping operation because on a peacekeeping operation you don't expect to go into conflict; you don't expect that you're going to necessarily be shot at. We have lost peacekeepers, but they went with the expectation that they would come home.

I think that anyone going to Afghanistan had to go - particularly the Reservists who volunteered - knowing that with the understanding, I may not come back alive. That needs to be recognized as well when that happens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to jump back across the table to the NDP caucus - the member for Sackville-Cobequid for 10 minutes.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I have just a couple things. Sorry I was a little bit late, but I read through your initial comments that you retired in 2009. When I look at the 15 soldiers that were killed, I see three - Sergeant Taylor, Petty Officer Blake and Sergeant MacNeil

kind of after your time in there were killed. Are you aware if their families received the same ceremony?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I really don't know. I've lost touch with that effort. There was no effort by the people who succeeded me to keep me informed about that and I felt it would be inappropriate for me to impose myself on my successors.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Hopefully the committee will agree that we'll try to find that out. I think it's only respectful to maybe finish that process and that procedure and that recognition. That's all I have - thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The member for Pictou Centre.

MR. PAT DUNN: Just two questions. The first one, perhaps a follow-up from my colleague with regard to being interested in the history of our wars from a Canadian perspective and especially from Nova Scotia's perspective. As many of us living in small communities know, many soldiers have participated - male and female. I have a daughter in the Armed Forces, in the Navy and my father's brother was a prisoner of war during the Second World War over in Europe and I had the opportunity three years ago to tour a lot of countries over in Europe, looking at gravesites, monuments, et cetera - something that I always wanted to do. It was probably one of the greatest trips I ever had and I would do it again, given the opportunity.

Going back directly to my question, would you like to see in our curriculum in our schools, part of a curriculum, maybe a civics program tied in with history or whatever in such a way that it would commemorate and honour these fallen soldiers - something that could be inserted into our curriculum just as a reminder to students. Like my colleague was saying, as time goes on, sometimes the light gets a little dimmer and people are not aware of what actually happened in the past to families that lived right in the same communities that they're living in. Would that be something that you would perhaps advocate for or would like to see?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I certainly would. I believe that would be a wonderful step in the right direction, to incorporate something more permanent into the school curriculums in Nova Scotia so that we recognize those who have made all kinds of sacrifices. Not just warriors, not just the people with professional arms but also there are so many Nova Scotians who have made such a wonderful contribution to the country at large, as well as to the province. On this issue particularly I think this would be a wonderful initiative if the curriculum were to look at the contributions this province made to the Afghan conflict.

We have the 15 names here; it's not a difficult thing to put together at this point. The farther away we get from it, the dimmer the memories become and the harder it becomes to write these pieces of the curriculum to recognize the people.

MR. PAT DUNN: As we all know, many if not all schools across the province do a wonderful job around November 11th of each year. Some of the presentations are absolutely fantastic.

Perhaps my last question - I mean there are many ways in the province where we honour our fallen soldiers and soldiers who have come back. If you were given the task to determine in a formal way how we should, if there was one way that if you were given the task that this province could honour our fallen soldiers, what would that be?

MR. TIM DUNNE: I would probably continue to advocate for naming of the provincial parks after our fallen. I would also make an effort to have something permanent and something hard, of bronze or something of that sort, put in the Veterans Room of Province House, a place where we could point, we could bring our visitors, our guests, and point to this with pride, that this room is a Veterans Room and yes, it commemorates all of Nova Scotia's veterans but in particular the more recent ones who have given their lives in the Afghan conflict, and then point to the centerpiece in that room that would permanently have those names.

MR. PAT DUNN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moving back to the Liberal caucus, the member for Fairview-Clayton Park who is eagerly awaiting her turn.

MS. ARAB: Patience isn't one of my virtues. Following up actually on the last question that I asked you, your answer did sort of lead into my next question. I really want to take the opportunity, because having read some of the articles you've written talking about the role of our military and the role Canadians play in a post-Afghanistan world, now we're faced with the very real threat of ISIS and I'm just curious as to what your thoughts are and what kind of a role we should be playing, as a nation, in regard to this?

MR. TIM DUNNE: To ISIS, that's a particularly difficult one. I've studied terrorism, I've studied terrorist activities and terrorist groups a lot. What ISIS is doing is - there's a reason why they are no longer affiliated with Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda felt they were too far out there even for Al-Qaeda. We need to confront these people as a community of concerned nations.

Canada has very often taken a lead. We took the lead in Libya - the commander of the effort in Libya was Canadian. Right now we have the Commander of the International Task Force in the Indian Ocean is Canadian. The Commanding Officer of HCMS Toronto for Operation Reassurance to bolster the feeling of confidence among our NATO allies in the wake of Russian adventurism in Ukraine, Commander Jason Armstrong, was the International Commander for the Task Force in the Black Sea. Canada has stepped up and has taken a massive leadership role in a number of areas. With ISIS, I believe we need to

continue that effort. We need to confront these people who would like to see our standard of life and our standard of democracy taken away from us.

Having said that, I'd also like to underscore that one of the concerns I have - and I've detected this in some of the responses to my writing - is that there was a fair degree of concern about people of the Islamic faith. There is a pervasive attitude that they all share the same philosophies. They don't. I did an article about that a little while ago and I consulted with a local Imam and I've also had the honour and privilege of working with some very fine people from different parts of the Islamic world. They do not share the philosophies of Al-Qaeda, of ISIS or Boko Haram. These are people who want to be part of the mainstream world so we need to work together internationally to oppose organizations like Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

MR. GOUGH: In looking at your presentation, you said you served 37 years. I was just wondering, in your own personal military experience and also through discussions with military men and women who were under your direction or you talked to over the years, in those discussions, did anyone ever say how they would like to be remembered if indeed they went into military combat and they lost their lives? Has anyone shared with you how they would like to be remembered?

MR. TIM DUNNE: No, they haven't per se. I would like to go back to comments that were made by Winston Churchill when he talked about the military. He said that the military is a funny beast - it takes any criticism at all to heart, but it also relishes any praise it receives no matter how slight. The Canadian military is a very modest organization. When I was doing military relations for the province, I became involved in a number of projects - some of them very subtle - to assist with the settlement of people here; people who come to Nova Scotia who don't know where to turn to get a health card, to do all of these things. I assisted with a lot of that and a lot of very small things but that gave them some comfort. I also assisted with introducing various commanders and commanding officers to various people - for instance, the Premier or some of the ministers.

Having said that, the military in and of itself doesn't talk about how it would like to be recognized. If there is a popular effort to recognize the military then that is certainly recognized and appreciated. The fact that this was the only province with a Ministry of Military Relations really got the attention of people in Ottawa and they were pushing the example of Nova Scotia to the provinces. General Rick Hillier did it. There were other people in national events headquarters that were just astounded by this initiative.

When I was in uniform I was working quite closely with the Public Affairs Learning Centre in Ottawa. Every time I would go there, the director of the school would say, do a presentation about Nova Scotia - come tell us what Nova Scotia is doing. I was proud to do that. I was proud to be part of that. It speaks to the feelings that this province has for its

military. Our military history goes back to 1749 - maybe even a little bit before, but the formal history goes back to 1749.

We have very deep roots and those deep roots have not been disturbed by modern feelings that we don't want to be involved with the military and there is a feeling of apathy about military service in other parts of Canada. Not so in Atlantic Canada - particularly so in Nova Scotia. As I said earlier, military service in this province is still an honoured profession.

MR. GOUGH: I just want to close with this - I did some study on the First and Second World Wars when I was at Acadia. It makes sense what you're saying that people haven't really shared how they would like to be remembered because people who I know who have gone to military and served, they're a different type of person. The old saying was if anyone is talking about the glory of the war, they haven't seen anything. I know people who served in the Second World War and they wouldn't talk about anything. Sometimes on certain occasions they might say a little of this or a little or a little of that but you know they actually served. They are different people, they don't want to - they just want to serve their country, I guess. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense, yes. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, at this point in time I'll invite Major Dunne to make some closing remarks.

MR. TIM DUNNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to restate that I believe we have a group of Nova Scotians who have given their lives in the service of Canada but they have come from Nova Scotia. I believe it is incumbent on the province to recognize not just all of those who have made sacrifices for their country but particularly those who have come from this province. We have a proud history of military service in this province.

As I've said, I've gone to a number of war cemeteries in Italy when I was assigned to NATO headquarters there. A Remembrance Day at a war cemetery in Europe is very different than a Remembrance Day in Canada. I have yet to leave a war cemetery on Remembrance Day dry-eyed. It's a very emotional experience for all of us, particularly when you see people from the Cape Breton Highlanders, the Nova Scotia Highlanders, the West Nova Scotia Regiment, the Halifax Rifles, the Princess Louise Fusiliers, all who have gone up to the line and fought on behalf of the country and the province.

There are some very old, very historic hat badges in this province, and I believe that by working with the people who are with those regiments right now we can go a long way to preserve the heritage and the contribution of these people but I also think we need to underscore that by making an official effort, as the province, as well.

Again I'd like to thank you for giving me the time to speak with you today. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to give you my views on this and I also sincerely appreciate the questions you have asked me. Thank you so much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee I'd like to thank you for taking the time to be here and also for your enthusiasm with respect to remembering our veterans.

At this point I'd like to recess for five minutes, to reconvene at 10:15 a.m.

[10:08 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:13 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting back to order. Moving on, I'll ask for your continued co-operation in directing your comments through the Chair and pausing to be recognized by the Chair.

To begin we have a couple pieces of correspondence. Is there any discussion on the correspondence? Seeing none, we'll continue to agenda setting.

I'll begin with the Progressive Conservative caucus to present their potential witnesses. (Interruption) I guess we'll start with one apiece right now - the member for Pictou Centre.

MR. DUNN: I believe just looking at the agenda items, I guess perhaps the first one there, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Royal Canadian Legion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there agreement on bringing in the Ladies Auxiliary? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Moving on to the NDP caucus, the member for Sackville-Cobequid.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Knowing that we don't have that many meetings, we just brought the one forward, I think it piggybacks on kind of the topic today, the Protocol Office, just on the rules and procedures on what we do as a province, when a Reservist is killed in action or a soldier. I'm unclear and I've been a member of the House for almost 12 years so that's the topic there for us, the Protocol Office, just to find out what are the protocols for the province. Hopefully we can maybe continue honouring our fallen soldiers as we have done over the last decade or so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I guess I'll ask if there's any discussion on this witness, the member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I heard your preamble earlier when you talked about when do you put a flag up, when do you not put a flag up, that kind of stuff. I do believe that responsibility does not fall within the Protocol Office. I mean it's a legitimate question, I'm wondering if we could deal with it in a different way, just maybe writing a letter to the Protocol Office to find out who, in fact, might be responsible for that.

I know myself, in the municipal role I was in, we had protocol of our own in municipal so there are several different jurisdictions that I think cover that. For example, we would recognize the RCMP, we would recognize any fallen military people, and it was very clear for how long we flew or that kind of stuff.

I don't think, first off, that this is going to be one that we would accept, basically because it's not their responsibility but I think we should find out the answers for that, through correspondence, if that might be acceptable.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I'm a bit perplexed because it is the Protocol Office. They set the protocol for dignitaries who enter our province. The department the government would take direction from the Protocol Office on what would be appropriate, I know that happens. I've been around for a long time.

It's our topic that we would like to see them come forward. If I don't get the support, I mean it's the will of the majority of the committee but if I'm asking about what the protocols are for a fallen soldier, for a Reservist, for flags, for ceremonies, I would think the Protocol Office would be the most appropriate one.

I would hope that you would support bringing in the Protocol Office just to give us an overview on what the protocols are that are currently in place. I'll leave it at that. My wish is to have someone in the Protocol Office come in front of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll ask for a vote. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is defeated.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Could I further, though, maybe suggest a motion that we do write to the Protocol Office and ask for that information? Again I do think it's very valid and maybe if they are not, which I suspect they are not the overseeing entity, I believe that Veterans Affairs Canada probably is more appropriate or that we get some correspondence back on some general protocols, if not just for the province but for federal also, if that would assist. I'd like to make that motion if that's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion on the table. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye - oh, excuse me, is there any discussion?

MR. DAVID WILSON: Just for clarification, I don't really want to know what Veterans Affairs Canada wants, I want to know what the province - what is the province doing when something happens? I support the letter - I wish you would have supported bringing them forward but I'll just support the letter. I'm just asking, what are the protocols around procedures related to veterans and event planning for communities across the province and for departments and for the province as a whole?

I mean, Veterans Affairs Canada has a whole list of things they do in Ottawa which are different than what we do in the province. It's really that what I want to find out, what does the province do and what their protocol is? If that could be in the letter, I'd support it.

MR. ORRELL: If we could, in that letter could we include - who do we see about a protocol that we may want to initiate as provincial representatives in our community if that's the case because if it's not the protocol officer and it's Intergovernmental Affairs, then we'll know to go to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs instead of the Protocol Office. So if in that letter we could include who is in charge of protocol for that, it would be great for us to know as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What I'm hearing, if I may - I know there is a motion on the floor, but I think we just need to determine who is responsible for - not necessarily the Protocol Office, but the protocol with respect to remembering our veterans.

MR. ORRELL: If I may, if it is the Protocol Office that is responsible for that, could we revisit that again later so that we could get it right from that person on the actual procedures?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough, I'd say. (Interruption) The member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I would suggest that we just simply keep it to the letter at this point in time. Agenda-setting is agenda-setting and asking for direction on rules and procedures related to veterans events provincially - let's keep it simple.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So a motion is to submit a letter to the Protocol Office addressing veterans event planning.

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

The motion is carried.

For the Liberal caucus, the member for Kings South.

MR. IRVING: I'm going to put forward the Injured Soldier Network as a topic.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion on this witness? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. ORRELL: So we just set an agenda for the next two meetings and that's it, and we're going to have another agenda-setting meeting after that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we can do one more.

The member for Kings South.

MR. IRVING: I'd suggest we do one more and I'd be interested in the Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada that the PC caucus has put forward.

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

The motion is carried.

MR. ORRELL: Do we get another one now, Mr. Chairman - they get two, we get another one?

MR. CHAIRMAN: How many meetings do we have this year?

MS. KIM LANGILLE (Legislative Committee Clerk): We have one scheduled for next month and now we have three others.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I personally feel like we've got - does the clerk have enough to work with presently?

MS. LANGILLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we can revisit that at another time. So moving right along, the federal Office of the Ombudsman reached out to the Clerk's Office here and indicated that Guy Parent from the federal Ombudsman's Office is going to be in Nova Scotia on the 27th and 28th of this month. I'd like to suggest that we communicate with him and invite him to an informal meeting at Province House in the Veterans Room as an opportunity to have a discussion and to meet Mr. Parent in the province and discuss veterans' issues. Is that something that the committee would be interested in?

The member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Could I suggest that it might be more appropriate if the meeting is held here in this room?

MR. ORRELL: Would that limit the amount of people who could come meet with Mr. Parent, if that was the case? If it's here, it's a real formal meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My understanding is that he reached out to meet with the committee members so the room, based on size - I thought it would be kind of fitting that we meet in the Veterans Room.

The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Could I then maybe suggest that the location be "to be announced"?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough, that works for me. Cool. I'll just clarify that this will not be a formal meeting of the committee, it would just be an opportunity for some face time with the Ombudsman.

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

MS. ARAB: Mr. Chairman, I'm just curious, will the Clerk's Office be giving us a notice of where and when and what time that meeting is going to be?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, they will.

Moving on again, our next meeting is scheduled for February 12th. The witness is the Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. ORRELL: Are we going on to other business now, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I suppose we can do that, yes.

MR. ORRELL: I'd like to again, further to the witness we had today, maybe as a committee if we could write a letter to Intergovernmental Affairs or the Military Affairs person for the province to see where that flag ceremony sits now as far as the commemoration of our fallen soldiers, not just necessarily for Afghanistan but anybody who, in the future, does happen to - even if it's just in service in the province, to have that ceremony continue with some form of the box or the flag and be given to the families.

I think that's a great thing for the families and the families of the fallen soldiers as a memory of them, just to show that we, as a province, as the citizens of the province, as governors of this province, appreciate what they do for us and have that so that it's just a little extra for the family as a thank you for the service that their loved one has provided to our province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The honourable member for Kings South.

MR. IRVING: I'd support that letter. Just to ensure that we didn't lose the last three and ensure that that gets followed up if that has been missed with the change of staff, I'd also suggest that in that letter we just ask - and I think you are suggesting to the two ministers - sorry, it's one minister and two departments - to consider the ideas, an idea in terms of recognition of the Afghanistan fallen soldiers. I think there's some merit in that, perhaps the plaque in the Veterans Room. There may be a reason to do or not do that but at least begin to explore the idea of how this province could recognize those 14 brave Nova Scotians and their families.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have agreement on submitting a letter to Intergovernmental Affairs? Okay, it is agreed.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Chairman, in light of this witness, what is going on now nationally again with replacement of the Veterans Affairs Minister and the resurgence of the veterans' concerns with whatever is going on, I know we're the only Committee of Veterans Affairs in the country because I attended the last meeting of the Veterans Affairs Committee, which is about eight or 10 months ago, I'm wondering if we could try and have the meetings on a regular basis so that we know that the concerns of the veterans and of the people who deal in service with veterans could be kept in the forefront so that it's not every 10 months or six months even, that we do meet on a regular basis.

I think it's very important that if we're the only one, we want to make sure that we're doing the job that we're here to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on that? I think I guess we'll consider it. Is that a motion? (Interruptions) Fair enough, perfect.

So again, to repeat, the next meeting date is February 12th, the Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre will be our witness.

If there's no further discussion, this meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:29 a.m.]