

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thursday, March 10, 2016

Legislative Committees Office

Canada Company Military Employment Transition Program

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

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WITNESS

Colonel (Ret'd) Kevin Cameron,
Director,
Canada Company Military Employment Transition Program



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR

Derek Mombourquette

VICE-CHAIR

Keith Irving

THE CHAIR: Good morning everyone, I'd like to welcome you to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. My name is Derek Mombourquette, I'm the chairman of the committee. We're going to be receiving a presentation today from the Canada Company Military Employment Transition Program. I'm happy to have with us today Retired Colonel Kevin Cameron, who is the Director of Canada Company Military Employment Transition Program.

Before we start, anybody in attendance please ensure that your cellphones are turned off or on vibrate. Just for yourself, Mr. Cameron, when we get into the question period, members will ask the questions but I will refer to you for Hansard, so we can make sure we record all the names. We also have some committee business to deal with after the presentation.

Thank you for being with us today. I'm going to take a moment now and allow the committee members to introduce themselves to you. We'll start with Mr. d'Entremont.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Mr. Cameron, the floor is yours.

COL. (RET'D) KEVIN CAMERON: Thanks for having me. As you are aware, there are many players in the veteran assistance space and we consider ourselves one of the prime ones, from a national perspective. I'm happy to be here to provide a little overview of what we do in Canada Company and what the program is about.

I've got a short presentation here that you should all have copies of on your desk. I'll just walk you through, if you flip to the agenda slide. A little introduction on Canada Company itself but then I'll really focus in on the MET Program with regard to what we do, who we are, how the program works, and what it can do for veterans and how we connect to other players in this particular space.

On Canada Company itself, just a quick overview of the organization; it is a not-for-profit registered charity. It was stood up in 2006 by Mr. Blake Goldring who is the Chair and CEO of AGF Management out of Toronto, a Bay Street firm. He did so with the intent to provide an organization that was non-partisan and there to support the military community in any capacity they could find to do so, with a connection into the business community. That is the core of what we do - connection to corporate Canada, to the business side, not necessarily related just to the finance industry. As you'll see here, we have tentacles into all industries across the country.

Several programs that Canada Company runs, not to get into too much detail on the ones that aren't specifically relevant to the MET Program and the veteran dynamic, but we are running a LAV Monument Program for placing LAV IIIs as monuments across the country, that's part of our mandate. Some of the communities in Nova Scotia may already have applications in for that. We also run a scholarship program for children of fallen service members. To date we've issued 84 scholarships as post-secondary education for the children of the unfortunate families who have lost a loved one either overseas or in training or whatever it might be. That continues to carry out every year. I believe last year we awarded 13 of them and we'll do a similar thing this year.

We also hold strategic knowledge exchange type events where we bring in senior leadership of military government and so on - business leaders, the corporate dynamic - and put them in a room together to exchange strategic ideas as far as how the civilian community and the corporate world can assist the military family and the military dynamic and veterans and families of veterans and so on. That's an ongoing activity that we conduct a couple of times a year as well.

So to bring you to the Military Employment Transition Program - in 2012, it was commenced as a project within Canada Company as another program. It started out relatively basic. I wasn't personally with the organization then. I've only been with them for just under a year as I just retired from service last May.

The idea was a recognition that some transitioning military members can have challenges coming out of uniform and transitioning into a second career path. Some people make the transition relatively smoothly and some have some significant challenges with doing so.

It started out relatively basic as kind of a networking handshake, sort of face-to-face activity, and it has since morphed into a national program that is connected both deeply

into the corporate world in the private sector, as well as some government connections, educational institutions and so on. We've got a database of over 5,700 military members, ex-military members in our database who are either considering transition or looking for transition opportunities in the civilian world.

When we say that we mean looking for solid second career paths, we're not talking part-time types of jobs and so on. We're looking for solidifying that next mission - if I can call it that - in someone's life for the betterment of their family and so on, as they decide, for whatever reason it might be, or whether the system decides that they need to move on to the civilian world. So that's really what we do. I'll talk through some of how the mechanism of that works and what it means to our veteran base.

So who we are and what we do - I just put an organizational chart here. We are a small group, Canada Company. Not including the board of directors that is chaired by Blake Goldring, there are only 11 of us and that includes a couple of university co-op students that we cycle through on a four-month basis out of the University of Waterloo. So it's not a large organization.

We are headquartered in Toronto in the AGF Management offices - that's Blake's continued contribution to the company he founded - so we're able to function using some of the resources that are available to us there, which helps the charity achieve what we need to achieve.

Not to get into the details of who is who, but the president is Ms. Angela Mondou, also ex-military who then went into the business world in the 1990s and has done great things on the business side. So she's the president, I'm the director of the program, and we have several other folks who assist with either the program or some of the other activities, as I mentioned previously, the LAV program and so on within the organization.

We are connected with regional chapters across the country. Those aren't paid staff of Canada Company. Those are corporate leaders who believe in what we're doing and have stepped up to be a regional chapter chair to further the initiatives that we're achieving across the country. We have chapters in Montreal - soon to have one launched here in Halifax which will be the Atlantic chapter, and then we have a B.C. connection as well, so a western chapter. Those are on the slide, but just as a piece up in the right-hand corner.

We're also connected to key stakeholders such as Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces. We work diligently and collaboratively with those organizations to achieve our collective objectives as we need to - all in the interest of helping the veterans and helping the military community.

The mandate or the mission of the MET program was somewhat modelled after the American 100,000 Jobs Mission, and the aim is fairly simple. The aim is to engage the corporate community, engage the private sector with an end state goal of 10,000 veteran

hires by the year 2023. That's the target and you'll see shortly where we are along that pathway. If you do the math, that equates to approximately 1,000 a year between now and then of placing - and I use that term loosely and I'll talk to that in a moment - placing veterans and ex-military members, including serving reservists who are looking to solidify civilian options so they can actually continue to stay in uniform and serve part time in the reserves. The aim is approximately 1,000 a year across our network of corporate employers, which we continue to build.

What we do and who we help is on the left-hand column of this slide - I'll talk to the right-hand column first. What we are not is we are not a recruitment firm, we are not a headhunting company. We do not charge for our services, so everything we do for our military community is free - no charge. We do not charge our corporate network fees for hires and that sort of thing. We are funded through the goodwill of our corporate partners who donate to Canada Company because they believe in what we're doing so we are not a fee-for-service organization with regard to job placement and so on.

We also do not actively poach from the CF, if I can use that term. We don't encourage people to leave the military; in fact we do the opposite. We are there as an enabler for them when their circumstances require them to move on to whatever they need to do next. We're very cautious about that, we're very sensitive to that, and we work diligently with the senior military leadership to ensure that we're all on the same page when it comes to that. We have tremendous buy-in and support from the Chief of Defence staff all the way down through the military chain of command, as a recognized, credible organization that is there legitimately to help veterans and service members. We're very sensitive to that and we're very proud of that fact.

Who do we help? On the left-hand side of this slide, primary reserve members, as I touched on briefly a second ago. Really that's about enabling civilian career paths for them. As we know, reservists, in order to serve part-time in the reserves, they're not going to make a living at that. In order to stay in their communities - whether it's here in Halifax with organizations like the PLF or up in Sydney with the Highlanders - in order for them to be able to continue to serve part time in uniform, they need to solidify solid career paths on the civilian front in the private sector.

We work with the reserve community and the senior leadership across the country to put mechanisms in place to assist that. It's a similar and same mechanism, pretty much, as we have for our regular force transitioning members and they have access to the exact same resources that the other categories have.

That brings me to the regular force aspect, which really was the nucleus of the idea and that's how the MET Program started, with that in mind. But as I said, it has kind of morphed to a little bit more all-inclusive. As I mentioned at the very outset, that's really about enabling solid second-career paths for individuals coming out of uniform, whether they have 10 years of service or 35 years of service, whether they retire as a general or

come out of uniform as a corporal. The demographics of the military members leaving service is broad, it is not all a bunch of individuals who have reached mandatory retirement age and are now looking to go off and solidify something post long-term retirement. The demographics are very much along the spectrum of the age bracket and we recognize that. That's a great resource for the private sector to tap into from a talent pool standpoint.

Recently we've launched a spouse program. The spouse program is linked into the Military Family Resource Centres across the nation. It's a pilot project for this year. We've been asked to take that on by Military Family Services of the Canadian Armed Forces, to open up - really what its intention is designed is to create mobility options for the military family unit across the nation as members are moving from one base to another. For example, if someone is posted from Halifax to Edmonton, we have our corporate partners who sign on to do what they can, within their capability of hiring and job potential, to assist spouses in transfers and internal movement within their organizations or potentially mobile jobs, work-from-home type opportunities and so on. Halifax is one of the pilot Military Family Resource Centres for that particular program.

A little bit on the metrics. The first slide talks to the numbers and I referred to some of them already. As of the end of 2015, we have 1,266 documented hires. I used the term "placements" earlier and really what we're referring to is hires because we are not a job placement agency - we build the bridge to connect those individuals to our corporate partners and that loop is closed by the individual and our corporate partner. We are not screening resumé for them and submitting their applications for them, they do that on their own but they do it through our mechanism and our network.

At the moment we have just over 5,700 registered members, as of last week, in our - if I can call it - talent pool. Not all of them are necessarily actively seeking at any one given time, but the majority of those are either still serving - either as a reservist or a regular Forces member - who are contemplating or imminently about to look for civilian opportunities. About 30 per cent of those are already out of the military and are either looking for something different than what they're doing now or they're in limbo, so to speak, and they're looking to solidify a civilian career opportunity. So that is the demographic of our network.

The next slide, on the top left corner is a little demographics of our 5,700 members, as I mentioned. We're 88 per cent anglophone by self-identification, 12 per cent francophone. We're working to balance that and we're working with the military communities in the national capital region and across Quebec and elsewhere - New Brunswick and so on - to balance that out a little bit more, 75/25 per cent, to better represent the actual demographics of the Canadian Forces. We'll get there eventually, but that will take time for us to do.

We're 70 per cent, as I mentioned, still in uniform - 30 per cent outside of uniform. Overall, about 70 per cent of our members are regular Forces, as I mentioned, but some

have both service as it's not that unusual for someone to move from the Reserve Force to the regular Force or vice versa. So that's the demographic of our 5,700 members.

The bottom corner talks to our industry hires. I mentioned the 1,266 hires. Those are some of the industries that you can see that we have had success in having people become hired into those industries. Some of the big ones are business, finance, consulting, defence and security, telecommunications and transportation. Those are generally the pathways that our network enables the most for transitioning members.

If I can talk to the geographic location of those hires, you'll see the percentages there. This is not where our 210-plus corporate partners or employer partners are headquartered, these percentages are where they have hiring ability. So we do have a network of 210 employer partners with a goal of 275 certified with us by the end of this year. That shows you the areas in which they hire.

We are putting a concerted effort this year into the Atlantic Provinces with an event that I'll talk to shortly and linked into the military fabric here in Halifax and across New Brunswick and elsewhere to heighten the network of corporate employers, and therefore opportunities, for what is an incredibly large military community in Atlantic Canada. We are working diligently this year with an event coming up in June here in Halifax that I'll talk to very briefly here in a couple of minutes.

Employer partners by industry - a similar chart to what you saw about hires. It really does similarly reflect that last chart that talks to where the hires - the veteran community has migrated to post-service. Again, we continue to, if I can use the term, expand our portfolio as far as industry partners so that we provide the most opportunities across the broadest range of industries as possible.

The reality is if an occupation exists in the civilian sector, it generally exists in uniform in some capacity. It might be termed differently - the terminology may be a little off as far as military terminology, but generally there is a correlation in every industry across the country, so that's what we're working to do.

I just throw this slide in to show some of our 210 corporate partners just so you can get an idea of who our corporate partners are. I'll talk very quickly on how we certify them and how we bring them into the program.

It is a national program, as I mentioned. We have national employers, regional employers; we have the large players; we have smaller mom and pop shops - if I can call them that. As I mentioned, we have a wide range of industries covered - everywhere from security industry, police forces, all the way through to transportation and retail. We continue to expand that network of employer partners and that is the primary focus of my job as the director of the program.

So a quick couple of aspects on how the program works: it is largely a self-directed, web-based system of networking through our 5,700 members, as well as our 210-plus corporate partners. Individuals sign onto the program by registering, using their military service number. That service number is validated by our partners at the Canadian Armed Forces, to ensure that the people who sign up for our program are who they say they are and they are actually eligible for the program.

Eligibility for the program is anyone who has served in uniform, regular or reserve, qualified in their occupation, and either honourably or medically discharged. If they were released dishonourably from the military they're not eligible to become part of our program, and that's the double check that is done by our partners in Ottawa at the Canadian Armed Forces.

Once they're registered they have full access to the suite of tools that we have on our program. This is just the registration page but obviously they insert their data. Spouses can also apply as part of the new program but their applicants, they apply through the Military Family Resource Centres and that is their double-check mechanism, to ensure that they are actually a military spouse who is coming on board.

Once they're inside the portal there's an employer/partner toolbox for them which provides them the start-to-finish educational dynamic of how to help them transition from military to civilian. The challenges can be great for some individuals to translate their military skill sets so that when they are submitting a resumé or writing a resumé or in an interview or trying to "brand themselves" - if I can use the term - to a civilian organization for that second career path, it can be challenging to navigate how to translate that skill set, to reduce the military terminology, to civilianize their capabilities so that it's understandable. We walk them through that process. The individual you see in the video here is Dwayne Cormier, he's our Director of Transition Services. He's a career practitioner by trade, and that is his role in our realm: to work with our veteran base, to assist them in navigating that pathway.

There are several other tools that they can utilize, including links to educational institutions for certification, enhance educational opportunities and so on, recognizing that some military occupations are not necessarily directly acknowledged by various provinces, as far as official certification, so we work along those streams, as well, with educational partners but also with government at the provincial level. For example in Ontario, the Ontario College of Trades is looking to map out various military occupations and correlate them to direct certification in Red Seal trades in the private sector. That's another avenue we take. We're not alone in that space; other organizations do similar work in that regard and have made great strides.

Similarly, we on-board and certify our employers. What I mean by that is we essentially educate them. I wouldn't use the term "train them" - that's probably a little strong - but we educate their HR departments and their representatives as they come on

board to our program with the military dynamic. I deliver them what I call a military 101 package which is essentially educating them in either a webinar format or face to face, if it works out that we can do it face to face. It gives their HR hiring decision makers education on the military culture, military occupation structures, salary grids, the skill sets that military members bring based on their experiential basis in uniform, depending on what rank level and occupations they've done, so that when they are in that dialogue or they see a resumé they can have some basic understanding of the military dynamic and help them in a way militarize their own thought process when they're looking at ex-military members.

We ask them to sign a terms of reference - not a contract. It's a terms of reference acknowledging the program, with a commitment that they will give due consideration to ex-military skill sets and seek out opportunities for them when that arises. It's not preferential treatment, it's just a recognition that there is a significant talent pool and some significantly talented folks coming out of uniform who could benefit their organization.

We also ask them to commit to reporting back to us on a quarterly basis if they've hired any ex-service members or reservists; therefore, that allows us to track our metrics as far as tally and number of hires. There are several other things we ask them to do as far as attending monthly teleconferences, participating in events and so on.

There is no financial obligation for them to do this. If they choose to donate to the Canada Company cause then that is their prerogative to do so, but we do not charge them to become part of the MET Program itself. They have a suite of tools on site as well.

They also have a landing page through our portal, which is an active landing page with their logo that they can post jobs through us - through our hot jobs process that are directly targeted to correlated military skill sets. We generally monthly run about 100 jobs from our corporate partners. The aim there is to have them correlate jobs that they have done their own analysis based on their knowledge of what we've delivered them and our dialogue with them to correlate that particular job to a specific military occupation, military rank level, geographic location and so on. So it enables opportunity for members to apply to something that is a good fit for them.

That is the core of our job posting process. That's a closed system and we push those jobs out to our 5,700 members and growing bi-monthly. Then those jobs are consistently renewed by our corporate partners.

The last little bit here just on engagement and partnerships. I mentioned our collaborative approach. We do collaborate with everyone else in this space. We are not a competitive organization. We are not reliant on fee for service and headhunting fees and so on, so therefore our approach to what we do is where we can collaborate with other players in this space, we do so. We work with several other organizations. They direct folks to us; we direct folks to them, and so on and so forth - all in the interest of benefiting those individuals who need some assistance coming out the pipeline that was a military career.

As I mentioned, on this slide you'll see some of the other organizations I already discussed. We do work with some industry groups and chambers of commerce in various areas as well to help educate the corporate community on what we do, but more importantly, educate them on the talent pool that exists out there that has in some cases been overlooked by some of the private sector.

We do hold events from time to time. We will be doing one here in Halifax in June - it is our MET Atlantic Conference. Really it is an educational session for veterans and for the corporate community, followed up by a job fair where we'll bring in just under 50 employer partners with many of them here in Atlantic Canada to connect our veteran dynamic base with the private sector.

This is the last slide. We hold a national transition symposium. We did our first one last year in Toronto. It's a very robust job fair/educational session and so on for veterans and the corporate dynamic. This year it will be in Ottawa.

That is the overview of the Military Employment Transition Program. I'm happy to take questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Just before we start on the question list, if you could just forward on the information on that June 1st conference. We'll coordinate with you at the end of the meeting to make sure and then we'll make sure we get it to all the members. Thank you for your presentation. We're going to move on to speakers and first on the list I have, Mr. Irving.

KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Mr. Cameron, for an excellent professional presentation, with military precision. You answered many questions that came into my head as we went through the presentation, but one thing that is not here - I was wondering if you could give us a bit of an idea of your budget and where your revenues come from to support this organization.

KEVIN CAMERON: That's really Angela Mondou's realm, but I can tell you that we have founding corporate partners of Canada Company - many of the big banks in Canada that do donate recurring funding to Canada Company on an annual basis.

We also bring in revenue from our membership base. I don't mean our registered members that I referred to as veterans, we have corporate members who are generally key business leaders across the country. We have just under 600 of those individuals as Canada Company members who pay an annual fee, annual dues to be part of the program so that's some of the revenue generation. Those individuals tend to be influential business leaders, some of them within our MET partners but some outside, in different organizations.

When we do hold events we do have sponsorship opportunities to primarily offset the cost of the event but if there's scope to raise some funds in the effort then that's a

possibility as well but that's not our focus. Fundraising is not our focus, it's more offsetting costs.

From time to time various organizations in the private sector step up, believe in what we're doing and contribute donations to Canada Company as an organization.

KEITH IRVING: One more question. You're obviously filling a gap for something that's not there - I'm surprised the military is not doing this in-house. Are they doing something in terms of transition out of the military? Is it that you are filling a gap that they are not doing, presumably?

KEVIN CAMERON: They are doing a significant amount, between Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Forces they do have a pretty robust system in place. The gap we're filling is the connectivity into the private sector. That is something that would be difficult, I would suggest, for a government organization to do without perhaps appearing preferential to various organizations and so on.

As a non-partisan, non-governmental charity that is connected into that business world, we have the ability to do that. That's really one of the significant benefits we can bring to the table. We do work collaboratively with Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces with their processes and they do have what I would call an umbrella moniker called Hire a Vet, that is sort of an umbrella package that many of the players in this space are under. We are connected into that network as well.

They do have programs in place to effect this type of thing but we really bring the benefit of that corporate private sector connectivity.

THE CHAIR: Just before I go on to the next speaker, I was asked to just make sure that when we're asking our questions to speak directly to the microphone. Sometimes it's hard to pick up what is being said.

Next on the list, we have Mr. d'Entremont.

HON. CHRIS D'ENTREMONT: The question I have is, we've got all these programs, we have a number of members who retire for various reasons - what kind of gap is there for our military when they retire? Is it hard to find a job, is it not hard to find a job? What is the unemployment rate we're seeing now? We see the numbers that you are filling but what other gaps do you guys identify that might be there?

KEVIN CAMERON: That's a difficult question because it really is regionally based. I can tell you from my experience, both when I was still in uniform and helping members transition out, from people who worked for me and colleagues of mine and now in my current role, some of the big challenges individuals have that inhibit - if I can say that - their ability to move on to something viable in their next career is geographical

reality, depending on where you are in Canada with regard to the industry sectors at the time, of course.

Another element that is a significant challenge is willingness of individuals to relocate. Again, if someone is - I'll use the example, not a Nova Scotia example but I'll use an Ontario example - I was in North Bay on Tuesday and several transitioning military members are not willing to leave North Bay when they get out. That's fair if they choose to do that, but the reality is that if they choose to limit their options then that is a significant contributor to some of the dynamic that we see.

Overall, though, I would suggest that the individuals who, and again this is just my observation, individuals who leave the Canadian Armed Forces under their own tend to fare better than those who are leaving because they've either been medically discharged and the system has told them they need to move on or they're at the end of their career path and so on.

In my view, that comes down to mental preparedness, acceptance and having a plan - a personal objective and a personal plan. Those individuals have a higher success rate, in my experience, than those who leave the military without really mapping out where they want to be. In the end, a military member's destiny is their own. There's no one holding their hand. There's no one handing out free jobs as they walk off the base. Their destiny is their own and organizations like us are there to assist them where we can. It's not a perfect science, by any means.

CHRIS D'ENTREMONT: As a comment and then a follow-up to that - I have a brother who's living in Petawawa and I can imagine that when he does decide he's done, I don't think he wants to stay in Petawawa. He wants to move to a bigger city or where the opportunities would be better for him, of course. He's a warrant or master warrant at this point with the armour division - so take that skill and transfer it somewhere else. He'd have a better chance somewhere else in the province or somewhere else in the country.

So then we get into that discussion - and you brought it up - the issue of retiring on your own volition or being medically discharged. We talk a lot about the issue of PTSD and those kinds of issues that flow along. How do you deal with that side of the story because some of those stories can be very difficult as well?

KEVIN CAMERON: Just to clarify, we are an organization that does not specifically focus on ill and injured. There are other great organizations out there that do - that are working similar aspects to what we work, that focus specifically on ill and injured. Certainly Veterans Affairs Canada has put significant effort there, as well, and so they should. I know that's high on their mandate list.

We are an all-inclusive organization. The reality of the medical dynamic - specifically PTSD - in my experience and my opinion is you hear a lot about it and it's a

very significant and important aspect, but the reality of members transitioning out of the military, very few of them suffer from that infliction. It just generally tends to take a heightened awareness and so on, and it needs to, but my experience through our membership base of registered members is the majority of them - even if they're medically discharged - are still fully functioning, fully capable of moving on to a solid civilian career.

So it is a factor and it's a very important one, but from a MET program standpoint, we recognize that component is there, but that's not really where we are in what we do.

THE CHAIR: Next we have Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you for your presentation. This committee has heard from a number of organizations over the last couple of years about how they're supporting veterans, and I appreciate a little bit more knowledge on what MET does.

You mentioned you have a symposium coming up. How much success have you had in Atlantic Canada, and of course more specifically in Nova Scotia, about having partners come on and companies? I looked through the list there and of course I can identify some, but there are some that for me are not present.

Is it that you're starting now to really ramp it up and try to get partners here in Atlantic Canada, in Nova Scotia - and how much success have you met with, have you been getting and receiving from those businesses, companies, organizations in this area?

KEVIN CAMERON: We need to raise more awareness of the program, not just in Nova Scotia but Atlantic Canada as a whole, which is why we've embarked on a program this year to really bring MET a little bit more into Atlantic Canada. We're going to do that leading up to and including the June 1st event, but that certainly won't be the end of it. That will continue on.

I mentioned before that we're launching a Canada Company Atlantic Chapter, and the chairman of that chapter will be an influential business individual who brings that connectivity, so that will go a long way in helping us do that.

Up to this point we recognize, and the reason we've put some emphasis here into Atlantic Canada in 2016 is we recognize that the expanse of our corporate network isn't where we want it to be yet in Atlantic Canada. We're hoping and we're optimistic that over the course of the next six months and beyond, once we build awareness of the program and build awareness amongst the private sector here in Atlantic Canada of the tremendous talent pool that exists for them, which I don't think is lost on anybody, it's just not out in the fore and it hasn't really been brought to light so that's what we're aiming to do.

We're optimistic we're going to be able to do great things, not just in Nova Scotia but across all the provinces. There's a tremendous amount of industry here that is directly

correlative to military skill sets and it just needs to be brought together, and that's what we're aiming to do.

DAVID WILSON: I just have a suggestion, hopefully, and maybe you can send it to whoever will be cheerleading and running this area. Medavie Blue Cross is an organization that runs the EMS service for not only here in Nova Scotia, but in New Brunswick and P.E.I. - EMC here, Island EMS and I don't know if it's New Brunswick EMS or something like that.

It's a great organization, I think, to make contact with not only in the Medavie Blue Cross business world, insurance world, but those medics that work in the military, especially in the deployments over the last number of years. I know about their experience as a former paramedic, working with many of them. There may be some challenges around the certification but I think with an asserted effort we could work through that. It's a great opportunity to be able to get a company on board maybe that has representation in three provinces.

With that, my last kind of comment and question to you - as I said, we've had organizations come here and this committee has been very supportive on motions that I've brought forward and other members, to try to do what you're doing, support veterans, support retired military personnel. I don't know if I've got his name right, General Matte from Helmets to Hardhats - of course, their focus is with the trades, trying to transition veterans into those jobs. He and his organization supported a motion that we brought forward, or I brought forward and I was glad members on the committee supported, around the recognition of the DND 404 licence, which is a great opportunity to hopefully transition potentially into jobs here.

Would your organization support that? Do you advocate and say yes, that's a great thing? I know that jurisdictions across the country have been moving forward with it. I'm a bit concerned, not with our committee here but with the minister and the government who can kind of do that relatively quickly. It's a policy change in Nova Scotia, it doesn't have to go through legislation. Would you or can you support that? Do you support that type of change in jurisdictions, to recognize certification, for example, like the DND 404, is that something you would say yes, we should be doing it here in Nova Scotia and can we add your name and your organization's name to the list of supporters for that move?

KEVIN CAMERON: Absolutely, in fact more than just advocating it we actually are working diligently with partners in other provinces to advance those efforts. If we could do that here in Nova Scotia as well, that would be fantastic.

I used the example earlier of our work with the Ontario College of Trades. They've mapped out nine occupations right now. There's no reason, in my view, that that can't be done elsewhere across the country and quite frankly, it should be. As an example, marine engineering technologists, they've mapped out with a direct correlation to marine engineer

technician in the Navy. It just makes sense. It just hasn't been done to the degree that perhaps it needs to be.

So in short, yes, and if there's a way we can become involved in that process we'd be happy to do so.

DAVID WILSON: Excellent, I appreciate that, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Next we have Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you for being here today, Mr. Cameron, and thank you for your service to this country and also for the opportunity to ask questions to you today. I'm wondering, if I'm an employer, can you walk me through kind of the protocol for signing up with you guys?

KEVIN CAMERON: Up until about, I would say, six months ago, we were generally out actively seeking a lot of companies, and we will continue to do that here in Atlantic Canada because of our need to bring them along. What generally happens now is because of word of mouth, because they know about the program, companies are phoning us asking how to come on board.

So either way, whether we engage them or they engage us, the process is quite simple. We ask for a direct point of contact in the company. So no matter who makes the linkage, we ask for a direct point of contact. Normally that's someone in their HR realm - either the director of HR or their senior talent acquisition manager - whoever the company designates as their point of contact.

We run them and their team - whoever they choose that team to be - through a certification process. That certification process commences with a monthly webinar that I deliver, about an hour long. Military 101 is the name of it. It is what it sounds like it is; it's basic military knowledge - the structure of the Canadian Forces, the rank structure, salary grids, the occupation expanse that exists in uniform, the skill sets that members bring, whether they're hard trade skills or whether they're the soft skills they develop over time, and a little bit on military culture and just how the military family is and how people think and act who come out of uniform.

So that's tick number one. They get that certification package. They have to go through that before we will open up their landing page on our website.

We ask them to sign terms of reference. That terms of reference is about a page and a half long document. It's not a legally binding contract. It is simply - if I could use the term - a gentlemen's agreement, that they understand the program and they acknowledge their obligation by signing on to the program to do what they can within the realm of what

makes sense for their company to provide opportunity where it makes sense to military members. That's tick number two.

That's the formality of it. Then they go through the process of giving us the content for their landing page that exists on our platform, as well as then they can start posting jobs with us. We also ask them - and it's part of the program requirements - to submit quarterly reports to us through my manager of employer partner relations, Nathalie Drake. Again, it's a very simple report. That report varies by company. Some companies have privacy issues so they will give us a number rather than names. Some are okay with giving us names. It really depends on the industry they're in and so on. That's so we can track our metrics.

Then we run monthly employer partner teleconferences, which is as it sounds. We give all our employer partner representatives, or as many as we can muster up on a monthly basis, an update on the program, upcoming events, any unique things that are ongoing - sharing best practices amongst employer partners. That's all part of the expectation as well. In all of this, there is no exchange of funds or money. There is no fee for them to do this.

BEN JESSOME: Just a quick follow-up. If there were some obvious barriers to the private sector hiring or bringing former military personnel into their organization, what would it be? Generally speaking, an employer may not be as inclined to hire a new graduate because of the added costs to training. So is there anything that pops up as the business goes through the sort of initial fact-finding screening process and then says, there is something that needs to be addressed and we're not going to move forward with this? Is there anything that comes up that's like that?

KEVIN CAMERON: Not move forward with the program or with an individual who is seeking opportunity - just for clarity?

BEN JESSOME: To clarify it - not move forward as an employer joining your organization.

KEVIN CAMERON: That is very rare. In my time in this position, that has only happened with one organization. For whatever reason, they decided from a human resources standpoint that they just weren't a good fit for the program. Their reasoning behind that is their business, they just chose not to sign on to the program for that reason.

Since I've come onboard with Canada Company in this role, we've certified and on-boarded almost 100 employer partners and out of that only one has, if I could say, opted out of the program. It doesn't mean we won't re-engage them in the future, to see if they've changed their perspective.

The reality is that companies that do come onboard and become certified either have success in hiring us or believe in it to the point where they know it's going to pay

dividends for them eventually - maybe not right now but maybe next year - or they are in a downswing of hiring at the moment but they want to be at the ready when the economy turns back for them and so on.

We've only experienced that once and the reality is that companies that come on and they hire one military individual, the next question generally is, how can I have 10 more of them? That's generally the sentiment.

BEN JESSOME: Excellent, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Lohr.

JOHN LOHR: Thank you, Mr. Cameron, for your presentation. I guess what comes to my mind is the question of how many people are there retiring out of the Canadian Forces every year who could enlist on your website and how many of them are you actually getting - just sort of raw numbers? Do you have any idea of that kind of information?

KEVIN CAMERON: A good question. Approximately - and these are governmental numbers, rough numbers - about 5,000 individuals come out of uniform annually. It fluctuates year to year but that's kind of the number we use to base. Not all of them will actively move on to seek solid, second-career paths. Some will go into retirement completely or semi-retirement, which may not be a good fit for us. Some are medical and choose not to or are incapable of moving on.

We work off the number annually of 1,500 to 2,000 individuals coming out of uniform, either in the reserve community or the regular force community - what we would call our target demographic. How we attract those individuals is through the military chain of command. The more we work with the military chain of command, the more awareness there is of the program and what it can do for individuals.

The Canadian Forces also has what they call the Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) seminar process which they run on every base, normally twice annually. We are a key player in those seminars. Normally it is me or Dwayne or Nathalie from our organization. We try to go to as many of those seminars as possible to bring awareness to that particular demographic. The individuals attending those SCAN seminars generally are those who are imminently about to move on, for whatever reason it might be.

Halifax generally tends to be a very significant one. I was at the one in October and there were almost 400 members in the room. So that is that target demographic that we are seeking across the country.

JOHN LOHR: Do you have any idea of the unemployment rate of people out of the military and is that any different than the national average unemployment rate?

KEVIN CAMERON: I don't have specific statistics on that. Anecdotally, though, I would say it's probably not much higher than in the civilian sector but that's just my opinion on that, I don't have hard statistics. I will point out, though, that members coming out of uniform, it's not unusual for them to have a gap in employment when they come out of uniform. That's really what we're trying to bridge, that gap, so that when they do come out of uniform at the end of the year or whatever it might be, either they roll right into an opportunity or they are lining up an opportunity that is there for them in the short term, so it reduces that, if I could call it, unemployment gap between service and second career.

That's really what we're aiming to do with our educational component to our registered membership base, to help them navigate it preferably while they are still in uniform, so they actually build a plan, they build a pathway. They use our tools and our network to set themselves up for success so when they roll out of uniform, they roll right into something else to reduce that unemployment perspective.

JOHN LOHR: It just comes to mind in your answers - obviously Halifax is a pretty important military base on the East Coast. On the other hand, the economy of the East Coast is probably not as conducive maybe as other parts of Canada to get these jobs. How do you see things functioning for those 400 people that you just mentioned who were at the meeting in October? Would they have a good chance of finding employment in the Maritimes or would you be seeing some of them move out? What is the trend?

I think you already mentioned you need more employer partners on the East Coast, but what do you see the dynamics of the East Coast with our heavy military presence and our - compared to the rest of Canada - weaker economy?

KEVIN CAMERON: A great question - I'm not an expert in economics, but what I can say is, my observation of military members serving in the Atlantic Provinces, they tend to be more stable in geography than perhaps elsewhere in the country. The so-what to that is we need to find more opportunity for them here in Atlantic Canada because they're less likely to move out of the Atlantic Provinces to Ontario or to Alberta and so on generally.

I think that stems from the fact that, just by the nature of the military community here in Halifax specifically, it's generally less mobile or conversely more stable postings - especially the Navy component - you've got one coast to the other. Once you stay here in Halifax you could potentially be here for long term, therefore you solidify your life here; your kids are embedded so people are more likely to stay.

So the take-away from that for us is that offering those 400 individuals great opportunities in Toronto or Ottawa or elsewhere across the country might not be the best approach. Not to say we're going to rule that out because there will be some people who may want to relocate. So the objective we're taking is to do exactly what you just mentioned and that is to enhance our network of corporate employers here.

The economy and their needs will ultimately determine their hiring ability and how many people they can bring on, but what we want to do is build that bridge and make them aware that there is a tremendous skill set and talent pool here that's sitting next door to you that we can facilitate your organizations tapping into.

If I can compare it to the oil and gas sector that's out West right now, a year ago they were hiring significantly, and at the moment they're on a little bit of a down stride so they're not hiring as much. So it ebbs and flows, and it really is regionally dynamic. I don't know if that answers the question exactly.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Belliveau.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Kevin, in your introduction, you talked about the Atlantic Provinces - I want to bring everybody's attention to Page 10. My understanding from your presentation was that you were trying to get those numbers up in the hiring in the next year or two. The numbers speak for themselves, but also it gives you a good indicator, as my colleague brought up earlier - talking about military skill sets.

To me, this is about - I call them the heavy vehicle licences. They're recognized within the military, but when they come to civilian life, they are not recognized in certain jurisdictions - one in particular, Nova Scotia. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal will not recognize that licence and yet, the majority of our products are trucked into the Atlantic Provinces.

To me, the simple lightbulb moment is, why can't we just have that policy changed? Can you expand on that? What is your group doing to bring that to governments that do not simply recognize that skill set level and what is being done? To me, that's a simple exercise of getting more opportunities in Atlantic Canada.

KEVIN CAMERON: You're referring specifically to vehicle licensing in this case?

STERLING BELLIVEAU: That's correct.

KEVIN CAMERON: We're not actively working with government to do that. Helmets to Hardhats has really led that charge, and Greg Matte and his team have done fantastic work in that realm across the country.

I can't comment on where it stands with the Nova Scotia commitment to recognizing that at the moment, from a governmental perspective. I certainly hope, and I know that Greg and his team are working to further that. We will obviously support any initiative like that but, at the same time, when it comes to certification for skilled trades and those types of things, Helmets to Hardhats has really been leading the way in that regard and kudos to them for doing so.

I can't really answer the question specifically with regard to correlation of licence but I certainly hope it happens.

THE CHAIR: Mr. d'Entremont.

CHRIS D'ENTREMONT: I'm going to go back to when you talked about the anglophones versus francophones. When you were talking about our presence in Quebec and presence in New Brunswick, don't forget that because of the military, Halifax is actually the largest francophone area in Nova Scotia right now, even though we have a number of Acadian communities across the province - we have 40,000-odd Acadians, French-speakers across the province - but the largest group is here in Halifax, because of the military presence as people have moved in.

It's not necessarily a question but be aware of those little communities across Canada that the military has created for French services as well, so as you try to adjust to that kind of reality as well, to be careful with the gang that we have here in metro, to provide services to them as well.

KEVIN CAMERON: A great point and absolutely acknowledged and again, just by the nature of the military service, there's French-speaking communities everywhere across the country - a great point.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

DAVID WILSON: I'll just quickly go back because I started to write it down when you were speaking. Was it Ontario that had nine certifications that they are targeting to try to hopefully have recognized - is that correct? If that is, are you able to provide us with those nine or give us the group that I could contact just to see what they are?

KEVIN CAMERON: Certainly. I don't have the nine off the top of my head but the one that I did mention before was the marine engineering technologist. I can certainly forward those on. It's the Ontario College of Trades. Through their website they have them annotated right there and what they correlate to in military occupations. We're working diligently with the Ontario College of Trades to help them map out more than just those nine.

It will be a long-term project to be able to do that because it's fairly intensive, as far as the analysis they need to do to make sure the occupations actually correlate and the certifications match. They have mapped out nine already that you can see on their website. I can certainly forward you the link.

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr. Cameron, if you can forward that on to the committee I can make sure, Mr. Wilson, that it is distributed as quickly as possible to all committee members, if that works for everyone.

DAVID WILSON: Yes, thank you for that.

There has been a lot of work over the last number of years across the country to try to break down barriers, not only military-wise when it comes to recognizing certifications but in the civilian aspect, so whatever you can do and whatever we can do to ensure that not only our own government here but governments across the country when they're doing that, recognize that the discussion needs to be broader, especially with our military, because if they're working on breaking those barriers down, it's a great opportunity for your organization to make sure that your interests and the interests of your members are kept in the discussion when they make those changes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Do you want to comment on that, Mr. Cameron?

KEVIN CAMERON: I agree 100 per cent and wherever we can engage in that process we're happy to do so.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Lohr.

JOHN LOHR: Just a question for my sort of raw curiosity, I'm kind of wondering about the way that you've got this program structured. I can presume that if a veteran was leaving the Armed Forces, a veteran with certain skill sets, I can imagine would fit very well into your program but on the other hand there must be some types of skill sets or maybe less-trained individuals who sign on who maybe don't fit as well into what you are offering. I'm just wondering, in what areas do you have difficulty in placing people? What sort of broad, general sectors or types of veterans leaving are more problematic for you to sort of fit in here. I'm curious about your program.

KEVIN CAMERON: It's a great question. My experience and observation is that officers tend to fare better, partially because of their educational background and not necessarily their experience - although they have a significant amount. They are generally more marketable, if I could use that term, based on formalized education. The reality is most officers at the rank of major or lieutenant commander or above now have a master's degree. That's the reality of military service in the officer corps, and therefore tend to be more marketable when they come out of uniform at that rank level.

Where we have the most challenge, in my experience, is the younger members. If I could put a rank quotient to it, I would say that corporal to sergeant, even into the warrant officer on the Army and Air Force side. Not so much the Air Force side because many of

those trades, although they do have challenges, many of them are directly correlatable because of the technical side.

Army combat arms can be a challenge. If you take an infantry master corporal or an artillery sergeant or an armoured corps warrant officer, those are trades that there really is no equivalency for in the private sector, obviously. It's just the nature of the combat trades. So where those individuals need to focus their marketability is on the soft skills - the leadership ability that they bring to the table.

That takes me back to the challenges related to converting those military skill sets so that they are relevant to a potential hiring organization. That's the challenge, and that's what we work with them to do, to assist them in doing that.

There are tools on our site to help them with that, but we will take it further than that on a case by case basis. It's not unusual for them to send me a resumé or send Dwayne a resumé to have a look at - to say, what do we need to do here, what do you think - to help them move over that speed bump because it can be a challenge for a lot of them to do.

I wouldn't put an age bracket on it, but I'd put more of a rank bracket on it. The more technical the skill set, the more likely they are to find employment. The more combat-oriented the skill set, it can be a little bit of a challenge, is my observation.

JOHN LOHR: One thing I haven't heard you mention in the whole presentation, but which comes to my mind as I come from a self-employed background - is there anything that is helping veterans become self-employed? I realize it's probably not part of your mandate, but what is there for them if they were to choose to become self-employed upon leaving the Forces?

KEVIN CAMERON: We collaborate with Prince's Operation Entrepreneur, which is a great organization - part of Prince's Charities Canada. They run programs specifically for ex-military members to facilitate entrepreneurial opportunity. They're based out of Toronto, but they run programs across the country. So that's one avenue.

We also have connections with the Canadian Franchise Association. For those who are interested in pursuing that, we can direct them in that direction.

We don't focus on specific workshops to that effect, although we acknowledge it as a viable career path for individuals, and if they choose to do that, we'll do whatever we can to help steer them along that pathway. There are other organizations that we collaborate with that do that stuff.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilton.

DAVID WILTON: Just a quick question. With the shipbuilding announced for the province, are the Irvings part of this? I don't see their name here. Are they one of the employer partners?

KEVIN CAMERON: They are not at the moment. Obviously I will openly state that we would certainly like them to be, and that is obviously one of our organizations that we will be leaning out to attract into the MET program, by all means, yes.

THE CHAIR: That concludes our speakers list. Mr. Cameron, I would like to give you a few moments to make some closing remarks.

KEVIN CAMERON: Thank you very much for the opportunity to present. The regional challenges across the country vary in this space with regard to veterans assistance so the more we can get out to educate everybody on what we do and how we can help - and more importantly, how we can collaborate and work to better that opportunity for military members and the veteran community, the happier we are.

There is still a lot of work to be done, admittedly, but great organizations like ours and others are there to assist where we can. So we're happy to help with any initiative that anybody thinks might be useful in this mission.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Cameron. Thanks to the committee members for your questions. Please keep in touch with us and please pass along any information that you see fit and we'll make sure we get it to the committee members. I really appreciate your time here today.

We'll take a five to seven minute recess and allow the speaker to stay or leave, whatever he wishes, but we'll resume in five minutes.

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

[10:16 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: I'd like to call the meeting back to order. We're now onto committee business. We have two pieces of correspondence: one from the Department of Health and Wellness, it was information requested from the October 22nd meeting; we also have the response to the committee's letter from February 11th to Tourism Nova Scotia, in regard to the Pictou County Military Heritage Museum.

Are there any questions or comments on the correspondence? No, okay, very good.

The final item on the agenda today is meetings moving forward. We are now aware of when the House is going back into session - I didn't look at my email yet - April 14th. I believe past practice has been that we don't meet during House sessions so are the

committee members okay with that? We'll reconvene with the list of presenters after the House is complete. Very good.

Thank you all for today. I appreciate the questions and the comments. We now stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:17 a.m.]