

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Legislative Chamber

The Poppy and Remembrance Program

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Rafah DiCostanzo (Chair)
Ben Jessome (Vice-Chair)
Brendan Maguire
Bill Horne
Hon. Margaret Miller
Kim Masland
Murray Ryan
Lisa Roberts
Claudia Chender

[Bill Horne was replaced by Hon. Tony Ince.]

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Don McCumber
Poppy and Remembrance Chair

Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte
Executive Director



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2020

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

2:00 P.M.

CHAIR

Rafah DiCostanzo

VICE-CHAIR

Ben Jessome

THE CHAIR: Order. The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has started. I call the meeting to order.

I'm Rafah DiCostanzo, the MLA for Clayton Park West. Today we'll be hearing from the Royal Canadian Legion regarding the Poppy and Remembrance Program.

Please put your phones on silent or vibrate. In case of emergency, please exit through the back doors, walk down the hill to Hollis Street, and gather in the courtyard of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

We have new procedures in place to help protect the health of everyone here today. We're meeting in the Legislative Chamber instead of our usual committee room. You are seated as far apart as possible, but please keep your mask on during the meeting unless you are speaking.

We have provided bottled water. If you have a bottle at your desk, please keep the cap on while you're not drinking. This is to protect the new microphones from spill.

Please try not to leave your seat during the meeting. If you must, you must. I suggest we all take a short break at the one-hour mark to allow for this break. Perhaps we could agree to extend the length of the meeting by 15 minutes until 4:15 p.m. Is everybody in agreement? Thank you.

Now I will ask the committee members to introduce themselves, starting with Ms. Roberts.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I welcome the witnesses as well. We have Don McCumber, who is the Poppy and Remembrance Chair and Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte, Executive Director.

We will open it to questions and answers, and I will keep a list of people who would like to speak or ask questions. If you could wait until I call your name so that the microphone will come on. We will wrap up the questions just before 4:00 p.m. so that we can do our business.

You can start with your remarks. Thank you. Mr. McCumber.

DON MCCUMBER: Good afternoon. On behalf of members of the Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, I extend great thanks to the committee for your interest and support. We're most pleased to meet with you today.

Every year from the last Friday of October to November 11th, tens of millions of Canadians wear a poppy as a visual pledge to honour Canada's veterans and remember those who sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. While the poppy is distributed freely to all who wish to wear one, the Legion gratefully accepts donations to the Poppy Fund.

The Poppy Campaign is very much a local initiative conducted by Legion branches in cities, towns, and communities across the country. The Poppy Campaign is organized and run by local Legion volunteers at over 1,400 branches across Canada and abroad, 102 of which are within Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command.

Poppy funds are held in trust at every level of the Legion, and the use of these trust funds are strictly controlled via appropriate advanced approval processes. Branch executives are accountable for poppy fund expenditures and are required to inform the public of the results of their campaigns, including contributions received and disposition of funds.

Donations collected during the poppy campaign are held in trust to directly support veterans and their families, and to help ensure Canadians never forget. Through donations to the Legion poppy fund, the Legion provides financial assistance and support to veterans, including Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP and their families who are in need.

Poppy funds may be used for the following purposes:

- grants for food
- heating costs
- clothing
- prescription medication
- medical appliances and equipment
- essential home repairs and emergency shelter, or assistance for veterans and their families in need
- housing accommodation and care facilities for veterans
- funding for veteran transition programs that are directly related to the training, education, and support needs of veterans and their families
- comforts for veterans and their surviving spouses who are hospitalized and in need
- veterans' visits, transportation, and day trips
- accessibility modifications to assist veterans with disabilities
- educational bursaries for children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of veterans
- support of local cadet units
- veterans' drop-in centres and services in communities where veterans would benefit
- community medical appliances, medical training, and medical research that will assist in the care of veterans and their community
- support for the work of the Legion Command and service officers across Canada in assisting and representing veterans
- donations for relief of disasters declared by federal or provincial governments which impact veterans in those communities
- promotion in administering of remembrance activities to ensure Canadians never forget the sacrifices of Canada's veterans

The Poppy trust fund fiscal year is from October 1st through to September 30th. In the Poppy trust fund year of 2018-2019, Nova Scotia branches raised, after expenses, just over \$771,000 and dispersed just over \$736,000 in direct grants to veterans and their families, veteran transition programs, bursaries, youth programs that foster remembrance, and to hospitals and facilities that care for our veterans.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Mitchell-Veinotte.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: With approval from Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command level, branches may also contribute to a centralized fund. Supported partially by branch poppy trust funds, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command's centralized Benevolent Fund provides assistance further to supports extended by branches to veterans and their

dependents in need. This includes those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and those facing food insecurity.

In 2019, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command Benevolent Fund extended direct support to 47 veterans who were homeless, at risk of homelessness, or faced food insecurity. From January to September of this year, that number sits at 21.

Included too through that centralized benevolent fund is Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command's Veterans Outreach Program. The program's mission is to provide enrichment to veterans' lives and to assist in the transition to civilian life through connection to recovery-oriented care, programming, social services, and peer support.

By fostering and forming mutually supported partnerships with established community resources, health care professionals, all levels of government, and like-minded individuals, the Veterans Outreach Program offers a hand up. Funded partially through Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command Legion branch poppy trust funds, support has been extended through programs such as the Veterans Transition Network, the Porchlight Veterans Transitional Housing Program, trauma relapse prevention programs, Paws Fur Thought, Operational Stress Injury Social Support peer and family programs, Rally Point Retreat, Heroes Mending on the Fly, Mental Health First Aid, the Veterans Farm Project, Operation VetBuild, and Buddy Check Coffee groups with full connection to the Royal Canadian Legion's National Operational Stress Injury Special Section.

At the provincial command level, poppy trust funds raised support the operation of the Command Veterans Services Bureau whereby Professional Command Service Officers assist veterans and their families by providing information and advice on available Veterans Affairs Canada programs and benefits, assistance with preparation and submission of disability claims, assistance with the claims process from first application up to and including requests for reconsideration with the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, as well as professional advice and assistance in accessing other programs and benefits.

The services provided by the Command Veterans Services Bureau are free of charge, whether or not the veteran or the dependant is a Legion member. A representation role is mandated through legislation. Command Service Officers also assist and represent still-serving Canadian Armed Forces members, RCMP members and their families. On average, the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command Veterans Services Bureau carries an open file caseload of 400 clients and is the third busiest Legion command service bureau in the country.

In 2019, we were responsible for over \$13.1 million awarded in financial lump sum for VAC claims and 18 new monthly pensions and increases. As important, though, to these monetary payouts are the medical benefits given to each individual for the rest of their lives.

The Legion is Canada's largest veterans and community service organization. Our membership includes currently serving and retired Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police members, as well as their mothers and fathers, wives and husbands, sons and daughters, and grandchildren. Each of these are deeply impacted by the care our veterans receive and the issues affecting them. We also welcome into our membership those without military affiliation who support Canada's veterans.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Mitchell-Veinotte. We will open it now to questions. I have two on the list.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: I haven't quite finished the presentation. I'd like now to ask you to call upon my colleague, Don McCumber, to complete the presentation.

THE CHAIR: Mr. McCumber.

[2:15 p.m.]

DON MCCUMBER: Without Legion volunteers, the tremendous programs and services the Legion provides to our veterans and their families would disappear. In the days leading up to November 11th, poppies can be seen in every corner of this great country. This show of support and display of remembrance would not be possible without the efforts of thousands of Legionnaires who volunteer to distribute poppies to the community through schools, community organizations, and local businesses.

We are grateful for the support of the many partners - local and national - who welcome Legion volunteers and poppy boxes into their locations. We thank all Canadians for supporting the Legion's Poppy Campaign and honouring Canada's veterans. Lest we forget.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms. Mitchell-Veinotte, do you have any more?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: That concludes our presentation.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for your opening remarks and I apologize for earlier.

We will start the questioning at the moment. I do have two names. We will start with Ms. Miller from the Liberal Party.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: This is my first day on this committee, so it's a pleasure to be here. Certainly, talking about the poppies and veterans - they have a special place in my heart. My parents were Dutch immigrants and lived in occupied Holland. They know first-hand the sacrifices that Canadians made for them. It's always been instilled in

us to appreciate veterans and what they've done for other countries, what they've done for Holland - it's the reason they even moved to Nova Scotia. I extend my thanks for that.

This year we actually had the opportunity to go visit some sites in Europe, in France. We went to Vimy Ridge, saw the memorials there, saw the fields there - it was amazing. We went to the Canadian cemetery, where we actually had the time to appreciate that sacrifice. I don't think you get the scope of it until you go there and see all those headstones and you see everything that's going on. I just wanted to say thank you for that. I can't say that enough. It just means so much to me.

It's certainly something I always do support and I've seen a change in the last few years that I've noticed from the time that I used to go to the cenotaph as a child, which was many years ago. Even to now, it seems to be more and more people are going. The cenotaphs on Remembrance Day are packed, crowded with so many people. Do you attribute that to children learning more in school? What is making that change? Although I celebrate it, sometimes it makes me wonder why that's happening. Is that something you can respond to?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: I don't think we will ever know the reason for the increased number of Canadians that we see even worldwide observing Remembrance Day, especially on November 11th. I would certainly think that with the access to information that the human race actually has now, perhaps we've become more aware of the populations on this Earth who do not have the right to self-determination.

I think probably as Canadians, we celebrate and are ever more grateful because we're aware of people in not as fortunate circumstances as we get to live in in this country. I believe that perhaps we're more overt in expressing that, especially when it comes to November 11th and Remembrance Day.

DON MCCUMBER: Just as a follow-up to your comments, I'd like to say that we realize the respect that the Dutch people certainly have for our veterans. I'd just like to point out that we certainly appreciate the citizens of the Netherlands and their government for what the people do and the upkeep of our cemeteries.

Also, the history that is taught in the local schools and government on what had happened in the past and the value of our Canadian veterans to those people. I think we do offer respect to the citizens of the Netherlands and certainly have appreciated all of the tulip bulbs that were sent to Canada to be planted in memory of our fallen comrades.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Miller, would you like to do a follow-up?

MARGARET MILLER: Yes, also on that note about celebrating or remembering - I guess it's not really celebrating Remembrance Day, but certainly remembering Remembrance Day and all our fallen heroes - this year is going to be a little bit different

because of COVID-19. I expect somebody else will probably ask you about local services, but what about schools? Are they going to be able to have some of those services that they've had in past years?

DON MCCUMBER: I know locally that our Legions have contacted the school and certainly there are strict regulations that they have to follow. Some of the branches are submitting packages on remembrance and hoping that the teachers will have their own in-class little services. Some Legions are submitting videos and whatever support information they can give to the schools to present to the students, but as you are aware, we will not be able to have the services that we have had in the past this year.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Masland.

KIM MASLAND: Again, thank you for being here today. COVID-19 has changed so much in our lives and it has certainly had a very concerning effect on many of our not-for-profit organizations and our Legions.

I know the numbers you had cited on monies that are collected from the annual Poppy Campaign and what that provides to local levels is very significant. What do you anticipate as - or if any - will there be a lost revenue for this year's Poppy Campaign due to COVID-19 and more people staying closer to home?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: We certainly do expect a drop in the generation of funds on a community level. I don't think it necessarily relates to people staying closer to home. I believe that the drop will be realized because businesses don't find themselves in a financial position whereby they can purchase the wreaths and make the donations that they certainly have in the past.

I believe that we will still have Nova Scotians making donations to receive poppies. As Mr. McCumber mentioned, we have many partners in the business community and corporately who are accepting our poppy trays and our poppies without those being manned this year. We're very thankful for that because we're unable, of course, to physically be in particular settings and to maintain the health protocols that are required.

KIM MASLAND: I was on social media last night and I found that our Local 545 Squadron leader had put a plea out to people in the community to make sure they supported our local Legion - the Mersey Branch 38. I was surprised at how much money they actually bring in to help local veterans and their families and the Cadets, and so many more people and things within the community.

I know the people that I've spoken to within our branch are concerned that there may be less funds this year because of the pandemic we're in. I understand that at the end of September, anything that is left over in that poppy fund that is held in trust, 10 per cent of that goes back to the Command. I'm just wondering, in light of the fact that we're in a

pandemic and many of our Legions are really struggling - some I hear may not even make it past December - is there any thought within Command to allow Legion branches to keep the remainder of that fund to help people that may be in need this year?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: The 10 per cent assessment that is applied to the balance in the poppy trust fund for each branch at the end of the poppy trust fund year - which is the 30th of September - is actually based on the previous year's campaign. The assessment that will be levied on the branches on the balance of the poppy trust fund after they have reported and recorded all of the expenses to support the veterans, to support their mission and all of the initiatives that we laid out in our presentation - whatever that balance is, is what that 10 per cent is based on.

If that branch is utilizing 100 per cent of its funds in support of the mission, then 10 per cent of zero balance is zero. We won't actually be levying an assessment on this year's campaign until this time next year. Certainly, if the branch is unable to raise sufficient funds to support the veterans in their area, then those veterans are supported through my office, through our provincial and territorial command.

[2:30 p.m.]

Our service bureau and professional service officers provide representation through the Veterans Affairs benefit process and claims for every veteran throughout our Command, so within the territory of Nunavut and the Province of Nova Scotia. So we require a percentage of the unused balance in the poppy trust funds in order to support the overall mission and provide support to veterans and their families in branches that can't necessarily financially maintain that support.

I hope that answers that question and clears a lot up for you.

THE CHAIR: We will move on right now to the NDP. Ms. Roberts.

LISA ROBERTS: Thanks for very much for your presentation. I was struck at your description of the Benevolent Fund, and at my constituency level we have a pretty firm grasp on the benevolent funds that exist at the community level. We've resorted to the Lions Club, we've resorted to the Brunswick Street Mission - those, of course, are funds that are accessible for all citizens.

I don't think we've had constituents come to us in need of support who are veterans because - perhaps obviously - they have another place to resort to when they are not able to make the rent or are not able to both make their rent and pay their food bill and cover their power bill, et cetera.

I wonder if you can tell me a little bit more about the Benevolent Fund. Is that centrally held and centrally allocated, or is it done at a regional level by different regions?

Also, how have you seen the demands on it change, maybe both over time but also during this particular period of the COVID global pandemic?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: At the community level, branch poppy trust funds may be utilized for supports such as emergency shelter, transitional shelter, food insecurity - all of the things that Comrade McCumber laid out. Individuals who fall within our definition of a veteran and fall within our mandate can approach branches to ask for the type of assistance you described, and if they fit within our criteria, then they can access funding at that level. But they can also access or seek supports from the centralized Benevolent Fund.

If I had an individual who lived in New Glasgow who contacted my office and required emergency assistance for that full range of potential supports, I would work perhaps in conjunction with the branch - depending on the health of the branch poppy trust - and we would work together to find a solution for the veteran.

There are situations, though, whereby the local branch poppy trust fund is not healthy enough to provide that assistance, in which case 100 per cent of the assistance would be provided through the Benevolent Fund.

How we've seen a change, considering COVID, is somewhat difficult to explain because one of the things that happened because of the pandemic very early on was that there was a freeze on evictions. That actually helped us and delayed the inevitable. It took a lot of pressure off some of our clients, took a lot of pressure off of our funds because of the lack of transitional housing that we have available, especially within the HRM, and the lack of affordable housing that we have throughout the province. We end up expending huge amounts housing veterans and their dependents in hotels until we can seek other avenues to house them comfortably and safely.

So COVID-19 in a way helped us with some of that. It kept people in housing that they were in danger of being evicted from, and of course the supports that the federal government or the banks allowed also helped those who were on the cusp of losing their homes.

What affects us more are the extreme delays in processing claims and applications through Veterans Affairs Canada - with the pandemic, Veterans Affairs Canada were not working at full capacity, and that full capacity has not been enough. That's more the problem that was exacerbated by the pandemic. I could use all of the day to discuss the delays in Veterans Affairs and the drastic ramifications of that. I hope that answered your questions.

LISA ROBERTS: I find your answer quite interesting, in part because it's challenging my own perception of who your members are. I'm the NDP's spokesperson on

housing, and so I speak about and learn about affordable housing regularly, and I'm talking about it regularly.

Our Party position is that we need rent control in Nova Scotia because we've been contacted by people even during this pandemic who have been served notice of very significant rent increases, 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 45 per cent, because we have truly no rent control in Nova Scotia. There is no limit, especially if a multi-unit building changes hands all of a sudden and every tenant in the building can be served notice with a significant rent increase.

I did not anticipate that affordable housing would be such a prominent concern amongst your members. I wonder if you can speak to me a little bit more about that. We certainly are aware that affordable housing is not only an issue for very-low-income Nova Scotians. We're hearing about more middle-income Nova Scotians - basically anybody who is a renter is very vulnerable.

Can you speak to me just a little bit more because I'm realizing that I'm having a perception of a veteran - which is maybe not up-to-date - of someone who served for some time and has gone on to work, but also maybe has more benefits than some of the people that I would typically assist through my constituency office, but obviously they are in some numbers. You also mentioned people with dependants, so that also means quite young people with children also vulnerable to homelessness.

When you speak of transitional housing, transitional from what? Is it transitional from military housing or are you talking about transitional from some other circumstance?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Thank you for the questions. It's a very broad topic. I would certainly welcome an opportunity to sit with you or your staff and discuss this in great length. Generally, the people that I refer to - our clients - are those who are ill and injured. That opens up a whole other umbrella of clients or constituents that you may not be aware of.

Pensions are fixed. Ill and injured individuals are being medically released from the military anywhere from 20 to 35 years old to after a full career, so you could be dealing with a 35-year-old that's on a fixed income that is not going to change for the rest of their lives. They are ill or injured and cannot be otherwise employed.

Again, this is a topic in and of itself. I would welcome the interest from your office to provide you with good information and your advocacy in that area of homelessness or risk of homelessness.

THE CHAIR: We'll move on now to the PC Party. Mr. Ryan.

MURRAY RYAN: Thank you both for being here this afternoon. As the son of a World War II veteran, this time of year is - I can't even begin to describe how important it is to my household, both from when I was growing up and now, of course. I know my father always looks forward to November 11th and being able to watch the ceremonies - this year being a bit different, obviously, but looking forward to watching those ceremonies and the events on November 11th on television.

You touched on some issues and some information surrounding some questions I have. I found it quite interesting how in 2019, you helped or assisted 47 veterans related to homeless issues, food shortages, what have you, and this year it's down to 22. You mentioned how the rent freezes, eviction freezes - I'm assuming other COVID-19-related programs - also provided some supports. I'm wondering, do you have any idea of what those numbers would have actually been if it hadn't been for those support programs? You've helped 22, but how many actually were in need - or would have been without programs?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: The figure that I quoted, 21, really only covers from January to September of this year. Again, the numbers of clients that present to us in urgent or emergent situations requiring support from our centralized Benevolent Fund is more closely related to the delays in processing claims and entitlements with Veterans Affairs Canada.

If Veterans Affairs Canada is not processing in a timely manner, that equates to people who are without income supports, without medical treatment, so they have no other income. Some don't qualify for pensions because they served less than 10 years, but they're injured and medically released from the military. Some only come to us after 18 months of still waiting to have claims or entitlements processed and they've already collapsed all their RRSPs. They've already run up the line of credit. They've already gone to "B" lenders for loans.

I'm not sure that I'm answering your question, but I'm not sure I'm making it clear that it is directly related to the processing of entitlements and benefits and claims at the federal level under Veterans Affairs Canada. Surely this committee, of all committees within the Province of Nova Scotia, is well aware of the concerns of how entitlements and benefits are processed at that level and the complications that arise from that.

MURRAY RYAN: Thank you and you did answer it. It's a very tough issue. There are so many nuances to it and there shouldn't be. I have personal experience related to the backlog and the timelines that it takes dealing with Veterans Affairs.

I heard the news last week of over 50,000 applicants who had their claims in some place being processed - what stage they were in, Lord knows. I know that we're in a pandemic, but these veterans have sacrificed so much for our country. It's really inexcusable that there are delays of that length of time.

To that end - and this is maybe another question you have difficulty actually providing some insight and information on - but related to this 50,000 backlog: veterans are so proud. For them to reach out for help is such a difficult thing for them. I'm wondering with such a backlog, are you seeing a significant uptick in actual requests for assistance be it just with the paperwork to actual supports?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: We are the fifth largest command in the country of the Royal Canadian Legion, but we are the third busiest service bureau in the country.

I have two full-time Service Officers. All they do is representation and claim work. We carry a full file caseload of 400 clients on average day in and day out, 12 months of the year. If we could receive additional funding from some source, I could use two more Service Officers to process claims. Did that answer your question? Was that the question that I answered? Thanks.

THE CHAIR: We'll move on now to the Liberal Party. Mr. Jessome.

[2:45 p.m.]

BEN JESSOME: I just had a question initially related to any type of contingency planning or thoughts that relate to supplementing the Poppy Fund itself. We can all acknowledge that that's one, if not the, main fundraiser annually. Regardless of what the scenario is - this year it's related to a global pandemic - it could be something else in the future. I just wonder if your organization has any contingency planning related to supplementary fundraising initiatives for your organization that we might not hear about.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Poppy trust funds cannot be utilized for branch operations or any use other than as Comrade McCumber outlined. Branches, of course, raise funds through initiatives such as community suppers or drive-throughs. They're being extremely creative right now because the usual sources of funding for them are not possible. They can't do catering, they can't rent out their facilities safely.

Branches we find are being extremely creative. We do have a source of funding at our command level that supports our mission, and that is the Veteran Service Recognition Book, and I'm quite sure most of your offices would have been contacted, asking for your support of that publication. We publish that once a year, and it is a collection of biographies of veterans that are submitted by their families or their communities. We do sell advertising in that publication and distribute the publication to community libraries, school libraries.

Many of the advertisers would be medical practices, if they're allowed to actually have books and things that people handle in their waiting rooms, and even the Premier's Office. That's a significant fundraiser for us at the command level.

The foremost mission of the Royal Canadian Legion is to advocate and support for veterans and their families. That is primary; it will be foremost. We do a lot of other great things in our communities, certainly everything from youth programs at the provincial level to educational programs and leadership programs for youth, but the primary mission will be upheld, and that's the main thing.

DON MCCUMBER: Just to add to that, when there are special needs that come up for veterans, there are other avenues for the branches to raise funds. For example, in the Yarmouth area, the veterans needed a van for transportation, their van was 17 years old, so the five Legions in the area embarked on a fundraising project, and within a short period of time raised \$106,000 to put a new van in that location. As we speak, there are another nine Legions in the South Shore area that are presently raising funds for a new van in Lunenburg.

When special needs come up, perhaps there isn't a need to take it out of a Poppy Fund; there are special projects and fundraisers that they can take on to accommodate the needs of veterans as well.

BEN JESSOME: I'll have to double-check to make sure that we're participating in that recognition booklet that was referenced. Thank you for that.

Reference to youth here. It was kind of a good segue into my next question. Evidently the Cadets are, for me anyway, the first thought that comes to mind with respect to participation of young people in honouring our veterans and supporting that space, military veterans, what have you. I'm just wondering if your organization has any sort of initiatives specific to recruiting the next generation to support the Legion specifically.

DON MCCUMBER: I'd just like to say that we certainly recognize and appreciate the value of our Cadets that assist us in many ways in the Legion, not just during remembrance. We do offer the Cadets when they age out a one-year membership to the Royal Canadian Legion, encouraging them to continue on above their program and working in the community through the Legion.

THE CHAIR: Next is Ms. Roberts from the NDP.

LISA ROBERTS: I normally mark Remembrance Day at Northwood in my constituency. There isn't a cenotaph in Halifax Needham so I've been invited since I was elected to mark that day at Northwood.

I have to say, I have never entirely understood why certain veterans are there in long-term care versus at Camp Hill, but it may be a case where they moved to Northwood to be with a spouse who wasn't eligible at Camp Hill. I know in some cases they also have some veterans who are actually veterans of the U.S. military and other service experiences.

Mr. McCumber, I believe that you mentioned some assistance that is given to seniors in long-term care from the Poppy Fund proceeds. I wonder if you could share a little bit more about your intersections and perspective on the experience of members in long-term care.

DON MCCUMBER: This is a topic of concern to me in regard to the whole long-term care issue and that is that Veterans Affairs, as we know, look after and contract out the beds in these long-term care facilities. The criteria, as I understand it, is that if a veteran has served overseas and has seen active duty, then they qualify for one of those beds for long-term care.

For example, again using Yarmouth as an example, there are 15 beds. If beds become available, then there are veterans who could be upstairs in hospital beds who don't qualify for that accommodation. So Veterans Affairs is basically saying, we'll contract out the beds, but the Health Authority seem to have a lot of power in the decision-making, and there really is, as I see it, a need for policy changes to ensure that these facilities remain open to our veterans - our modern-day veterans or those coming along - because, as we know, we're losing our veterans. That's something that hopefully you can keep in the back of your mind in encouraging the criteria to change.

We certainly do offer programs to our seniors in the community by providing the facilities. Now we're faced with COVID-19, but we have in the past provided the Legion as a community centre for our seniors to take part in. We're certainly there to help them as well in any ways that we can.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: If, for instance, the branch in Liverpool, Nova Scotia wanted to support veterans that are their veterans from their communities that are in long-term care facilities, they would go to the long-term care facility and ask if there were any supports that could be provided to make the comfort paramount of those veterans in that facility.

The branch would then make application to be able to utilize however much of the fund is requested. In this case, in this term, Comrade McCumber would make the decision that the branch could actually spend those funds and it would be an acceptable use of poppy trust funds.

That's Way 2 that veterans are supported in long-term care facilities. If an individual veteran needed comforts that they were unable to provide for themselves, then too the facility would normally contact the branch and certain comforts wouldn't require Comrade McCumber's approval, such as blankets or pieces of clothing, that type of support. That's offered too through the poppy trust funds.

LISA ROBERTS: Just to follow up with Mr. McCumber, as I understand your concern around the wait for long-term care, do you understand the challenge to be the

management of the waiting list and that veterans should be prioritized to enter when a bed becomes available? Or is the challenge a shortage of beds?

As I understand it, in Nova Scotia we haven't opened a new long-term care bed in a long time. There's been some announced recently, but as I understand it, right now for a general client of continuing care, one doesn't get access to long-term care until one really, really, really needs 24-hour nursing care. That sort of managing with really a scarcity of resources has resulted in many people waiting in hospital.

Just to reiterate my question, is the challenge the policy of the management of the waiting list, or do you see the challenge being the lack of resources, which effectively needs to be shared between veterans and other older Nova Scotians - and not even necessarily older Nova Scotians, but other Nova Scotians in need of long-term care?

DON MCCUMBER: I can't relate provincially as to what's happening. I'm speaking mainly from my own local area and what I've seen, and there seems to be sufficient beds in my local area to accommodate veterans. My concern is that as the veterans that qualify decrease and more beds become available, that these beds should be available to veterans that perhaps have not seen overseas or active duty.

We have veterans that served in this country that did not go overseas who are veterans that made contributions. What some are concerned about is that as the numbers decrease, that Veterans Affairs will get out of the long-term care and turn it simply over to Housing Nova Scotia or to the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and that our veterans will fall by the wayside.

My comment is that I hope and trust that the policy and the criteria won't change for veteran units in Lunenburg or in Yarmouth that will continue to allow veterans to use those beds and be accommodated in the future as opposed to everything being turned over to a health authority. That issue was discussed with the Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada at a recent town hall meeting in Yarmouth. We certainly let our voices be known.

THE CHAIR: This is a perfect time to take our 15-minute break. We will be back at 3:15 p.m.

[3:00 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[3:15 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Order. We will continue our questions, and we will be starting with Ms. Chender from the NDP.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you for all of the information that you are offering us today. We really appreciate it.

You spoke a little bit about Legions on the ground, sort of separate from specifically the Poppy Campaign, and one of the questions I have is, I know that one of the big issues - I guess kind of jumping off of my colleague's point - what we've seen in the pandemic has been social isolation, particularly for seniors, and we know not all veterans are seniors, but certainly there are many. I know in our local branches, for instance, at least for a long time, there wasn't bingo, there weren't the gathering opportunities. I wonder if you can speak to what, if anything, is happening around meeting folks' needs for community and connection in a different way, if there's work being done either at the local level or centrally.

DON MCCUMBER: I'd just like to say that we've had to come up with some innovative ideas. I know in my local area and others we realized that veterans can't get out to the functions that they were certainly used to, so we've made an attempt to go to them. We have had the opportunity to go to a veterans' place with an individual who was celebrating a 100th birthday, and we gathered outside - keeping our distance of course - and sang "Happy Birthday" to him, and he was very pleased to see us there.

We've had a lady veteran whose family brought her outside and we in our vehicles drove by and blew the horn, wishing her a happy birthday. Again, I can only speak for my area, that if there doesn't happen to be some type of a remembrance service in the community, that an attempt will be made to go to the facilities and perhaps have one outside while they can watch from inside and try to make them feel part of the remembrance.

There have been occasions where the communities have jumped in with an antique car parade to drive by the facilities. We have to look now more of going to them and trying to put on some events for them to at least make the veterans know that we're still out there for them and looking after them.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Mitchell-Veinotte would like to add something.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Provincially and territorially speaking, because we also represent the territory of Nunavut, branches have from the very beginning of the pandemic taken extra efforts to contact the veterans, have conversations with them on a daily basis, form telephone trees, deliver groceries, pick up medications, deliver medications, whatever supports are required. Not just to veterans, but fellow members as well.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I heard you speak a little earlier about the fundraising for the van in Yarmouth and I recognize that I'm sure people are continuing to step up and show up for their branches and for veterans through this challenging time. But along with

the cancellation of so many of those events - and obviously the bar is closed, and the building has been closed - are there overhead challenges? Because I heard you say that the Poppy Campaign, that those proceeds are not to be used for overhead. Have you been hearing of challenges at the local branch level in terms of overhead, and can you say anything about that?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Just for the record, the majority of Legion branches within Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command are open. They are operating at reduced hours and a reduction in the number of events and the types of events, but they are there. Even if and when the buildings were closed, the mission was maintained: to serve veterans and their families.

Absolutely, there are operational challenges. The closure was due to the requirements as established by Public Health. Actually, if there could have been a good time weather-wise to close our branches, that was probably a good time in March and leading into the Spring and the Summer, when our operational expenses at the local level are less. There's great concern with challenges to meet the utility bills with the coming colder weather in buildings that are slowly being upgraded, but not fully.

There are certainly challenges to operational budgets coming in the next few months. Branches have been able to utilize some of the government programs, including the programs extended by the Nova Scotia Government, which have been extremely helpful. The Legion Capital Assistance Program continues to be a mainstay in this province in supporting our branches to upgrade their buildings by doing things like inserting heat pumps and new windows and insulation. These all go towards, of course, reducing our operational expenses.

The answer to that question is: absolutely. Will we be facing challenging times? That is true. We will.

THE CHAIR: Minister Ince.

HON. TONY INCE: First of all, thank you both for serving. The question I have is more immediate. It's around your volunteers and the folks who are usually out helping with the Poppy Campaigns. I understand from talking to a couple of the branches that there are challenges. Some places don't want you inside and so on. What can we do as politicians to try to help you in that area? It's important. I've already volunteered to go out and help out, so I don't know. What can we do?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Thank you for volunteering. I would certainly encourage all Nova Scotians to volunteer where they can to help make the Poppy Campaign a success.

Each of you has access to large groups of people. You have access to media. You have public exposure. Please encourage Nova Scotians to support the Poppy Campaign this year. It is solely the Poppy Campaign funds that are raised that support veterans and their families. Without that, the supports we're able to provide as a volunteer, not-for-profit, charitable organization will be greatly reduced.

Is the Province of Nova Scotia or the Government of Canada ready and able to step in and do what we do? Please speak about it. Encourage others to support it at every opportunity. Every time I see you publicly or in the media and you've done that, I will be thanking you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Mitchell-Veinotte. Before your follow-up, Minister, may I ask just a quick one?

My office is in a market and café. Are you able to deliver so that we can maybe go around and sell it in our offices? Would that be a possibility?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Absolutely. I will leave you my card so you can contact my office. I will have my staff look after that.

Just as a clarification, we do not sell poppies; we distribute poppies and accept donations.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for correcting that. Mr. Ince.

TONY INCE: I don't have a follow-up. I'm more concerned about the immediate and how we can help support that particular campaign, so thank you.

THE CHAIR: The next person is from the PC Party. Ms. Masland.

KIM MASLAND: Just a question again talking about the challenging times that many of our branches will be experiencing. You've alluded to the ability to meet the utility bills in the Winter months that are coming and, sadly, the lack of being able to fundraise as much as they would because of the pandemic.

You mentioned that governments - especially the provincial government - has been able to help, that the Legion branches have been able to access some of those funds. Is there an ask that you would have or is there more that you believe that government provincially could be doing to help with our branches?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: A tremendous benefit to branches within the Province of Nova Scotia would be an expansion of the Legion Capital Assistance Program. Certainly, Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command would welcome the opportunity for productive conversation and consultation to that end.

KIM MASLAND: I'm wondering if you could just explain a bit about the Digital Poppy Campaign. Sadly - I shouldn't even admit this - I didn't know that there was a Digital Poppy Campaign. I guess I spend all my time making sure that I'm volunteering with Legions or being at services and I wasn't aware of a Digital Poppy Campaign. If you could explain just a little bit about that, I'd really appreciate it.

[3:30 p.m.]

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: The Digital Poppy Campaign was actually launched last year. It was launched and is maintained by the national level of our organization. In its first year, funds raised through the Digital Poppy Campaign were distributed to branches based on the postal code. It proved to be not the best system, especially when you consider in places like Cape Breton, where we have three branches that are within five kilometres of each other - so not the best beginning.

The Digital Poppy Campaign now raises funds that are appropriated to the Legion National Foundation. It is an initiative that is controlled by the national level of the organization.

DON MCCUMBER: If I may, just to go back to your first question: we have seen throughout the province some municipalities that have come forward and made donations to the Legions to help support them. For you - individuals that represent many of the communities in your area - I would ask that you encourage those municipalities to make a contribution to the local Legion that provides the service that they do to the veterans in their community and the projects that they run and support of their community members.

THE CHAIR: Our next person is Ms. Miller.

MARGARET MILLER: I want to get back to talking about the Poppy Campaign. I think that's what the subject matter of the day was, and the Legions and their role in that.

I just wanted to ask: do you think this is an opportunity to use our virtual world to livestream some of the Remembrance Day ceremonies? I know that they're not going to forget, but just as a reminder so that this little semblance of normality of remembering on Remembrance Day - to make sure that they take that time in their personal lives to honour the veterans and their great sacrifices.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: I'm terribly sorry. I didn't understand a question in that.

MARGARET MILLER: The question is obviously the concern about that - but is there a possibility that something virtual could go out so that it could be, whether it goes

out to the schools or whether it goes out to the Legions or whatever, that they could put out videos so that people can share the services that way.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Absolutely. There are plans through local branches to do Facebook Live broadcasts of services. The Command actually is responsible for the remembrance ceremony at Grand Parade and, although it's not been absolutely confirmed yet, it is hoped that that will be livestreamed as well.

MARGARET MILLER: I know you're all part of planning what's going to happen and how it is, to remind people that they can always go to their local cenotaphs on their own during that day - whether it's to leave their own wreath, even if it's not a ceremony available that day, or to leave their own poppies that day as a memorial. Could that be part of that?

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: A press release will be forthcoming from the President of Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command on this. The Poppy Campaign doesn't begin until the 30th of October, so we're really just in the beginning of the program for this year and still working with many moving parts. But thank you very much for that suggestion, and I will pass that along to her.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Roberts.

LISA ROBERTS: Earlier, you made reference to your charitable status. You're a non-profit organization with lots of volunteers. There are many organizations in that situation in Nova Scotia that are dealing with the impacts of COVID, but of course you're a somewhat unusual organization as well because of your ties with the military and so forth. Likewise, the Legions themselves are restaurants and bars that are like many other restaurants and bars, but they're also a little bit different because of the fact that they're Legions.

All of that is a preamble to say there have been various programs made available for impacted sectors during the pandemic, and I'm wondering to what extent you have been able to access some of those funding programs - be they federal or provincial - and to what extent you've fallen into gaps.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Just to point out that Royal Canadian Legion branches definitely have a social side to them in that we do have bars in clubhouses, and we meet our comrades there and we gather there for peer support, but we are very much the cornerstone of many communities within this province. We're everything from a place where you hold your grandma's 95th birthday to a warming centre when there's no power in communities. We certainly have a wide range of service to our communities.

Our branches were able to access the Nova Scotia small business grant that was made available, and most did access that funding, but we didn't qualify for the majority of

the funding programs that were offered by the federal government to the non-profit and charitable sector. Some branches qualified for the CERB at the federal level, although that's a loan program, which is concerning.

The federal government just announced \$20 million in funding to veterans organizations within the country, of which there are many. There are only two, though, that basically have bricks and mortar: the Royal Canadian Legion and, at a far distance, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada association. The funding is apparently for operational expenses, but we have absolutely no details, so we have no idea of the criteria as it relates to individual branches.

LISA ROBERTS: My follow-up is a bit of a change. It's the other last question in my mind, so it's not related to my first question, but thank you very much for that answer. It's interesting to hear to what extent you've been able to access funds that have been made available through both levels of government.

Back to the Poppy Fund and long-term care. You referenced earlier how if a veteran is in a long-term care facility and is missing some comfort, you would be able to access poppy funds in order to provide that. At Northwood, there's a similar fund which they fundraise for in the community such that if a nursing home resident is missing something, is not able to provide something, they're able to meet that gap.

I wonder if you encounter any challenges - because sometimes the gaps that I hear about in the long-term care sector is funding more at a systemic level, such that people aren't able to eat the kind of food that they like because the facility doesn't have the food budget to provide the sort of food that residents would prefer to eat, perhaps. It must be difficult at the level of a nursing home administration to provide an upgrade in service to certain residents because they are veterans when there isn't the funding to provide it to all. I'm wondering if that is a challenge that you've encountered.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: It's certainly a challenge to say no to anyone in need, however they define that need. More specifically, for supports such as medical appliances or medical equipment or medications or shelter or even assistance with providing food, all require an application process that is handled directly by me at our office in consultation with a member of my elected executive council. That application process includes a financial means evaluation of all income, all expenses, all debt commitments.

If it came to something such as an individual in a long-term care facility requiring dietary variances than what is offered by the facility, we would more likely take the route, if it's a veteran, of advocating for supports for that veteran that meet their needs because they would be entitled to that. If it is simply a dislike - well, I'm sure one of our branches could make sure that they delivered a fruit basket or chocolate to provide them with a treat every once in a while.

THE CHAIR: We have two more names. Maybe we can cut it down to just one question without a follow-up so that we can give our witnesses time to give us closing remarks, as well.

Mr. Ryan.

MURRAY RYAN: Related to the digital poppy: you spoke of the challenges after last year and how it's become more of a national program as opposed to a local program.

That being said, over these past months since March, when our world literally was turned upside down, we've seen the creativity and ingenuity of all of us front and centre. Facebook and social media being used in ways that weren't really imagined previously. Zoom has become a word that we all know all too well.

I'm wondering what sort of creativity and ingenuity have you seen from the Legion's side of the perspective locally in our region and in our province with regard to selling the poppy and to the remembrance program? If we could know some of this ingenuity and this creativity so that we can share that information to veterans and Legions in our own areas where they might not be aware of what they're doing in Dartmouth or in Amherst, it might be a benefit and it might work in our areas.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: If any of the branches within your communities would like to discuss that, they need only contact my office.

THE CHAIR: Next, Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'm just kind of sitting here taking this all in. One thing I will commit to is - and I think all of us probably could or should - is making a donation to pick up some poppies and distribute them out in our communities. I'll be contacting somebody within the organization.

I'm lucky I have a very - how would I describe him, I have to be careful here - vocal veteran in Gus Cameron in my community. I don't know if you know Gus, but Gus and I have been friends - we go way back. Shortly after I got elected, Gus encouraged me to start coming down to Camp Hill. I would bring my children down to Camp Hill for Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day and other things. It's heartwarming to see the look on the veterans' faces when they see little kids run in the room. We would talk to them and ask them questions and get to know some of their stories. Obviously, some are willing to share more than others.

My first interaction with a veteran ever was when I was 15 years old working at a restaurant here in Halifax. The owner of the restaurant, who's long since passed, was a veteran. I think he was actually a veteran of World War I, so it would have been about 30

years ago - does that sound about right? He was pretty old at the time. I used to cook, and he'd come in and he'd share these stories with me. I always worried that these stories, when our veterans pass - especially around the great wars - that they disappear. It's good to have documentaries and Netflix and all that stuff.

I remember there was - and I think the gentleman passed away - a couple years ago for Valentine's Day, we had made up all these valentines for the veterans. There was one gentleman who was talking about how he was a teacher and then shortly after, in the war, he was jumping out of a plane behind enemy lines and he said, "I never, ever would have thought it was in me." He said, "it just wasn't in me," but of course it was.

What can we do to make sure that those stories can carry on? My children are seven, five, and four and this was the first time they'd ever heard those stories. What can we do as MLAs and what can we do as government and as a society?

[3:45 p.m.]

DON MCCUMBER: As was mentioned, we have the Book of Remembrance, and if you can encourage individuals to carry on workshops at their local libraries, which has been done, it's amazing the number of individuals that are so proud to come out with pictures of their family and write-ups about what they did. I think it's certainly one way to record those stories, the history and the events that many of them have been through, and their contributions to society - to Canada. I certainly encourage the promotion of that particular book, the Book of Remembrance for veterans.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: Other than in unprecedented times as we find ourselves this year, we do have an extensive speaker-in-the-schools program that's carried out in just about every community in this province. We have veterans and Legion members that go into the schools and talk about personal experiences and the importance of remembrance.

Poppy trust funds can also be utilized to purchase presentation materials that can be accessed by teachers. They're provided to the schools and the teachers can access. It's all visual.

There's also an organization called Veterans Voices of Canada that records personal stories. Veterans Affairs' Canada Remembers division also has a tremendous amount of material and packages that they put together and make available to the schools around this time each year. The resources are certainly out there. I guess it's knowing where to find them.

THE CHAIR: One last question. Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I just wanted to make a request. I reached out to staff while we were speaking here today - just perhaps an additional request for that request for advertising for the recognition booklet. I don't ever remember seeing it and I want to make sure we're on top of that, so if that could be facilitated through you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: It would be wonderful if it could be sent to all MLAs. If you send it to the committee, that would probably be the best way. Then it will be sent to all of us. We would appreciate it and the timing would be perfect.

Maybe it's a good time to do closing remarks from our witnesses. Mr. McCumber.

DON MCCUMBER: I would just like to say thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk about the Remembrance Poppy Campaign and what we as Legionnaires are doing to assist our veterans. As we all know, they did so much for us - gave the supreme sacrifice. We do remember them at this time, but I think it's very important, too, to remember them every day of the year, not just during Remembrance. We should never forget the contribution that they've made for our sake, our democracy. So I thank you for the opportunity to be here and look for your continued support down the road in assisting us and our veterans. Thank you so much for that opportunity.

VALERIE MITCHELL-VEINOTTE: It was a pleasure to appear here once again to this committee. Thank you very much for your well-thought-out questions and for your support. Thank you for your work in support of veterans and their families as representatives of the people of Nova Scotia and as members of this committee. As the daughter of a veteran, the sister of a veteran, and the mother of a veteran, I thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you on behalf of the committee. You've really informed us with a lot of things, and the timing is perfect. We would love to do more for the veterans because of COVID. Thank you again. You may exit from the back, and we will do some committee business after this.

We do have some committee business. We have correspondence that I will read, a couple of them for now. November 14, 2019: a letter from the Department of Health and Wellness, a response to the October 2, 2019 letter from the committee after discussion which happened in the September 17th meeting. It was received in the Legislative Committees Office on February 28, 2020. The original response was lost.

Also, January 27, 2020: a reminder to the Department of Health and Wellness. And February 20, 2020: a letter from the committee member Murray Ryan, the MLA, inquiring as to the status of the correspondence. This was forwarded to the committee members on February 28, 2020, and again yesterday. I did receive it. I hope everybody received it. Is there any discussion? Everybody's happy? Thank you.

February 21, 2020: a letter from the Department of National Defence, the National Cadet and Junior Canadian Rangers Support Group, a response to a request for information made at the December 17, 2019 meeting. This was forwarded to the committee members on March 10, 2020 and again yesterday. Did everyone receive it? Is there a discussion? Thank you, everyone.

March 11, 2020: a letter from Commissionaires Nova Scotia, a response to a request for information made at the February 18, 2020 meeting. This response was also forwarded to committee members on March 12, 2020 and again yesterday. I have received it. Is there any discussion?

There was also correspondence on June 16, 2020: a letter from committee members Kim Masland, MLA, and Murray Ryan, MLA, asks the Chair to resume meetings. This was forwarded to members on June 18, 2020 and again yesterday. Is there any discussion? I see none. I move on to the next one.

June 25, 2020: a letter from committee members Kim Masland, MLA, and Murray Ryan, MLA, asked the Chair to call a meeting to discuss the future of Legions in the wake of COVID-19. This was forwarded to members on June 25, 2020 and again yesterday. I assume everybody received it, and is there any discussion? I see none.

The next thing on our business is the next meeting, which will be Tuesday, November 17th, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The subject will be the Legion Capital Assistance Program. If the House is sitting at that time, the meeting will be cancelled and rescheduled. Is that okay with everyone? Is there any discussion?

I will call the meeting adjourned unless . . .

KIM MASLAND: Madam Chair, I would like now to make a motion.

THE CHAIR: Sure. Ms. Masland has a motion to make.

KIM MASLAND: Today we heard that branches are struggling with their fundraising goals because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We heard from our presentations that Legions are our community hubs in our communities, that they are the warming stations in some of our communities and they're places where fellow veterans meet, and where we come to celebrate citizens in our community.

Sadly, because of public health protocols, they were required to shut their doors for a time and fundraising operations ceased. We heard today that many will struggle to pay the utility bills, and if we're struggling to pay the utility bills, I would assume that would be struggle to keep the doors open.

Because of that, I move that the committee write to the Premier, as he is the Minister responsible for Military Relations, asking him to extend a one-time grant to the Legion to support the vital work that they do for our veterans.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion? Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Could we take five minutes, please?

[3:56 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[4:03 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: We will resume, and I will ask Ms. Masland just to repeat the motion exactly as she wrote it.

KIM MASLAND: Today, we have heard that our Legions will struggle to meet their fundraising goals due to COVID-19. Because of that, I move that the committee write to the Premier, as he is the Minister responsible for Military Relations, asking him to extend a one-time grant to the Legions to support their vital work.

THE CHAIR: Is there any further discussion? Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Just promptly, I'll bring the support on behalf of the Liberal caucus for this motion.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Jessome. Is there any further discussion?

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

The motion is carried.

All right. So we're done. The only other discussion we should - just in case the House is sitting on November 17th - the next meeting would be Tuesday, December 15th. Is that okay with everyone?

Thank you again. Meeting adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 4:05 p.m.]