

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Via Video Conference

Rally Point Retreat

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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

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia:

Rally Point Retreat – Sable River, NS
Bob Grundy, Co-Founder and President
Johan Grundy, Co-Founder and Secretary
Mike Burke

Prospect Haven – Prospect, NS
Cynthia Piccott
Brad Hogg

Purdy Wood Acres – Wallace, NS
Gary Phillips

Service Members Keep – Ogilvie, NS
Duke Karsten

Serenity Acres Family Ranch – Ellershouse, NS
Kristy Falconer

Veteran Farm Project – Windsor, NS
Steve Murgatroyd

Newfoundland and Labrador:

Pathways to Better Days – St. John's, NL
Grace Shears

Ontario:

The Valhalla Project Niagara – Niagara, ON
Graham Bettes
Shawn Bennett

Quebec:

Equi-Sens – Mirabel, QC
Chantal Soucy



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

2:00 P.M.

CHAIR

Rafah DiCostanzo

VICE-CHAIR

Ben Jessome

BEN JESSOME: I'll call the meeting to order, folks. Once again, thank you for your patience and your consideration to be here today. My name is Ben Jessome. I'm the MLA from a little place outside of Halifax called Hammonds Plains-Lucasville. We're about half an hour outside of the city proper.

We are at the Veterans Affairs Committee, obviously. I will give our members an opportunity to introduce themselves in a moment, but just for clarification's sake, our presenters are Bob and Johan Grundy and we're going to make an effort to give the floor to them primarily, as they're the approved witnesses for the committee. We do appreciate the support that's being shown from places much broader than we might have noted when we looked at this initially. It's good to see your faces and thank you for your time.

Just generally to the members and our guests as well, keep your microphones on mute to the best of your ability. For our members and presenters, please leave your video cameras on as well, just so we have an idea that everybody is there and accounted for.

Without further ado, I don't think I've missed anything. Phones on silent, if you want to have your phone close by. Otherwise, let's start with our friends from the NDP. Ms. Chender, please.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

BEN JESSOME: I think that's it. I don't see Ms. DiCostanzo. She's the member for Clayton Park West, which is also in the municipality of Halifax. Hopefully, she'll be joining us shortly. In the meantime, perhaps Mr. and Ms. Grundy, would you like to start us off with your presentation and introduce yourselves, and perhaps some of the company that you've asked to join in today.

BOB GRUNDY: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the efforts of these very fine, unselfish Canadians that have gathered with us today. My name is Bob Grundy. I'm the co-founder and president of Rally Point Retreat in Sable River, located on the south shore of our beautiful province of Nova Scotia. My beautiful wife sits beside me right now and she will take over at several points when I lose focus.

This afternoon, I'm presenting on behalf of the Peer Support Facility Coalition of Canada. I am going to stray from your normal progression during the presentation. Why I'm doing that will become immediately clear when I do it. As I am presenting today, you will probably notice I have some difficulty maintaining my focus. My eyes may water. My voice and hands will shake. This is a result of post-traumatic stress disorder, which I was diagnosed with in 2004. It is further exacerbated by Parkinson's Disease, which I was diagnosed with in 2013.

Over the years, what we refer to as PTSD has been called many different names. During the American Civil War, the condition was known as "Soldier's Heart." In the First World War, it was called shell shock. In the Second World War, it was known as war neurosis or combat fatigue. Today we call it post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is broadly defined as a mental health issue that some people develop and experience after witnessing life-threatening combat, natural disasters, car accidents, sexual assaults, et cetera. It is a war within yourself that never actually goes away.

According to the National Centre for PTSD, about 8 out of every 100 people will experience it at some point in their lives. It can affect people of any age, culture, or gender. The cause and symptoms of PTSD vary from person to person, but one aspect is universal. When you're living with PTSD, the world feels unsafe. No one understands this better than those who have experienced it and experienced it daily.

I think we'll jump straight into the presentation at this time, if it's alright with you, Mr. Chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes, sir. I appreciate your time. Let's go on your pace.

BOB GRUNDY: Thank you. I realize that most of the people sitting before us have this presentation in front of them already. It's a very long presentation and I will try to hit the highlights on these pages. You can refer back to the actual written copies for additional details as you need them.

“Tradition and innovation need not be mutually exclusive. We have a rare opportunity to gather strength for a better future. In partnership, we can all succeed.” That’s from *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan*, 1997. I believe the same opportunity exists now.

Peer support was declared an evidence-based practice for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services in 2007. Why are we just getting to it now? Peer support improves symptoms of depression more than care as usual.

What are peer respites, peer support facilities as we’re trying to get them known? A peer respite is a voluntary short-term program that provides community-based, non-clinical support. Peer respites are staffed by people who have experienced trauma - hence the word “peer.”

[2:15 p.m.]

What effect does peer respite have on the mental health system? In 2018, psychiatryonline.org quoted that their conclusion was “Peer-staffed crisis respite services resulted in lower rates of Medicaid-funded hospitalizations and health expenditures . . .” We have to use foreign information for this because we don’t have a great deal of it in Canada at this time that I was able to find.

The Canadian Mental Health Association’s Nova Scotia Division, during their January 5th presentation to another committee, had a slide up: How Do We Support Communities? Peer support facilities are actually poised right now to address the top 10 items on their list: education and training, food security, housing support, employment, psychosocial wellness, resilience-based programs, social programs, community-based peer support, life skill development, community-based suicide, community navigation and support services.

There’s another page that will give you the average cost of running a peer support/peer respite in the U.S. At this time, it’s between \$353,000 to \$16,000 on when it’s established locally. For them, it was West Virginia that has the lowest cost.

It’s referred to as an unrecognized gap in mental health. Not really. Between 2016 and 2021, here at Rally Point we’ve had over 30 psychologists visit, three psychiatrists. Many have taken away bits of this place to help with other people. At least six social workers have come through.

We’ve provided 14 public speaking engagements to enrich the neighbourhood on what PTSD really is and how we can get around it.

I’m going to now introduce the people who are here with us, and they’ll each give a wave when they hear their organization being named: Prospect Haven Wellness Retreat,

and we have Cynthia Piccott speaking on behalf of them. They're in the process of setting up in the Halifax area - well, Prospect Haven, with a goal of 10 guest cabins. I'll be hitting key points only, guys, to get through this.

Purdy Wood Acres, Gary Phillips. Since 2017, Gary has run his 50 acres of wood with a wood mill in an attempt to teach members how to do wood milling and how to do building with what they've created with that project.

Service Members Keep, Duke Karsten, 2017, beautiful location. For those with a presentation, they can see it, and they have diverse activities there as well.

Serenity Acres Family Ranch, Kristy Falconer. Provides equine-assisted learning, archery, and trails. They have horses.

Veterans Farm Project. They even provided us with food. Steve Murgatroyd up on top with me and they provided food to us as well in an attempt to get the cross-border organization going, and it's working extremely well. They provide veterans healthy food, ensuring no one lives with food insecurities. They're planning on doubling what they provided last year. They're going to double this year coming up. They're looking to serve 120 families between Nova Scotia and Cape Breton.

Out of province with us today is Grace Shears from Pathways to Better Days. They're in the process as well of trying to keep vets and first responders safe in Newfoundland through music.

Equi-Sens from Quebec. Chantal Soucy. They too are running an equine-based therapy, and anybody who has the slideshow in front of them will see a soldier with a horse that is walking beside them, not being led, being led the proper way. Just following along beside the rider, who is not riding.

The Valhalla Project Niagara. We actually have Shawn and Graham coming down. They are both ex-vets and first responders at the same time. They run a virtual program, and they have a very active peer support program down there.

The last place I'm going to introduce you to is Rally Point Retreat. We opened in 2015. We have two to three guest units. They're year-round. We're looking to build an additional 10 units on part of our property with 20 cohorts of 8 cabins being added on a further 202 acres.

Ben, do you need to break to introduce the Chair?

BEN JESSOME: We're just going to let you get through your presentation. Ms. DiCostanzo will jump in when you wrap up.

BOB GRUNDY: We have diverse activities, as you will see. We operate 24/7, 365 days. We've been doing that since we started.

We expect guests from Five Eyes countries. For anybody not familiar, that's Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K. and the U.S. We're located on the south shore. We have 320 acres for this project. We include a diverse range of activities for outdoor work and indoor work. It looks very much like any entertainment centre out there, I suspect, with a pool table, ping-pong, darts, board games, and a list of crafts and arts to help generate initiative in the people who visit us so they can get a better feel for what they're able to do because they may never have experienced it.

Some of the woodworking opportunities that we provide to these people are pen turning, wood carving, fly tying - which is not wooden - and fishing rod building.

We have a sustainable food security program that we instituted last year. A lot of this is based on the book *Field Exercises* by Stephanie Westlund. We've included chickens as of late last year. They provide both frozen chicken and eggs.

We've developed a wood harvesting program so we can (Inaudible).

Our supporters include the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and a number of branches which will be on your screens. The Canadian Mental Health Association, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Veterans Association, Military Minds Inc., and I'm very proud to announce the 100 Women Who Care of Shelburne County.

Ways that our ongoing mission can be supported are boots on the ground to be a labourer, donate, tell your MP or MLA, case manager, therapist, join our society, bring a person down here that's actually suffering with PTSD - or do nothing and watch families part and peers die.

Funding is critical for developing peer support facilities. Here at Rally Point we need a greenhouse program, trail development for walking, hiking, geocaching, eco-cabins for our guests and families, and eco-cabins and ponds for corrections, first responders, vets, journalists and those without fixed addresses.

COVID-19 and the trauma stress that is coming about from it, will likely exacerbate existing mental health disorders and contribute to the onset of new stress-related disorders. The recommendation was to consider limits of current approaches, invest in intellectual or financial resources, urgently needed in order to innovate, forge partnerships and develop the technologies to support those in greatest need.

A very big thank you from our organization to Pamela Magee, Executive Director of CMHA Nova Scotia; Erin Christie from her organization - who is a communication

specialist - for helping us put this together; to you, the Nova Scotia Legislature Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs; to all those who serve, who continue to serve to keep us safe in our country and homes; and to all those who operate peer respites across the country, providing a light in the darkness for so many.

At the time I wrote this, Mr. Jessome, I had Madam Chair in the script: we have a few limitations, ma'am. We have a few limitations that we'd like to be followed if possible. Please do not inquire into the nature of how the people operating these facilities came to have their PTSD. It will trigger most of us. These independent organizations are primarily self-funded, with donations gratefully accepted, of course. We have PTSD or support someone with PTSD, and not all triggers are known to us. Our answers may be quick or slightly delayed.

Madam Chair, I hope I've met the time constraints, and this group of people have made themselves available to answer questions on a topic that we believe is most timely. Peer respites may help this province, this country, and others around the world, as our first responders and our front-line workers are burning out. We believe peer respites will provide a great service to the community at large as we help them get through this. Thank you very much for your time.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Grundy, and I apologize for the technical issues that I had. I pride myself on always being punctual and I signed up 10 minutes early, but it wasn't meant to be this time.

Again, welcome everyone. I have the list, and I was going to welcome, so thank you. A big thank you to my colleague, Ben Jessome, for taking over on short notice. I thank you for the presentation. I hope I didn't miss very much. It was amazing information and I'm sure the questions will enlighten us even further.

At this point, I just want to remind everybody to wait until I call your name, and we're going to - I'll be making a list. If you can just put your hand up for the first - I already see a hand, and I'll try to keep everybody in sequence, and then I will call their name before. If you don't mind, Mr. and Mrs. Grundy, wait for me to call your name before you start speaking - that way, Hansard can type it properly.

We can start with the questions. The first hand I saw was Ms. Masland, and then as she's speaking, you can put your hands up and I will write the list. We will start with our first question with Ms. Masland.

KIM MASLAND: Thank you again for that wonderful presentation. It's so great to see you, Mr. and Mrs. Grundy, and thank you for accepting the invitation to appear virtually to share the incredible work that you folks are doing, which I might add is in the most beautiful constituency in the province of Nova Scotia. Of course, that's the constituency of Queens-Shelburne.

I actually had the pleasure to tour this remarkable facility - I call it a haven and safe place - that the Grundys have created for essential service members who have become PTSD bearers, and I would encourage each of you to take the time to visit this facility, because it's absolutely incredible.

Very quickly, before I ask my first question: when I was there, I met a visitor, and a visitor - I won't go into the conversation, but shared words with me about what Rally Point Retreat meant. They were words of respect, support, friendship, promise, and hope on what was described as a journey of deep pain to possibility. I was just so moved by that, that it's something that has stuck with me for quite some time. I know there is success happening at your facility, but I also know that there are many challenges that you experience and face in those successes that you're achieving.

[2:30 p.m.]

You've talked about peer support models and how they are such a benefit. I'm wondering if you're seeking accreditation through Peer Support Canada. If so, what would that mean for your facility?

BOB GRUNDY: Thank you for the question, Kim. We will be seeking accreditation across the board. We have to still build what a peer respite is going to look like in Canada - what rules and regulations we're going to run under. The group you have in front of you right now have put their money where their mouth is, and I would highly recommend that they be part of that discussion. They all bring in a very important portion to how to set this up properly.

Some of my research has indicated that where county influence has taken over because they're providing funding, they've actually lessened the effectiveness of peer respites in the U.S. So yes, ma'am, I guess our answer is we'll be seeking accreditation on so many levels through Peer Support Canada, possibly even intentional peer support. That will cost a lot of money that some of these people just don't have available while they're trying to run these facilities on their own dollar.

KIM MASLAND: In speaking of the application process that you folks have been making, would some type of letter of support or endorsement from this standing committee help in your application process? Is that something you would like for us to provide to you?

BOB GRUNDY: Fantastic segue. That would go a very long way - to have people within government willing to work with us to develop the legislation that should be required to put peer support facilities on the board across the country, if not just in Nova Scotia, would be most beneficial. In that way, the Workers' Compensation Board and perhaps even Veterans Affairs Canada will start to recognize that these are major sources

of assistance to their programs as many of the VAC case managers have already observed, but are not permitted to send people here because we do not have that exact accreditation.

THE CHAIR: Now we'll move on to Mr. Horne.

BILL HORNE: I'm glad to see so many people here involved in this program. I'd like you to talk about your facility that you have now and how it works on a daily basis, a weekly basis, or a long-term basis - how many different types of programs you have and that sort of thing. I know you've talked about some of them, but I just want to hear how the operation works.

BOB GRUNDY: Thank you, Mr. Horne, for that question. Madam Chair, I'm going to introduce Mr. Mike Burke. He was on our list of speakers as well. I feel he'd be the best person from here to be able to answer that question, as Parkinson's has actually taken me out of some of the daytime roles.

THE CHAIR: Not to worry, wonderful. Please go ahead, Mr. Burke.

MIKE BURKE: Sorry about that. Thanks for hearing me. Day-to-day operations, how things operate here during the week, everything is ongoing. We have activities that we're developing in relation to the development of the retreat: the cabins, the trail development, all the infrastructure required to provide the activities that people are going to participate when they come in here.

So far we've had a number of guests that had come here that have participated in our logging operation, our milling operation, the construction of buildings that accessorize our objectives, meaning the establishment of the greenhouses, the actual establishment of outside raised bed gardening, that all go hand in hand with our food security program.

We have people who are learning new skills and putting those skills to good use here at the retreat. It's part of them finding purpose in their lives, finding something that they can be passionate about. It goes hand in hand that these people are enjoying what they're doing when they come here: learning how to use a chainsaw properly, learning how to use the mill properly, doing gardening. Interacting with our chickens is turning out to be a big one - who would have guessed?

Everything that is being done here by Bob and Jo and the establishment of the retreat is available to the people who have come here and the people who will come here. They get to decide what part of the activities going on here on a daily basis that they want to be part of based on their passions, their interests. There's a lot of work that's being done here on a daily basis. Something is always being constructed, something is always being prepared for future projects, so it's busy here. It's constantly busy.

COVID has slowed the number of people who have been coming through, but a lot of people who have been here and have benefited from here - me included - have remained loyal to the cause, have remained loyal to the retreat. Thanks for hearing me.

BILL HORNE: With the number of people who are attending your resort - it sounds like a resort, but retreat I guess is the proper name - do you have many medical people or first aid people, fire department people who will be there on a daily basis?

BOB GRUNDY: No sir, we don't. We do not have any hospital staff, we don't have a permanently-attached fire department to here. We are strictly peer support.

THE CHAIR: We move on now to Mr. Ryan. I don't have anybody else who has put their hand up, so if I've missed you - okay, perfect. Thank you.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Grundy, thank you so much for your overview of your organization and for bringing so many of your colleagues who are likewise involved and dedicated to this cause. PTSD has had many names over the last centuries, as you so aptly put it, and it's only in our recent history that it's truly receiving the attention that it truly deserves. All of your work towards helping sufferers of PTSD is to be commended.

To that end, related to Rally Point, I'm curious. On a daily basis, what's your capacity? How many guests can you currently handle on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis?

BOB GRUNDY: Our two internal guest rooms, our suites: one of them has two queen-size beds in it, the other one has a king-size with a bunk bed establishment - a double and a twin. We also have a trailer during the other three seasons that are not really cold, and we have a library/art room that expands and provides additional sleeping quarters in time of an emergency or in a time when we're actually beyond what we can normally handle.

The addition of the 10 cabins would go so far to expanding what we can do, and many of these other places need the exact same help. You cannot have enough of these around the province or around the country. That's why these people from the other provinces are here: this group here, the only group that has access to a Veterans Affairs Committee at a provincial level, I might add, can hopefully influence the other provinces into following and providing funding for their initiatives as well. Thank you for your question.

MURRAY RYAN: Thank you for that, Mr. Grundy. Just 10 minutes prior to this meeting starting, I had a veteran come in from Afghanistan, Bosnia, and he's having issues with Veterans Affairs. He's a PTSD sufferer, good guy, I went to high school with him, and I know his story all too well.

Obviously you have very ambitious plans and you're expanding rapidly, and that just testifies to the need. Related to that need, a lot of your activities are based on outdoor activities, trails, what have you. These last 11 months almost have been very trying for all of us, and I'm wondering how COVID-19 has played a role related to your organization, and how people have responded.

BOB GRUNDY: Great question. We are very fortunate out here at Rally Point. We are situated in a 6,700 square foot bungalow. It allows us to do isolation for guests that come from out of province, and we put that to practice. We've done our best to accept guests from wherever they're coming, and we make arrangements to make that happen when they get here. We deliver food to their door and they stay isolated from us and from any of the other guests.

Because we come from one family, essentially, of serving this country, when people get here it's easy for them to be able to fall in line as we did when we were in uniform and help each other. That's what Canada is really about. Did I answer the question?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Ryan, is that satisfactory?

MURRAY RYAN: That's fine, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Grundy.

THE CHAIR: Thank you so much, Mr. Grundy. Our next person is Ms. Lisa Roberts.

LISA ROBERTS: Madam Chair, may I just ask a question of clarification? I do understand that Mr. and Mrs. Grundy and Rally Point Retreat were the agreed-on witnesses for this committee. But as our questions continue, are we able to also invite other witnesses to address questions - just so I'm clear?

THE CHAIR: Actually, this may be a good time, but we will discuss this at the end. We've never had that many witnesses at one time, so this is a first time, but it's a wonderful thing. I think at the end, as part of our business, we will discuss how many are we allowed as witnesses, because if everybody spoke, then we'll have less time for questions. We will discuss that at the end of our meeting as a business item.

At the moment, I will refer it to Mr. Grundy, and then if he needs help, then he can let me know. Is that all right?

LISA ROBERTS: So Mr. Grundy might invite someone else who is on the call to address the question. Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: I think I will run it this way for this time, and then we can decide for future if we have that many people at the same time.

[2:45 p.m.]

LISA ROBERTS: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mr. Grundy, I was wondering if you could address the healing nature of this peer support activity, and particularly from your conversations with your colleagues who may be further along this path to developing different projects. How has it been helpful for your healing, for the healing of first responders and veterans and others with PTSD in general to sort of have a project to pour your energy and focus into, which is very much focused on also helping others?

BOB GRUNDY: Thank you very much, Ms. Roberts, for that question. On my own behalf, it causes me a lot of stress because we're the ones trying to push this water up the hill.

The folks who have one of the biggest organizations might be best placed to answer that particular question, because they have the most active peer support system I've seen yet. I'm going to refer to the guys from Valhalla to provide that answer, if that's all right.

LISA ROBERTS: That's certainly all right for me. So that would be Mr. Bettes or Mr. Bennett?

GRAHAM BETTES: I guess I'll field one. Thanks, Mr. Grundy. My name is Graham Bettes. You're muted. I can't hear what you said.

THE CHAIR: I am so sorry. Mr. Bettes, please go ahead.

GRAHAM BETTES: So the concept of peer support is very important. I should add that both Shawn and I do suffer from PTSD, so our program is kind of learned on a road-well-travelled, lessons-learned type of motif. To that end as well, I've also got the credibility that I'm a licensed or registered psychotherapist in the Province of Ontario. Although our program doesn't specifically deliver therapy, we recognize the concept of group - being introspective and part of a group.

I kind of joke seriously with the group that I needed a support group so I built one around me because one wasn't available, because I'm selfish that way. That basically morphed into the Valhalla Project. The whole concept of peer support is that all of the difficult aspects of the treatment - like you need people supporting you along the way, encouraging you to take your medications, encouraging you to go to your therapies, encouraging you to come out and share what you're going through so that you're not carrying that shame and stigma and everything that PTSD entails.

We're firm believers that PTSD is diagnosed in the brain, but it's really cured through the heart, and you have to learn a greater appreciation for what's around you,

because the injury itself takes away your ability to see the positive things in life. Another symptom of that injury is that it makes you see all the negatives: shame, guilt, embarrassment. When you can't see the light and all that's shoved in your face is dark, having peer support is a wonderful thing.

We're two weeks into a lockdown in Ontario, but you're allowed to get together expressly for the purpose of service dog maintenance, as well as exercise. So we have members from our peer support organization meeting today in groups of four and five at a local park, and they're going off and they're getting that fresh air, they're getting that human contact, they're doing a therapeutic concept known as behaviour activation in the fact that as peers, they are scheduling activities that are positive in nature, and then they are going places.

So when somebody visits a resort like Rally Point and they meet a few other people suffering the same injury and walking that same road, you have your instant network built in right there where when you have a rough day, I can reach out to Shawn and say, "I'm having a rough day, man, check in with me in a couple of hours and if I'm not out of bed, come and get me." It can be something as simple - and this is pre-COVID-19 - something like "Fine, I'll be at your house in an hour and we'll go for a walk or we'll do some archery or we'll train the dogs for an hour."

In COVID-19 days, it's like, all right, take a picture of you outside at the end of your driveway. Take a picture of you outside doing something. You need that constant peer support because, again, another symptom of our injury is to isolate and to have disdain for the world and to be untrusting. The concept of peer support is necessary because it serves to kind of destroy all the kind of confidence that you have in being able to embrace society.

SHAWN BENNETT: Some of the things that we have - we have Brazilian jiu-jitsu, which Graham is a black belt instructor of - we've run with that.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, can I get your name?

SHAWN BENNETT: Sorry. I'm Shawn Bennett. I'm one of the directors. I just want to add that we do run various programs through the week. We have a Tuesday dog walk with service dogs and others to get them out. We run Brazilian jiu-jitsu twice a week. It's kind of hard now. It's been kind of slowed down due to COVID-19. We run a Wednesday night group meeting. We run Sunday morning chats online, with yoga. We try to make sure that we take care of our demographic.

We've also instituted a check-in program. Everybody in our program, in our group dynamic that we have come into contact with is checked in on every day through us - like a cell program, where I contact five, you contact five, and everybody checks in so nobody ever feels alone. As we know, PTSD is only dangerous when you're alone.

THE CHAIR: Thank you both. Ms. Roberts, do you have a follow-up?

LISA ROBERTS: Given that Mr. Grundy asked for us to learn a bit from the Valhalla Project, maybe I'll ask Mr. Bettes and Mr. Bennett if they can share, as a larger project that has been organized around serving this need, what is your operational model? Have you registered as a non-profit organization? Have you applied for a charitable number? Are you a social enterprise? How are you tackling the challenge of building and sustaining the organization and yourselves?

GRAHAM BETTES: Yes, we have incorporated as a non-profit within the province of Ontario. We currently have a consultant preparing the paperwork for our charitable status with the Canada Revenue Agency. To that extent, we're basically - we've both been to several five-day respite programs, one up near Ottawa, as well as we went down to one in California in the United States.

They provided a lot of activities and a lot of soul-searching, and some I'm not even sure what they did, but I know they saved my life. It's kind of a weird magic that you see because you're stepping out of that dark little hole.

The one thing that we saw that wasn't being actively even talked about - it was almost like it was a Harry Potter/Voldemort moment - was the subject of suicide amongst our demographic and PTSD and veterans and first responders. In the United States, it's a very common statistic that 22 veterans commit suicide a day due to PTSD. We don't have a corresponding statistic in Canada because we're just not keeping stats on that sort of thing.

With the rise in COVID-19, it's arguable in a clinical sense on whether or not COVID-19 is meeting the criteria for that traumatic experience in regard to facing trauma. But I can say that the world kind of knows what it's like to have PTSD. You lose your sense of safety, trust, control, intimacy, and self-esteem, and lockdowns in all this COVID are taking away all those variables from people. You've got people that are in that PTSD demographic, who are already in that heightened sense, and they're already going to be charged up from that.

That being said, we basically had planned on doing a five-day respite, and we had contracted a camp or a facility - basically a conference centre - and throughout that week we showed various coping skills, but there's a lot of communicating going on and introspection. Although we don't do therapy on people, it's kind of like a silent form. We really educate them in regard to their injury, and then from there they move on.

With the advent of COVID, we've had to go run a complete Zoom format, so pretty much every month we're offering basically a cohort. It's every Monday and Thursday, it's three hours, we do morning sessions, and I think our next one is going to be evening

sessions. Our intention is within three to five years having our own piece of property in wine country here in Niagara, and opening up a small 20-room respite centre.

We would be running active programming one to two weeks a month, and then we would be inviting other organizations to utilize the property on the so-called off weeks, realizing that the hardest part is trying to find that place where people can feel safe and really commit to a healing journey.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Graham Bettes. Do I have the name correct? B-E-T-T-E-S? Or are you Bennett as well?

GRAHAM BETTES: I'm Graham Bettes, B-E-T-T-E-S. That's Shawn Bennett.

THE CHAIR: They sound the same sometimes, so I just wanted to make sure I'm hearing correctly. Thank you, Mr. Bettes.

Ms. Roberts just finished, and we're moving on to Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I have a clarification question, perhaps for Mr. Grundy, related to the presentation from the initial part of this meeting. You referenced a number of CMHA priorities that your facility or these types of facilities seek to support. Can you clarify whether or not these are issues that pertain to your visitors, or that your visitors attempt to address in the broader communities around your facilities?

BOB GRUNDY: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Jessome. The statements that are listed in there - we provide education and training on site. We are introducing people to the food security program that is well in development, including the chickens, and there is a chicken (Inaudible) watch the chicken run and laugh, you're probably in a depression.

Housing support by filling up the other 202 acres. We're hoping to address the homelessness that surrounds the vets and first responders with PTSD by showing these gentlemen and ladies how to reacquaint themselves with tasks. We're providing the ability to go out and be employed in perhaps an area that doesn't involve trauma quite so badly.

By being amongst others with PTSD and being able to shed a tear when they need to, express some anger if they need to, that allows them to take care of the wellness resilience-based. We show them how to actually build that up and how to ground themselves again. We provide tools here to do that exact job.

We have access to social programs, and we do try to put our guests in touch with the people who require those or who request those.

[3:00 p.m.]

We've worked with the Community Business Development Corporation to help other vets who have come here who want to try to start an organization of their own or an enterprise. We're doing our best to show them life skills with PTSD.

By addressing these methods and by showing them that they have purpose and they have a place still in society, it's actually working well for helping to prevent suicide as well. When you don't have purpose or use anymore, then this is where negative thoughts come in. If you've got a purpose to get up and grind your nose to every day, it's a lot easier to get up and do the job. Think about when you're on vacation with no tasks to do around the yard - the lawn is cut, the pool is clean - what do you do? You're without purpose.

We also provide the navigation and peer support for negotiating through the Veterans Affairs world. In those fashions, that's how we attempt to address those issues.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you for that response, Mr. Grundy. It should go without saying, but thank you to you all for standing up these entities in your own corners of the nation and in our province. I appreciate that work that you folks are doing.

My follow-up has to do with the programs, Mr. Grundy, that you reference which seem to be pretty focused on supporting the individual or the individuals through their own struggles to get them to a point where they can sustainably conduct themselves outside of that safe environment.

Have you been around long enough or do you have visitors who would come back to your facilities and act as the leader or the helper for a new client or patron who would be coming in the door to get the same type of help they did? Sharing their own success stories about how they address their circumstances with the newcomers that would be coming in your door?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Grundy, would you like to answer that? I did see Shawn Bennett put his hand up. Would you like to answer that, or should I ask Mr. Bennett?

BOB GRUNDY: Shawn, I'm going to take this one. Thank you. Yes, we have seen people come back through. We've had people come back through in a sheepdog role where a vet or first responder will bring somebody who has PTSD and is not in a position to make their journey themselves - that they will bring people in. That happens across the other brick and mortar facilities.

We have had them call through as well for support, but especially yes, we have had people come back. We've had many guests who have made return trips frequently. We do our best to leave the door open for that exact purpose. You can't tell when you're going to require assistance.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Miller, you are next.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: I really want to thank all of you for coming forward with this. I know it's hard, yet to see the collaboration amongst groups and that you've all taken time to share this opportunity in the Veterans Affairs Committee is certainly heartwarming.

I would like to know a little bit more about Rally Point. This was the first time I really had heard anything about it. How do other people find out about it? Is it through word of mouth or do you do advertising? How do you get that word out there? Are you afraid if it gets out there too much, that you will be overcome and not be able to provide the level of service or supply the amount of beds that you actually might need?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Grundy.

BOB GRUNDY: Thank you, ma'am, for that question. I don't have enough of a self-defence mechanism to say no to anybody, so my wife had to take over that role because if somebody would ask to come down, I'd just say, come on down. I'd tell Jo on the day of: hey, by the way, somebody might be dropping by, and she would just make it happen. Magic, as happens in the world.

We stay away from hard advertising because we really don't have the money to do that, being run by pensions primarily. These are fairly expensive facilities to keep up, as anybody that is running these will tell you straight up, and to get through some of the licensing and shortfalls that are out there can be even more expensive and sometimes stop the cost.

We enjoy seeing the people come back. We enjoy seeing families come back even more. At Rally Point, we take the entire family down here to help the entire family, not just the person with PTSD. Families are not collateral damage. They are part of the damage that occurs from this insidious disorder.

I hope that provides a quality answer for you, ma'am.

JOHAN GRUNDY: Let me add to that. We have brochures that we leave in various ...

THE CHAIR: Ms. Johan Grundy. Sorry. Ms. Johan Grundy, one second if you don't mind. It's not very loud. Can you speak up, please?

JOHAN GRUNDY: Can you hear me now?

THE CHAIR: Much better.

JOHAN GRUNDY: We have brochures that we leave around different locations in the province. Different Legions have our brochures. Each of the folks whom you have been introduced to today has some of our brochures and some of our information that they share around as well. We advertise through Facebook, we have a website, www.rallypointretreat.org, but a lot of it is word of mouth. We have been in the paper, we've been on TV, but we find that a lot of people don't recognize the information until it becomes relevant to them. It just becomes almost white noise in the background until they encounter someone with PTSD or a situation where a family member develops PTSD. Then they'll hear the advertising and it will be relevant and then it will pass onward. As Bob said, as far as doing hard advertising, commercials, signage, that sort of thing, it's way out of our price range.

We have participated in a few wellness expos. We were at the Christmas at the Forum for the few short weeks that it was up and running. We try to find low-cost ways of getting the information out there, but it's expensive, and you have to prioritize and decide well, what are we going to do, get groceries or get some more brochures? The groceries are going to win because we have to take care of the people who are here first. We can't feed them brochures.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Grundy. Do you have another comment, Mr. Grundy, or can I go back to Ms. Miller? That's fine? Thank you.

Ms. Miller, do you have a follow-up?

MARGARET MILLER: I do, just again about the people who come to you. I just wanted to know, what is the time frame that most of your guests stay? Do they stay for a few days, a few weeks? What is the longest that you've ever had anybody stay with you?

BOB GRUNDY: That's a great question, ma'am. We've actually divided it into three major categories: visitors, guests, and residents. If you're here less than two weeks, you're a visitor. (Inaudible) greater than six months, you're Mike, whom you met earlier. Sorry, you become a resident instead in our vocabulary.

MARGARET MILLER: Thank you so much.

THE CHAIR: Before I ask Mr. Maguire, I do have a quick question, if the committee would let me. In regard to advertising, I'm not sure if you know that as MLAs we have a reach to a few thousand people ourselves. If you wish to email us information, we will be happy to promote it for you. I would love to know if we have members in my constituency who are able to use your service. I hope I'm clear that all MLAs here will be happy to help you promote it if you want us to. Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you for being here today. It has been very educational. First of all, I want to thank all of you for being here today and everything you do.

My question surrounds - most individuals who have PTSD who have served are very proud individuals and it's very difficult to approach them and to get them to get the help that they need. Not all veterans - in particular, the younger veterans - are involved with the Legion. We have the Spryfield Legion out here. I think it tends to be a bit of an older crowd there.

The reason I bring this up - and I'm not talking out of turn or anything like that. I've had this conversation. My youngest brother served two terms in Afghanistan. He has some issues that he acknowledges. It's very difficult to get somebody to reach out to an organization. He's actually in Ontario. It's very difficult for them to reach out to an organization or to reach out to health care individuals for the help that they need.

Maybe it's a little off-topic or maybe I'm asking the wrong people, I don't know, but what I'm wondering is, how do you approach that? If you see somebody struggling, how do you approach them to start the conversation to reach out to your organizations and to reach out to individuals like yourselves who may have similar experience?

BOB GRUNDY: It's actually a pretty easy question. Walk up, stick your hand out and say "What's happening?" Making contact is the first most important thing you can do to help somebody. We don't try to tell them what to do. That's not the purpose of peer support. Peer support is to help them find their own way. At the respites, we've tried to provide options that they can explore to do that, but typically, I've found that walking up, sticking my hand out and going, "Hi, I'm Bob Grundy. What's happening?" seems to work pretty well.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: That's what I just wanted to know. What in your experience - and with the work that you're doing, are you getting individuals from all different ages and backgrounds? One of the things that I've noticed when we have these conversations around PTSD, in particular from military members, it tends to be our older and wiser, more experienced military members that recognize this. I say that just from my own personal experience being around. I have a lot of friends who have served in the military and, like I said earlier, my youngest brother served in the military. A lot of times, it's difficult to have a conversation with somebody who is younger and thinks they're invincible.

First of all, do you have a huge age gap with the people whom you're dealing with and do you approach people differently depending on their age and experience?

MR. GRUNDY: That's actually a pretty good question, and I know the folks at the other facilities have all encountered the same thing. Since we started this, we have had vets

who have served in the '60s through to vets who have served in Afghanistan. The age group difference is very wide, and it serves vets from three different conflict eras in Canadian history. It has not known borders, it has not known sexes, it has not known races, and it doesn't exclude anybody whom we've seen thus far.

[3:15 p.m.]

Does that hopefully answer your question? (Interruption) I'm not sure where the feedback was coming from, but hopefully that will give you the answer. There are no borders, there are no boundaries, and from what we've seen, it's just as devastating on one as it is on the next.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Grundy. Mr. Horne.

BILL HORNE: Thank you. It's extremely interesting what has been happening this afternoon with us here. Mr. Grundy's starting up a system in the local area. Three years ago, I heard your name and about your Rally Point operations. I belong to a Legion, the Waverley Legion Dieppe 90. I think you may have friends who are also members there, and that is where we've heard your name.

Also, there's a little fact here that was mentioned earlier: Nova Scotia really is the only province that has a Veterans Affairs Committee, so you're fortunate there. Maybe other provinces should have them. That's what I understand.

My question, I think, is for Mr. Steven Murgatroyd. I see you there, and I just wanted to ask a little bit about your organization helping vets in particular on the farm, and I just want to know where you are and how your operation works - if that's okay, Ms. Chair.

THE CHAIR: I'm sorry, I was just looking - sorry Mr. Horne, I was just looking for the name that you mentioned. It was Margaret?

BILL HORNE: Murgatroyd.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Roy.

STEVE MURGATROYD: Murgatroyd. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: Sorry about that.

BILL HORNE: I apologize.

STEVE MURGATROYD: That's quite all right. No problem at all. Thank you for your question.

The Veterans Farm Project - we're located near Windsor, Nova Scotia. What we do is we provide a safe, welcoming space where veterans can come enjoy the property and the peacefulness of it. When they're here, they can help us cultivate and harvest vegetables, and all those vegetables are donated then through the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. Last year, we donated approximately 5,000 pounds worth of food to needy veterans through the Legion.

Our program is focused mostly on providing a safe space for women - female veterans and first responders. We do have co-ed, and I think we've started calling them Guy Day Fridays. Unfortunately, COVID has really put a damper on any group gatherings here at the farm, so we've just kind of stuck with our small core group for providing the food and the vegetables that we give.

I hope that answers your question, sir.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr. Horne, do you have a follow-up?

BILL HORNE: I don't have another question right at the moment. I see there are other people who wish to talk too.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Horne. The next person is Mr. Ryan.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Grundy, earlier when you were giving your preamble at the beginning, you talked about Veterans Affairs. I'm just wondering, what can we do on our end with you to get Veterans Affairs to fully recognize the value-add of your organizations and the critical role that you play in providing the service to help our veterans heal, and our first responders?

BOB GRUNDY: I believe by stepping out and helping these organizations establish to the level where they feel comfortable establishing. Please keep in mind, these people are doing this on their own skin and dime. This is not something that they're being paid to do. They're doing this out of the bigness of their heart.

One of the biggest things that could happen - and what we're hoping to see come from this meeting - would be influencing of the provincial Veterans Affairs Committee on perhaps the national Veterans Affairs Committee so that they will see the benefit of what peer respites mean. Then when the people are coming to the respites that have been set up already and help establish the ones that don't have the bricks-and-mortar facilities established, then when they're established properly, then CRA will be able to bless off on naming these as places where vets and first responders can go for healing, and then they can be compensated for their efforts in what they're doing.

I guess the biggest part would be if you could influence the federal Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to have them recognize the efforts of all these people, that would be amazing.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Ryan, do you have a follow-up?

MURRAY RYAN: No, that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Grundy.

THE CHAIR: I don't have anybody else on the list, unless somebody has a question right now. We can wrap it up or let our presenters give us their final remarks. Mr. Grundy, do you have final remarks?

BOB GRUNDY: If I had one question that I could beseech, could you give a minute for each of the organizations of these people that have come to let you know exactly what each are doing exactly?

THE CHAIR: With pleasure. I think that's a wonderful idea. Actually, we thought we were going to do this, but I didn't know how long your final remarks were going to be, so this is fantastic. I had decided that if we had extra time, to do that. I will go by the list as I have it and I'll call your name. Try to time it for one minute, if you can. Mr. Burke, you already spoke, correct? The next one is Prospect Haven. We have Cindy Piccott and Brad Hogg. Would you like to give us just a quick?

CYNTHIA PICCOTT: Good afternoon. Thank you for that opportunity. My name is Cynthia Piccott and I represent Prospect Haven Wellness Retreat, which is probably Prospect Haven Peer Support Retreat.

We have 42 acres. We are here in Prospect, Nova Scotia. Our goal - and we've already started this process, we're about two years into the process now - is to have 10 self-sustaining cabins and a common space, so we would be residential temporarily and hopefully have some therapeutic components as well as being out in nature on the trails and whatnot. We hope to have a peer support established system somehow relative to what Mr. Bettes was talking about earlier, where people can come and have either a few days of retreat and one-on-one therapy because a lot of us who have been through this know that we trust each other, as opposed to an established therapy environment. We tend to walk with the people who walk the walk and talk to people who talk the talk.

That is our project, and we're working with Halifax Global right now in trying to get everything in order for application to the Halifax Regional Municipality in the next two or three weeks.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Piccott, I have it as Cindy, and I see here as Cynthia. Which is the correct name?

CYNTHIA PICCOTT: The legal is Cynthia.

THE CHAIR: The legal is Cynthia. Thank you again.

Next one is Purdy Wood Acres in Wallace, Nova Scotia, and I have Gary Phillips. Gary Phillips, are you here? I also have Duke Karsten from Service Members Keep. Do we have Mr. Karsten, or Mr. Phillips?

DUKE KARSTEN: You have Duke here.

THE CHAIR: Perfect, Duke Karsten. Sorry about that. It's a long list.

DUKE KARSTEN: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This opportunity to speak with a group of people such as this is amazing, for sure. Listening to all the answers to all the questions and stuff that you had there, I could have the meeting with any one of you that would last hours and hours and hours long.

I'm retired military, 38 years, Army sergeant major. I dealt with a considerable amount of PTSD and always trying to answer the question of what can we do to help? This project, Service Members Keep, started up 10 years ago before my retirement, and has gone into my retirement. We've been up and kind of operational now for two to three years. I based it on a lot of visits and respites that I looked at and involved myself with down in the States.

Unlike a lot of the ones out there, Service Members Keep will always be a very private, very secluded location on the Bay of Fundy for many reasons. Number one, you can't buy 40 acres of land on the Bay of Fundy - it doesn't exist, okay? Number two, that's what I got as an answer after I surveyed 5,000 people with PTSD and what they wanted, and I based the Keep on that.

The best I can say is, I invite any MLA or anybody from Nova Scotia who wants to come and take a look. You'll understand what's going on here if you take the time to come and look. Anybody who comes is amazed, and everybody who's stayed here would come back in a heartbeat. Again, thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr. Karsten. I just want to clarify: in Wallace, Nova Scotia - there are four different facilities that are available in Wallace? Is that correct? I have Purdy Wood Acres, Service Members Keep - is that a name as well? - Serenity Acres Family Ranch and Veterans Farm Project. I've got it wrong. Somebody is shaking their head. All under Wallace, Nova Scotia. That's not accurate - I apologize. All right.

I will move on. Do I need to get every one of those to speak? Because Mr. Karsten spoke. I didn't see Mr. Phillips here. That was the point of this. It was going to be a little

confusing because we have such a large number, so I'm just following the list. I have somebody with their hand up. Mr. Grundy, go ahead.

BOB GRUNDY: I believe, ma'am, if we went down to see the pictures, Ms. Falconer still has to speak. Ms. Shears has to speak, and Chantal also has to speak.

THE CHAIR: Not only do I have a long list, but my computer is giving me a hard time, and I missed what you said. If you don't mind repeating the names, I will go with your names.

BOB GRUNDY: All right, ma'am. Here's your new lineup: Kristy Falconer, Grace Shears, and Chantal Soucy.

THE CHAIR: Beautiful. All right. Kristy Falconer, please go ahead.

[3:30 p.m.]

KRISTY FALCONER: Good afternoon. My name is Kristy Falconer. I'm the owner and founder of Serenity Acres Family Ranch. It's a 217-acre parcel. We do equine-assisted learning. We have a heated pool and a therapeutic saltwater hot tub. We offer horseback riding, hiking, workshops - primarily self-care workshops. We've started archery. We start with basic skills and our coach gradually progresses the participants to horseback - so mounted archery, if you will. Petting zoo. We also do campfires.

We are endeavoring to add in 10 cabins as well for participants to come and stay. Right now, we currently have accommodations for either a family or two members. We have a two-bedroom trailer. It's on the 35-acre parcel of the ranch. We'll be adding gardening, trauma yoga and we are working with other first responders who don't have facilities yet but have received training. For example, trauma yoga - they are going to be coming and participating with our workshops, simply because they don't have a facility of their own yet, so we are incorporating other first responders who are also wanting to offer peer support to fellow peers.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Falconer. Ms. Grace Shears.

GRACE SHEARS: Thank you, everyone on the panel here today. My name is Grace Shears. I am a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces and founder of Pathways to Better Days Foundation, which is a not-for-profit registered foundation. We're working towards becoming a charitable foundation as well.

Our focus is music and kind of the human side of pieces. What my foundation is developing is a mobile peer support unit with a music twist and base to it. We'll be bringing the humanizing piece to our veterans and first responders because of the isolation, because of the homelessness. We're going to them with the mobile unit and bringing the peer

support connected with the music piece with the intention to bring them back to our hub, which is at the RCMP headquarters. That's where we meet with Healing Rhythms for Veterans, another not-for-profit foundation I'm connected with - our foundation is - where we give instruction to give veterans some power to learn some instruments themselves, and also become a part of our jam night, which is Music Heals the Soul, which is at the RCMP headquarters as well.

We've also formed some wonderful partnerships and relationships with organizations like Eastern Health here in Newfoundland, Wounded Warriors Canada, and Boots on the Ground. We are actually with CMHA, looking at getting trained, peer support trained as well.

I am a psychological first aid instructor who started a peer support group here in Newfoundland back in July 2019, as I also suffer with PTSD and wanted to find a resource that was outside of the clinical piece - something that was a little bit more humanizing, and of course with the music piece component to it.

Thank you very much. That's who we are and what we're doing here. We hope to eventually go across the nation with our mobile unit and bring this to different places and across the globe, if possible. We say that music heals the soul, and that's where we're bringing that in - to build a family and community with our veterans and first responders around music.

THE CHAIR: This was wonderful. So many of you are working separate, but together. It's incredible. It's wonderful. Last, but not least, we have Chantal Soucy.

CHANTAL SOUCY: I'll try to make myself as clear as possible. As you know, I'm speaking French, so I'm not perfectly bilingual. First, thank you Bob and Johan for inviting me.

My name is Chantal. I'm the founder and director of Equi-Sens, which is a therapeutic horseback riding centre. It was created in 2005. We are working with kids with disabilities. In 2015, I decided - because I was also diagnosed with a secondary trauma, I wasn't able to practise and work at what I was doing before, so because I'm coming from the Air Cadets, I decided to continue to work with the military. Our president is a former commander of one of the - in French I would say le Vingt-deuxieme regiment, so it's R22 - something in English. So when I decided to present my project to him, he was very excited about that, so we decided to go see Mr. Natynczyk, and Mr. O'Toole - I don't know their titles exactly - and presented the project to them.

So now we did research in 2015, so probably you can see the results on Veterans Affairs. We did participate also on the national research to know how the horses are benefits for PTSD programs, so now we are offering the therapeutic horseback riding for

the kids, but also since 2015, we have the program for veterans with PTSD and also a program for their spouses and their kids also.

Our program is based on psychotherapy, so the team that we have right now is psychologists, psychotherapists, and also social workers, so it's very centred on psychotherapy, so it's equine-assisted psychotherapy that we are offering.

That's about it. My life partner is also a veteran. He did some turns in Afghanistan and was also diagnosed with PTSD. So now he's working with me. He did some equine therapy also, and then he decided to become a volunteer, and now he's working. Anything that we are doing, every group that we have right now, everything has a meaning. So even though it's a small thing, even though it's a big thing, horse, gardening, a retreat, yeah. We can save people from that, and also that would make a difference in their life. That's about it. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Merci, Madame Soucy. Votre anglais est très bon. Also, I do know a friend of mine who has a daughter who used horseback riding as a therapy all her life, so horses do make a big difference in many people's lives. Merci encore, Madame Soucy.

That was the last. Is there anybody else, Mr. Grundy, you would like to call on? We have five minutes.

BOB GRUNDY: Right off the top, ma'am, Gary had to leave because part of his new house was falling down on him and he had to save it. That was why he had to disappear.

THE CHAIR: All right, thank you for letting us know. Do you have any final comments you would like to make, Mr. Grundy? Mrs. Grundy?

BOB GRUNDY: I'd like to thank all of the folks who came out today and have stuck with us and have faith that as a group we can help more people by cross-pollinating. Thank you for the opportunity. We've had the opportunity between our organization and Duke's organization to help people who needed places to stay. Even as of 2019, we had two occasions to do that quickly.

The organization that Steve Murgatroyd's got with the Veterans Farm Project has cross-pollinated, if you will, with Rally Point, and they've brought us food resources, and they're growing seeds for our future year too. Gary, who is no longer on screen, he and I responded to a first responder who was in distress. I'm sorry, I'm not good on dates and time anymore - 2020 left me completely bereft of figuring what a calendar even looks like anymore. We assisted that person as well.

We've doing a lot embedding ourselves with Serenity Acres Family Ranch. They have such a marvelous prospect for what they are trying to do. It's amazing. We contact

with the other folks via Zoom whenever we can. Any help that you guys who are close to the city could give Cynthia Piccott and Brad Hogg would be so greatly appreciated.

I'm hoping that you're going to be able to contact the MLAs for each of these organizations. If they haven't been contacted already, let them know there are some fantastic people in their neighborhood who are trying to do big things on behalf of Nova Scotians and Canadians. Thank you for your time.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Grundy. On behalf of the committee members, I truly want to thank all of you. I truly believe in the work of peer support. Sometimes that is a lot more beneficial than clinical support in certain cases. I want to thank you on behalf of the people you serve and on behalf of the committee for joining us today.

If you would like to leave, we have some committee business to do for the next 10 or 15 minutes. I appreciate you all joining us, even though it was a large group. I hope my computer issues did not delay things today too much. It was lovely meeting you all.

I think we only have the members. Thank you for being patient. I did get lost with the names - that they were all under Wallace. I apologize for that, but that's what I thought it was. I was confused there.

The first item is the prorogation of the House of Assembly. As we have decided, we are continuing with our meetings. There is no issue there. Unless somebody has any issue, we can move on.

Ms. Masland.

KIM MASLAND: I'm wondering if now is a time for me to put forward a motion concerning the presenter's presentation.

THE CHAIR: Sure. Is it in regard to the number of witnesses?

KIM MASLAND: No, it's a different motion that I have just sent off to the Clerk.

THE CHAIR: Do we have a copy of the motion? It was sent to everybody via email, Judy?

JUDY KAVANAGH: I just sent it.

THE CHAIR: Go ahead, Ms. Masland.

KIM MASLAND: We heard today from these amazing presenters and the success of the peer support model in helping to treat those who have become PTSD bearers. I

therefore move that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs write a letter of support for Rally Point Retreat to use in their accreditation application to Peer Support Canada.

I would like to further add to this motion that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs write a letter of support to the federal Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs Canada, outlining the importance of organizations like Rally Point Retreat in our province.

THE CHAIR: Any comments? Mr. Horne.

BILL HORNE: What I've heard, it sounds like a very good motion. I think we should all pass it, in my opinion.

THE CHAIR: I think it's wonderful, Ms. Masland, to support as a committee, from what we heard today.

Would all those in favour of the motion, please signify by raising your hand. Contrary minded, raise your hand.

The motion is carried.

KIM MASLAND: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Kavanagh will help us write those letters, correct? Thank you, Ms. Kavanagh.

Next is correspondence. We have received three letters. Does anybody have any issues or comments regarding the correspondence we received via email? They're all on your agenda. Any comments? I hear none. Thank you, everybody.

The next meeting is on February 16th from 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. The subject is: Nova Scotia Health Authority Veterans Services, regarding Camp Hill Hospital and the challenges faced due to COVID-19. If the House is in session, this meeting will be postponed. Is that all right with everybody?

If everybody's okay, we can call this meeting to an end. I thank everybody. It was a very interesting meeting, and lots of presenters, but it was heart-wrenching at times. Thank you all for being here.

[The committee adjourned at 3:46 p.m.]