

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Tuesday, March 22, 2022**

**Committee Room**

**Legion Capital Assistance Program**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Chris Palmer (Chair)

Danielle Barkhouse (Vice Chair)

Larry Harrison

Tom Taggart

Nolan Young

Hon. Ben Jessome

Ali Duale

Suzy Hansen

Lisa Lachance

[Danielle Barkhouse was replaced by John A. MacDonald.]

**In Attendance:**

Kim Leadley  
Acting Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

**WITNESS**

Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism & Heritage

Bill Greenlaw, Executive Director, Community, Sports and Recreation

Nancy Sheppard, Manager, Community Engagement



**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**10:00 A.M.**

CHAIR  
Chris Palmer

VICE CHAIR  
Danielle Barkhouse

THE CHAIR: I call this meeting to order now. This is the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. My name is Chris Palmer and I'm the Chair of the committee. Today we will hear from Mr. Bill Greenlaw and Ms. Nancy Sheppard from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, regarding the Legion Capital Assistance Program.

At this point, I'd like all the committee members, and everyone in the room, to please either turn off your phones or put them on vibrate. In case of an emergency, we'd ask that you please exit through the Granville Street exit and walk to the Grand Parade. Following Province House protocol, we would ask that you keep your masks on during the meeting unless you're speaking.

At this point I would like to ask all the committee members to introduce themselves. We'll start on my left and go around.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you. For Hansard, I acknowledge the presence of Chief Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb and Acting Committee Clerk Kim Leadley.

Today our topic is the Legion Capital Assistance Program. Our witnesses again are from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage: Mr. Bill Greenlaw, the Executive Director of Community, Sports and Recreation; and Ms. Nancy Sheppard, Manager of Community Engagement. I'd like to welcome you both to our committee today. At this point, if you'd like to introduce yourselves and give an opening remark, please feel free.

**BILL GREENLAW:** My name is Bill Greenlaw, and I am the Executive Director of Community, Sports and Recreation at the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. I'd like to thank the members of the Veterans Affairs Committee for inviting us back here to speak about the Legion Capital Assistance Program because of its importance.

Like many organizations, Legions have been struggling since we've appeared here last in November 2020. Following Public Health guidelines while continuing to operate programs that benefit its many members at the branch level has been particularly challenging, especially when fundraising activities like selling poppies have been stunted. That is why we've allocated \$75,000 to Nova Scotia Nunavut Legion Command in 2020-21 and an additional \$100,000 in 2021-22 to supplement the losses from the Legion poppy campaign.

As you may know, poppy campaigns provide financial assistance and support to veterans and their families for food, heating costs, clothing, home repairs, housing costs, and much more. My team is in regular communication with Legions at the branch level, and with Nova Scotia Nunavut Legion Command, to monitor their status as we transition out of this global pandemic mode and enter in our new normal.

It's not only these programs that are important to communities. The buildings that Legions operate are important to communities, and these buildings play significant roles in helping to strengthen communities. They are the cornerstone of communities, places where veterans socialize, and where communities mark some of their most important events. In many instances, they are hubs for our communities' most vulnerable.

The intent of the Legion Capital Assistance Program is to assist Legion facilities with repairs and capital upgrades. This is a unique program in Canada where funding is exclusively set aside for infrastructure upgrades at Legions, which is greatly needed. This program was created in partnership with Nova Scotia Nunavut Legion Command and is administered by the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to honour veterans for all that they have given to Nova Scotians and Canadians.

Legions in Nova Scotia are first and foremost supported by Nova Scotia Nunavut Command. The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage administers the Legion Capital Assistance Program on behalf of Legion Command. Nancy Sheppard,

manager here at the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, will now walk us through a brief description of the Legion Capital Assistance Program.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Sheppard.

NANCY SHEPPARD: Good morning, everyone. As Bill said, I'm Nancy Sheppard. I'm the administrator for the Legion Capital Assistance Program, so I'm the girl on the phone every day with many of the Legion members.

It is a pleasure to be here and share how our department works with Nova Scotia Nunavut Legion Command to ensure that Legions across the province are supported going forward. I may refer to Nova Scotia Nunavut Legion Command as just Legion Command.

Legions play a significant role in Nova Scotian communities. They provide gathering places where people of all ages connect. There are 100 Legions currently operating in Nova Scotia. Legions hold many member events - the most well known, of course, are the Remembrance Day receptions that are held in all of your ridings all across Nova Scotia. They are also open for important community events like weddings and birthdays. Numerous non-profits use them for hosting fundraising activities and cultural events. This is how Legions generate a lot of their revenue - through the facility rentals. Some Legions are also warming or emergency centres when their communities are in times of need or crisis.

Unlike other provinces in Canada, the Government of Nova Scotia has a unique relationship with its Legions. In 2010, the Legion Capital Assistance Program was created through a partnership between the Province and Legion Command, which has continued to evolve year over year. The program is one way we demonstrate our gratitude to veterans for all they have given us and continue to give us here in our province.

The Legion Capital Assistance Program was previously managed by the former Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. In 2016, the program's administration was transferred to our department. Our department takes great pride in being able to administer this capital grant program created to assist Legions in maintaining safe and accessible facilities.

Typically, we cover 50 per cent of the total project costs up to a maximum of \$10,000. However, in the upcoming year, we will cover 80 per cent of the costs of repairs, up to the same maximum of \$10,000. This change is a really good example of the collaborative relationship we have with Legion Command. We know Legions have struggled to fundraise during this pandemic, but the annual program stands at \$100,000.

Eligible capital projects under the program include necessary structural repairs to meet building code requirements. These include repairs and replacements of roofs, doors, windows, furnace and heating systems, onsite sewage systems, wells and water treatment, and other emergency situations deemed eligible by the department and Legion Command.

Each year, individual Legions apply through an application to our department. If the total value of all applications received exceeds the total program budget of \$100,000, Legion Command then prioritizes the projects to be funded. The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage also makes additional investments in Legions across the Province through other programs. This is one of the benefits of having our department administer this important program.

Since 2019, 50 Legions were funded to update their facilities in a variety of ways through the Legion Capital Assistance Program. Over the past five years we have seen trends in the types of capital improvements made by Legions, including heat pumps, energy-efficient windows, replacement roofs, structural repairs to foundations, and electrical work - mostly to bring the buildings up to code. These investments and the associated projects will help sustain our Legions going into the future.

The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage has also made additional investments outside of the LCAP program. In 2021, \$25,000 was allocated to Legion Command to assist with their Meals on Wheels program. For example, RCL Branch 32 in Chéticamp prepped and delivered more than 810 meals for vulnerable Nova Scotians in the communities of Chéticamp, Margaree, and St. Joseph du Moine.

This money also included support for the Veteran Farm Project, which is managed by some female veterans. Some of that food is sold, but mostly goes as bundles weekly to Legion Command who package it up and deliver it to 30 low-income families throughout the growing season - typically Spring until after Thanksgiving. This year, other food programs through Legions fed 500 kids breakfasts in Pictou, and 668 meals delivered to communities in Lower Sackville, Bedford, and Hammonds Plains.

Also this year, the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage is funding two emergency repair projects totalling about \$30,000. Both were sewer and pipe replacement due to freezing and thawing because the Legions remained closed during the pandemic. Damages were outside of insurance coverage, and without help, the facilities would quite likely have remained closed.

Through the Community ACCESS-Ability Program, we are working toward the Province's commitment to make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030. This, of course, includes our Legions. There is a significant amount of work being done to make Legions easier to access for their members and other members in their community. We've invested tens of thousands of dollars to improve the accessibility of these Legions. These include improvements to accessible washrooms, as well as paving in the parking lots, replacing floors, ramps, et cetera.

Another example of a program administered by the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage that Legions take advantage of is the Community Food Literacy and Access Fund. For example, in 2020-21, RCL Branch 22 in Bear River

received a \$4,500 grant to teach skills about harvesting and preserving foods in their community. It was a live stream and video.

This concludes my presentation. We're happy to take any questions you may have.

THE CHAIR: We'll now enter into our question-and-answer period. As per our normal procedures, I'd ask that you raise your hand. I will keep a running tally on our questions being asked. I will allow for a follow-up question if it pertains to the original question or if you need clarification on an answer given by the witness. I would ask that you keep your masks on. You can remove them at the time that you ask your question, and please wait for your light to be lit up on your microphone.

I did see MLA Taggart's hand, and then I saw MLA Lachance's hand, so we'll begin the questions with MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Greenlaw, could you speak of the ways in which the Legion Capital Assistance Program works with the department's other programs to fit in with the applicant's needs?

BILL GREENLAW: I don't know if the members are aware, but for funding fiscal year 2022-23, we at the department had the majority of the Capital Assistance Programs in our department close in February. This was to allow for assessment and evaluation so we could make decisions once the budget was passed so that community groups and Legions can put their projects out to tender or get the work done during the building season or Summer season. What we heard from across all sectors is the need to have that security that funding would be flowing to them early in the new fiscal year. That's why that closing date.

Because of that, when we get the Legion Capital Assistance Programs in, we look at what the request is, if there are opportunities for other funding across our department - like Community ACCESS-Ability Program grants. That's one. Legion Capital Assistance Program doesn't necessarily address - we would hive off some of that ask and use it through our Community ACCESS-Ability Program. If they had recreational programs in the Legion, we would direct it to our recreational funding programs. We try to maximize the grants across and assess the files in a collaborative way to maximize government's investment and maximize our impact in the community.

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: Thanks so much for your presentation. It's really interesting to hear. We know the important role that Legions play across our province, so it's certainly really important to understand how government supports those community facilities. I was interested to hear about support - whether through this fund or through other funds - for meeting accessibility commitments. I'm also wondering, as you're responding to requests

for funding and that sort of thing, if you're seeing a trend towards requests around green technology or greening of facilities. Maybe I'll just leave that question there.

[10:15 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Ms. Sheppard.

NANCY SHEPPARD: Yes, we have seen a trend. Many of the Legions that call want to update their heating systems, and we always recommend heat pumps. That's where they're all pretty much going now. I would say that 30 per cent of the applications we get, that's what they're doing. They're putting in heat pumps, or they're putting in really good windows, or they're replacing really bad roofing that hasn't been insulated properly. Slow by slow, bit by bit, we are getting there, for sure.

THE CHAIR: Is there a follow-up, MLA Lachance?

LISA LACHANCE: I'm just wondering if you've been able to collaborate with any other parts of government around providing information to Legions to educate them about what choices there are in terms of green technology or green upgrading?

NANCY SHEPPARD: No, I haven't, but I would certainly look into that, because that's a fantastic idea.

THE CHAIR: MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: My question is about the structural repairs. I know that you can only take in so many through a fiscal year or during a period of time. I'm wondering, is it common for Legions to continually ask for particular funding for structural repairs? As we know, some structures need a little bit more work than others. Do they get approved year after year, or is it just based on a priority?

NANCY SHEPPARD: We do get a lot of structural repairs. Some buildings aren't even up to code. We get a lot of those, but if, for example, they come to us and say their washroom really needs to be done badly, we will suggest they make an accessible washroom if they don't already have one. Then we take them over to the Community Accessibility Program. It leaves room in the fund that we have for electrical repairs and roofs and that kind of thing.

We try to work with each applicant, depending on their project and what their priority is, but if we do get more applications than we have money, we really leave it to Legion Command to tell us who to fund. They have their own internal measures on how they make those decisions.



BILL GREENLAW: In addition to that, the funding criterion is we do not fund a Legion two years in a row. We don't see the trend of year-after-year funding, because if you've received it this fiscal year, you wouldn't be eligible next year, but you would be eligible in the third year. I just wanted to be clear. They do come back for successive capital improvements, but we would not fund them unless there was enough demand for the \$100,000, which has actually never happened.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Greenlaw, you had mentioned a process undertaken to evaluate programs at the department. Can you speak a little more to that, and whether or not programs like this may be subject to changes or differences in levels of funding?

BILL GREENLAW: Great question. The department has been undergoing a program review and looking at all of our programs fundamentally from an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) lens to make sure that we are reaching the right audiences, we're being inclusive to traditionally marginalized communities, assessing grants from primarily that perspective. I guess it's perspective, but I see that the changes that will eventually result from this program review will be positive. We'll have more inclusive funding, better transparency. I think that the funding programs are pretty transparent, but I think you can always be better. I see this as a great opportunity for our reach and our department to continue to grow, and to continually impact and make the lives of Nova Scotians better.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Greenlaw, could you clarify if this is a new move, or is this part of an annual standard operating procedure that gets done at the department?

BILL GREENLAW: The review's been going on for a while. It started with the previous government, with their review. We have currently well over 80 funding programs. We're looking at ease of access. An example would be capital grants - is there a capital grant portal? Then we decide if we can streamline the applications better. Rather than having somebody try to figure out whether there is a Community Facilities Improvement Program or a Legion Capital Assistance Program, or a Recreation Facility Development program, if you have a single point of access, and then we can direct it that way.

We're hoping that through a streamlined approach that the accessibility and the (Inaudible) to that confusion, perhaps, that exists about how to apply and where to apply is clearer to those who are seeking funding.

THE CHAIR: I apologize if I didn't say your name for the microphone. At this point, I would now like to ask MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: This program has been out for over a decade now. I'm just wondering - you touched on it somewhat - could you tell us a bit about how the program has changed from when it was initially established?

NANCY SHEPPARD: We have an annual meeting with Legion Command every year. We talk about things they would like to see in the program, eligibility of projects, the timing of when the program opens and closes. Over the years, we have changed that. The program now opens January 31<sup>st</sup> and closes March 31<sup>st</sup>, so it's currently open for the next fiscal year. This allows the money to flow in the construction season, so it's better timed.

We changed the program. It used to be we would fund them half of the money up front, and then the other half at the conclusion of the projects once their final reports were filed. We now give 100 per cent up front. Some Legions struggle to front the money until the other money comes, so this helped with that problem.

Then again, this year they told us that Legions are struggling to come up with their 50 per cent of the total project costs. It's a hardship, and we get that, and we heard that. We changed it to fund at 80 per cent and up to 20, which brings it almost in line with our other infrastructure program that we have on the books. Those are just a few of the examples, but we talk to Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte over at Legion Command a lot, and I am on the phone all the time with Legion Branches with their questions.

THE CHAIR: MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Through you, I believe to Ms. Sheppard, there are great stories in there of the positive, but can you talk about why some of them are being declined? Some are being declined, I assume; there are more than 100. Are there reasons for that?

NANCY SHEPPARD: We work collaboratively with Legion Command. Basically, I'm the Program Administrator. We don't really make any decisions over who gets money and who doesn't. Some projects aren't eligible. For example, a Legion will call me to say they want a new bar fridge. That's not an infrastructure need, so that project isn't eligible.

For the most part, if the project is eligible - they haven't received any funding over the last two years - it goes on the list. It goes to Legion Command and, like I said, they have their own internal measures on how they let us know. They don't only prioritize which Legions are being funded, but they also give us the amount. An amount is requested, Legion Command might give them a little bit less than they requested, so in order to fund a few more Legions, sometimes they do it that way, but how they make those decisions is really a question for them.

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: Actually, my question is perfectly timed. You were speaking about how Legion Command prioritizes and assigns funding within eligible projects. I was wondering about the planning process. Is there a sense of the hundred Legions in Nova Scotia, what's coming up, what the priority areas are? Also, how do you ensure that your

partner in this, Legion Command, is funding consistently with government priorities - that there's fairness and that sort of thing? Not suggesting that there wouldn't be, but how do you make sure that you're comfortable with the transparency and accountability of that process?

NANCY SHEPPARD: I think we're pretty comfortable. They know their Legions better than anybody. They meet with their boards bi-weekly, I think, so they have a really good idea of what's happening in the Legions. I have a pretty good idea of what's going to come because I get a lot of phone calls. Folks want to know, is this project eligible, is that project eligible, I got money last year, can I get it this year? I have a pretty good idea, and we usually typically get 15 to 20 applications per season. As far as whether Legion Command is aligning with government, I don't know.

THE CHAIR: Is there a follow-up, MLA Lachance?

LISA LACHANCE: I think this would count under the planning cycle. You talked about funding folks 100 per cent up front. What's the end process? How do Legions report on the funding that they receive?

NANCY SHEPPARD: I usually give them a date. It's usually in February the following year to finish their project and send in their final report. I usually have to walk them through the process. It's not very difficult, but they're not really sure or can't remember what paperwork they have to submit.

It's actually pretty easy. They have to tell us what happened, how their project went, how it better serves their community, and who it's serving in their community. They have to send us photographs of their project, and I usually get 20 to 30 photographs of each project. They have to give us an accounting of all the invoices that they paid, and they have to send us cancelled cheques to prove that the invoices have, in fact, been paid. Once that happens, then it's marked in our system that the final report has been received and approved.

If the final report is late coming, it happens, contractors cancel, they can't get materials - I'm sure everybody here has encountered those problems, so that happens for the Legions just like everyone else - they just call me, and I give them an extension. Sometimes they're really long extensions, but we know the project is happening. They're working hard to make it happen. Sometimes they're volunteers doing the work. It's not a problem.

If there's an outstanding issue where we don't get a final report, we usually enlist the help of Legion Command, and they're quite quick at getting us the paperwork. It's usually not because a Legion is being delinquent in any way, but they have a change in the board members, the president changed, they weren't sure. It just takes a little time to align that, but it's usually pretty good. We do have a policy at CCTH that if you do not file your

final report, you are not eligible to receive any further grants. That's the incentive, because people like to have the grant money flowing when it's available.

[10:30 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: I have MLA MacDonald, and then MLA Jessome next.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Picking up from one of the comments, with what's been going on, do you have a recent, good success story where the funds went to a Legion - something recent in your mind that you could give an example?

NANCY SHEPPARD: We had two Legions call me with really severe freezing and thawing pipes bursting everywhere, really beside themselves about how they were going to be able to reopen their Legion. They knew the LCAP hadn't opened yet for the year, and needed the money now. I get those calls from time to time. One was Legion Branch 34 - I think it's New Glasgow. The other one was Legion Branch 116 in St. Margarets Bay, I think. I apologize if I got that wrong. My memory isn't always great.

They both called me. I usually spend some time on the phone. I take their information about what's happening there, I call Legion Command just to make sure that they're in good standing with Legion Command, and then I pass it off to leadership. I don't know if Bill wants to talk about that any further. I guess if the money is in the department and it's a good project and we can do it, we will. We don't want the Legions to close.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I just want to say that I really appreciate that. That means they're in a bind and you're actually trying to find a way to do it, as opposed to it's not between January 31<sup>st</sup> or March 31<sup>st</sup>. I just want to say that I'm sure all the Legions appreciate that.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Greenlaw, would you like to speak to that?

BILL GREENLAW: A couple of points, just to follow up - one with MLA Lachance's comment regarding funding in alignment with government policy. Through the discussions we would have with the applicant Legion, we would have a discussion about how maybe your washroom should be accessible. It's not a stick. It's persuasion. It's a discussion to bring them on. We really, since I've been on the file, have had no instances where a Legion has been offside with government policy. It's not a risk. It's not an issue at this point in time.

A lot of this happens through our dialogue and discussion about funding opportunities and what they can seize in the moment when they're applying for funding. I just wanted to follow up on that.

The philosophy of the department is to work in community for community. We take pride in trying to work with community and trying to meet community's needs. As I indicated earlier with regard to our funding programs in my division, we try to have a holistic approach or a systems approach to our funding. We try to maximize the benefit to the community or a community that is applying for funding.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I think it was Ms. Sheppard who made the comments about the functionality of some Legions as warming centres. I don't actually have a Legion in Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, but I'm curious, are all Legions considered warming centres, or is there some assessment that takes place to determine which buildings in a community are designated warming centres? Or are all Legions just across the board considered warming centres?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Sheppard, would you like to speak to that?

NANCY SHEPPARD: I can't really speak to the process. I know Legion Command does get those calls. I did reach out to them in one instance when we were looking for vaccination clinics and possible locations for that. Legions were falling over themselves to volunteer to be that centre. They are there. When their community calls them, they are there to do whatever they need to do. Warming centres are just part of that. I can't remember the Legion, but I think there were a couple that were pop-up food banks during lockdown where there was a hub centre where they delivered food from that Legion. They're really the centre of community, and when they need them, they turn up.

THE CHAIR: MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: Thanks, Chair. I think I'll direct this to Ms. Sheppard for a couple of reasons. First, I want to say that I have three Legions in Colchester North. In doing a little bit of prep work for this meeting, I had conversations with some of them. They talked about the lady they continue to speak to and how helpful she is. I assume from the conversation here today that that's you. I want to thank you for that.

Secondly, I really want to concur with your comments that in a lot of cases, especially in rural communities like Colchester North, those Legions really are the community centres.

Anyway, my question is - I believe you've already answered this, but I just want to clarify - if you use the accessibility program, that doesn't preclude you from going to another. That doesn't preclude that Legion from going to another program or anything like that, right? They can stack as much as they want?

NANCY SHEPPARD: Yes, of course. We don't oppose stacking of the grants. We want to get the work done in the Legions. If they want to do their washrooms and replace their roof in one year and we can make it happen, then we will, absolutely.

THE CHAIR: MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: Just picking up from where we left off before, I'm just wondering if you could talk about how the program has evolved since coming to the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

NANCY SHEPPARD: I think we did touch on this before, but I'm happy to talk about it again. Like I said, we do meet with Legion Command every year, and every year, Legions face different kinds of issues. They've wanted to talk about eligible projects for a long time.

Parking lots weren't part of the eligible project under the LCAP, but I don't know if you've seen some of the parking lots. Well, parking lots everywhere right now are horrible, but it's been a problem and they're very expensive. That's when, if you can't get a rock through a parking lot without falling into a pothole, how's someone in an accessible chair going to get to the doorway? Or, if you have a walker. A lot of Legion members are elderly, so they need to have an accessible way to enter it. That was something we funded through our Community ACCESS-Ability Program. That was a great partnering with it.

Like I said about the 100 per cent funding up front, that was something that wasn't done before, but it was greatly appreciated by the Legions - especially the ones who struggle, who need work done. We're always open. It's a great collaborative relationship we have. We're on a first-name basis, they can call us, we can call them, and if there's a way we can make the program better, then we do it.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Greenlaw, did you want to speak to that?

BILL GREENLAW: I just wanted to clarify a point. I know that all of you are great advocates for your communities and would seize on the opportunity to pave a parking lot. I just want to be very clear that we would fund the accessible parking lots - we would pave two or three spots, whatever's determined. We would not pave the whole lot. As you know, some of the lots could be a couple hundred grand to pave, so we deal with the accessible parking spots and access to the building - not the whole lot.

I saw some of your eyes light up on the parking lots getting paved, so I thought I would just put that idea to bed. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Greenlaw, for that clarification. That's very important. MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: Thank you for your information. We don't always know about what programs are out there to assist. Is there an outreach effort to let the Legions know exactly what programs are available to them, or is that done through Legion Command?

NANCY SHEPPARD: Because it's a grant program for a specific group, targeted outreach is fairly easy. Like I said, we meet with Legion Command, and they put out a notification through their board to all of their members when the program is opening. I send a snail mail letter with the guidelines and the application to every Legion in the province every year because that's the way a lot of Legions like to receive their notices. I also send an email blast to everybody as well because there are some Legions where that's how they like to do business.

They're pretty keen and they know when the program opens. They're calling me usually in December to ask me the questions. We have done some social media as well, but because it's such a targeted group, it's pretty easy to let all of those folks know when the program is open.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I know that the accessibility legislation falls under the roof of the Minister of Justice. I'm wondering what either of you might be able to share with respect to progress with the 2030 goal in mind.

BILL GREENLAW: Mr. Jessome, thank you for the question. I think that's a question that's best asked to the Department of Justice.

THE CHAIR: MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to say thank you both for being here and giving us this wonderful presentation. It's very enlightening in the sense that I'm a community-oriented person and the fact that this particular department is using all aspects to include the community and listen to the voices of the people who you actually serve, which shows benefit. They're reaping the benefits of that.

We talked about a hundred Legions operating, and we know that most of them need to be up to code. The budget is \$100,000, and if everyone applied, there'd be \$1,000 for that. I mean, I don't know, maybe we can pay for one or two pieces of lumber with \$1,000. I'm wondering, what can this government provide that could give better programming and allow you to do the work a lot more freely?

As well, as we know, these Legions, they play a huge role in our communities. They're community hubs. I understand the premise behind the parking lot. It's unfortunate that we can't do the whole parking lot. I think if we had a big picture and we were like, this is what we need to do - because we are in budget planning in the next little bit. If there is a

way to insert some things to kind of offset that, what would that look like, to serve our veterans?

BILL GREENLAW: Good question. The Legion Capital Assistance Program is a dedicated fund specifically for Legions. That in itself is an advantage for Legions. They're not competing against the other 3,500 not-for-profit groups for infrastructure funding. That is specifically set aside for them.

The \$100,000 is a significant investment in Legions. We do our best to leverage the other grant programs. The budget cycle - there are competing pressures and demands on the government's budget. I feel that the department, through my minister, has been given - successive ministers and successive governments - the latitude to improve the file and benefit community as best as we're able.

Could every file use more money? Absolutely. It becomes a matter of, what are the priorities of the day? I would say that we have heard from Legions that more money would be appreciated, but we hear that in my department from all of the not-for-profit groups.

I think that the ability, through our program review, to look at streamlining to get some more efficiencies to address the equity and diversity inclusion of our funding programs and move the department forward - I think that all governments that I've worked for have been supportive and appreciative of that approach.

THE CHAIR: I have MLA Duale, MLA MacDonald, MLA Jessome, and then MLA Taggart, in that order, coming up. MLA Duale, you're up.

ALI DUALE: Thank you for coming. We appreciate the great work that you do for the community.

We know that it is a tough time, especially this time of year, especially with COVID-19. What I'm interested in is the Community Food Access and Literacy Fund, if that's still in place. I'm wondering, is there any future vision? We know the rise of the cost of living. We know people are struggling. It was also part of your presentation, I think - that perspective. I'm just wondering if that still exists, and is there any vision to continue in the future or increase that funding, if it's available. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: MLA Greenlaw - Mr. Greenlaw. (Laughs)

BILL GREENLAW: Thank you for the pay raise. (Laughter) The Community Food Access and Literacy Fund is continuing. We've just awarded the grants, so we'll wait and see what happens in the next budget cycle. I believe it will continue. It's a good program. We work with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. We work with the Department of Community Services. We work with



other - even in business, about food literacy, food delivery, so it's a significant issue in this province.

[10:45 a.m.]

I think during COVID, the department has stepped up really well with the support of communities with regard to food banks, utilizing food delivery, et cetera. I don't have the specific numbers off the top of my head about the impact. There was an investment by the previous government in particularly food security, to frame it up that way. I don't want to get caught in a number, but it was an impressive amount of families that we impacted with a modest investment.

I think that food literacy - addressing those most in need - is a priority and supported by this government, just like it has been by previous governments. Again, we listen to community, we try to support community and address those community needs when they come in.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a followup, MLA Duale?

ALI DUALE: I'm just wondering if there's any possibility to create a permanent or sustained food bank within those Legions. We know sometimes also those Legions are actually a community hub - it was part of your presentation - but I'm wondering if that could be a vision, that can be a link with Feed Nova Scotia or other sources that can be beneficial for the community.

BILL GREENLAW: I think that the vision is to think of it as a systems approach. You have Feed Nova Scotia, community food banks, and farmers' markets, which we are investing in so people can access fresh food in the Spring going to markets with a credit-based or cash-based system. Very conscious not to stigmatize anybody who's going to those markets. It's actually done brilliantly by the farmers' market group. We're aware of that, so the vision is to think of this as a system and address the systemic food security issue from that kind of perspective.

Everybody who's involved, we just need to connect the dots and figure out how best to make sure that people have access to food. Quite honestly, it's different in every community across the province. What may work in Colchester is not going to work in Digby. Really, we take a community development approach to food delivery and food security, and we partner with the departments that I mentioned, particularly DCS.

THE CHAIR: MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: My good friend over there asked a question - I'll ask a little different. In your presentation, you showed the last three budgets was \$93,000, maybe it was \$99,000, \$110,000, and \$100,000 for the allotment. What has that budget number

been for a number of years? Has it been static? I've seen \$110,000, but I think it's \$100,000. I'm not sure who wants to take that question.

BILL GREENLAW: The budget is \$100,000. If there's room in our department for a \$10,000 - we're going to have a bit of room on that. If there is a good project, we're not going to not recommend it, and we inform Legion Command that if they support it, we would find the extra \$10,000 to support this Legion in a certain need.

We don't really go dramatically over the \$100,000, but it's our budget number. Sometimes we might be a little less - that's why you saw that \$99,000 on the given year - and some years, in the \$110,000 year. We communicated to Legion Command and to the minister that this was a pressure, and everybody supported that we would cover that cost.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: How long has it been \$100,000?

BILL GREENLAW: I can only speak to as long as being in the department, and it's 2016 for sure.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: This year's game plan is to cover the cost to 80 per cent? I think I heard that. Is that something that has been observed as - I don't want to say the solution, but the best-case scenario? Or, can we anticipate consideration for multiple years of coverage at that rate, given the challenges having to do with raising funds and funding projects like this?

BILL GREENLAW: It's two parts to this answer. One is program review, so we're looking at the consistency of what our percentages are for government investment in community projects. There's a range in our department, so part of the program review is looking at consistency. We're looking at that currently.

Secondly, as Ms. Sheppard has indicated, we have regular dialogue with Nunavut Command. Because of that discussion, we went to 80 per cent. We will follow up discussions with them on the 80 per cent. We'll do an evaluation of what the demand is and what the needs are in this round that's currently coming in. Then we'll have a discussion with Legion Command about the best way to go forward, and then circle back with the Program Review Committee to see where we're going to land as a department on that.

BEN JESSOME: I think you kind of covered this, but just specifically, the 80 per cent coverage in theory would result in a larger requirement on the budget. To Mr. MacDonald's point, that figure of \$100,000 gets used up pretty closely year over year at its current amount. Is there any observation of what additional funds may be required based on that 80 per cent coverage rate?

BILL GREENLAW: This is why I get to keep my mask off, so thank you. I never thought I'd say I like to speak at committee, but not having the mask on is a privilege. (Laughter) I think, to MLA Jessome's question, we'll need to look at that when it comes in and see what the demand is. As we've indicated, the department has some flexibility on meeting demand and also the leveraging of the \$100,000 that has been given to Legion Command. They can assess if there are additional needs that they could support from that \$100,000 support that they've received this fiscal year.

THE CHAIR: MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: To Ms. Sheppard, if you don't mind, you really piqued my interest when you mentioned the Veterans Farming. I can't remember exactly how it was worded, but it's quite interesting. I love the idea. Maybe you could expand on that a little bit. I'm also wondering what there might be for funding. I'd like to understand more about whether it is something that's done commonly, that sort of thing, and if there is any amount of funding for it.

NANCY SHEPPARD: I don't know if it's the first time it's happened. It typically happens through Legion Command. We gave the money to them and then they distributed out to the Legions that were doing that kind of work. I do think the farm project is fairly new, but it was very successful. I wouldn't be surprised if other Legions picked up on that and started to do it as well.

Their Meals on Wheels Program is very successful and highly used, especially during the last couple of years. There was a significant amount of meals delivered. I would love to see that continue, but I'm not quite sure what the plans are going forward. I look forward to hearing about it. We'd be happy to pass it along.

TOM TAGGART: Mostly a comment, but, again, I just think it's a great idea. I think that even though in a lot of cases, they're getting up in age and don't have quite the agility or the ability, it certainly gives them the good feeling to do it. I think about my own Legion, and I'll discuss it with them. You may hear from them, or somebody may.

THE CHAIR: MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: I'm just wondering if you could explain how your relationship with Legion Command works. Are they involved in the decision-making process?

NANCY SHEPPARD: It works really well. During our annual meeting every year, we give a report on what happened the year before and if we encountered any issues or some good news stories to share with them. They always let us know from their end what they're hearing from their membership, what their issues are with the program, and how we can improve it. It's just been this really great collaborative approach.

I have a soft spot for veterans. My dad is a navy veteran, so I have a lot of time to sit and listen, like many people in our department, to what membership needs. I can give you one great example. They were having a really difficult time recruiting volunteers, and another program we run through CCTH is VolunteerNS.ca. If you haven't heard of it, you should use it. I describe it like Career Beacon for volunteers. The Legions didn't know, so I connected them with the administrator of that program. They've done a few presentations for different Legions throughout the province on how to recruit new volunteers and members to come in to help them with their board work or volunteer work in the facilities.

They tell us what they need, and we try to plug the holes as best we can with the tools we have in our department.

THE CHAIR: MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: I know you've touched on the approval process. I'm just wondering: Are there certain criteria for setting the priorities for the Legion funding?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Sheppard.

NANCY SHEPPARD: I don't have the criteria. Typically, how it works is they usually call me before they send their applications in and we talk about what's eligible and what's not. They like to do that because they aren't sure a lot of times and what they want to do isn't listed on the page that they have, so they want to ask me questions.

Then when the applications come in, I always look at it and if there's something missing, I don't disqualify their application. I call them and I say you're missing a quote, you're missing this, can you get me that? Every application has everything it needs. Everybody's judged fairly by Legion Command if they need to do that, so there's nothing missing that way.

Are the criteria set? The eligible projects are set between us and Legion Command, but what their internal criteria are for awarding the program, again, I'm really not sure. I know they know their Legions really well, and they're very clear about it with me, so I usually don't question it.

LARRY HARRISON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The assistance programs across the board are integral for communities and for organizations that are touchpoints in our communities. I'm wondering if the restructuring of the department as a whole to bring tourism back into government has had an impact, or if there's been an impact on your roles, or were there additional staff who were brought in to take on that responsibility of tourism.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Greenlaw.

[11:00 a.m.]

BILL GREENLAW: It's a good question and requires me to think about what I'm about to say. I have the history of having tourism in the department before. It's a welcomed addition. Our tourism colleagues add value to the discussions about where the tourism products are going to be connecting with community tourism development projects. Again, I don't want to overuse the word, but if you think about it as a system, we connect at the executive level and talk about a systems approach to how we promote and celebrate communities across the province.

I believe that there was a net transfer of the FTEs back into our department for tourism, so that whole Crown corporation, when it was dissolved, that staff has moved back into government. The staffing complement is consistent.

THE CHAIR: The time is now 11:00 a.m. We have potentially 40 more minutes for questioning. We'd like to wrap up the questioning period by 11:40 a.m. We'll continue with questions. Do we have any other questions? MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Not really a question, Ms. Sheppard - and I'm sure other members would like it. I'm sitting in, but I'd still like - the volunteer that you mentioned - the guidelines for the applications. My other note is that I'd love to get a copy of your last yearly report. I'm not sure if I'm the only one who'd like it, but I'd like to see if that information could be given to the committee members after.

NANCY SHEPPARD: Sorry, which report?

JOHN A. MACDONALD: The yearly report that you said you did - the last yearly report - or just be able to tell me where to find it. You mentioned the new volunteer - I had no idea that it existed. I'd love to know the details of where that is, and the guidelines of what's eligible for projects. I have four right now with the redistribution. I did have five Legions in mine. I can think of one Legion that I'd love to be able to sit down with going, "Have you guys looked at this?" because there's not a lot of people in the Legion. They probably just don't have time to do the application. I just want to sit back and say, here's what it is and what's in it. I'm just asking for that information. Like I said, I assume all the committee members would like the same information.

NANCY SHEPPARD: I'd be happy to provide a copy of the guidelines. They are on the website, but I'd be happy to circulate them. If you need to call me or if you want one of the Legions to call me, I'd be happy to have a discussion with them about their project.

About the yearly report, Legions send their individual report on their individual project which I compile in a file. I'm assuming it's public record, but I'm not quite sure if there's access to it anywhere. I'd be happy to share.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Not that, but you said you do a yearly report that you give to Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. That's the one. If it's on the website, if you can just tell me which page, I can find it. I don't need you to send me copies of that, obviously. Again, I'm not on this committee, but you've piqued my interest. Thank you.

NANCY SHEPPARD: Yes, of course. It's mostly anecdotal with a few numbers like I've shown you here today. That's pretty much what I give them. They know it's just a reminder. I usually do a bit of the scope of the province, like which areas of the province, that kind of thing.

VolunteerNS.ca is the website. It is a volunteer website that's administered by the Kings Volunteer Resource Centre in New Minas. They're the last volunteer association left in Nova Scotia operating, and they are incredible, the amount of work that they do. They have one paid staff and a volunteer board. That project started about November 2018. It was a project shared through the PMO Office, through the youth volunteer program is how it started. Then it kind of launched from there.

We partnered with Kings Volunteer Resource Centre. Volunteer Canada had a stake in that as well. That's how we built and launched the website in November 2018. Since then, we now go it alone in the province with KVRC. We fund them every year to take care of the website, but we work closely with them on promotions, communications, and events. We celebrate anniversaries and benchmarks in membership. The last time I checked, there were more than 1,000 organization members, and upward of 1,500 volunteer members.

You should know, VolunteerNS.ca was there during the pandemic to help recruit essential service volunteers and to let people know how they can volunteer from home safely. We sort of revamped the website for the pandemic to make sure that it was out there, and to promote it to make sure that folks knew that that website was operating.

If you have organizations in your communities that need volunteers, we have stories that within 24 hours, everything from helping with your quilts to volunteer policing. The HRM police are a member on our website. There's lots of variety. You could become a member, if you want, and sign up and get alerts. If you just want to do a beach cleanup on the weekend, you can just turn up, or you can become a member and get alerts in your email when a volunteer position of your interest is posted. That's how that works.

It's super easy to use. It's free for all organizations to sign up. They get their own micro-webpage on VolunteerNS.ca. You can apply for a volunteer position directly through the website, or you can contact the organization directly. The organizations are given guidance through KVRC on a little bit of volunteer management: Do I need a criminal background check, do I need a vulnerable sector check, these kinds of things? They help educate to make sure that they're getting the volunteer that's just right for that position.

Legions are of no exception. Many have participated in finding new board members, which is really tough for a lot of volunteer organizations, because it's such a big time commitment. Actually, during the pandemic, we had more volunteers than we had jobs to give them, so that was really amazing. Nova Scotians turned up, as I'm sure you all know. They also turned up to register on VolunteerNS.ca and at their Legions to do what they needed to do.

THE CHAIR: I've been informed by the clerk that an email will be sent to you, Ms. Sheppard. Maybe sending out the information as per asked by MLA MacDonald to the committee, that would be great. MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Thanks for your time this morning here, folks. What is the relationship with Efficiency Nova Scotia? Is there an obligation on the Legion to bring Efficiency Nova Scotia in? Or is it kind of like a standard operating procedure that would be involved when it comes to outfitting Legions which, dare I say, are older buildings that can be suited for efficiency upgrades? I'm just wondering what that relationship is, if there is one, with Efficiency Nova Scotia?

NANCY SHEPPARD: I don't have a direct relationship with them, but I think that's a great idea. I would like to have one. If Legions call me up and say they want a new heating system, I'll always suggest a heat pump. We had two Legions this year, and I think two last year, that had solar panels installed.

They are thinking about it. At a branch level, they do speak about how to make - because of the costs, if nothing else, it's really difficult. A lot of these buildings, as you know, are older buildings with numerous issues. Once they get it insulated, they get good windows, good doors, sealed, a nice, tight roof, then they want to think about how they'll heat it most efficiently. I think a collaborative approach with Efficiency Nova Scotia would be great, with the LCAP program.

BEN JESSOME: Just to oversimplify it for me, is there a way that you'd recommend we approach that to establish that partnership, or is that something that you can push go on?

BEN GREENLAW: Part of the answer is that through discussions that Ms. Sheppard has with the Legions that are inquiring about funding are the questions about have you had an efficiency assessment, et cetera. I'm not sure of the benefit of a direct relationship with Efficiency Nova Scotia. I think we can explore it, but it would be up to the Legions. We would provide them with the information to make that contact. That is top of mind. If we have knowledge of something that can help a community or a facility get extra support or rebates on their efficiency investments, we would be encouraging them to do that.

THE CHAIR: MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I'm going to pick on Ms. Sheppard again. It's kind of a two-part question. I think I mostly know the answer to the first one. Is this work through these grants always done through private contractors and community, or do government departments become involved in any of that at all?

NANCY SHEPPARD: It's always done through private contractors, usually within their own communities. One of the things, the guidelines is you're supposed to have three quotes. It's really hard when you live in rural Nova Scotia to get three contractors to turn up and give those quotes. So I always say to them, if you can get one or two really good ones from someone close by, then we will accept that. We will not exclude an application because they couldn't get a contractor from Halifax to drive out to Pictou County to give them a quote on a project, which is really hard to do.

It's usually always private. I've never heard of government doing - Mr. Greenlaw might know, but I don't think there has been.

BILL GREENLAW: We provide the funding. It's up to the Legion to find the contractors. We wouldn't encourage the Department of Public Works to do that work. They're busy doing roads, bridges, hospitals, and schools. This is a community-based project, and it's best left to the community to sort out who would be the best contractors, et cetera, for the community project.

THE CHAIR: Is there a follow-up, MLA Taggart?

TOM TAGGART: That's kind of where I was headed. I wasn't suggesting so much to do the actual work. I do know that there are a lot of professionals within the Department of Public Works - and certainly within the building part of the Department of Public Works - who could probably assist in a lot of different ways in helping these folks make a plan going forward and what's most needed. I'm really impressed with what I've heard so far about how you're so supportive with finding other funding streams. Is there any consideration to maybe tapping some of that in-house professional expertise? I pretty well answered it, but . . .

BILL GREENLAW: Good question. Our colleagues at the Department of Public Works are extremely busy. I have approached my colleagues at the department when there's been something that we would question. For example, we would ask their opinion on - we've got one bid, does this pricing seem reasonable - just to make sure we've done our due diligence on some of these things. After a while, you actually know what things cost. An accessible door is \$5,000, or a ramp is this much money, or a roof of this much square footage for shingles is this much money, and if you want to put a metal roof on, it's this much money. They're pretty straightforward investments.

The more complex investments that would come through some of our other capital programs - there are planning assistance programs for community organizations to plan or



to do business plans for what they're planning to do. Then they can make a better informed decision. If it's not a replacement of windows or a heat pump - basic infrastructure requirements - it's fairly straightforward. For a new build or construction, we would provide a planning assistance program, particularly on the recreational and sport facility projects that we do.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just one last one. Ms. Sheppard, you had mentioned about the ones that had burst pipes, and you were able to help them out, which is great. Is there a mechanism for you to be able to deal with expedited issues? I don't know what the normal process is. If it's normally four weeks or three weeks, when an urgent thing comes in, is it something that you just have to go to the minister and explain it? Just explain to me how we actually get it expedited in the rare occurrence it happens.

NANCY SHEPPARD: I've become the Legion girl at CCTH. If a Legion has a problem, some members know me, so they'll have the Legion call me, which is great. I spend a lot of time talking to them, and I can usually tell how bad the situation is. They get really nervous because they've got weddings booked, they've got things happening, and they're under a lot of pressure. They know the LCAP program isn't opening, so all I do is take down as much information as I can, listen to their story, and I take it to leadership. I explain to them that this is the problem, they can't wait for LCAP, they've got four burst leaks with water entering. Can we help them? I can't remember a time when the answer was no.

THE CHAIR: It doesn't appear we have any further questions. I'd like to ask you both if you have any closing comments to make at this time.

Mr. Greenlaw.

BILL GREENLAW: I haven't been in a forum where it could be recorded, but first of all, let me congratulate all of you on re-election in this past election, and welcome to government for the new members. I'm excited to have you here. As a citizen, I really appreciate you stepping up and being leaders in your community. I know it's not easy in this time - particularly with COVID - taking on the challenge of being part of the democratic process and leaders in community. I admire you. I respect you for doing that. Thank you very much for doing that. It's not all glitz and glamour, as you know. I appreciate the hard work - particularly how vital you are to making constituencies work. Thank you so much for that.

As discussed today, everyone understands how important Legions are, not only for their members, retired and serving, but to the communities they serve. The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage is proud to administer this infrastructure program. We understand very well how much communities depend on these facilities. Making the physical structures safe and accessible to everyone is an important initiative. Our staff work very closely with Legions when they reach out for us to help them, either by

applying for their grant or in the writing of their applications or in submitting their final reports.

[11:15 a.m.]

We also have an excellent relationship with Legion Command, which allows us to ensure that any issues or updates are made to our program promptly, evidenced in how we've adjusted the funding program since it's been at CCHT, with the input of Legion Command.

We're also happy to work with Legions to make accessibility upgrades through the Community ACCESS-Ability Program. We look forward to continuing to help Legions, and communities more broadly, into the future. I'd just, again, like to thank you for your time today and for your service. I really, sincerely, appreciate it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Greenlaw. Ms. Sheppard.

NANCY SHEPPARD: I'd just add one final thing. We have another week before the LCAP program closes, so if you have Legions in your ridings that are interested in applying, I've left some copies of my card up here. You can have their Legion president or whoever give me a call and I'll help walk them through that process. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Sheppard, and thank you, Mr. Greenlaw, again, for appearing before our committee today - very enlightening. I'm sure we all will be speaking with our Legions, if we haven't already.

As our witnesses prepare to leave, I'd like to call a five-minute recess before we get back to our committee business. Again, thank you to both of you for coming today.

[11:18 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[11:23 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: We'll call our meeting back to order. Our committee business - let's start with a discussion regarding our May 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. It's been a challenge over the last couple of months with procuring witnesses for our dates, our meeting times. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, our clerk cannot arrange a meeting for that date due to witness availability again. The topic for that day is the transition from active service to veteran and homelessness prevention. Our witnesses are from the Department of Community Services, HRM, VETS Canada, Royal Canadian Legion, and UN-NATO Canada-Nova Scotia. The Legion has requested to add a witness as well, Ms. Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte. I believe we had her for a previous meeting. She'd be the one responsible to speak about the topic.

We would need agreement from the committee on that. Also, we have to discuss as a committee changing the date for the availability of the witnesses that day. The discussion would be another date. The clerk has provided us with some other options, depending on the sitting of the House: May 10<sup>th</sup> in the morning, May 24<sup>th</sup> in the morning, May 31<sup>st</sup> in the afternoon. Those are some options.

I believe it would be the intent of this committee to try to get our witnesses in as much as we can. Any discussion? MLA Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: Our intent is to get all the witnesses. Our intent is to make this happen. I'll put a motion out there. I move that we leave the rescheduling of the May 17<sup>th</sup> meeting to the clerk and to the Chair to get the witnesses there and to make it so we could have that meeting prior to . . .

THE CHAIR: Any further discussion on that?

All those in favour of the motion? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is passed.

Okay, that was simple. Very good. That was the only other bit of business that was in our committee. Oh yes, we also need agreement for the witness change as well. MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: We can deal with that first, perhaps, but I'm just curious, the group from Seamless Canada that was scheduled to come in, what's the status update on their go-ahead or their approval to come and make that presentation to the committee?

THE CHAIR: My understanding is that they would be available for June. Are they scheduled for June, or are they available for June?

KIM LEADLEY: They are. I'm not sure if it's still pending his approval from his minister, but he has received the invitation.

THE CHAIR: Do we have full agreement then, that we have no issue in changing and adding the witness who was discussed for the main meeting? MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: Just for clarity, it's just an addition, right? We're going to continue with the same speakers?

THE CHAIR: Yes. MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: If I'm not mistaken, it's not a requirement, but typically, with the exception of the Public Accounts Committee, the Human Resources Committee, and the Health Committee, committees don't have a tendency to sit throughout the Summer. Is that

something that we will maintain, or can we expect to have a monthly meeting? Just putting it out there to ask the question.

THE CHAIR: I believe that previously we had discussed that we would not meet in the Summer. We have two sets of witnesses left in May and June, then we would be off for July and August.

Now where we have only two witnesses left, two topics, we would want to set a date for agenda-setting for the next round at some point. We can discuss that now - we can set a date for that going forward - or we can wait until our June meeting to set a date. We could have one special meeting to do that in the Summer, or we could wait until September to have our agenda-setting meeting for the next round of topics. MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I don't care when we do it or the date, but I'd like to see it happen before the Summer. That gives lots of advance notice to the speakers and that sort of thing. It makes it convenient. Whatever the preference is, I would like to see it before we break for Summer.

THE CHAIR: Is it my understanding that would be a separate meeting in and of itself? Or would it be part of the committee business if we did tack it onto the end of the June meeting? We could put it in the agenda of our June meeting and maybe have the questioning a little bit more condensed, and then have that time to do an agenda-setting meeting in June, if that's what the committee prefers.

The clerk just reminded me that our June meeting with Seamless Canada, if he has authorization from his superiors, would be a hybrid model. He has requested to appear virtually, travelling from Ottawa. MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: To that point, I'm okay with it, to just tag on X number of minutes. We won't be here for another hour, I hope, but if we can take 15 minutes to do some agenda setting after the regularly scheduled program takes place, then that would be awesome.

THE CHAIR: We have agreement. I guess we don't really need to have a vote on that, there's no motion. We have agreement that we will have our agenda setting meeting at the end of our June meeting.

Is there any other business before we adjourn? We will hear from the clerk in regard to our May committee meeting. Our meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:30 a.m.]