

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Tuesday, June 21, 2022**

**LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER**

**Seamless Canada: Overview of Organization**

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

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[Nolan Young was replaced by John A. MacDonald.]

**In Attendance:**

Kim Leadley  
Acting Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

**WITNESS**

Seamless Canada  
Col. Stéphane Boucher

Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services  
Laurie Ogilvie, Vice-President of Military Family Services



**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2022**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**2:00 P.M.**

**CHAIR**  
Chris Palmer

**VICE CHAIR**  
Danielle Barkhouse

**THE CHAIR:** Order. This is the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. My name is Chris Palmer, MLA for Kings West, and I'm the Chair of the committee. Today we will hear from Seamless Canada with an overview of their organization. At their request, they will be joining us today virtually. Following our question and answer period, we will be moving into our agenda-setting time and committee business.

At this point, I would also like to ask all committee members, and everyone present, if they could turn off their phones or put them on vibrate. In case of an emergency, we'd ask everyone to please exit through the Hollis Street exit, if able, and assemble in the courtyard by the Art Gallery. Masks are not mandatory. They are recommended, however.

At this point, I would like to ask all the committee members to introduce themselves and the constituencies they represent. We'll ask the NDP to begin over here.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

**THE CHAIR:** For the purpose of Hansard, I acknowledge the presence of Chief Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb; and from our Legislative Committees Office, Kim Leadley, who has been our acting committee clerk, and done a fine job, if I would say so; and our new clerk who will be joining us in the Fall, Tamer Nusseibeh. Welcome.

Again, our topic today is Seamless Canada with an overview of their organization. Our witnesses, as I said earlier, are appearing virtually. They are Colonel Stéphane Boucher from Seamless Canada, and Ms. Laurie Ogilvie, Director of Military Family Services. At this time, I would like to ask our witnesses to introduce themselves and begin with any opening remarks.

I'll say this again, and please forgive me: we're doing this virtually today, so there might be a few hiccups along the way. Again, I'd like to welcome both Colonel Boucher and Ms. Ogilvie to our committee meeting. I would like to ask you if you'd like to introduce yourselves and give opening remarks before we begin our question and answer period. Whoever would like to begin, we'll leave it with you.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: I am Colonel Stéphane Boucher. I'm the Director of Personnel, Strategy and responsible for Seamless Canada. I'm accompanied by Ms. Laurie Ogilvie. I'm pleased to be joining you this afternoon from Ottawa. I appreciate the opportunity to join you virtually, and with your permission, I'll go into my opening remarks.

THE CHAIR: Yes, please do.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Before I begin, I wish to acknowledge that the lands on which Laurie and I are seated and gathered are part of the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinabe people here in Ottawa. Miigwetch.

Ms. Laurie Ogilvie is the Vice President of Military Family Services with Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. She and I should be able to answer your questions today, and if not, we'll be happy to find the answers for you and communicate these back to you.

What is Seamless Canada? It's a Canadian Armed Forces initiative that started about four years ago to share with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners the mobility challenges faced by military families when they move between jurisdictions. Since 2018, we've had a number of in-person and virtual meetings to communicate our concerns.

What are the mobility challenges we face? We like to group them under three themes. First, we have dependent education, which includes education and child care. Secondly, we have health care, which includes accessibility to provincial and territorial services, family physicians, and specialists. Finally, we have spousal employment, which includes many issues, but is primarily centred on professional accreditation.

I'll come back to these in a minute, but first a little bit on Seamless Canada. We've had seven meetings with our counterparts since 2018. These meetings are important because the challenges to which I speak are all outside the authorities we have. Whether it

be the Canadian Armed Forces or the Department of National Defence, we have no jurisdiction on these issues. They all rest within provincial and territorial authority and, where applicable, supplemented by the federal government. Collectively, the Canadian Armed Forces, with the provinces and territories, have made some headway on some of these challenges. I will cover these shortly.

Delegates to the Seamless Canada meetings acknowledge that they have a significant influence on mitigating these challenges, many of which also impact other residents in their respective jurisdictions. They also understand that what we are seeking is not to be treated better than Canadians, but to be treated equitably as we transfer jurisdictions in pursuit of our military careers and meet operational requirements.

One of the requests from the delegates during our meetings was to find a means to normalize our relationship and formalize our dialogue. I'm pleased to say that after two years of negotiations, we signed last week the terms of reference establishing the Seamless Canada Steering Committee to do just that. Representing Nova Scotia was Hon. John Lohr, and he spoke proudly of the affection that your province has for its military constituents. During that day, Hon. Mary Wilson from New Brunswick was appointed the first provincial and territorial co-chair for this steering committee. The other co-chair is our parliamentary secretary. It was an exciting day.

Back to the challenges. As I mentioned, we've thematically grouped these in three categories - the first being dependent education. We've divided these into education and child care, and understand that the division is based on practices across the provinces and territories and trying to find a way to communicate equally. Education of military families is impacted by a move between jurisdictions. For example, my eldest child went to eight different schools in three different provinces to complete Grade 12.

The first issue in education is academic equivalencies. Each province and territory has identified different requirements to successfully complete high school, including credits needed in sciences, mathematics, and languages, and in some cases, volunteer hours. There is good news on this front as a result of Seamless Canada. After many discussions on this challenge, the issue was tabled in 2021 before the Council of Ministers Education, Canada. There was immediate agreement, and work is ongoing to develop a student mobility guide that could be used by educators and guidance counsellors to better understand military families and the academic challenges to changing jurisdictions.

Another education challenge is that of special needs and in particular, individual learning plans. Each jurisdiction has wait-lists for this support and each approaches these differently. We have identified 8 per cent of our military families as having children with special needs. This issue, and academic equivalencies, are often cited as a dissatisfier and leads to Canadian Armed Forces members to either taking off their uniform or limiting their career aspirations as they privilege their families.

Child care is also a particular concern when one considers dependent education. It comes down to accessibility and flexibility. Accessibility is focused on wait-lists to access daycare and essential worker status of Canadian Armed Forces members. Wait-lists for daycares are problematic, and it's something that many Canadian families have to deal with.

The problem is exacerbated for military families, as many do not remain in one area long enough to get a spot at the local daycare, and they then have to restart on a new wait-list when relocating. The impact can be seen on familial health, spousal employment, and the military member's capacity to be operationally ready.

Essential worker status is an issue that came to the forefront as a result of the pandemic. Jurisdictions identified health professionals and first responders as essential workers, yet initially, military members were not provided the same status. This led to military members who were deployed into long-term health care facilities or other operational deployments, such as search and rescue, not having access to daycare facilities. Thankfully, as a result of great relationships between local base and wing commanders and their elected officials, this was resolved. We are asking jurisdictions to consider the role of military personnel play as essential workers in the future.

Let's move on to the second mobility challenge: that of health care. As I mentioned, the first issue is the accessibility of the services in the new jurisdiction upon relocation. I'm happy to say that this has been resolved with all 13 provinces and territories as we implement a waiver for the 90-day wait period when military families arrive in their jurisdiction. This means military families can rapidly acquire a health card and continue the treatment of their dependents if required. I'm happy to say that Nova Scotia was one of the first to implement the 90-day waiver - so thank you.

The second issue within health care is one that is all too common for many Canadians, and that is access to a family physician. Military families often go an entire stay in a province or territory without finding a family physician, and depend on walk-in clinics, emergency rooms, or virtual care. There is no easy solution to this issue, but the pandemic has shown that virtual care can certainly be a bridge upon relocation until a family physician is secured.

Finally, the last mobility challenge I'll speak to is spousal employment. Spouses are often having to restart their careers or go through a complicated process to be accredited in their new jurisdiction. This affects health care professionals, educators, and many other professions. This challenge is amplified by the fact that provinces and territories are not the only stakeholders - professional certifying organizations also impact this issue.

To that end, we support the work being done by Employment and Social Development Canada and the labour mobility coordinators in each province to support the ongoing coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the labour mobility chapters of

the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. The federal, provincial, and territorial labour mobility coordinators have developed a report for the Forum of Labour Market Ministers with key recommendations to enhance the movement of certified workers across various jurisdictions. It is worth noting that on several occasions, this report makes specific mention of how labour mobility challenges are specifically problematic to military spouses.

[2:15 p.m.]

Having covered the mobility challenges for military families, I would like to offer a few final thoughts. First, we are thankful for the support that all provinces and territories are offering military families, and their willingness to co-operate and collaborate with Seamless Canada. I know I've laid out many challenges, but the jurisdictions have demonstrated great co-operation with those and are the strength behind the uniform.

Second, we are not seeking to be treated better than other Canadians - simply that military families be recognized as having a unique military lifestyle, and as such, we're asking for equitable treatment.

Finally, as Canadian Armed Forces members transition into retirement, these challenges persist. Retirement often comes with a final relocation to a new jurisdiction, and the challenges I have mentioned impact our newest veterans as much as it plagues those who serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Laurie and I are ready to answer your questions. If we cannot answer your questions, we'll reserve the right to get those back to you as soon as we can. Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Colonel Boucher. Before we move on to questions, I just want to confirm, Ms. Ogilvie, would you like to give any opening remarks?

LAURIE OGILVIE: I do not. I'm here to support and answer any questions that you may have on military families, as well as veteran families, as we go through the rest of this afternoon.

THE CHAIR: We will now move into our question and answer period. As per the protocol of our committee, we will ask questions probably until 3:40 p.m. Then we will wrap up at that point and ask if you have any closing remarks at that point in time. We normally go by show of hands around the committee for questions. I would ask our witnesses, when you give your responses, just to wait for me to recognize you before giving your response.

We will begin our question and answer period. MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: Thank you so much for joining us today and laying out so clearly some of the main challenges. I'm glad to hear that work on this has been advancing. When you start talking about moving - certainly in my family, we've had a number of military members and folks moving around. What struck me was trying to think about things, and then you came to it: inclusive education and IEPs, and then also thinking in terms of health care - access to health care for young people in general, but also people with complex needs or specialized needs.

We know the wait lists for mental health are long in every province. The challenges around early autism intervention - there are a lot of things that have wait lists that are absolutely essential for young people. I'm wondering, between the inclusive education plans and specific child and youth health needs, are there any models that exist in Canada or elsewhere where the systems are set up to better support that transition for the family?

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance, is there anyone in particular you're directing that to? Either one - Colonel Boucher or Ms. Ogilvie.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Your question resonates with me. I have a child with a chronic illness, and twice it prohibited me from moving him out of province, and I went to the next jurisdiction on my own to ensure continuity of care. Some of your questions are quite technical, so I'll hand it off to Laurie, as she manages a lot of the delivery of these programs and deals with the provinces.

LAURIE OGILVIE: I'll answer it in a number of ways. First, the modeling. What I will say is we do a lot of research, both in Canada and then with our allied partners, to look at what services are available for military and veteran families - for children, for special needs - for access to care especially during relocation.

What I can say is that not every model that exists out there is translatable to the experience that Canadian Armed Forces families and veteran families experience here in Canada. What we have tried to do within Military Family Services is take those examples and models that exist out there and adapt them for the best support that we can for Canadian Armed Forces and veteran families here in Canada. I'll give you a couple of examples right now of areas that we've expanded our services.

For children's education, probably about six or seven years ago, we introduced guidance counselling specific for military families. Part of the guidance counselling service prepares our families to relocate children - interprovincially or territorially, and internationally. It's about what equivalencies are required, but more importantly, what additional support is required.

If a child has an IEP or has a specialized learning requirement, or has language challenges because of where the family is relocating, i.e., an anglophone family relocating to a francophone community or vice versa - what supports are required to offset these



challenges, or mitigate as much as possible the challenges that military, and more so the military veteran families, are facing.

One initiative was the addition of tutoring support. Families who are looking for that additional level of support to augment what their children are experiencing in the educational system can access the tutoring support. We also have introduced and provide second-language training to offset the challenges that military families, youth and children are facing when relocating to provinces with different linguistic profiles.

From a mental health perspective, about two years ago we introduced a specialized phone line for youth who were having mental health challenges. We partnered with Kids Help Phone to create a specific opportunity for children in a military family to talk to a counsellor. We've expanded, so across Canada we have Military Family Resource Centres. There are 32 in total, and they are in each of the provinces and territories.

Those Military Family Resource Centres offer specialized services for families, but also for children and youth. During the pandemic, as Colonel Boucher mentioned, there were some opportunities and some deficiencies that were identified. In those areas was really the virtual support that we have for families. So we have introduced a virtual MFRC, which offers all of the services that are provided at the in-person MFRCs across the country, but we added a few components to that specific to COVID. Our hope is that these will extend - funding pending - going forward. This would be access to medical care.

We introduced telemedicine to all military families and, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> this year, medically released veterans and their families from the Canadian Armed Forces. That telemedicine option provides a bridge for families who are relocating or having trouble accessing health care in the community. We saw this specifically during COVID, when access to physicians, and more to medical care, was reduced. It also allows for families to get or have the referrals to those specialized services that are required to, for example, get an IEP or to support the special needs of children in their family.

The last piece that I'll talk about in specific support to, or modelling of support that we can provide to military families, is we have - in our research, we've gone out and looked through partners that exist within Canada who are providing services. So instead of duplicating what we're providing, we're looking at how we partner or how we engage with existing partners to augment the services that we have.

For example, we have been able to partner with associations, with service providers, to offer unique supports in the areas of mental health and education, and more importantly, in increasing awareness and education within the systems of care - both the provincial/territorial but also the community systems of care that exist across our country.

So when a military family or a veteran family is trying to engage with a service provider, those items that Colonel Boucher just mentioned - the unique military family

lifestyle experiences - are explained so that the service providers know, okay, this is a little bit different, or this is why this family is frustrated, because once again, for the tenth time, they've gone to the bottom of the wait list because that's the way the system of care works once you relocate to a new province. That understanding and being able to put those services in place.

The waiving of the 90-day wait period for access to health cards is the perfect example of being able to leverage an existing policy and change it ever so slightly for military families so that they can not be disadvantaged, as Colonel Boucher mentioned, when they're relocating, or supporting Canada as part of the military.

Colonel Boucher, do you have anything more to add?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: No. MLA Lachance, I hope that was sufficient.

THE CHAIR: MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I want to start off by saying that I really like this. I was super excited that you guys are here. I am an Army child, and I know all too well, being the youngest of four, what it was like to move from Oromocto to Lahr, Germany, to CFB Cornwallis to Ontario, and so on and so forth. My mother had some health issues, and it was always hard to find care for her, and day care. My childhood was spent either in the kitchen of a restaurant or with the cleaner of the PMQs.

With that being said, I'd like to know a little bit more. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, Seamless Canada worked collaboratively with provinces and territories to sign the terms of references to improve mobility for military members and their families. This is to either of you: Can you tell us about how these new terms of reference will better support military members and their families?

THE CHAIR: Colonel Boucher.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: I feel for you. I was a base brat myself. I decided to follow in my dad's footsteps, and I'm wrapping up a 35-year career. Thank you for your continued service to Canada by being an elected official.

The terms of reference were really a fundamental shift in the dialogue between the provinces, territories and ourselves. As I mentioned up front, we actually have no authority. We have moral responsibility on some of these issues, and we have no accountability on the issues I have represented.

By establishing terms of reference very similar to other intergovernmental bodies to normalize the discussion, by having co-chairs who are elected officials, it brings the discussion to a space that I as a colonel cannot take it. We've been doing virtual meetings

in terms of information transfer and getting the provinces and territories mobilized, but sometimes we just need that little extra oomph that you as elected officials bring to a discussion - and that's the big win. You can open doors within your jurisdictions to make things happen.

[2:30 p.m.]

For example, the previous question on ILPs and perhaps children on the autism spectrum: They get an ILP and they transfer provinces. The new jurisdiction - at least we haven't found one yet - will not accept outright the entire ILP prepared by the previous jurisdiction. If we bring this, and the two co-chairs champion this through Seamless Canada, we can start establishing agreements between provinces. Maybe at first, it's regionally: for example, within the Maritimes, whereby New Brunswick and Nova Scotia agree reciprocally to recognize the ILPs, or at least recognize them for a transitory period, a couple of months, to allow the student not to fall behind.

The strength is in who we'll bring to the table: elected officials as opposed to the public servants, and people who are able to maneuver in the government space that I as a military person am not allowed to go to and can only influence by giving you the best information I have. Do you have anything else you wanted to add on the terms of reference, Laurie?

LAURIE OGILVIE: No, sorry, I don't.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: There you go. I hope that answers your question.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

HON. BEN JESSOME: I appreciate both of you being here with us virtually today, and thank you for your service. I was fortunate to be a delegate at Seamless Canada during the first two meetings that were held in Toronto and Ottawa respectively, so I've been eager to see you folks back in action virtually. This is exciting news. I'm glad to hear the updates about the additional work around the terms of reference and agreement amongst provinces. I appreciate seeing that Minister Lohr was up on the list of delegates that was there for the call to action. That's great to hear. I wonder if we can get a copy of the terms of reference for the committee.

I guess my question, more specifically, pertains to the spousal employment component that Seamless Canada is focused on. Ms. Ogilvie had referenced some strategic partnerships that were available. I'm wondering if you could provide some added context around what types of entities you might be referring to, and if entities such as professional colleges and self-regulated professions have become a part of the effort specifically, or if the intention of the elected officials in respective provinces is to facilitate those introductions?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Absolutely. Thanks for being there for those first two meetings. With regard to the terms of reference, that won't be an issue. I'll provide them to the Chair as soon as I get back to my office after this meeting.

With regard to spousal employment, I believe there was unanimity amongst the delegates last week that this has to be something that we'd address soonest, especially with the labour crisis that we currently have across the country, and they view it as an opportunity. I'll let Laurie tackle, perhaps, some of the strategic examples, but I'll give you just one example within the public service.

The federal public service launched the Military Spouse Employment Initiative. Through that initiative, military spouses have privileged employment and can retain their status as a public servant as they transfer jurisdiction. You can imagine a sailor or a lieutenant commander coming out of Ottawa posted to the beautiful city of Halifax. If his spouse is an administrative assistant or a manager, and a job is available in Halifax, she will have privileged employment when she gets to Halifax. That is one example we were able to influence from a federal perspective.

Just before I hand it off to Laurie, back to your comment about elected officials and where they can play. I believe that's where we're trying to go with the Seamless Canada steering committee. I believe elected officials are the ones who can bring these professional colleges to the table, and we can start addressing professions such as the medical field, financial, and legal. These are all sort of uphill battles with so many stakeholders. I don't know if Laurie's got other examples at this time.

LAURIE OGILVIE: I'm going to answer it a couple of ways. One, yes, those strategic partnerships that we have - working with ESDC, working with the provinces and territories, and looking at what the challenges are in the transferability of credentials between provinces and territories when families are relocating. Then from the next perspective is the colleges or the certifying organizations. What do we need to be able to leverage to be able to offset that?

Those aren't easy, and solution spaces that are immediate. So what we have done to help support military families in the interim or as those discussions are happening is we have a Military Spousal Employment Network. Through that Military Spousal Employment Network, we have a number of initiatives to enhance opportunities for military family members to seek employment. In there, there are opportunities to go to career fairs. There are specific identified employers who are, I'll say, friendly to relocating between provinces and territories. As Colonel Boucher just mentioned, what the federal Public Service has done is the transferability when you move from location to location to bring your career with you.

The other piece is to look at: now that the work we're doing is on the remote work, what we can do to be able to support military families to continue a remote work stance as

they're moving both within Canada and internationally - and then when they're working internationally, to come back into Canada.

There are a number of opportunities. We do, absolutely, as Colonel Boucher mentioned, rely on elected officials to support us in being able to have those conversations, especially on where those higher-need positions are moving - so medical care, child care, mental health support, where there is specific regulatory framework for the employment of the professionals in each of those positions.

THE CHAIR: I would just like to take a minute to let our witnesses and our committee know - I apologize. At the beginning, I should have reminded everybody that the practice of our committee is to allow for a quick follow-up question if it pertains to the initial question that you did ask. It's not a space for a second question, but if there's a short follow-up in regard to your original question, we will allow for that.

MLA Jessome, I'll allow you to do a quick follow-up on that line of questioning, and then we'll move on.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to our witnesses, you identified an appetite, it sounds like, around some priority labour market gaps. If that's accurate, then please confirm that, and if there's an identified list of high-priority professions that are kind of repeat offenders for having challenges when moving interprovincially. Does Seamless Canada have a list like that that could identify some priority areas for us to target as a province?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: I wouldn't have the exact numbers handy. I don't think Laurie would have them either. I can tell you that the professions - such as all those in the health care field - if they have provincial accreditation, education, financial, legal, those all become problematic if we go jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and primarily because the colleges hold those certifications, and the process to get recertified is complicated. It's not an issue about the military spouse paying to get recertified, but it does become an issue of time.

Typically, in an annual cycle, we find out that we're being posted, if you will, or moving to a new jurisdiction in and around a January, February time frame. It could be shorter. Then, of course, there's the panic of putting your house up for sale, finding a new house, transferring the kids, and we always put spousal appointment last. So now the spouse arrives in a new jurisdiction, and it could take two, three, four, six months before getting recertified. I don't have precise numbers, but those fields are the ones that I would argue for now, at least based on my experience, that we can come up with. I can certainly see if Laurie's got numbers, or we can see if we can get some to you after the fact.

LAURIE OGILVIE: We can absolutely get you more specific numbers after the fact, but just as a kind of a starter, 30 per cent of military spouses are in the social services

or medical field. If we're looking at 30 per cent of our spouses with those professions relocating on a relatively frequent basis, that's one of the impacts.

If we also look at where there is a need, not specifically in the military environment but in the community or in the provincial/territorial environment, I would say child care. We all know that there are challenges facing all Canadians and military in access to child care. It is an access issue because of insufficient early childhood educators across our country. I hope that gives you a little bit more. We'll provide numbers after this.

THE CHAIR: MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: Thank you. This initiative is really, really needed within our nation, I'm sure. Sometimes when we have initiatives or new programs, their parameters are fairly tight. I'm just wondering how different experiences - and there are going to be many different experiences - influence your support of families.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: We deliberately left the parameters wide for the terms of reference. That's why we've tried to keep the issues grouped in those three themes. We discovered over time that if you try to get too surgical, too precise too early in a discussion, we either reach an impasse or we solve that problem and then we're hungry to solve the next.

I think, in terms of reference, keeping those themes wide will allow us to then focus in. For example, last week there was discussion amongst some of the delegates: wouldn't it be fun if we could just tackle one issue - it was spousal employment - between a couple of jurisdictions, and then share that best practice and go forward? Some of the MLAs and MPPs have volunteered to reach out to their certifying colleges to kind of bring it together.

Seamless Canada is committed to keeping the delegates informed as to where the problematic issues are. By keeping it wide but focused on three themes, we think we've got a winning solution.

A quick vignette - for example, let's just go with the medical field. If 30 per cent of our spouses work in the military or social fields, you can imagine when there's a crisis in medical personnel across the country, wouldn't it be sweet if we could have agreement at the start between a couple of jurisdictions that are very familiar with each other - like the Maritimes or perhaps out in Western Canada and then we can build on that nationally? I think that's what we're trying to encourage. It's just that Colonel Stéphane Boucher as a military individual can't force that discussion. It's got to be elected officials. I can certainly facilitate and give you the data with Laurie to support that.

Laurie, would you like to add anything else?

LAURIE OGILVIE: I'm just going to build on what Colonel Boucher just mentioned, and I'm going to turn it just a little bit further to talk about service delivery. One of the approaches we take within the Military and Veteran Family Services Program is that there is a familiar or a level of standardization across the country so that families can feel at home when they're going into their new community, and they can know what's available to them to access. But all of our communities across Canada and internationally are different, and every family is different.

While there is a level of standardization or familiar service delivery, there's also customization based on the requirements of the community, but more importantly, the requirements of the family. It's a matter of trying to balance the two of them to be able to offer services and supports from a variety of different lenses to best support what families are bringing forward as to what their needs are in that place and time. Because in solving it, as Colonel Boucher mentioned, we're hungry to always move on to the next issue that we can try to solve.

In rushing too quickly to that, we forget sometimes that what the solution space was perhaps five or two years ago, even a year ago, may look slightly different or may need to look a little bit different today - so to have that ability to be able to continually modernize and adjust. But most importantly is listening to what military and veteran families are coming forward with and addressing those. Yes, it's a matter of picking those things that we can have influence on, but also those things that we have influence on that are actually going to be of benefit and really support the military families themselves.

THE CHAIR: MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just to start off, I'm wondering - their opening remarks, is that something that we can get a copy of? I didn't see it here. I'd love to get it because some of the stuff in it . . .

THE CHAIR: We didn't receive any through the clerk, but we can make a request. If our witnesses would be willing to send their opening remarks to our clerk, they can then be disseminated to our committee when we receive them.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Yes, that would be great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is: Can you tell us in a bit more detail what your role is in assisting families to relocate?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Yes, Mr. MacDonald, thank you for the question. It's going to have to be all Laurie, but what I can tell you is that the situation has vastly changed during my career compared to where - and my father's career before me. When I started my career, military family resource centres didn't exist. This speaks to a need that was identified in the early 1990s. Ever since, that mandate has changed.

Laurie will definitely bring you through some of those services, but from a military perspective, we try to be cognizant of the support that military families need. From a military perspective, we allocate the time from, I'll use the term, "a battle rhythm perspective" for the families to get prepared for the move, including a number of days so that they can go house hunting. We provide them a number of days upon relocation so they can get settled in, get their new driver's licence, get their new licence plates, and get their children registered in school. Militarily, we provide time, which is really what the members seem to request the most. In terms of specific services - Laurie?

[2:45 p.m.]

LAURIE OGILVIE: I can't talk specifically to what the Canadian Armed Forces does in support of relocation. What I can talk to is about the support that we provide for families. I'm going to do it in what we do - kind of as Colonel Boucher just mentioned, where we came from, what we currently do, where we're looking to go, and then how we use that feedback loop to be able to better support.

Back in the 1990s and 1980s, families were considered as part of furniture and effects when military members were relocating. They would have been the same as the couch or the fridge that was going with the military member to their new location. Over about the last 30 years, there has been significant modernization to the Military and Veteran Family Services Program, acknowledging that families are not just tagging along but are truly an enabler of the military operational capability and the capacity of the military member to be operationally ready, especially at times of relocation.

Acknowledging that, what we have been able to do is put together programs, services, and supports to provide the families with knowledge, but more importantly, an outlet to get their questions answered. We have recently developed a revised and renewed relocation guide for military families. It's just being released right now. Instead of the checklist that families would have received previously, it takes you through the journey that families are going to experience as they relocate across the country. We can absolutely get you a copy of that if you're interested in it.

We're also just in the process of finalizing a relocation activity book for children as they're relocating. It's children who have been mostly tagalong, so just come on along, whereas children actually feel the relocation experience very, very deeply. So what are the supports that we need to be able to provide the families to support the children in that relocation?

I talked about the Military Family Resource Centres. At every single one of the Military Family Resource Centres, they have staff. They're all called something different, but their role is to navigate on behalf of the families. There are opportunities for families to engage with this navigator-type position in advance of relocating to a new community and ask them questions. Where is the best school? If I were to live in this part of the



community, what would be the benefits or not the benefits of moving there? So to answer those questions that they may have.

We also have something called a Family Information Line. The Family Information Line is available 24/7. It is information, referral, crisis, and mental health support. The Family Information Line is actually a place where a lot of families go when they either don't know an answer to a particular question, or they are in crisis. It's that two o'clock in the morning when they can't find what paperwork they needed to be able to do whatever when they're moving to a new province or territory. The Family Information Line is there to support the family in being able to get answers and reduce the stress for them.

We have worked very closely with the CAF Ombudsman's Office specifically on relocation. They have just completed a systemic investigation on compassionate postings. Compassionate postings are because, for whatever reason, the family cannot relocate with the military member. There were a number of recommendations that have come out of that compassionate posting review that we will then take action on, and we will put services in place. They have done a number of systemic reviews around relocation where we have taken all of their recommendations and been able to put services in place where families have said this is an issue.

The last thing I'll share is that we have something called MyVoiceMaVoix. MyVoice is a closed Facebook page for military family members where they can come and ask questions. Through the MyVoice platform, we also offer specialized engagement activities. We invite experts in a bunch of different areas, relocation being one of them. We will provide the information on things you need to think of, services, what's available for you, and when things don't go well, this is who you talk to, and this is who you can engage with to try to get a solution. Out of what we're receiving from the feedback from MyVoice, we're able to use that and look at what other services are required as families are relocated.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I believe this one will be back to Ms. Ogilvie. You mentioned the Military Spousal Employment Initiative Network. Can you just explain more how that works into the relocation?

LAURIE OGILVIE: Absolutely. The Military Spousal Employment Network has a bunch of different intake areas. There are virtual career fairs. We used to have it in person. Now we're doing virtual career fairs where military spouses, when they know that they're going to be relocating to a particular location, can come into the career fair. It's almost like going to a real career fair because you go into the different rooms. It's all been set up virtually, and you're able to talk with the employers, get a feel for who the employers are, and then find out what opportunities exist within that community that you're going to be relocating to. We also have job banks where military families can go in and look what jobs are available to be able to support it.

Also, at each of the Military Family Resource Centres across Canada, there is an employment coordinator. That employment coordinator is available to support families, pre - usually it's post, because as Colonel Boucher said, that's not always the top of everybody's to-do list upon relocation. But absolutely, families can engage with the employment coordinator at each of the Military Family Resource Centres to start to look for employment before relocating to a particular community. There is also entrepreneurship training that's available through the Military Spousal Employment Network.

What we're trying to do is look at what the challenges are that families face when relocating, and then look at what opportunities we can create to offset that for them. I'm not sure if that answered everything you were looking for.

THE CHAIR: I have MLA Taggart, MLA Barkhouse, MLA Jessome, and then MLA Duale in that order. I will now go to MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: Thank you, Colonel Boucher and Ms. Ogilvie, for the work you do in supporting military families - children in particular, in what must be a very difficult time, and I expect, on a fairly regular basis for them.

My question - I think to some degree it has been answered a couple of times, but I'd like a little bit of clarity on it, if I could. To Ms. Ogilvie: Can you tell us a little bit about the role that the Military Family Resource Centre plays in helping military families relocate, and what your partnership with the Military Family Services Program - how they sort of work together, but how they're defined separately?

LAURIE OGILVIE: Absolutely. I'm going to start with the second half of your question first because it'll lead into the first half of your question. Military Family Services, as Colonel Boucher mentioned, are part of the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services offers a breadth of supports and services to military members and their families, and veterans and their families.

We extend from commercial services through CANEX to financial services through SISIP to personal support, which is health promotion, fitness, recreation, to military families. In the Military Family Services Program, we provide the specific social service support to military and veteran families.

Military Family Services, we have a dual role. One, we provide direct services to families, as I mentioned, through the virtual MFRC and through some of the other initiatives that we have, like the Military Spousal Employment Network. We are also the steward of the Military Family Resource Centres.

Military Family Resource Centres have been established as not-for-profit, provincially incorporated, charitable organizations that are governed by a board of

directors, who are all volunteers but elected by the community that they serve. The military family community would be their area of responsibility.

Military Family Resource Centres receive the majority of their funding through the Military Family Services Program, and we receive it from the Department of National Defence, Canadian Armed Forces. We provide the money to the Military Family Resource Centres to deliver the Military and Veteran Family Services Program. The Military and Veteran Family Services Program, as I mentioned, it provides a level of familiar services to families across our country.

They are all separated into six areas of things, and that's maybe where I'll talk a little bit about the six areas. There are three conditions of a military lifestyle that make the military family unique, and that's relocation, as we've been talking about today. It's also the risk of profession, and the risk of profession is that you don't know if a military member is going to return after they leave on deployment or on exercise, or even going to work. There's a variety of services that we provide to support deployment, to support if there is a fatality or a death, how we can support bereavement. The third one is frequent absences from the home and how the family is being supported.

The other three areas that the program really looks at, and this is in order of, I'm not going to say priority, but it's order of need. The first is mental health. That has been an increasing challenge that is facing military families. I think it's facing all Canadians, but facing military families, but definitely gets more challenged when families are frequently relocating.

The second is financial resilience. I think we can assume that most Canadians, as we see what's happening with the markets right now, are experiencing that. How can we support the military resilience of our families? Third is the social interaction. All of those, the last three that I talked about, are uniquely tied to relocation.

What we ask the Military Family Resource Centres to do is provide services on our behalf to the military families within their communities that focus, not exclusively, but primarily on looking at the mental health and social wellness of the family, to look at the financial resilience of the family, and then the interactions or the personal relationships. All of those get tied into specific programs that are definitely challenged by relocation.

To go into some of the more specific programs that are offered at the Military Family Resource Centres - I talked about that navigating role. What that navigating role does is - I'll get really technical for you right now - families will come into or talk virtually to or call and say, this is my experience. This is what my family makeup is. It could be a family of one, it could be aged parents living with the family, it could be children with special needs, whatever it happens to be.

This navigator type role, what they do is they then are able to connect the families - either before, during or after relocation - to those service providers that are a need for that particular family. Instead of just basically saying, good luck, go find what you need in the community, they will tailor those service offerings, or the referrals to the service offerings, in the community specific to what the family needs and the family dynamic.

[3:00 p.m.]

I'm saying this all right now. This new program and this new way of doing business was launched on April 1, 2022. We were still in the process of moving from the way it was before, which was basically a catalogue of services that are available to this very tailored navigating role, to be able to support the exact needs that military families are facing and not bombarding them, in essence, with too much information. We all know what happens when you get too much. You just shut down; you don't listen to any of it. It's about tailoring our supports to them.

THE CHAIR: MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Could you tell us the role that Seamless Canada plays to ensure that when families have to relocate, they are able to connect with the health services at their new postings, and efforts around providing care transitions when specialists are involved - cancer care, for example.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Seamless Canada does not actually do service delivery for military families. What we do is bring together the stakeholders - the elected officials, other government departments, Employment and Social Development Canada, Ministers of Education, Transport - to make sure they understand the challenges faced by military families, and through education are we going to be able to address these issues.

When it comes to the actual service delivery along the lines of what you're asking there may be some elements facilitated by Military Family Services, but certainly not done with the Seamless Canada team. Really, we're just about orchestrating the overall dialogue and mobilizing people.

Laurie, is there anything that you do in Military Family Services you want to share?

LAURIE OGILVIE: Absolutely. As I mentioned, we initiated the telemedicine services. It was primarily in COVID, but the purpose of it was to be able to offset and not delay access to medical care when a family is relocating into a community. The referral piece to a specialized service like with cancer care or to a child with special needs or for autism support can be done through the telemedicine with then the referral to the specialist in the community.

We ask each of the Military Family Resource Centres to keep referral lists for specialists that have places available within their communities. We also have a military doctor network where we partner with Calian at their Primacy care clinics at many - not all - locations across the country.

Again, one of the biggest challenges that families face to be able to get the specialized care is to get into the physician initially to get the referral to the specialized care, especially upon relocation. The Calian Military Family Doctor Network is able to get access to that primary physician sooner than later by staying on waiting lists to be able to reduce the amount of time that families are looking for referrals to a specialist.

The last thing I'll mention is - at the beginning, I talked about strategic partnerships and the people we work with. We have worked with a number of medical associations on putting together guides specifically to educate or to increase awareness of the medical profession on some of the challenges that military families face that many other families in Canada would not.

I will go back to Colonel Boucher as he said twice in his opening remarks that it's not about making access ahead of all Canadians, but it's equitable. What are the initiatives we can put in place to make sure the military families are not disadvantaged or don't have access to that incredibly needed medical care when they need it because of a relocation?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Mr. Chair, if I could just add one comment, with regard to the Canadian Armed Forces' role. We do have a great deal of compassion and empathy for families who go through challenges like the one described, for example cancer care or those with special needs children. We have mechanisms, policies that allow us to either delay or cancel an inter-province posting if all of a sudden, we discover a family member with cancer or whatnot. There are ways of doing it to prevent the issue from becoming an issue upon relocation.

The reality is that in some occupations, pilots, or for some reason a critical career path and they decided they need to get to Halifax to be a captain on a frigate, then that becomes also a personal choice, but we do have tools to try to prevent a crisis from happening. It's all about communication with the chain of command.

THE CHAIR: MLA Duale.

ALI DUALE: Thank you, Colonel Boucher. First of all, I really appreciate your personal story, especially the relocation of your family, specifically your children. I can speak from my personal life experience, sometimes relocation is not a bad thing. Also, there's a lot of benefit to being relocated in terms of adaptation, learning a new language, seeing a new life, so sometimes there is also a benefit of moving. But what I'm interested in is the impact of the relocation of children and how to fill that gap.

My question is: Is there any research that has been done on the impact of relocation of children?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Yes, sir. I'll let Laurie get into the services, but I agree with you that relocation for a family can be healthy if done with the right attitude. My wife just retired after (Inaudible) years of service, and I'm going to be retiring. We are quite proud of the fact that three of our boys are now in the Canadian Armed Forces. One's a Captain in New Brunswick, one's in Quebec City, and one's in Kingston, Ontario. We're really proud of that. We think part of that is with the attitude.

I shared with you at the beginning about the impact on the education of my children. I've had two boys who graduated high school but never got a prom or didn't get an opportunity to graduate from high school. They have the credits, but just by virtue of the times of relocation. There are numerous studies out there that speak to the impact and ongoing studies - for example, a young lady out of Queen's University who's doing a really interesting study on the impact of relocating teenagers. But rest assured, it does have an impact, but more importantly, not just on the kids, on the families - on the parents, in particular - the spouses giving up employment and whatnot. I'll let Laurie speak specifically on the children.

LAURIE OGILVIE: We have conducted research on relocation from a family perspective and from a youth perspective, and we just have a research study that's initiated on the impact on children. It doesn't mean we don't know specifically what children are experiencing because there is a variety of other research that's been conducted over the years.

At the current moment, there are two main research studies around relocation specific to children and, as I mentioned, one working update. There's also the quality of life survey that's conducted every three-to-four years throughout the Canadian Armed Forces, and that really does look at the challenges. Also, and as you talked about, there are some real benefits to relocating. There really are some amazing things that come out of the military lifestyle, so it captures that.

The best inventory of research that exists that we rely on significantly is through the Canadian Institute of Military and Veteran Family Research (CIMVHR). CIMVHR is an academic institution currently out of Queen's University, but includes many academic institutions across Canada where military, veteran and family research is conducted. It's also where all of the different pieces of research are brought together, where we then are able to leverage the findings of each of the individual research reports and put that into a language or into an idea that can help us actually increase our capacity to support military families, including children.

The activity book that I just mentioned that was produced for children as they're relocating was born out of research that was conducted on what the big challenges are that

children are facing. It becomes the unknown. It's the fear of making new connections in a new community, and it's grieving. It's the sense of loss of leaving an old community. Children can't express that in that way, but those are the primary emotions that are being felt by children. We are trying to support parents and support families, and be able to support the children as they're experiencing those unnamed types of emotions.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Through the Chair to our guests, we've discussed, in particular, an interprovincial agreement around access to health services and health cards. Nova Scotia got a checkmark quickly there because you get it on Day 1 if you're a Canadian citizen.

I'm wondering if - not necessarily a nationwide milestone or win - if our guests can talk about some of the efforts or the wins or milestones that other jurisdictions have achieved that would align with the priorities of Seamless Canada, and things that Seamless Canada would like to see adopted in other jurisdictions, similarly to what has been done with the health card access.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: The 90-day waiver that you're alluding to is now implemented by each province. Nova Scotia was quick to deliver. The jurisdictions that brought it in later had a very small military constituency, so it was less, I guess, critical or urgent, but all have implemented it to different means. Yours, if I recall correctly, is when you just call and you get in. In Ontario, there is a military - it's on the website. As soon as you see that military symbol, you click on it and you're going in.

From that perspective, the best practice has already been shared. Other elements of best practice that have gone on to help provinces - we've highlighted a few. In the past it was Seamless Canada conferences. For example, facilitated by Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, we've enabled provinces to use the Support Our Troops ribbon on licence plates. This sounds like a small gesture, but in one jurisdiction, 100 per cent of the proceeds in that jurisdiction go toward Military Family Services. You're not going to retire with that amount of money, but it's enough to make a difference in that jurisdiction for those military families.

Seamless Canada speaks primarily to the regular force, but also touches upon the reserve force. In some jurisdictions, the legislative assemblies or provincial parliaments have established legislation that helps protect reserve employment when they go on deployment. That means that they can now know that they can go on deployment with the Canadian Armed Forces, do an operational mandate overseas or at sea, and come back to their employment because it's been protected. That alleviates a stress on their family, knowing that you're coming back and you're still going to have pay. So it's not directly attributable to Seamless Canada, but it definitely connects. We promote that with great pride.

Other examples of best practice that are starting to be shared among the provinces: Some provinces offer portals for some of these professions that we speak about in terms of spousal accreditation. For example, your neighbour, New Brunswick, has a portal. I haven't been on it, but the Hon. Mary Wilson was quite proud to promote it last week. Through this portal, you can apply before you even arrive in the province, highlight the profession, and it'll take you through the step-by-step to be accredited in that new jurisdiction. It fits part of this overall mobility issue.

[3:15 p.m.]

I'm trying to think if there are any others, Laurie, in terms of best practice that would come up at this point.

LAURIE OGILVIE: I think what I would say is Seamless Canada itself is a best practice. It's bringing together the provinces and territories to have those discussions, which - I've been around for a long time - did not happen 10 years ago. The challenges that military families and veteran families were facing became very provincial- and territorial-siloed. I think the introduction of Seamless Canada and the conversations that the provinces and territories are having is truly an amazing model and example of how even the initiation of discussions can really start to have an impact as we move forward.

What I would say is, if we were looking at a best practice, how do we continue to leverage Seamless Canada to start to look at more of these best practices, acknowledging what some of the bigger, or perhaps the more attainable, solutions can be across Canada?

THE CHAIR: MLA MacDonald, then MLA Lachance, then MLA Harrison, and then MLA Hansen.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I'm not sure which one will do this one, but I'm just wondering: Does Seamless Canada also help vets in transition to civilian life?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Mr. MacDonald, I think it came up somewhere in my uniform, so you want to say military, but it's a great question, and the answer to that is yes. We acknowledge that the transition to retirement and becoming a veteran is, if you will, that last move of your career. Many of the services, as Laurie has laid out, transpose themselves to the regular force as you initially transfer into retirement.

I don't have the exact numbers before me, but we do know that the average age of a veteran has also greatly decreased, so now veterans are not the veterans of my dad's age or even my age, where they're retiring and your kids are all grown up. We have people retiring now after - they're considered veterans after 10, 12, 20 years. They could be in their early 40s with two or three children under the age of 10.



We absolutely consider veterans part of this, and we were excited to welcome Veterans Affairs Canada now for a number of the Seamless Canada meetings. In the last week, the Associate Deputy Minister responsible for support services was there, engaged in the bilateral discussions with the MLAs and MPPs who wanted to have those discussions. One hundred per cent, we try to involve them, because they're a part of our legacy. Laurie, do you want to add anything?

LAURIE OGILVIE: Not specific to Seamless Canada, but definitely what dovetails well with Seamless is in 2017, we introduced the Veteran Family Program. The Veteran Family Program supports that transition from military to veteran lifestyle. At the current moment, it is only for medically releasing Canadian Armed Forces members and their families, but we do extend the offer to those non-medically releasing Canadian Armed Forces members who are having a challenge or having a difficult transition from military to civilian life. Based on a life after service study that was done a number of years ago, 25 per cent of non-medically releasing Canadian Armed Forces members experience a difficult transition to civilian life.

We do support that, again not specific to Seamless Canada, but as Colonel Boucher mentioned, having Veterans Affairs at the Seamless table also uniquely tied with what we are doing in Military and Veteran Family Services is going to help us take those deltas that currently exist and be able to look at what is a provincial-territorial cross-sectional requirement versus what can we do at each of those locations to support that transition to civilian life.

The introduction of telemedicine for releasing Canadian Armed Forces members as of January 1<sup>st</sup> this current year has been huge. One of the biggest challenges we're hearing from releasing Canadian Armed Forces members is that because medical care has been provided while in uniform by the Canadian Armed Forces, having to now access the civilian medical system is really difficult and quite daunting. Having this as an offset has been incredibly beneficial. Telemedicine, again while not borne specifically out of Seamless Canada, it definitely has been leveraged as a result of Seamless Canada.

THE CHAIR: MLA MacDonald, do you have a follow-up question?

JOHN A. MACDONALD: No, I'm good, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Next, we have MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: I'm going to try to get three questions in here in one. They're all kind of related. Can you tell us about the process that members use to find the services? Is there an outreach branch from Seamless Canada, and will the public ever be informed about what is available?

THE CHAIR: Are you asking someone specifically?

LARRY HARRISON: No.

THE CHAIR: Colonel Boucher.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: I think we're going to divide and conquer the question although there were three parts to one question. With regard to Seamless Canada and the outreach, a reminder that Seamless Canada does not do service delivery. We are a conduit for change and communication with the provinces, but we communicate our successes openly. We communicate through a variety of means - so the normal communication packages you'd see about the Canadian Armed Forces - but we also keep an all-informed net with the delegates through the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat.

All of that work is totally transparent and shared. The public can absolutely see what is available. Laurie spoke to some of this, but I think the critical question, which she'll answer the public piece, is the process to find these services when they get to destination. I suspect you can speak to that, Laurie.

LAURIE OGILVIE: I won't repeat some of the stuff I've said so far; I'll add some new stuff. We do have a website. It's called CAF Connection, and we will be launching a new CAF Connection in the Fall. There are two pieces to this. CAF Connection will provide access to all of the services that are available. What it provides to military members and their families, and veterans and their families, the ability to navigate through this online portal to be able to find specifically what they are looking for.

There is going to be an artificial intelligence backdrop to it. So instead of that catalogue of services, that I talked about, and needing to figure it out on your own, this will be able to tailor it specifically to what the family is looking for. For example, I continually get ads for hearing aids. I don't need a hearing aid. It's not a happy thing if you're getting information on stuff that is not applicable to you. This new website has been years in the making but will be launched hopefully this Fall and will tailor it specifically to the experiences of the military member and their family, and the veteran and their family.

We also have something called CF1. CF1 is mostly seen as a rewards type of program. It absolutely does provide rewards and benefits to military and veteran members and families. What it also does is it provides us the opportunity to send out information. We have over a million people in the CF1 program - active and veteran members and their families - and that's one way that we can communicate and tailor some of the information that we're providing to them.

Lastly, I'll just go back to the virtual MFRC. We do continually try to advertise and encourage families to go and ask their questions - not only families, but also service providers or anyone who is of interest. It's through those engagements that we can start to look at what actually are the emerging needs that military families are facing?

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: I was wondering if you both could comment on maybe how diverse families are affected in these areas. Has Seamless Canada had a chance to consider these issues under education, under health care, under spousal employment, or maybe based on some of the experience through the Military Family Resource Centres?

It just really struck me when you were talking about issues around social connection and integration, and thinking about families - like 2SLGBTQ+ families - who might be connected with folks or also have identified services that work for their family and then have to move.

I was also thinking about Indigenous families who may have a connection to a particular community or territory, and also thinking about other diverse communities who are connected to places, for instance, the African Nova Scotian community when folks are in the military and have to leave their community here. What sort of consideration has been taken to think about these families in relocation?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: I'm going to let Laurie dive into it a little bit. I'm just going to share with you my personal lived experience, if that helps give a specific lens or view.

As Laurie has pointed out, each MFRC - all 32 of them - work independently. They tailor the needs to their community based on where they are. They complement and fill gaps of what else is available in that community. Very personal experience: I resided in Valcartier, Quebec - just north of the City of Quebec. The base is a little bit further out from the communities, for example, compared to CFB Halifax, perhaps.

It has - or at least it had the last time I was there - a robust youth outreach program with a youth club. I think they used to call it a "teen club" back in the day. It was a place for the youth to show up, because they all have a common story in terms of being a dependent of a military member. At those youth clubs, professionals from the MFRC attend and can then take them through to other services if they see that perhaps the child needs a little bit of help in terms of education or integration or other health matters.

Each one is a little bit different, but I hope that view, my lived experience, is helpful. I don't know, Laurie, if you want to add a little bit more.

LAURIE OGILIVIE: Absolutely. I'll just mention two things. From a research perspective or an understanding of what those unique requirements are of families, in 2017 we concluded a research study basically on the status of military families from a regular force perspective. We haven't completed the reserve force profile yet. The basis of that research is what modernized our Military and Veteran Family Services Program. It was very clear, and we acknowledged that the program we had been doing pre-April 1<sup>st</sup> of this

year was not addressing a more non-1980s familial view. So that piece of research is what has driven where we have taken the program.

[3:30 p.m.]

The second piece I'll add is specifically around diversity and inclusion. Three years ago, we added a small cell within military family services to look at gender-based violence. That has grown into diversity and inclusion. In everything we do, gender-based analysis is conducted on all of our products, services, and communication, and now we are expanding that to include it through a full diversity and inclusion lens.

We have set up through HR, a company we use to help us support our HR functions, because as Colonel Boucher mentioned, all of the Military Family Resource Centres are independent. There is no centralized administrative support for them on areas like this. We have set up an office through that company on diversity and inclusion to support the Military Family Resource Centres on being able to ensure that the services they're providing are being looked at through an inclusive lens versus that kind of traditional 1980 familial view.

THE CHAIR: MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I guess this is to Ms. Ogilvie. Do you help military families move within provinces, or is it just when they're crossing provincial borders?

LAURIE OGILVIE: In the research study that I just referenced, we have the profile. I can't pull it out of my brain right now, but we have the profile. The most military family relocations occur in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. A lot of relocation happens across provinces or interprovincially, but there's also a lot of interprovincial relocation as well. I say that, if you look at the province of New Brunswick, there really is only one location in New Brunswick. Relocating interprovincially within New Brunswick it a little bit difficult, whereas in Ontario, there are a number of bases and wings located in Ontario, the same as in Alberta.

I would say from a profile perspective, Halifax and Esquimalt are the two locations where families relocate the least to other provinces besides Nova Scotia or British Columbia. That's really the nature of the Navy experience. The Navy relocation profile looks different from, say, an Army or an Air Force view, where the relocation would be because operational requirements would be based on where that wing or that base is located.

I'm not sure if that answered your question, but after this I can absolutely provide you with a link to the research study that will give you the profile. Again, it's from a 2017 lens, but it's not significantly different today.

THE CHAIR: Just for everybody's knowledge, we have just over eight minutes to go for questioning. MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I've been really quiet this whole time, just taking in the information. I think my thoughts on this are, first of all, thank you so much for your service, Colonel Boucher, as well for the work that you do, Ms. Ogilvie. Your work with the military families, I know that's a crucial piece - that families who are relocating need to have those resources available.

My take from this conversation today and the information that was given is that we as government officials should be educating, as well as having conversations with the ministers in departments that those mobility challenges affect, i.e., Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Wellness, Labour, Skills and Immigration, employment. The list could go on and on. I will say that I think this is valuable information that we as MLAs can take back and really emphasize the fact that we want to make sure that those service people who are out there doing the work for our country get equitable service.

Yes, we understand they're moving around, they're being relocated in many different facets, but they should also have the same equitable service provided to them wherever they travel interprovincially. I just wanted to say that I'm taking that in. I'm hoping that all of us sitting here are going to be very mindful when we get those phone calls or when we are asked for resources, that we're going to do the same and advocate for those families in a way that gives them the service in a timely manner. Thank you so much for your presentation. I really do appreciate it.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I'm wondering if our guests here today can comment on operationally what Seamless Canada does to promote the work that they're doing or that entity is doing within the Canadian Armed Forces and beyond to make sure that military families and serving military folks are aware of what Seamless Canada is and how they can add value to the work that Seamless is doing.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: I think there are three components to the question. First, again, Seamless Canada is not in service delivery. In fact, I'd rather not my name be everywhere, because it's not about me. It's really about the services that get offered, and we don't do that.

The second part of the question alluded to communication. We try to communicate our success stories, the 90-day waiver, things of that nature. We try to communicate as best we can through the public affairs network to get that out there. Obviously, using the military Family Information Line, services that Laurie's organization champions, we can communicate that as well.

The third comment I would make is in the communications space. As we bring these things forward, where Seamless Canada can have a success is by reaching out to MLAs like yourself, getting the messages back to the ministers, and getting you to have a healthy relationship with the local base and wing commanders to keep the discussion going. I think that's where the value of it is. Frankly, as I mentioned, I'd just rather be in the shadows with Seamless Canada. We're just trying to do the best we can for our children.

BEN JESSOME: I appreciate the intention behind letting the families lead the charge here, but I would respectfully submit that having been - I didn't get to do a ton of, for lack of a proper word, parliamentary secretary activity until I started working with the Seamless Canada initiative. I would come home and brag about the conversations that we were having interprovincially and the work that was going on. I'd talk to active military members and say that I was in Ottawa at the Seamless Canada discussions, and they didn't know what I was talking about.

Humbly, I would suggest that it's okay to brag a little bit about the work you're doing because it's very important. I think that the buy-in for military families - if there were more intentional interactions within the Armed Forces to promote that work, I think they would be extremely valuable, for whatever that's worth coming from me. I just note that those interactions that I've had back home here in Nova Scotia with actively serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, there hasn't been, in my experience, a lot of knowledge about what Seamless is and what the intended mandate of the organization is.

THE CHAIR: Is there a quick comment in response to MLA Jessome from anyone on the panel there, or we can move on to one more question?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: If I may, I completely agree with the question and the comment. Frankly, last week was really an inflection point of significant investment that has been made by all the provinces with the establishment of the Seamless Canada Steering Committee, and now we can get out into the news, be loud and proud.

One of the challenges we've faced in the past: I think you have to appreciate that I can't get ahead of the provinces and territories, so we had to let the provinces and territories kind of profess the good news with the help of the local MFRCs. Last week allows us to start doing that, and facilitated by the elected officials who are participating, including your own John Lohr. Your wise words are taken in, and believe me, we'll be loud and proud.

THE CHAIR: MLA Duale for our last question.

ALI DUALE: Thank you, Colonel. First of all, I'm just going to actually follow up my colleague. I encourage you to brag about what you do and to let people know what you do. I will encourage you to continue that.

I do have a question and it's very short. We have had two and a half years of COVID. I'm just interested to know: Is there any impact that COVID has had on your services?

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Sure, that's a great question. First to your comment, I will be loud and proud, so thanks for the advice.

COVID has had an impact on the Canadian Armed Forces and the military families. We've seen mental health issues on both members and with the military families. We've seen a decrease of retirements and releases during the pandemic, but now an uptake since the pandemic has softened, if you will. We've seen a huge decrease in recruitment because we couldn't process the recruiting and do the basic training, so now we're trying to reconstitute the forces. You may have heard General Eyre speak to that. We're trying to build back up so we can be able to deliver all of our programs.

I know from a father's perspective, and I speak to military colleagues, our children have also struggled. I watched my son go through Grades 10, 11, and 12. Online schooling, to quote my 18-year-old, sucks. I don't know if I can say that in committee, Mr. Chair, but that is from an 18-year-old. There are many more effects to military children specifically, I'm sure. I'll let Laurie who's got her thumb on that pulse speak to that, but thank you for the question.

LAURIE OGILVIE: I concur, COVID has had a significant impact on military families and our ability to be able to support military families, and the emerging needs of military families. I'll be very proud right now and say that we were able to - and I know "pivot" is everybody's least favourite word - but we were able to pivot very quickly and go to virtual services.

I will say we have learned significantly that there is an increased demand for virtual-types of services than there were for in-person. COVID absolutely has an impact on that, but we are seeing now, even as in-person services are opening, the need for the virtual. Access to virtual services is staying steady, if not growing more.

I talked about our Family Information Line a little bit earlier, and as I mentioned, that's an information referral 24/7 phone line - but it's also a crisis response line. We are seeing a significant increase in the reasons that people are calling. There is a lot of stress in families. There are a lot of family breakdowns. Addictions or substance abuse are increasing significantly, and just general challenges coping with the pandemic, but also with all of the changes that are happening.

During the first part of COVID, relocations were actually stalled significantly because relocating across either provinces or internationally was difficult because of COVID. Right now, we have seen a significant acceleration of postings or relocation of families, which is causing a whole new host of challenges that families are facing.

I say all of this not because I don't know, because I don't know if all of these issues existed pre-COVID, but I think what was taken away during COVID was those personal support systems. That's why families are relying a little bit more on or coming more forward and accessing these more virtual or anonymous-type services to be able to help them get through the challenges that they're facing.

I'll give you one stat because I think it's the biggest one. We are seeing a huge uptake - it's around that financial resilience and families experiencing financial difficulties, not unique to the Canadian Armed Forces. Absolutely, many Canadians are. But this past year, we had 800 military families who accessed our Holiday Food Hamper Program through Support Our Troops. Because of whatever the experience was that they had, they needed that little bit of extra support at Christmastime to be able to have food, presents, whatever it was for their family.

This is not a reflection of a bad time in the Canadian Armed Forces at all. It is a reflection of families reaching out and asking for help - whereas before, it could be a little better hidden because there were those in-person social support networks that were available.

THE CHAIR: The time for our question-and-answer period is over. Thank you, Colonel Boucher and Ms. Ogilvie. We do have committee business to attend to, but we'd like to extend to you an opportunity to give a brief closing statement to the committee, if you'd like. We can begin with Colonel Boucher.

STÉPHANE BOUCHER: Thank you for the opportunity here this afternoon. It was fantastic, and thank you for all the sage advice from the members of the committee.

Four quick points. First, Nova Scotia, not unlike other jurisdictions, is one that has many Reserve Force units across the province. Those Reserve Force units are supported by Regular Force members who get relocated annually, and that becomes an additional challenge. For example, being posted to Halifax, if you're going to an isolated community, they may be less familiar with the needs of a military family. There is no physical MFRC, thus the need for virtual. I'd just ask that you be cognizant that the Reserve Force units also create a challenge for us.

Second point, you are fortunate in Nova Scotia with many great military installations, including Halifax, Shearwater, and Greenwood. I would highly encourage the members of the committee to reach out to those base and wing commanders. They have the pulse with their MFRCs on the life on those bases, and can certainly quantify or qualify some of the data we've mentioned today.

Three, as much as I want to tell it loud and proud, we need small victories. If you can help me with your ministers to achieve some of those small victories in the spousal employment space, in the education space - any support you can give us will be greatly



appreciated. We need small victories. That's how we'll convince our military members to continue their careers.

[3:45 p.m.]

My last is really a thank you to the support. I can feel the love for the military from the members of the community, and I'm thankful for that support. I know that I'm retiring with Seamless Canada being launched and all of you supporting it, so thank you very much.

LAURIE OGILVIE: I'd like to echo Colonel Boucher's comments. I'd like to thank you very much. This was almost two hours of you listening to us talk about military families and being truly engaged, and that's quite amazing. This is exactly what military and veteran families need, is they need people to be engaged. They need people to understand, and most importantly, to be able to support their journey. They signed up to do this, and I think it's on all of us to be able to help and support them, where and when they need it.

Lastly, I just wanted to extend an offer to all of you. I think we've passed along a lot of information today. I hope this is not the end of the conversation. To you, your staff, your constituents, to anybody who is interested who wants to know more about what is available for military families - and more importantly, what's not available that we could be able to mitigate within your three locations, and even as you talk to your colleagues across the country, what we can do to support it - I hope this conversation extends.

My team and I are here. If you ever have any questions or want more information, please do not hesitate to reach out, because this conversation could only benefit military and veteran families.

THE CHAIR: Again, to both of you, on behalf of our committee, I want to thank you for appearing before us today and sharing the information that you did. If there are any reports of information that you feel relevant to pass on as per the request of our committee, pass that on to our clerk, and we look forward to receiving that from you. Thank you again from all of us who represent military ridings. You are now free to leave.

At 3:48 p.m., here we go - we have a bit of committee business to attend to. The first piece of committee business that I will bring up is a letter that was brought to our attention from The Last Post. I'm assuming you all have that letter. They had made a request to appear before our committee at some point, and we thought we'd pass it on to this agenda setting meeting. We've already received a list of topics from the caucuses, but I'll leave it with you if any of the caucuses would like to add it to their topic list for this round of agenda setting. Is there any discussion on that?

If no discussion, we'll move right on to our agenda setting. We will begin the selection of topics with the Liberal caucus. We'll go to MLA Jessome for your topic selection.

BEN JESSOME: The first item we submit for consideration of the committee is the impacts on veterans and military families dealing with cost-of-living challenges. Our suggested witnesses would include, but not limited to: Department of Community Services, Deputy Minister Taweel; Emergency Management Office, Erica Fleck; the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Deputy Minister LaFleche; and the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command Executive Director. So moved.

THE CHAIR: We hear the topic. Is there any discussion on that topic? Would you like to put a motion, MLA Jessome, that that's accepted?

BEN JESSOME: So moved.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Duale.

ALIDUALE: The second topic will be the military transition into the skilled trades. I believe this is very important. We know the military has a lot of skills that could also be beneficial within society. We believe it is a very important topic to choose.

The witnesses would be: Mainland Nova Scotia Building Trades Executive Director Brad Smith; Deputy Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration, Ava Czapalay; Nova Scotia Community College President Don Bureaux; and the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia Nunavut Command Executive Director.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, MLA Duale. Any discussion on that? MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I have a friendly suggestion. I ask respectfully if Helmets to Hardhats could be added as a witness. This is a not-for-profit group that works in partnership with government, industry, and trade unions to assist veterans as well as their spouses and dependents, and senior cadets as well, in their transition to civilian careers in industry.

THE CHAIR: Is it agreed that that witness could be added to the topic? MLA Duale, put a motion forward for that topic?

ALIDUALE: I will put the motion for the topic of military transition into the skilled trades.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We will now move on to the NDP caucus for your topic selection. MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I'd like to submit for consideration our topic on mental health services for police with Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton, scientific director at the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment; and Dean Stienberg, president of the Halifax Regional Police Association. I'd like to submit that.

THE CHAIR: We have a topic submitted. Is there any discussion on that? MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: If I may, I have to say it's a very important topic. I'm not sure where it fits in with veterans, but my real point here is that this is very sensitive - this idea of RCMP policing mental health. In the aftermath of the 2020 attacks, strongly felt emotions are still very high in my community.

I'm not going to support this. I'm going to ask that maybe it could come back at another time over this term. At this time, I'm uncomfortable with this as the subject for this committee.

THE CHAIR: Is there any other discussion? MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Through the Chair, just for clarity's sake, can we perhaps get clarification on the terms of reference for the committee related to what the scope of interactions we might be able to achieve at the committee?

THE CHAIR: Could I ask the NDP caucus to clarify and maybe give some reference? Is that what you're asking, MLA Jessome?

BEN JESSOME: Less so about the motion itself, but rather what the terms of reference for our committee enable. MLA Taggart's comment was focusing specifically on military veterans. Do we have latitude to bring in organizations or groups such as police veterans?

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: I understand that our interest in this topic and the speakers was actually based on a report from Veterans Affairs Canada that looked at long-term disability claims in a number of sectors, including the RCMP. It actually noted that 40 per cent of long-term disability claims for the RCMP have been for mental health disorders.

There's currently an ongoing study that began in 2019, so I think that was our interest. There had been one research project finished from Veterans Affairs Canada they'd highlighted, and based on that, they're doing further research. We wanted to give the committee a chance to learn about that research.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that comment. I think in the interest of our committee and the discussion that's ongoing, I think we might need to have a motion to extend our meeting time to finish our agenda setting. Do we need a vote? Okay.

I would suggest we extend to 4:10 p.m. That's a motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We'll carry on with the discussion, but before I move on - there's no mandate given to this actual committee in the green book, but I went on the Legislative website. I just want to read what's on the website about our committee.

Although there is no written mandate for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the committee is established for the purpose of considering "... matters pertaining to veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Legion." So no formal written mandate - just an understanding of its function. I just wanted to share that with the committee, as someone was asking what the terms of reference of what we do. I wanted to read that.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I just wanted to be clear on this - I actually have two points here. I'm just asking that this be moved to another time - a year from now or whatever. I prefer not to have the discussion against the backdrop of the inquiry. I can tell you that mental health is a huge issue within my community and within the RCMP, and I just don't want that to carry over into this.

Secondly, I just have to comment that this proposed topic that I have in front of me says Mental Health Services for Police. It doesn't mention veterans, and I thought this was a Veterans Affairs Committee. Again, I believe this is a very important subject and would love to address it at a later date, but I also think we need to have some clarity on where we go, what our topics are here. Are we dealing with veterans?

MLA Lachance spoke about 40 per cent of the folks that leave these services are veterans, that's fine, but it's not in this topic. That's where I want to go. I can say the same about the next topic - Climate Change Disaster Extreme Weather.

THE CHAIR: There's no other topic, so we'll just leave it on this particular one for now.

[4:00 p.m.]

MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: Yes, I'm concerned, too, about this issue coming at this point in time. The province is running very, very high on feelings right now with respect to what happened in Portapique, and my constituency certainly borders that. I know that a lot of people are really struggling. I'm not sure this topic would be helpful at this particular time, especially with respect to mental health. We have a long way to go on this.

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance, did you have another comment?

LISA LACHANCE: Actually, I'll cede my turn to MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm very aware, and I just don't want us to forget the fact that we're here to have these conversations and to educate ourselves on a number of pieces that pertain to the veterans in our communities. With all due respect, I do completely understand your feelings behind that, but when we talk about mental health, we can't ignore the fact that this is something that's happening. In order for them to have services or availability or information on how they can best take care of themselves or take care of themselves after a situation, I think the education piece comes there.

I'm okay with making that change with respect to the members across the table, but I really think that we need to be mindful that there are conversations that we're going to have that aren't going to be as easy to take in. We have to educate ourselves on that, and educate those who are watching on the mental health services that are available to them.

I just wanted to say I'm okay with making the change. I just don't think we should ignore the fact that this is something that's important in all communities.

THE CHAIR: We haven't voted on this one yet. MLA Barkhouse for our final comment.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I appreciate what you're saying, but I do feel that as well with my colleagues that it should be left until the commission is done with its proceedings. This is very serious and not just in one individual community - I mean, of course, MLA Taggart's, where the event took place, but I think we're feeling it all over the province.

We don't want to push it away - we just want to wait a little bit. That's my last comment.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to move that topic, or do you want to withdraw it? It's up to you. MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: (Inaudible) I would like to submit for consideration apparently the letter that was put forward to us - the correspondence about the Last Post Fund. I would like to move that as a submission for our topic.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion around the topic proposed? Seeing none, we have a motion that the Last Post be a topic for the NDP caucus.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Taggart, did you have a comment to make?

TOM TAGGART: I just want to say thank you.

THE CHAIR: We'll now move on to the PC caucus for their topic selection. We'll begin with MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: I move that the first topic of the PC caucus be Mental Health Supports for Veterans and Their Families - virtual and in person. The witnesses would be representatives from Operational Stress Injury Clinic, representatives from Mood Disorders Society of Canada, Michelle MacIsaac from Clannad Counselling and Consulting, and representatives from the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion around the proposed topic? Seeing none, would you like to put that in a motion, MLA Harrison?

LARRY HARRISON: Yes, I would move that.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I move that the second topic for the PC caucus be Veterans and Families: the Importance of Community and Peer Support, with the witnesses to be representatives from the Department of Community Services; Jessica Miller, the founder/director of the Veteran Farm Project; and Shelley Hopkins, Executive Director of the Halifax and Region Military Family Resource Centre.

THE CHAIR: There's a motion on the floor for the proposed topic. Any discussion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I move that the third PC caucus topic be an update on the Seamless Canada agreement with the witnesses being local Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. They can decide who to send who could best speak to the topic - that would be fine.

THE CHAIR: Discussion? MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm curious - is this an actual something that we need a topic for? We can get updated via correspondence. I don't know if this is really a full conversation. I don't know. I just want to put it out there because we just had a full conversation with Seamless Canada just now, and I don't know if that's a necessity for a full topic.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Well, this time we'll be talking to locals, so we'll be bringing in people from the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. I think that hopefully it will be pushed off to the end, so I think that with the agreement that was signed on June 14<sup>th</sup>, I feel that we will have made progress, and they'll have more information to come back to the table with.

I feel that this is a very important topic. I think that by the time this rolls around, we'll all have some more questions to ask the local government.

THE CHAIR: MLA Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Maybe as a friendly amendment to clarify that, we can put this at the end of the batting order for this round, or what have you?

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: That's what I was hoping. I was going to, when we moved it, ask that it be one of the last topics. Of course, it's up to lovely Kim for booking - oh, sorry, Tamer.

THE CHAIR: MLA Barkhouse, can you move the motion forward?

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I move that the third PC caucus topic be an update on the Seamless Canada agreement toward the end of our agenda setting with local Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, and they can decide to send and who would be best to speak on the topic.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion on the floor.

All those in favour? Contrary minded?

The motion is carried.

Thank you very much. MLA Jessome, before I come to you, if I could - just a clarification. The clerk wanted me to ask, going back to our topic that we talked about for the mental health support for veterans and their families, it's virtual and in person. I think the clerk was just looking for clarification on how much participation would be virtual and how much would be in person. Do we have an idea yet?

THE CHAIR: What I might suggest is at the earliest convenience, when we find out the witnesses, we'll just notify the clerk as quick as possible so she can make arrangements for that.

BEN JESSOME: Just a comment and perhaps a suggestion, having reflected a little more closely on the first PC topic that's been accepted. It's a great line of questioning and an important subject matter. I'm just curious if we should not add a representative from Veterans Affairs Canada or the Canadian Forces to attend the meeting as well.

THE CHAIR: Well, we've already passed the motion. We passed it as a topic, so we can go back and have another motion. (Interruption) A friendly amendment.

Any discussion? There is a motion on the floor that a witness be added to that topic. MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Could you repeat who you'd like to add? Sorry.

BEN JESSOME: I move that we add a representative from Veterans Affairs Canada to the topic of Mental Health Support for Veterans and their Families.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: We're fine with that, so if you'd like to make the motion.

THE CHAIR: The motion on the floor is to add the witness.

MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: The motion is on the floor to add a witness from Vets Canada? Just for clarity.

THE CHAIR: Yes.



All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Taggart with 35 seconds left.

TOM TAGGART: I can be quick. I just wanted to give my opinion on the virtual as well. I found today's topic to be a great topic, but a little bit hard sometimes to stay engaged - they seemed so distant. So the less virtual, the better for me.

THE CHAIR: That concludes our meeting. There is no other business. Do we have a motion to adjourn? Okay.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 4:09 p.m.]