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Chair

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.)): I would call the meeting to order to make the most of our two hours here. We're opening meeting number 6 for Thursday, November 4. The order of the day is the study on the parity between compensation received by first nations veterans and other veterans.

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Chair, as we get going, I would like to acknowledge at least that with regard to the original motion I moved at the meeting, I did contemplate having representatives here from the First Nations Veterans of Canada, as well as the Métis of Canada veterans organizations. I've spoken to the national chairman of the First Nations Veterans of Canada, Mr. Tom Eagle in Yellowknife, and we've had communication from Percy Joe, the secretary treasurer, Ray Rogers, the vice-chair, and Howard Anderson from Saskatoon. All of these people would have been here were funding available. So I'd like to know why we did not see fit to pass a motion at the last meeting to give authorization to pay for the airfares of these very pertinent and relevant witnesses. Also, how do we intend to fold their information into this study?

The Chair: We tried. I had that on and I was trying to bring it forth, but because people left, we didn't have a quorum to pass a motion. I had just started to ask the committee for unanimous consent to authorize the clerk to submit a budget. We didn't have enough money from our \$5,000 to pay for airfares. The clerk will speak to two veterans, I believe, and try to arrange for them to come in. We did not have enough money for them. I didn't bring it up because I was interrupted.

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Chair, I flag this as a very serious shortfall of this committee, and I would urge that in the future, as the chair, you should make sure basic finance issues are a priority in these meetings, so that we don't waste an hour going back and forth over relatively insignificant issues.

• (0910)

The Chair: We had another one that we had to deal with, which was Bill C-14, and as soon as we finished dealing with that, I started to bring forth the budget for the veterans.

Mr. Pat Martin: Before I yield the floor, could I simply ask that written submissions from the First Nations Veterans of Canada be constituted as a part of this committee and be treated as if they're read into the Hansard of the committee if they're unable to be here personally?

The Chair: We thought we would bring forth the budget and the request at a later date if you wanted, but that's up to you. We had a budget prepared—

Mr. Pat Martin: Yes, I know.

The Chair: —and we were going to submit it to the committee.

Mr. Pat Martin: I'm concerned that because legislation is coming before this committee as soon as we get back from the week break, we won't get back to the issue of first nations and Métis veterans and the difference in compensation that they received for months and months, if ever within this Parliament. So I'm asking if we can treat the written submissions from those who couldn't be here as entered into the record as if they had been here.

The Chair: Yes, if possible.

I have Mr. Smith and Mr. Lunn wishing to speak on this. I don't want to keep the witnesses waiting too much longer.

Mr. Smith, very quickly.

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): We agree with the principle, but I would impress on the committee that these are all important issues that are brought to the committee, so it is important to reserve the time we did determine, which is the two hours. At the previous committee four people left within the first hour. If it is actually of such importance, it's important to be here until the end of the committee, so we can do our committee business throughout.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lunn, very quickly.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): I don't want to belabour this, because I do want to get to the witnesses.

I would like to second Mr. Martin's comment. If we can, and if we need unanimous consent, and I don't think we do, I would fully support having the written documents read into the record.

As concerns a quorum in future for passing of motions, members of Parliament have different commitments and different committees, competing ones sometimes. You just have to communicate to us, Madam Chair, that you have these things. As long as we know they're coming, we can hang back. If we don't know they're happening, we can't deal with them. We are here to cooperate, but there will be competing interests at times. It's unfortunate that this happened, it shouldn't have happened, but I would agree that the written submissions should be read into the record.

The Chair: There's no difficulty with that. You all had the budget in front of you the day we were going to deal with it. As chair, I tried very hard to make sure you had the information, and I was starting to speak on it when someone brought forth their motion. I did what I could to make sure all the members had the information and we would deal with it. Further to this morning, we understand it will be put in the record. I checked with the clerk, and we can put into the record the submissions. We would like to get to the witnesses we have here.

Good morning. Welcome to our committee. We have people from the Departments of Indian Affairs and Veterans Affairs and the National Métis Veterans Association.

We'd like to start with the Department of Veterans Affairs. We'll give each group ten minutes to give their presentation, and we can ask questions of any of the presenters. Perhaps we can get Veterans Affairs to give their presentation, and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Bryson Guptill (Director, Program & Service Redesign Modernization Task Force, Veterans Services Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs): Thank you, Madam Chairman, and good morning, Chair and members of the committee.

You've asked us to speak about matters regarding first nations veterans, the first nations veterans package and other related issues. My colleague Martin MacDonald and I are pleased to join you today to provide you with information regarding Veterans Affairs Canada's dealings with aboriginal veterans. As you may be aware, many of the grievances of aboriginal veterans relate to the receipt of demobilization benefits upon their return home after World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. In this presentation, I'll be providing you with information in part on those demobilization benefits, but more particularly on the first nations veterans package, on *ex gratia* payments made to other veterans groups, on Métis and non-status Indian veterans and their treatment after the wars, and on improving services to aboriginal veterans in general, because we, as a department, are focusing more and more on this group of veterans.

As you know, aboriginal veterans have claimed for many years that they and their dependants were treated differently and in a discriminatory manner by the Government of Canada during and after the wars. Through the efforts of Grand Chief Howard Anderson and Vice-Chief Perry Bellegarde, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of Indian Affairs agreed on February 1, 2000, to work with first nations veterans to better understand and respond to their concerns regarding their treatment during and after the wars.

Under the terms of reference developed by the national round table on first nations veterans' issues, provisions were made for first nations veterans to research how various departments dealt with their requests for demobilization benefits after the wars. The NRT also focused on collecting oral testimony from first nations veterans, identifying acts, policies, and programs available to veterans and their spouses during and after the wars, and gathering data on the names of first nations veterans. The report of the national round table outlined the grievances of first nations veterans, and these grievances related to their access to and the administration of benefits during and after the wars and to inequities in veterans legislation.

The conclusion of the report was that first nations veterans did not get the same start in civilian life as non-first nations veterans. From

file reviews, research, and discussions at the national round table, it is clear that many first nations veterans did receive demobilization benefits after the wars. However, some first nations veterans who chose to return to their reserve communities after the wars had to deal with an extra layer of bureaucracy in order to receive the demobilization benefits. For some this may have meant they did not receive the benefits they should have received.

On June 21, 2002, the Government of Canada announced it would provide \$20,000 to each living first nations veteran who returned to a reserve after the wars or their living spouse. The payment was also available to the estates where the veteran or surviving spouse passed away after February 1, 2000, which was the date the national round table process began. Although there was and still is outstanding litigation by first nations veterans on this issue, the offer was not based on legal liability. Given the advanced age of many of the first nations veterans, the government wished to provide a means for these veterans to put this matter behind them during their own lifetimes. Veterans Affairs Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have worked with the national round table working group to get the message out about the federal government offer to the various first nations communities. Although the original application closing date was February 15, 2003, late applications are being accepted. The adjudication process has been shared between Veterans Affairs and Indian Affairs. Veterans Affairs confirms military service and domestic status, while Indian Affairs deals with Indian status and post-war residency questions. To date 1,195 *ex gratia* payments of \$20,000 each have been made.

● (0915)

As for *ex gratia* payments to other veterans groups, the Government of Canada has provided *ex gratia* payments to other groups of veterans—for example, Hong Kong prisoners of war in 1998 and merchant navy veterans in 1999. A lump-sum payment of up to a maximum of \$23,940 was paid to living Hong Kong veterans—and their widows—who performed forced labour as prisoners of Japan. These veterans suffered under inhumane conditions and were prisoners of war of Japan during the Second World War. Many of them died.

On February 14 of this year, the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced a recognition program for Canadian veterans involved in chemical warfare experiments between the 1940s and the 1970s. This program offered one-time *ex gratia* payments of \$24,000, in recognition of service, to eligible veterans who volunteered as participants in these chemical warfare experiments.

Ex gratia payments were also provided to merchant navy veterans and surviving spouses for post-war demobilization benefits provided to the armed forces. These payments to merchant navy veterans ranged from \$5,000 to \$20,000, based on their length of service.

So these are, if you wish, the precedents for providing these sorts of payments.

In terms of Métis and non-status Indian veterans, Métis and non-status Indian veterans have also made allegations of discriminatory treatment after the wars. The Government of Canada recognizes that organizations representing these veterans are dissatisfied that they have not received the same offer as first nations veterans. Since the concerns of Métis and non-status Indian veterans are not the same as those of first nations veterans, the federal government established separate processes to deal with their concerns. Funding was provided to these various organizations; in my speaking points, which you have, we outline those various bits of funding.

I'll move on to the last bullet on page 6.

VAC informed the National Métis Veterans Association of the results of various file reviews, and extended an offer to the National Métis Veterans Association to further review these findings. Veterans Affairs also informed the National Métis Veterans Association that any Métis veterans who have questions regarding benefits Veterans Affairs provided are encouraged to contact the department.

I should point out that in all these file reviews, the results of these file reviews with Métis veterans have indicated that Métis veterans receive the same benefits as other non-aboriginal veterans. We have the exact files for these veterans. We have the historical records. We can go back and check these files, and we have done so.

The NAVA submitted a report outlining its findings and grievances, as well as listing 400 aboriginal veterans. We conducted file reviews for this group of veterans as well. Those results are also summarized in my speaking points.

I'm sure I'm running short on time, so I'm trying to rush through this.

I want to make a couple of comments about what we're doing now to improve services to aboriginal veterans. I should point out that we have established an aboriginal outreach strategy to reach out to aboriginal veterans across the country. Just recently, we established a contact person in the department, a senior officer who will be the first point of contact within the department for aboriginal veterans, spouses, and organizations. I think this is a very important development, in the sense that it will provide us with an ability to focus on the needs of these veterans as they are today.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, there is a perception that non-aboriginal veterans received education assistance, land, and money after wars. This is not the case. After the wars, veterans had a choice of three main demobilization benefits available to them once they returned. The onus was on the veterans to choose which program they wished, to the exclusion of others. The majority of veterans—about 70%—opted for what is called the re-establishment credit. This provided 25¢ per day for in-Canada service and 50¢ per day for overseas service. The average amount provided to veterans was \$450. Other programs were available, but if they had received this

re-establishment benefit, the veterans had to pay back that benefit in order to be entitled to education assistance or other assistance under the Veterans' Land Act.

• (0920)

As I mentioned earlier, the offer to first nations veterans was based in part on the fact that many first nations veterans who returned to reserves after the wars were unable to deal with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The extra layer of bureaucracy they were required to deal with resulted in many of them, or some of them at least, receiving less benefits than they should otherwise have received.

This was not the case for Métis and other aboriginal veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs has precise records on the demobilization benefits paid to these veterans. Extensive file reviews have shown that the benefits paid to these veterans were comparable to benefits paid to non-aboriginal veterans.

Veterans Affairs is looking to the future for aboriginal veterans by establishing an aboriginal outreach strategy. Our aboriginal veterans will be better served to understand what programs and services they may be eligible to receive in today's context. We invite all aboriginal veterans to work closely with us to ensure that they are benefiting from the extensive programs and services the Government of Canada provides to its veterans in appreciation of the sacrifices these veterans made on our behalf.

I'd be happy to deal with any questions you may have on this matter.

Thank you.

• (0925)

The Chair: What we'll do is hear presentations from all of you. That way the members can ask questions of any of you.

Next is Sandra Ginnish, from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms. Sandra Ginnish (Director General, Treaties, Research, International and Gender Equality Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Good morning to you and to members of the committee.

First of all, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. As the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada witness, I will be sharing my time with Allan MacDonald, who works with the office of the federal interlocutor. He will be commenting on issues related to Métis and non-status veterans.

As noted by Mr. Guptill, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada played a support role to Veterans Affairs in terms of the administration of the Veterans Affairs package once the decision was made. Our role essentially was to verify Indian status as well as post-war residency for the purposes of determining who would be eligible to receive the package.

An expert external research company was contracted by the department to actually undertake the research on post-war residency. We used in-house staff to verify the Indian status of individual applicants through our Indian register. Based on the research findings, Veterans Affairs Canada actually made the final determination on who was eligible, and communicated those findings to individual applicants.

In terms of background related to the support this department provided to this whole process, beginning in 2000 we supported the development of the national round table that Mr. Guptill spoke to, the national round table on first nation veterans. This round table was set up to examine the concerns that had been raised by first nations veterans, specifically veterans who had treaty or Indian status, on the way in which they and their dependants were treated during and after both world wars as well as the Korean War.

Our department provided funding to the Assembly of First Nations to support coordination of the work of the round table. In the 2000-01 fiscal year, our department provided over \$250,000 to this process, and a subsequent \$150,000 was provided in the fiscal year 2001-02, for a total of approximately \$400,000.

Based on the discussions at the round table, the Government of Canada dedicated considerable time and resources to earmark the \$39 million package, that Mr. Guptill spoke to, for eligible first nations veterans who served their country and then returned to Canada to settle on reserves.

In addition, on behalf of the Government of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs provided \$300,000 in funding in the fiscal year 2001-02 to the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans Association for the development of a first nations veterans policy outreach project.

Specifically, this project was set up to identify the policy priorities of first nations veterans in each region of the country; to work with other first nations veterans to provide input into a national process of policy development on first nations veterans issues; and to identify joint policy objectives in regard to the Government of Canada and shared policy objectives between first nations veterans and Canada. The project was also established to develop a communications policy and a strategy to address the various barriers that faced first nations veterans when they tried to access information about federal policies and programs affecting them as first nations veterans. Finally, the project was established to disseminate information to first nations veterans.

In terms of the results of this particular project, a very extensive handbook was developed to provide first nations veterans with easily accessible information on the services available to them as veterans. If you wish, I have a copy of that report with me. We can table that with the committee.

Our department has also provided \$1 million towards the establishment of an aboriginal veterans scholarship trust fund. This fund is managed by the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, and it uses interest from the trust to provide aboriginal youths who are descendants of aboriginal veterans the opportunity to pursue university education.

●(0930)

To summarize, our department certainly recognizes the very important contribution that first nation veterans have made to Canada during the wars and is pleased, in addition to the other initiatives I've spoken to, to support our colleagues at Veterans Affairs Canada to continue to deliver the first nations veterans package.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are you ready, Mr. MacDonald?

Mr. Allan MacDonald (Director, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you very much, Sandra.

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

I also want to acknowledge Mr. Ed Borchert, from the National Métis Veterans Association, and Mr. David Chartrand, who is the president of the Manitoba Métis Federation and Minister for Veterans Affairs for the Métis National Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you all today. I have brief remarks to make and then I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have, as the chair has indicated.

I'd like to inform the committee of how the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians plays a contributing role in addressing the concerns and interests of Métis and non-status Indian veterans. The office of the interlocutor has ongoing relationships with organizations representing Métis non-status Indian interests, including both of the organizations that were referenced by my colleague from Veterans Affairs in his presentation. That's the National Métis Veterans Association represented here today by Mr. Borchert, a group advocating for the interests of Métis veterans, and the National Aboriginal Veterans Association, which is a group that represents the interests of non-status Indians.

Indeed, when Mr. Guptill mentioned that funding was provided to these organizations for the reasons that he mentioned—for fact finding, for supporting Métis and non-status Indians to compile their experiences and stories to tell government, to provide capacity funding to support their research efforts to compile a list of Métis and non-status Indian veterans, and to work with government—substantially all of that funding was provided by the federal interlocutor's office.

The current federal interlocutor, who is also the Minister of Indian Affairs, Minister Andy Scott, and past interlocutors have championed the interests of Métis and non-status Indian veterans. In the past four years the National Métis Veterans Association has received \$490,000 from our office and the National Aboriginal Veterans Association has received \$365,000.

Interlocutor funding has also gone to these organizations to honour the efforts and contributions of Métis and non-status Indian veterans. Our office has provided funding to the NMVA to produce the video on the wartime and post-war experiences of one Métis veteran. NAVA has received funding and will continue to receive funding for the establishment of the monument to aboriginal veterans that the committee members can see in Confederation Square. It's a very impressive statue.

These actions on the part of the interlocutor and interlocutor funding to support these organizations will carry on. The interlocutor will continue to assist these organizations in their efforts with the Department of Veterans Affairs to pursue fact finding and investigations to document the experiences of Métis and non-status Indian veterans. In this vein we support the efforts of the Department of Veterans Affairs and their aboriginal outreach strategy to ensure that aboriginal veterans are benefiting from the full range of programs and services to which they are entitled.

Do these actions fully satisfy Métis and non-status Indian veterans and the organizations that represent them? The committee will hear from them today on that question. I will say, though, that the Office of the Federal Interlocutor will continue to advocate for and support the interests of this constituency and work with their colleagues from Veterans Affairs in their efforts to do the same.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll hear from the National Métis Veterans Association, represented by their president, Mr. Edgar Borchert, and he has with him Mr. David Chartrand.

● (0935)

Mr. David Chartrand (Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis National Council): If I can, Madam Chair, before we commence, I'd like to state we're going to present in two forms. Ed will give you an executive summary of the document that was referred to, or some of the resources that were given from PCO regarding this matter, although it wasn't in the same context as referenced by DVA, on the research that was done on a clear direct review of the first nations matters as they pertain to discrimination. Ed will read from the document, *To Walk With Dignity*, and I will present some of my comments and definitely my views on some of the presentations that have been made by my colleagues to the right.

Mr. Edgar Borchert (President, National Métis Veterans Association): Executive summary—*To Walk With Dignity*:

The evidence is overwhelming that Métis veterans did not receive the benefits and services that they were entitled to for their service to King and country. Our research shows that Métis veterans did not know what they were entitled to, that they did not have access to the means of communication that were used to inform veterans of their rights. We heard of Métis veterans who were turned away from DVA offices when they were able to get transportation there. We were told stories of Métis veterans being humiliated and insulted by the attitude of DVA staff. We listened as our veterans told us about the difficulties they have had getting basic drugs, and aids such as hearing aids and teeth. We learned that many Métis veterans were denied military burials and were buried in areas reserved for Aboriginal veterans, not with their "white" comrades in arms.

Our research has shown how few Métis veterans have received any benefits or services. We found out that less than 3% of the identified Métis veterans received one of the three key programs of the Veterans' Charter: education, land, or re-establishment grants. Our research showed that the Métis veterans were treated differently from First Nations veterans in that whereas the Department of Indian

Affairs along with the Department of Veterans Affairs communicated the information to First Nations veterans and in some cases facilitated the programs for First Nations veterans, Métis veterans had only the Department of Veterans Affairs with offices in major centres.

We have demonstrated the need for a process to continue the work that we have begun. We have awakened the consciousness of Métis families and communities to the need to resolve the outstanding claims of Métis veterans.

I think it is important to understand and to look at the past—the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, our presentations to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and to the interlocutor, who we thank so graciously for his support. We have done all this and our people are still standing on the sidelines.

We have watched, as in 1983—and this came from a member of Veterans Affairs—as the Home Guard from World War II were awarded compensation. I wasn't even aware of that. The wood cutters in Newfoundland, the newspaper and photo journalists, Hong Kong veterans, first nations veterans, merchant navy, all received compensation. What about the Métis?

What was offered in simple terms was the re-establishment credit, the Veterans' Land Act, land improvement, livestock, farm equipment, small business loans, education and training. The first nations only received fishing equipment or traps to the tune of \$850 and household equipment—a major buy for the home—\$250.

What is the difference? Everyone received the re-establishment credit. I don't care if you were first nations or if you were Métis, whether you were purple, green, or orange. Everyone received that. But the knowledge of the entitlement under the Veterans' Land Act...

● (0940)

Non-Métis people were given a comprehensive briefing of the benefits when they were demobilized. They had the support of the Royal Canadian Legion, urban centres with newspapers and radio. Many of those non-Métis people had a far better education than our people. Veterans Affairs offices were located in urban centres.

The Métis and first nations veterans were simply told to return to their reserves and they would be cared for there. This is borne out in the first nations report. Our veterans were not allowed access to the Royal Canadian Legion under the Indian Act. When I joined the service, I wasn't allowed in the legion, and I'm a half-breed.

Our veterans were the product of the residential school system, the farm school. They had very little education when they went to serve Canada. Their marginal reading skills and use of the English language put them at risk when they came home. In my community there were no newspapers, there was no radio. How did my veterans know that they had all these opportunities? There were no telephones in my community. The road was nothing more than a cart trail.

First nations veterans had an advantage over the Métis. The Indian agents were products of the government, and they were tasked by the government, through an act in Parliament, with Veterans Affairs to provide the support for returning soldiers. They received \$850 for fishing equipment and traps, and \$250 for household equipment. Métis had nobody to talk to. We didn't have an Indian agent we could access these things from. My people returned to the bush lines of northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, B.C., northern Ontario. We could have used traps and fishing equipment to establish and make better lives for ourselves, but we weren't allowed that.

What do the Métis veterans desire? They want the recognition that they served Canada honourably. They want equitable treatment. For their contribution to Canada and its war effort, they want no less than the first nations, the wood cutters, the newspaper journalists, and other veterans groups. The Métis veterans are very proud warriors, and their struggle will not be diminished to being nothing more than beggars at a government table. But I beg for them. I beg for your compassion to allow our veterans to live out their last few years with dignity and that their widows have your support and that they have truly the honour of being called Canada's warriors.

Thank you.

● (0945)

Mr. David Chartrand: Thank you very much.

You could hear the passion, of course, of President Borchert in the matters pertaining to the veterans, as he talks to them on a regular basis.

I think I want to make it very clear in my presentation.... And I do encourage the panel if possible to excuse us if we go beyond ten minutes. We're trying to ensure in the short timeframe or notice we've been given that matters are translated and the proper report is given to you. I thank the panel for inviting us to speak here today. I think it's long overdue, the recognition that Métis have been forgotten, a day that will hopefully come to an end.

I want to start off my comments in reference to the comments made by Mr. Bryson. He starts off his report with first nations and turns that language into that of "aboriginal" quite quickly in the reporting stage of what takes place. I think that's one of our biggest downfalls as Métis people. For the many who are inexperienced in the world of the aboriginal people, the word "aboriginal" is being used—even in my province, Manitoba—along with Métis in the educational system.

If I look at the Constitution of this country, I'm aboriginal, and yet somehow we're being distinguished and being separated. The word is quite conveniently used when funding is given out and aboriginal people receive funding. When you knock on those doors, there is nothing for us; it's strictly for first nations. So I hope that government will come to terms one day and use the proper language. If they're going to give first nations money, say first nation; if you're going to give Inuit money, say Inuit; and if you're going to give to Métis, say Métis, but don't use the word "aboriginal" when we are told as Canadian citizens there's something for us. The DVA has been very effective with that type of message as it pertains to what they're trying to do for aboriginal veterans—hopefully Métis to be included.

I really beg to differ from my colleague from DVA and especially with his reference that they have precise records of the Métis veterans. I'm sure, but maybe he's not.... He was too young yet to be involved in the process of registration that took place when entering war on behalf of Canada, to protect the principles of what we stood for as a country, but Métis were not allowed to register as Métis. The records can easily prove that, and any veteran can tell you that. They were forced to enter as Canadian members or as French-speaking members, and weren't entitled to call themselves Métis. We can test veteran after veteran, who will tell you that. If they tried to say they were Métis, they were told, "You can't; you have to be a Canadian". So it was very clear at that time, and not until 1982, when more clarity was given to the Métis.... So how the DVA can come along and say they have precise records of all the Métis veterans is a very interesting statement being posed by DVA.

I think another matter that caught my attention quite quickly in the presentation was the reference to the demobilization mechanisms and that the discrimination toward first nations was not the same, as referenced by Mr. Bryson. I think it's very clear; I don't know what discrimination he means by that. I'd like to get clarity—and obviously I'll be running for clarity following this presentation. Was there different discrimination that was worse or better for the Métis? I would like to know what he meant by that comment.

Our view is very clear. You heard Mr. MacDonald reference the fact that Métis veterans in the last four years received \$400,000; but that \$400,000 must be important to reference, because the \$400,000 he was referencing was not from any clear researcher conducting a review or process of seeing if there was any systemic discrimination that did occur against the Métis. That \$400,000 he's referencing is for the relations and discussions of Veterans Affairs, for making videos on different issues pertaining to their interests. So there was not a specific review that was done.

The reason I raise this is that I could hear very clearly from the Department of Indian Affairs how they in fact pursued the actual research and conducted the actual reviews that were necessary to see if there was systemic discrimination. That's the only way to come to a conclusion by government that there was an outstanding financial obligation that Canada owed to first nations. There was a clear, direct relationship in doing that review.

● (0950)

For the Métis veterans, to this day they in fact still feel very deceived by the last \$100,000 they received from PCO. I think PCO had a good intention in looking at trying to establish the means of putting forward a presentation on the discrimination that obviously did place against Métis people. But when the names were submitted to DVA—they were requested by DVA to submit some names, and innocently, the veterans association, which really has no infrastructure, sent in a bunch of names—some of them were veterans of today's wars, not just veterans of World War II or Korea. DVA came across saying there was no discrimination in their findings.

The Métis Veterans Association felt that was never the intent of this research, to actually go out and establish this, or else it would have been more clearly pinpointed. They asked DVA to advise them to what degree they were speaking, of whom they were speaking so as to conclude there was no discrimination, that they did receive the demobilization. They would not share the information with the Métis Veterans Association. To this day they have not shared that information.

I had a chance to meet with Minister McCallum on this matter. We did have a lengthy discussion prior to the election. In that discussion Mr. McCallum and I came to a very clear understanding that the research DVA now banks on to show that there is no discrimination against the Métis is not substantiated, nor is it valid. A proper study should be quickly undertaken. That was a discussion Mr. McCallum and I had. That was the agreement Mr. McCallum and I came to.

Prior to the election we also came to the understanding that the Department of Veterans Affairs was not in the same frame of mind: where Minister McCallum wanted to go was not where the bureaucracy of the department wanted to go. The department makes it very clear that there is no systemic discrimination. I can bring you person after person who can sit before this committee and, given the time, can show you clear discrimination, systemic discrimination. I have them all over Manitoba. I may not have them for long, but they are still there. We're trying to get their stories in writing. I can prove discrimination after discrimination. What we're afraid of is that DVA wants to do an individual review. That's what the first nations stood against, that's what we stand against. We will not do individual review. By the time you get that done, they're all gone, and you might as well forget it, cancel it, don't even do it, don't give any Métis the dignity they deserve for protecting the very virtues of what we're celebrating and enjoying in this beautiful country.

So I think DVA knows what we're truly trying to establish, that the matter of systemic discrimination must be dealt with holistically, as it was with the first nations: we must be given at least the same credence and the financial respect we deserve. I think that's the outstanding challenge we face. I thought we surpassed that with Minister McCallum. It was very clear, in fact, at the round tables with the Prime Minister. I was going to raise this matter very vigorously also, with the passion I felt before I left my home province. Mr. McCallum and I spoke and the deputy minister of DVA before the round tables proceeded in the private sections, as Métis versus Inuit versus first nations. We had our private gathering as Métis. The Prime Minister came to visit us. I was going to speak on this matter. Mr. McCallum and I spoke, the deputy minister and I spoke. The deputy minister made it very clear also at that time that if I did not raise it, they would continue to pursue this commitment by Mr. McCallum. I received a phone call prior to the election from Mr. McCallum's special assistant saying this matter would be pursued and there would be a systemic review. I have letters, and discussions did take place. Following all that, everything came to a dead end.

I feel quite disappointed. I feel that in some respects we have politicians going one way and the bureaucracy going the opposite way. I think it's very important. I have lots of time, and so do most of us around this table, but our veterans don't have that time. I have a veteran not far from Winnipeg who was a prisoner for 11 months. He doesn't even want money any more from the government. He said,

all I want is a bloody apology. I'm somebody, I gave my life for this country, and what do I get in return? I want to see that so my kids can see it before I leave. He's 79 years old.

I have another veteran, Paul Thomas, who met with Mr. McCallum. Three different times he went to the office of DVA to ask for help. In fact, he said he got so embarrassed. He is so proud, he doesn't like asking anybody for handouts, the sort of thing you heard President Borchert speak of. He said, the third time—I never went back again—the young man asked me if I served there long enough. He said, whether I served one day or six years isn't the issue. He served six years of his life out there. He was in Italy, he was all over the place. He said, “There was a young punk who had the nerve to ask me if I was there for one day. How long was I there? People who landed on D-Day lasted for minutes, and he had the nerve to say that to me. I never went back again. That was it.”

• (0955)

I know the DVA will continue to advocate that they have done reviews, but there has been no review. Even to this day this country is still trying to establish who the Métis are, so how can they come here and say they have precise records when no such records do exist?

I make it very clear, from the Métis National Council standpoint, that if I was allowed politically to do what I wanted to do, I'd tell you there would be a hell of a lot of interest in this file. I feel we don't have the financial ability on our own to go out and pursue the proper research that would probably be part 4 to this committee, which would obviously quickly come to a consensual position that the Métis veterans were discriminated against. I make it very clear from our perspective that it is there, it is living. It's still alive and still exists. But if we continue to play with the bureaucracy, we won't ever see the proper respect given to these veterans before they do leave our fine world.

You heard Mr. Borchert speak. The Department of Indian Affairs was there for first nations; they had that ability. You heard very clearly from the report that close to three-quarters of a million dollars was spent just on the research alone, not counting for the human resources that were probably given by the Department of Indian Affairs to undertake gathering of information and following through with capturing who these individuals were. There is no way to do that for the Métis, because there was no data kept on who was Métis when they first entered the army or who are now veterans.

I implore clearly on behalf of the Métis. I am hopeful this committee will give the Métis the credence and the respect they deserve, and that there will be support for a proper review—a proper review, not one that deviates by trying to say they have captured them in a review of a hundred names that were given, many of whom are not even veterans of World War II or the Korean War.

So I would ask again for this committee to state clearly that the Métis need a review to be done, and a proper review. And it has to be systemic; it can't be individual. It has to be looking at the Métis as a nation, as you did for first nations. I think our Métis deserve the same respect as the first nations or any other veterans who served on behalf of Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Chartrand. I was very generous with your time, but you will have chances to add more to your debate when you're answering questions.

The speaking order is Mr. Prentice, Mr. Cleary, Mr. Martin, and then Mr. Valley for the first round.

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd first of all like to say welcome to the ladies and gentlemen who are here today, in particular to President Borchert, as a veteran and someone who is here on behalf of other veterans. Welcome before the committee. Mr. Chartrand, on behalf of the committee, welcome to you and the people for whom you speak.

I think it is fair to say that all of the members of the House were moved yesterday by the ceremony we had at the close of the session in the House of Commons, when I think spokespeople from each of the parties spoke about Remembrance Day, and about what we as Canadians owe to our veterans. I thought we heard very fine speeches from all of the parties, and I hope you were there to hear that.

This whole subject really remains a very sad chapter in Canada's military history and our history of service at the end of the war. I'd perhaps like to begin with a story that doesn't relate directly to the war years, but to the years after the war. I'm sure it's one you haven't heard before. It came to me when I was sitting as a member of the Indian Claims Commission of Canada.

In the aftermath of the war, the Government of Canada decided they would create a bombing range to assist our NATO allies. In their wisdom, a bombing range was established in northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan, which was known as the Cold Lake bombing range. It was a very large area, certainly larger than our smallest province, but many hundreds of miles long and wide. It basically became a target area where NATO allies could come to practise bombing. The difficulty was that the area was fully occupied by several first nations—the Canoe Lake First Nation and the Cold Lake First Nation. So our commission conducted an inquiry into the dispossession of all of these folks from their land.

I will never forget, as long as I live, the stories we heard, because there was a generation of people who had hunted and fished and trapped on that land since time immemorial who were summarily removed from the land. Their homes were taken away from them—their trapping equipment, their fishing equipment, the dwellings in which they lived—and they were basically allowed to take the possessions on their backs and leave. This happened in the mid-1950s.

They were given compensation of \$400 or \$500, and sent off to live in small towns where they really had no means of earning a living, and all of the dignity and everything they had in their lives was taken away from them. For the rest of their lives their communities descended into chaos, poverty, despair, and alcoholism. Essentially, several generations of people were lost as a result of all this.

As a commissioner examining one of the elders, I said, “Why did you leave? The federal government sent employees and they told you to pick up your possessions and get out. Why did you leave?”

This fellow said, “I left because it was for Canada.” It stopped our inquiry in its tracks. We had to adjourn, collect ourselves, and start again.

That is the sort of sacrifice aboriginal people have made for this country. That's a chapter of our history that not many people know about, and what you've spoken about today is a chapter not many people know about.

We need, in some way, to bring this to a close. In looking through the round-table report—and it speaks specifically about first nations, not about the experience of Métis Canadians—I was struck by how it says that almost universally, people who served in the Canadian services as first nation members were treated with full equality in the service. While they were in the service they were treated with respect and dignity. The problems began when they came home and found themselves no longer dealing shoulder to shoulder with regular Canadians. They found themselves trapped in institutions that were not serving the people they were intended to serve. They found themselves trapped in bureaucracies, where they were not able to get the benefits to which they were entitled.

● (1000)

In some measure, and I've been outspoken about this, that continues to this very day. I don't mean this disrespectfully at all to the people who are here today, but I feel that institutional reform in relation to first nations and aboriginal people in this country is lagging behind by almost a hundred years, at this point, in terms of servicing the people who live in Canada who are distant from the bureaucracy here in this city.

My question is very specific: what needs to be done? This is a chapter in Canadian history that needs to be closed with dignity and with honour and with respect. What needs to be done? What has to be done to identify the people who have not been treated properly, treated equitably and consistently with other Canadian service people? How do we identify who they are? What process is necessary to do that? And how do we make amends and move forward?

Thank you.

Mr. David Chartrand: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Prentice. I'm getting very clearly your passion for this. Had I known you sooner, I would have brought you the Métis file to help us in our pursuit of equity.

Clearly, what the Métis are asking for is no different from the respect that was given to first nations or any other matter that has taken place. You heard Mr. Borchert speak on the variety of different attempts Canada has made to deal with the issues as they pertain to the Hong Kong settlements, or the merchant navy, etc.

I think the document was called *A Search for Equity*, equity for first nations. That's what we're looking for, equity, and a proper review of whether systemic discrimination took place. Veterans are more than welcoming that invitation. They're not saying, just give us something because we know we've been discriminated against. They want to prove it. While they're still alive, they want to show it. That's why I was so pleased when Mr. McCallum agreed that we would pursue this immediately and fast-track it as quickly as possible. He knows that time is not on our side. I think all of us around this table know that.

We hit a brick wall when we hit the bureaucracy. The deputy minister at the time, who told me personally that he would support it, changed his mind after the round tables were finished with the Prime Minister. Mr. McCallum and I spoke on the phone following that, and again he said, I will ensure that it takes place...but we can't, because the election's called; it'll happen right after the election. Mr. McCallum can vouch for that.

The veterans were very pleased about that. I spoke to them personally in Saskatoon when we were meeting. There was a national meeting taking place on veteran affairs. The Métis veterans council was meeting, and we had a chance to discuss it.

All they are looking for is proper consultation, research, and evidence to bring back to government, or to this particular panel, to show that discrimination did take place. Whether it is better or worse or different, as pointed out by Mr. Guptill, I think the key point for us is that we definitely know what took place. The Métis veterans know it took place.

If we won this committee's support to bring it forward, given that the Minister of Veterans Affairs previously supported this, it should be no problem from this government. I'm trying to get a meeting with the new Minister of Veterans Affairs to find out why this thing hit the wall after a commitment was made prior to the election.

So I would encourage this committee to support the Métis in their search for equity and follow suit in the same kind of consultation that took place with the first nations. But we need to fast-track it; that's the only recommendation I make differently from *A Search for Equity*. It has to happen quickly. We cannot let a bureaucracy carry on for another year or two to determine how or what we should be doing, or how we should proceed. By that time, you will have lost maybe another 20 veterans. There are hardly any of them left, and we want to give them something before they leave.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Because we were a little generous with the presentations, we have time for only two rounds. I'm going to try very hard to fit everyone into their time slots.

Mr. Cleary, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Chair, gentlemen, I thank you very much for appearing before us today, especially Mr. Chartrand and Mr. Borchert, who are speaking to us on behalf of Aboriginals who went to war. I would also have liked for us to hear aboriginal representatives who they themselves went

away to war. Some were probably invited, I do not know, but I will unfortunately not have the pleasure of hearing them.

I must tell you at the outset that I myself am an Indian. I come from the reserve that used to be called Pointe-Bleue and that is known today as Mashteuiaastsh.

[English]

Mr. Gary Lunn: On a point of order, Madam Chair, this translation ear plug is not working properly....

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): While we're waiting for that, Madam Chair, can you tell us how much time we have? I think it's important for us to ask a question and then get an answer, or....

I'm just wondering what timeframes we're running on.

The Chair: In this first round, we're now into seven minutes for the Bloc, the NDP, and the government. The next round will be five minutes each. That includes the question and the answer.

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Cleary.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Cleary: Mr. Chartrand, do not worry: at every meeting, I too have trouble untangling my wires. I therefore make everyone else wait, but it is not a problem.

I am happy that the sound is coming through for you, because I am not very interested in putting questions to the officials from the department. I am of the opinion that these petty politics do not interest very many people. I am much more interested in hearing from people who went to war.

This brings me back 50 years. I was around twenty years old at the time, and there was an old Indian in Pointe-Bleue whose name was William Cleary. William Cleary was my father's cousin and he came to our place every year to have a chat with my father. He had served in the First World War and in the Second World War. He was a veteran who was considered, at least by some, to be a hero. I had the opportunity to meet a man he had saved and who was living in Chicoutimi. His name was Price, and he was the owner of the famous Price Brothers lumber company. William had carried him from the battlefield to a camp and had thus saved his life. Every time William went to Chicoutimi, he had to get together with him.

It was sad to see a man who had given 30 years of his life and who had absolutely no support. The only help he got was the money Mr. Price gave him because he owed him so very very much. As Mr. Chartrand mentioned earlier, people do not want money but recognition for what they have done. They therefore deserve apologies for what was not done for them and recognition for what they did.

I believe that the government of Canada, instead of busying itself with handing out little pensions and tidbits here and there, should begin by recognizing the groundbreaking work these people accomplished. Do not forget that you and they had the most difficult roles to play during the war. Who talks about that? I heard talk about it from a man who was on skid row at the time, because the system had been unable to support him despite the fact that he had devoted a large part of his life to two major wars. He ended up homeless, living in the street, without any recognition whatsoever. He is a nobody today, whereas he should be a hero.

• (1010)

[English]

The Chair: Who would you like a response from, Mr. Cleary?

Mr. David Chartrand: I will do what I can, Madam Chair.

First, I would like to thank Mr. Cleary for his remarks. I think the comments he makes are wise ones, in the sense that when we raise the issue to look at the search for equity for Métis, as was done for first nations, you will hear these stories. Hopefully we can keep them in history so our next generation will have the chance to read what happened in this country. I think it's important to recognize that.

It was the same thing with Mr. Thomas, a veteran, who is now 80 years old, when I brought him to meet Mr. McCallum. At the time, he almost broke down. He started to cry. He made all of us cry when he told about feeling that his dignity and pride were taken from him by someone who he called a "young little whipper-snapper bureaucrat" asking him these questions. That was his language, not mine. He was hurt, and he has never gone back again for help to this day. He's 80 years old and he'll probably die in poverty.

That's the sad part of our issue today as Métis people. It's a struggle. It's very, very hard when you're not recognized as a people, when you're not recognized for your contribution.

Mr. Prentice is actually right, or the comment made around here, that all of them were treated the same. When they were across there, there was no discrimination against them. They took each other as brothers and sisters when they were there. They worked together as one.

It's when they came home that this country did something that should be.... I don't know how to say it in the proper terminology, but it should be ashamed of itself for what it did and still does today and it still spends its time trying to avoid.

Mr. Cleary is pointing out in a very clear comment the policies that are being derived by a bunch of graduates from our top universities of this country in establishing how to deal with our veterans. They should have lived in that world, and let's see how they would have written them. The policies they write today would have been totally different in terms of how they would have wanted to be treated.

That's what our veterans are struggling with. They need to be looked at. They need a review. The Métis need to have a review. Once you see that review, I think it will carry itself and linger on to never happen to anybody in the future of our country.

• (1015)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Chartrand.

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all of you for being here today.

Because I have so little time I'm not going to put too fine a point on it, but the reason I moved the motion to have this study today is that, in my view, first nations and Métis veterans got screwed at the end of the war and they're getting screwed today at this late hour.

I want to talk specifically about the recommendations from the government's own task force on compensation for first nations veterans and the task force done by the FSIN with Regional Vice-Chief Bellegarde, I believe, as one of the co-chairs.

The compensation package recognized and recommended by those two was \$125,000 to \$425,000 per person. That's from the authorities, the experts who studied the difference in compensation between first nation and Métis veterans, and regular veterans. Yet the Government of Canada, after 20 years of fighting or resisting this, offers \$20,000 compensation and people have to sign a waiver to say they won't go after any further compensation if they accept this compensation. By what logic did they arrive at this paltry sum of money? How did they tie the Hong Kong veterans and the merchant navy to the issue facing first nations and Métis? Is there any—and please be brief—rationale that you know of, other than trying to pay the bare minimum, that made them arrive at \$20,000 as the compensation package?

Could you perhaps answer that? I'm sorry I can't read your name. I don't have my glasses on.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: Thank you for the question.

I want to clarify, first of all, something that you said. You mentioned that the first nations group concluded that they should be paid compensation of \$425,000.

Mr. Pat Martin: I said from \$125,000 to \$425,000. There are two studies. One was the government's.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: It is true that was their conclusion. The \$125,000 that you were mentioning references an entirely different subject, if it references at all.

The fact of the matter is—

Mr. Pat Martin: Our own Library of Parliament disagrees with you, as does the first nations veterans organization. We're dealing with the sums that we were given by our own research here.

The \$20,000 compensation is not even called "compensation". You use the word "precedent." They claim it's given on "compassionate grounds", I believe, rather than grounds of compensation.

In the interest of natural justice, is there any argument...?

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): On a point of order, I think Mr. Guptill has the floor.

Mr. Pat Martin: Actually, I have the floor for my seven minutes, Madam Barnes, and I'll use them as I see fit.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Well, he was answering your question, or trying to.

Mr. Pat Martin: All right.

Is there any rationale for the \$20,000 figure? Please be quick, as I'm running out of time.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: The claim from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations was that they were owed \$425,000 each. That was the only claim made subsequent to the national round table.

The government eventually made a decision to offer \$20,000 on compassionate grounds, as a gesture of goodwill. That was made available to living first nations veterans or their survivors, and that offer was consistent with other offers that have been made. It was similar to the offer made to the merchant navy veterans, for example, who had an offer from \$5,000 to \$20,000, and to the Hong Kong prisoner-of-war veterans.

• (1020)

Mr. Pat Martin: They were full veterans.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: So there were a number of precedents for *ex gratia* payments, and the offer the government made was an offer made while there were outstanding litigations taking place. The offer was made in that context of outstanding litigations; it was not made as a settlement, but as a goodwill offer.

Mr. Pat Martin: I'm not going to argue there, but the subcommittee on veterans affairs heard two forensic economic studies during the NRT process, to quantify the range between the value of the benefits available to first nations veterans and Métis and those afforded to other veterans. The one study said \$125,000, and the FSIN said \$425,000. So that's the range, yet what they were offered was \$20,000, which is a paltry amount.

I come from Manitoba, where Sergeant Tommy Prince was the most decorated Canadian war veteran, period, first nation or not first nation. As we approach November 11, I'm going to be asking this committee and all Canadians to finally do what's right for first nations veterans—acknowledge that natural justice was not done in terms of informing people what rights they should have had for first nations and Métis veterans—and to revisit this entire package and compensate people in the range of \$125,000 and \$425,000 while they're still alive.

It's an intergenerational thing. Had those people gotten education and access to land and resources in 1946, their children, who are my age now, might not have grown up in abject poverty. That's what we're facing here. It's the compounding effect. Education might be the only thing that can bring a person from poverty to the middle class in one generation. Well, this whole block of people was denied that. So we need to compensate the people who are affected by what I consider a very callous, cavalier treatment.

On the extinguishment issue and enfranchisement issue, can somebody from Indian Affairs enlighten me about this? There's a call by the first nations veterans to restore treaty rights to those veterans who were affected by the application of the Indian Act as it pertains to that enfranchisement.

Ms. Sandra Ginnish: I can certainly—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but because you used up your seven minutes, we don't have any time for an answer to that question, other

than four seconds. I'm trying to get everyone into two rounds, so we'll have to wait for the next round to do that one.

Mr. Valley, please.

Mr. Roger Valley: I'll give her a chance to use my time. I'll be more brief.

Ms. Sandra Ginnish: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I can just confirm that according to the legislation we currently have in force, individuals in those circumstances can apply for reinstatement and are eligible for reinstatement.

Mr. Pat Martin: How did they actually lose, or how did they—

The Chair: Mr. Valley, please.

Mr. Roger Valley: You'll have to be nice to me if you want my time.

Okay. I have a question for Mr. Guptill, and I'm going to refer to your notes. But first I just want to say we're all very sensitive to this issue. It's very emotional. It's very time-sensitive. Our guests today have brought some very good views, and we have to realize that time is marching on and there may be some actions required very quickly.

I will say that my father landed on D-Day, and while I remember many of his stories of the war, the one thing I remember him talking about most when he came back was the fact that he did not have access—he was just a normal veteran—to the demobilization payments or the establishment credits, simply because the bureaucracy at that time was so difficult to deal with. He tried to purchase farms, he tried to purchase businesses—everything. He could not access it, and he did not suffer any of the challenges that the first nations or the Métis did.

What I want to do is go back to your notes. You mentioned 174 Métis veterans whose names were submitted. The challenge is that when somebody signed up in the war, they were not allowed to indicate that they were Métis. So I want to know a bit about that, how this 174 was achieved. I see it was given to you by name, but you must have records that could identify the Métis at this point. I want to know just what access did any level of veterans get.

We've heard that an extremely low percentage of the Métis accessed the establishment credit. It was probably very unsuccessful for a large percentage of the veterans, whether they were first nation or Métis.

What can be done at this point with the much more up-to-date records? We've been asked for a study that will do this—and it has to be done quickly. Can you tell us, are there any thoughts about moving that forward with the much more up-to-date records that we have now about who was actually Métis at the time?

●(1025)

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I want to clarify, first of all, what we have in the way of records, because Mr. Chartrand made a point. When veterans signed up, they could not indicate if they were Métis or first nations or what they were, and as a result they simply signed up as veterans. And as the committee has heard, they were treated as veterans during the war; everyone was treated the same.

The records I referred to earlier are records that relate to all veterans' records. So the challenge we had with first nations and Métis veterans was determining who they were. That's why the research we undertook with the veterans organizations, both for first nations and Métis veterans, focused on finding out who these folks were. A lot of the research was basically poring over records, in some cases with firms that have expertise in going through archives, to try to find out who these folks were. We asked the veterans organizations to come back and tell us who the veterans were, and then we would go and look for their records once we knew their names and their service numbers.

The records that we do have for Métis veterans are based on their name and service number. We have the exact files for those people when they came back from the wars. So we know exactly what they were paid in terms of demobilization benefits. In the case of the first nations veterans, it's a much harder record to establish, because the first nations veterans who settled on reserves dealt with Indian agents in large part, and the records are not there from the Indian agents.

So we did not have the smoking gun, if you want, for first nations veterans. We do have for Métis veterans the exact service records, if we can find the names of those veterans.

Mr. Roger Valley: I just want to ask you before my time runs out—I'm going to make sure I don't go over. Your last sentence on page 8 of your speaking notes—and I'll read it back to you, it's in bold—says “The extra layer of bureaucracy may have resulted in them receiving less benefits than they should have received.”

I think because some of the things we've heard today about the Métis and their lack of access.... My father became a champion for the first nations in our hometown to help them deal with this, and the Métis did not even have that champion to stand up for them.

So I'm just wondering, do you want to comment on that last sentence? Do you think they could have suffered and had a lot more difficulty accessing a very tough system, that it didn't serve the people it was intended to serve very well?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: The system was perhaps complex. I wasn't there, so I can't really say for sure, but I've heard the system was fairly complex, and it was even more complex if you had to deal through intermediary agents, which is essentially what happened in the case of first nations.

The only way we could establish a record for what happened to Métis veterans, for example, was to go back to those files. When you go back to those files.... Because as a department we have to know what people's military service was in order to establish pension eligibility, for example, we do have those files, and consistent with non-aboriginal veterans, 70% of Métis veterans received the re-establishment credits.

The re-establishment credit was not a lot of money. It was equal to a war service gratuity, which was paid to them at the same time. So it was easy for many of the veterans to forget that in fact they had received a small amount of money.

We've gone back to the records and have found out that they actually received the war service gratuity.

And if you received the re-establishment credit, you couldn't get any of the other demobilization benefits. You had to make a choice among one of three benefits. If that was the one you took, then that was the end of the story for demobilization.

Our emphasis, what we want to focus on today, is that there is still a whole suite of programs, services, and benefits available to veterans, a very extensive suite of benefits. We would like to see Métis veterans, first nations veterans, and other veterans come forward and make sure they are getting access to health care, pensions, and other benefits that we provide as a department.

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Chartrand wanted to add to that. There's only about a minute left.

Mr. David Chartrand: Please, Madam Chair, I would not properly represent my people if I had to leave the comment of Mr. Guptill that he has 70% of Métis veterans.

I don't know if I'm entitled to ask any questions or if I can only speak my mind. Because there are over 2,500 names already collected by the Métis veterans association, and the names he's speaking of.... Are you trying to tell me...?

I don't know, Madam Chair, am I entitled to ask a question? I don't want to leave this committee with the understanding from Mr. Guptill's comment that 70% of all Métis veterans who served in World War II and the Korean War received benefits directly from—as he's referencing, the terminology he used—the re-establishment credit, which would then disallow them the demobilization. Is that the other phrase that's used in DVA?

How does he know who all these veterans are, and what is the total number he's speaking of—174? There are over 2,000 Métis, easily, who served in World War II and Korea. We don't even have that, as Métis; we're still searching. So how would he know?

He's leaving the impression that 70% of all Métis received that benefit. If that's what he's saying, I challenge that.

●(1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chartrand.

Mr. Lunn, if you want to carry on from there....

Mr. Gary Lunn: Thank you.

Let me start by saying that as we approach November 11 and we're all moved, I want to thank Mr. Borchert for his service. It's because of people like you that I'm here today.

Many of us have had an opportunity to travel. I've had an opportunity to travel to Normandy and visit Juno Beach and the Canadian cemeteries, and it is the most moving thing that has ever happened to me. I want to start by stating that to you as a representative of veterans right across this country.

As we're listening to this, one of my troubles is that—as has been pointed out correctly—the veterans don't have a lot of time. Time is not on our side. We need an action plan. We need to see that we rectify these issues. I have no doubt, listening to Mr. Chartrand and Mr. Borchert, that there was not equity in what happened. It wasn't equitable. The Métis people weren't treated equally, weren't treated fairly.

We have some discrepancies. Mr. Guptill believes that about 70% actually received benefits, and we're hearing.... So the question we really need to be looking at....

I've met with some of the Métis people in British Columbia. It's interesting, the most important thing to them, above all else—at least it's what I get—is that they want to be recognized for their service. The secondary issue is to ensure they're getting access to the programs. I'm not convinced that's happening.

I would like Mr. Guptill to respond. What do we need to do? Listening to your comments, I'm not convinced you actually believe there's a problem—and hopefully I'm wrong.

Do you believe there is a problem? You've heard from Mr. Borchert and Mr. Chartrand. Do you accept there is a problem? If there is, how do we rectify it quickly?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I think there are two parts to the question. Let me answer it in two parts. The first question is did this group of veterans, all of these veterans, receive the proper demobilization benefits 60 years ago? The challenge we have as a group trying to understand what happened 60 years ago is the problem of records. When we've looked at the names of people who've been brought to us as a department and we've found individuals, we have verified that Métis veterans received the same kinds of demobilization benefits as non-aboriginal veterans. That I can assure you.

There's certainly a problem of trying to find these files, and I don't think that is unusual, given the time span that has gone on.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Let me interrupt for a second, because I just want to make sure. I still hear you saying that you think they've received the same demobilization as non-aboriginal people. But do you accept the premise that the Métis people didn't receive that information; that they were at a disadvantage right out of the gate, because they weren't there getting the access; that they didn't know about it, they didn't know what they were entitled to; and that in fact your records might be completely flawed just by that simple error and we have to rectify that?

My father was a World War II veteran. When he came out of the war, he went to university. He came from a very poor background, but because of the war he put himself through university, and I'm here today probably because of that program. I don't think Métis people had that same access, probably because they didn't get the information. I do think there are some discrepancies here.

•(1035)

Mr. Bryson Guptill: All I can say is what the file reviews have shown. When we've found the names of these individuals and we've been able to locate their service numbers, their records show that they received the same benefits as non-aboriginal veterans. That's the first part of the issue.

The second part of the issue, which I think is a legitimate question as well, is do Métis veterans, first nations veterans and other aboriginal veterans, get the same kind of level of service today that we provide to other veterans? I'm saying that as a department we're committed to trying to determine or trying to make sure that this is in fact what is happening. We've started an aboriginal outreach strategy, and I'd mentioned this morning that we are also prepared to set up an aboriginal veterans coordinator who will act as a focal point for making sure that people are getting the very extensive benefits that we offer from the department today.

There may be instances—and I suspect there probably are instances, as Mr. Chartrand pointed out—of people who felt they were not treated fairly by the department in the past and have just gone away and said they're not coming back again. We would encourage them to come back, because we believe we can be of assistance to them.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Guptill.

This is our five-minute round, so we'll try to fit in as many people as we can. We have Mr. St. Amand, Mr. Bellavance, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Martin, and that will take up what little time we have left.

Mr. St. Amand, please.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Like the others, I want to personally convey the incalculable debt that is owed to individuals like the good gentleman seated to my right. He and many others sacrificed lives, livelihood, etc., to, as Mr. Lunn has indicated, allow us to be here at this table living in a terrific, free country. I acknowledge that our debt to our veterans is beyond calculation. Having said that, I suppose we're now seized with the task of somehow trying to fashion proper compensation.

As I understand it, without getting overly clinical about this, the position of the government officials is that, according to the evidence to date, Métis veterans have been treated essentially the same as non-aboriginal veterans. Am I correct on that?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: They've received the same benefits, yes.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Yes, all right. There is some question about the timeliness of the access of first nations veterans to department officials and as a result something of a goodwill offering has been given to them.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: That's correct.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Mr. Borchert started by saying that the evidence is overwhelming that the Métis veterans did not receive proper compensation. This may well be true. I presume that his evidence is anecdotal only and that no empirical research has been conducted into this. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: That's correct.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: How many identified Métis veterans are there? Is it 173?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: The question is a difficult one to answer in the same way, as it's difficult to understand or to give an answer on how many first nations veterans there were. In the case of first nations veterans, we were able to identify in this task force that there were about 5,000, but we don't really know if that was the exact number or not. We did find the names of 5,000. We went through the 5,000 and only found records on a much smaller subset of those people.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I take it though that there would be a recognition by the government that if in fact satisfactory evidence were forthcoming that there are tens or hundreds or thousands of aboriginal veterans, information disclosed or only now more or less found out about, the level of compensation provided decades ago would be grossly inadequate by today's standards.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: If we could find those records.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I appreciate that, but surely the suggestion of offering \$23,000 to a veteran receiving it today in 2004, compared to having received it 55 years ago, is grossly unfair.

• (1040)

Mr. Bryson Guptill: There would be a substantial difference.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Yes.

So what compelling evidence does the department need? Mr. Chartrand has talked about a systemic review. I'm not quite sure what that would entail, but what evidence brought forward would satisfy the department that there are Métis veterans—true, legitimate veterans—to whom we owe something for sure beyond tokenism? What evidence is required?

The Chair: A very short answer, please, because we're almost at our five minutes.

Mr. Bryson Guptill: We undertook a very comprehensive process to try to get at the names of these veterans, who they were. The National Métis Veterans Association at one point decided to give us the names, but only a very small number of names. If there are other names that are there and more information about them, then I would suggest that we be given those names, access to the service numbers of those veterans, and we will undertake an extensive file review on those veterans to determine what happened to them.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Can I ask then lastly—

The Chair: Thank you very much. We've run out of time.

I have Mr. Bellavance and then Mr. Smith asking to speak.

Go ahead, Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wish to thank the witnesses, and in particular Mr. Borchert, for appearing before us. It is important that younger people such as myself remember, at this time of the year, that people fought for our freedom and our democracy. Obviously, we were not there, but we know that it is thanks to people like you, the veterans, that we are living the way we are here today. You have my thanks.

We find ourselves here confronted with founded facts. There have been a lot of statements and discussions pertaining to what took place. We know that during the course of the Second World War approximately 3,000 Aboriginals fought for Canada and that in Korea there were several hundreds of them. There were approximately 500 deaths. There are also other confirmed historical facts: aboriginal veterans did not receive the same compensation as non-aboriginal veterans. This is why we talk of discrimination. Those who received compensation were not entitled to the same programs as the others, be it spousal assistance, training or even employment assistance, contrary to those veterans who were non-aboriginal. For the Metis, it was even worse, because they got nothing at all.

I will not be telling you anything new in saying that in 2000, the federal committee recommended a compensation payment of 120 000 \$ for each and every Aboriginal who fought for the country. As Mr. Martin mentioned a little earlier, this was the amount given to the Hong Kong veterans and the merchant marine. It is not that they did not deserve it, far from it, but we do not understand why this recommendation was not applied to aboriginal veterans. Two years later, as we all know, the federal government granted \$20,000 in compensation, which is grossly insufficient. This in no way repairs the injustice that was committed. In our view, Canada violated the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. And so the discrimination continues.

My question is for all of the witnesses present here, and I will have another one for Mr. Borchert or Mr. Chartrand. Did both departments throw in the towel? Do they consider that the file with regard to the \$120,000 that they granted to the merchant marine and to the Hong Kong veterans is closed? Why did they decide that this would not apply to aboriginal veterans? I would like Mr. Borchert or Mr. Chartrand to tell us what in their view would be acceptable compensation, acceptable reparation. How do they feel today in asking for something that dates back to the Second World War? This injustice might even go all the way back to the First World War. The federal government is accumulating surpluses—there is talk of 9.1 billion dollars—and here you are today, decades later, talking about reparation and injustice.

[English]

Mr. Edgar Borchert: I thank you kindly for your many kind words.

My veterans haven't sat down and put a dollar-and-cents figure to what they feel they're owed, because they aren't looking for a get-rich scheme. They are simply looking at a government that has marginalized them since Canada began. But we've been there at every battle—Seven Oaks, Nile Voyageurs, the Fenian raids. We have always been there with Canada. Yet when we came home from World War I and World War II, we were back on the road allowance again.

We didn't even have property. They still don't have their own property in Manitoba. In Alberta, some veterans got together and we have Métis settlements. Veterans Affairs turned around and quickly pointed out how the Métis veteran got so much. Well, I can tell you, I met with the widow of a veteran at Fishing Lake, with the president, Garry Parenteau. The woman was turning over her quarter section of land that her husband, a veteran, had received from Veterans Affairs because the damn land belonged to the settlement. That veteran, for 60 years, thought he owned that land, but when he passed away, he had to give it back to the settlement. He didn't own it. If that's compensation, I'm sorry.

I thank Mr. Cleary so much for his kind words about the veterans on the street. I know those veterans. I see them every day. My best friend passed away in June. He was a veteran who worked for TransAlta and NOVA, and he had a good pension. He was an engineer in World War II. But he went every weekend to the streets of Edmonton, to where nobody else would go, to meet his buddies he served with, who were Métis and first nation, to buy them a meal to feed them on the street. He was 87 when he passed away, but he was still giving. I'd like to see the government at least say thank you.

Hai-hai.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith, please.

Mr. David Smith: This is an honour, which—

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Madam Chair, I did not get an answer...

[*English*]

The Chair: You just had five minutes. I'm sorry, but we have to be fair to the other people who want to ask questions too.

Mr. David Smith: This is an issue that everybody sitting around the table is very sensitive to. I'm an aboriginal from Maniwaki, a Métis. I can tell you that it isn't something we'd get up on the roof of the house and yell out to everybody, but we are very proud in our heart and soul of being Métis.

I can tell you that I know the rural life, because I was born in a rural region. When I hear our guests saying they didn't have access to radio and newspapers and they used to go through trails to go to their villages, well, that's the reality in the regions.

Everybody will agree that some things have been done correctly and some things could have been done better. My objective today, as an individual sitting around the table, is to try to find solutions for today, and for the future to come in the short term.

My question is to Mr. Bryson Guptill. When you say a systematic review has been done, I can only speak to you from past experience. In my past life, I used to work for Public Works. I did that for a few years, so I understood a bit of the government culture. Previous to that experience, I used to say to myself, "I don't know how government works, it's so complicated". Life has been respectful and good to me. I have a certain level of education and I am still going to school, so for myself it may be easier. But I can understand somebody who comes from a background with very little education and they have to go up to a government office and meet a clerk at

reception, and the clerk may, with all good will, answer something that is out of the ordinary for the individual who is asking the question, and the person maybe feels uncomfortable and leaves.

So when you say systematic review, what bothers me in this exercise is that we identified roughly 170 files of Métis. We were told that roughly about 300,000 people representing the Métis went to war. Can you tell me how many files...? To me this is what is important at the beginning of a discussion. How many files exist that have been identified as Métis?

• (1050)

Mr. Bryson Guptill: We, as a department, haven't identified Métis files, nor have we identified first nations files. We undertook a process with two associations representing Métis and non-status Indian veterans and with another organization representing first nations veterans to collect the names of as many of those veterans as possible, and we spent a lot of money researching that issue.

Mr. David Smith: All right.

Can you tell me how many aboriginal files there are today? Because there is money that has been given specifically to aboriginal people who have worked...

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I'm sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question.

Mr. David Smith: If we take all the veterans, there are aboriginal, Métis, non-aboriginal. Are there a number of files that have been identified as referring to aboriginals, if the government gave money to these aboriginals?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I still don't understand the question.

Mr. David Smith: If there are 100 people who went and represented us in war and there are 10 files, because we gave money, we said we have given money back to the people who have served from the first nations. Is this correct?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: As Sandra Ginnish and Al MacDonald mentioned, we've provided funding for research for different groups—

Mr. David Smith: So after the research has been completed, you have identified some individuals as first nations?

Mr. Martin MacDonald (Special Projects Coordinator, Veterans Service Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs): Madam Chair, may I speak to this?

The Chair: Yes, very briefly.

Mr. Martin MacDonald: When it comes to first nations, we know for sure we have approximately 1,200 who came forward and qualified for this particular package. Their service records have been identified. It was clarified that they were status Indians at the time and that they returned to reserve. That's what we know for sure. We don't know the total number that settled off reserve. We don't know the total number of Métis. Even if we go back into our million records for those who served, a Métis would not be identified on those records. That's why we have to look to the associations to bring the names forward. Even if they suspect they are a veteran, we will do the research to dig out their records.

Mr. David Smith: So there we use the—

The Chair: Mr. Smith, it's almost 11 o'clock. We have Mr. Martin still left and some housekeeping information I need to share with you.

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This may seem out of character for me, but I'm not going to use the five minutes I'm allowed for questioning. I would point out that there's growing consensus among the parties recognized here that there is an unfair gap between the compensation offered to first nations and Métis veterans after the Second World War and the Korean War and the compensation offered to other veterans. The opposition parties at least would like to move a motion at this time if there's consensus on that. I realize we need unanimous consent to summarize our study with a motion. Actually, I think Mr. Prentice of the Conservative Party may be able to articulate that motion for us. Do I have permission to yield my time to Mr. Prentice?

Hon. Sue Barnes: It hasn't been discussed with me beyond your trying to tell me right now.

Mr. Pat Martin: I'm very optimistic that given the nature of the study we've undertaken here and given the evidence we've heard, we can agree on a summary statement to report to the House of Commons. So I'd like to yield my time to Mr. Prentice.

The Chair: Ms. Barnes.

•(1055)

Hon. Sue Barnes: Were there some letters coming in that we gave unanimous consent to have so this committee can read the letters? I thought we did that at the beginning of the meeting. The government members were here to pass the budget for witnesses, that's clear. We understood that at the beginning of the meeting we gave unanimous consent so that other testimony could be sent to us to read. I would like to read that testimony.

Mr. Pat Martin: Then you can vote against the motion—

Hon. Sue Barnes: What motion? We don't have a—

Mr. Pat Martin: —or the recommendation that you're about to hear. I'm yielding my time to Mr. Prentice.

The Chair: You're asking for unanimous consent to do a study or report, is that...?

Mr. Pat Martin: I'm yielding my time to Mr. Prentice. I explained that, on behalf of the opposition party.

The Chair: Mr. Prentice.

Mr. Jim Prentice: Madam Chair, the motion that I would like to make acknowledges the testimony we've heard today and provides a bit of a road forward regarding what perhaps the government should be doing and certainly what our committee should be doing. My friend Mr. Martin is correct. This can only be passed if it's passed unanimously. For the benefit of those who are here, the committee can only pass a motion unanimously unless there is 48 hours notice of the motion. So it has to be unanimous here today, or it doesn't pass unless a member of the—

The Chair: Could you do the motion?

Mr. Jim Prentice: On behalf of the committee we would like to thank all veterans, including aboriginal Canadians, including members of first nations, Inuit communities, Métis Canadians, for their record of military service to Canada. The committee acknowledges the testimony that we have heard regarding discrepancies in terms of how aboriginal Canadians were treated upon their return from their years of service. The committee asks the government to pursue that matter, and this committee will in the future pursue that matter.

That is the motion I put forward.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent?

Hon. Sue Barnes: Do we have unanimous consent for the motion on the floor?

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to put forth this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent on the motion?

Hon. Sue Barnes: Could you get it in writing or something?

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I have one comment. I don't know if Mr. Prentice would see fit to slightly amend it, and I'm not trying to wordsmith this. It's just the use of the verb "acknowledge". We don't want that to be interpreted as an affirmation, because there will be some other evidence that's going to come forward in the form of written reports. I would be more comfortable if it were phrased "The committee has received evidence".

Hon. Sue Barnes: Perhaps that could just be a friendly amendment there, because we don't have this in writing. I think I could follow you to the appreciation and thanking all aboriginal Canadians and Métis. That was the first part, as I understood. Unfortunately, we don't have anything in front of us here, and it went on for quite some time. I have a problem procedurally, looking at this. I'm doing a friendly amendment to cut off the first part, so we can do the thank you.

Mr. Jim Prentice: I think the difficulty, Madam Barnes, is that what you're suggesting as an improvement to the motion is not agreed upon by the other members. I think we have to have a vote on the motion as it's been presented.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I need a copy of the motion, then, to see it.

The Chair: I don't think we have unanimous consent, and there is another committee coming here today.

Mr. Pat Martin: The motion is on the floor. It has to be voted on, Madam Chair. A recorded vote on this motion.

Hon. Sue Barnes: On a point of order, I don't even have this in writing before me. It's also 11 o'clock and there is a committee coming in. If these members had really been serious about doing this, they could have given me this so I could have entertained it properly. I would like to participate in thanking, and I'm sure everybody would like to participate in thanking. That's been said by everybody here today and everybody representing this. I think everybody on this side agrees that this government should go ahead and do more than has been done right now insofar as pursuing issues.

• (1100)

Mr. Pat Martin: Well, then, vote for the motion.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Let's get the motion here, but don't do this at the last minute when people are standing at the door and you know the meeting is over.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): It's fairly straightforward: thank and acknowledge that there's been a discrepancy in treatment.

Hon. Sue Barnes: You got the unanimous consent, and I would like it in writing so we can deal with it.

The Chair: The motion is on the floor. You agreed unanimously to have the motion presented, so we have to vote on it.

If you could, read the motion slowly, because it is on the table and we have to dispose of it.

You agreed unanimously to have the motion put forth, so very quickly, please.

Mr. Jim Prentice: The motion reads: On behalf of the committee, we would like to thank all veterans, including aboriginal Canadians, including first nations veterans, Inuit veterans, Métis veterans, for their military service to Canada. The committee acknowledges the testimony which it has heard regarding discrepancies as to how aboriginal Canadians were treated upon their return from their years of service. The committee asks the minister to pursue this matter, and the committee will itself in the days ahead pursue this matter.

The Chair: You have heard the motion.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Change the word "minister" to "government."

Mr. Pat Martin: You want the appropriate ministers.

The Chair: Has everyone heard the motion?

Ms. Barnes.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I'm sorry, but you can't just say "the minister." We have two ministries represented. This is the type of—

Mr. Jim Prentice: "Government" is acceptable.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Are you now amending your motion? That's what you're doing.

The Chair: We would appreciate next time if you would be aware of the time we have left. We don't like to deal with motions quickly, because we want to be fair to everyone here. We really don't have the time, so I'll have to ask you to vote, because it's on the floor.

Mr. Valley.

Mr. Roger Valley: No, I don't appreciate the way this is. We brought these people here to listen to them. At the very last minute something is thrown on the floor.

The Chair: That's why we asked for unanimous consent for the motion to go forward.

Mr. Roger Valley: Well, I don't think it's appropriate that it's done this way. We can do business better than this.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: Call the vote.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I call to adjourn, because it's after the time period, unfortunately.

Mr. Clerk, is the motion in order for clarity when it just says "minister"? Because we have two ministries represented here on the table. Is it even a clear motion? Is it receivable at this page, the way it is?

I can't help you further because I don't have it in writing.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-Philippe Brochu): I don't have it either.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Can you rule on the clarity of it if you don't even have it in writing yourself?

The Clerk: No, but the committee gave unanimous consent to study the motion, even if was not in writing.

Hon. Sue Barnes: We gave unanimous consent to hear the motion, but whether it's in order or not is before you, as clerk advising the chair. I'm asking you if it's clear enough to be in order.

The Clerk: I think so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: In French, the term "minister" can also be in the plural form.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin: There you go. Then we'll vote on the French version.

Come on, for heaven's sake, as a courtesy to our guests, acknowledge their presence here today with that summary motion.

Hon. Sue Barnes: As a courtesy to our guests, you should have stayed for the budget.

• (1105)

Mr. Pat Martin: Call the question.

Hon. Sue Barnes: This meeting is over. You know that.

Mr. Pat Martin: It's not until the chair says it's over.

Call the question.

An hon. member: Call the question, Madam Chair.

Mr. Roger Valley: Adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: We don't have the motion in front of us because you didn't give us enough time to deal with the question. There are people asking which ministers. I'm feeling that it's not clear enough to vote on, and we really have to clear the room. I am going to have to take it and get a ruling on it, because we're not sure.

I have to adjourn the meeting and say that we'll deal with it at the next—

Mr. Pat Martin: Who are you taking direction from, Madam Chair?

The Chair: The clerk.

Mr. Pat Martin: You didn't even finish your own ruling before you listened to Cyrano de Bergerac over here to tell you to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: I'm asking the clerk.

I adjourn the meeting.

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