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• (0910)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Let me begin by welcoming our guests to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. We have with us today, from the Department of National Defence, General Romses, commander, land forces, Atlantic area. We have Karen Ellis, assistant deputy minister, infrastructure environment. From the Department of Veterans Affairs, we have Sandra Williamson, acting director of program policy directorate, veterans services branch. And we have Bryson Guptill, director, program and service remodernization task force, veterans services branch.

The issue today is a briefing on Agent Orange, which has been in the news recently. I understand that Ms. Ellis and Mr. Guptill will be speaking.

Ms. Ellis, the floor is yours. Then we'll go into questions from the members. Thank you.

Ms. Karen Ellis (Assistant Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Environment, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, there has been significant media coverage regarding the testing of Agent Orange and Agent Purple at CFB Gagetown in 1966 and 1967. We welcome this opportunity to provide you with the facts, as we know them, to share with you what we have learned in recent weeks, together with what we do not know, and to set out our next steps.

We will be doing exactly the same briefing for the community in Gagetown on Thursday of this week.

[Translation]

As the Assistant Deputy Minister (Infrastructure and Environment), I am responsible for environmental issues in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.

[English]

I'm joined here today by my colleagues. The chair has already named them, so I won't repeat the titles.

At the outset I would like to make it clear that the Minister of National Defence has asked the department to compile as much information as possible on the file so that we can put it forward for the government's consideration. He has committed to appropriate action based on a full picture of the history and the facts.

Agent Orange and Agent Purple were manufactured specifically for military brush control purposes. Colour code names were coined by the U.S. military for these different defoliants. For three days in June 1966 and for four days in 1967, small-scale testing of various defoliants and desiccants, including the defoliants known as Agent Orange and Agent Purple, took place at CFB Gagetown.

We have provided each of you with a map, and if I might draw your attention to that map, I will show you exactly where that testing took place. The small blue line on the left-hand upper side was the testing area for 1966, and the area marked in green on the right-hand side, a little lower, was the testing area in 1967. I just wanted to put in perspective where the actual testing of these agents took place.

What I mean by small-scale testing is that the tests were done on 472 acres out of 271,816 acres that make up CFB Gagetown. In fact, the defoliants Agent Orange and Agent Purple were used on only 83 acres total. The testing was for brush control purposes; it was conducted in cooperation with the United States military in order to evaluate the effectiveness of these products as defoliants.

To the best of our knowledge, and with available records, this is the only cooperative defoliant testing that we have done with the United States military. Old records indicate that both countries saw the testing as mutually beneficial, and that Canada would benefit from the technical advice that could be provided by the United States. Both countries had personnel involved in the testing.

The first tests were conducted between June 14 and June 16, 1966. The site was in the western portion of Base Gagetown, between Broad Road and Blissville Road. It was approximately four miles long by 1,200 feet wide. There were 116 plots, each 200 feet by 600 feet, for a total of 320 acres, with a 100-foot buffer strip between plots used for the tests. Of the plots, 107 were sprayed, and the remaining nine were left as check plots.

A total of nine herbicide products were tested in 1966. For the entire test, one drum of 55 U.S. gallons of Agent Orange was sprayed on 14 plots, 38.5 acres; one drum of 55 U.S. gallons of Agent Purple was sprayed on 14 plots, 38.5 acres.

The second set of tests was conducted June 21 to 24, 1967. The test area was located along Rippon Road and east of Broad Road. Fifty plots, each 200 feet by 600 feet, for a total of 152 acres, with a 200-foot buffer zone between adjacent plots, were laid out on both sides of Rippon Road. A total of 15 herbicides were tested in 1967. Agent Orange was sprayed on a total of six acres, for a total quantity of 18 gallons of herbicide.

• (0915)

[Translation]

The available records indicate that these tests consisted of spraying the defoliants and desiccants in two separate areas of the base. The plots chosen for the testing were deemed appropriate at the time, because they consisted of the right mix and density of forest. The location of the two test sites also took into consideration their proximity to local croplands.

The testing was conducted under strictly controlled conditions, ensuring minimal spray drift, in an area of the base that was difficult to access. Helicopters were used and flew low over tree tops to ensure a spray swath of 50 feet. Records indicate that spraying was conducted when there was little or no wind.

[English]

Reports suggest that a limited number of people, both American and Canadian, were involved during the 1966 test and returned to verify the test results. However, these reports do not include a comprehensive list of all those who were implicated in the testing. We have the names of 18 people who were involved in organizing or may have participated in the testing. We also have the names of certain units that appear to have been involved in the testing in some capacity. This is by no means a complete list. However, DND and Veterans Affairs Canada will work together to locate these people to obtain the relevant information from them and to provide assistance as may be required.

Based on the information that we have to date, the testing did not involve widespread spraying. Because of the precautions taken, it is unlikely that civilians outside the base came into contact with Agents Orange and Purple. According to U.S. studies, the Canadian Forces Surgeon General has advised that spray drift beyond the borders of target areas would be extremely unlikely in low wind conditions, as was the case in Gagetown, and any herbicide remaining in the air would be rapidly degraded by sunlight. The vast majority of Agent Orange sprayed in Gagetown would have been absorbed by the forest canopy or would have broken down in sunlight, with very little reaching the ground.

It is extremely unlikely that individuals travelling through the Gagetown test area, even shortly after spraying, could have received an exposure to Agent Orange of any health significance. In the absence of deliberate ingestion of large amounts of contaminated material, there is virtually no risk of significant exposure related to the spraying among CF members who subsequently trained in Gagetown.

At this point, with available records, the tests in 1966 and 1967 at CFB Gagetown appear to be the only known instances in which Agents Orange and Purple were tested by the Department of National Defence.

It was subsequently discovered that as a result of the manufacturing process, Agent Orange and Agent Purple were contaminated with varying levels of dioxin, known as 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-dioxin, which I will henceforth refer to as TCDD, a toxic and persistent substance. It's important to note that contamination levels for the dioxin varied widely, depending on the production run and the manufacturer. Without knowing exactly where the defoliants

came from, exactly what they contained, and how they were produced, it is very difficult for us to determine the level of dioxin in the agents used for the specific tests in 1966 and 1967.

We know that there has already been public discussion surrounding these issues at other times in the past. In 1981 a United States military report was tabled in the House of Commons. According to a media report, DND quickly took action to examine the background of the tests and reported the results to the public.

[Translation]

In 1985, the issue was again raised when DND received reports of suspected barrel dumps in the CFB Gagetown training area, some of which allegedly contained Agent Orange. DND, in conjunction with Health and Welfare Canada and the province of New Brunswick, conducted an investigation and through several private laboratories, had tests conducted of the suspected substances, the soil, and ground water. The final report was released to the public and confirmed that Agent Orange was not one of the substances. It also showed that there was no evidence of significant or harmful chemical contamination in the water or soil samples.

• (0920)

[English]

In 1988 the issue was again reported in the media, due to some further research done at CFB Gagetown.

Now I will discuss the health effects. The health effects of Agent Orange and Agent Purple exposure remain unclear. In 1991, uncertainties concerning the health impact of Agent Orange exposure among Vietnam veterans led the U.S. Congress to direct the conduct of comprehensive, scientific, health risk assessments by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine. The Institute of Medicine has been publishing its reviews of the available evidence every two years since 1994. It is widely viewed as authoritative with respect to this subject. It maintains a list of illnesses for which there is sufficient or limited evidence of an association with exposure to Agent Orange. It has not found that Agent Orange exposure is the cause of any illnesses, and the associations it found were largely based on studies of industrial and agricultural workers with far greater exposure to dioxin-containing chemicals than that experienced by Vietnam veterans. The Canadian Forces Surgeon General and her expert staff support the IOM's medical conclusions.

[Translation]

In order to identify military personnel and civilian employees who may have been exposed to Agent Orange or Purple during the testing in 1966 and 1967, we are taking a two-pronged approach. First, we are reviewing our historical and archived files here in Ottawa and in Gagetown to attempt to identify personnel who were involved in the testing. Assuming that we can then locate some of these people, we will be able to refer them to the appropriate agency such as Veterans Affairs Canada or to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, if further assistance is required.

● (0925)

[English]

That is why the second element of our approach is really important. We will invite people who believe they have been affected to provide us with factual information and to receive the information that we have. More information on this initiative will be released on Thursday at Canadian Forces base Gagetown.

DND will also be conducting research to see whether the dioxin levels of the agents used in 1966 and 1967 can be determined. The department will work with the United States Department of Defense to research and cross-check any relevant files. We need to complete the review of our own records first before we will be ready to seek further information from the Americans, but we have already made initial contact with the U.S. Department of Defense.

The department will also be initiating a soil, vegetation, and water sampling program during summer 2005—that is this summer—in the area where the tests occurred, and the results of that research program will be made public.

In conclusion, I have several points.

The testing in 1967 and 1966 was conducted on a small scale, it was carefully controlled, and it took place over a total of seven days. In total, slightly more than two drums—128 U.S. gallons—of Agent Orange and Agent Purple were tested on 83 acres in a remote and heavily forested area of the base. There is little chance that civilians living outside the base were exposed to the chemicals used in this testing.

We are trying to reconstruct what happened 40 years ago. Complete documentation is not readily available and may not be available at all. This is not an easy task, and I will say here and now that we are likely to have some questions that will be very difficult to answer. New information may also emerge.

That said, we are committed to doing the most thorough and conscientious research that we can so we can advise the government well. We have a responsibility to take the time to do this work properly and to consider the interests of all Canadians when we think about the issues. While we want to inform citizens, we want to do so with the facts and complete information and avoid providing erroneous or incomplete information that would unduly alarm area residents.

It is a fact that environmental awareness and controls are much more substantive today than they were in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as in previous decades. Across the country, in public and private sectors and in individual households, knowledge and awareness of environmental matters is significantly greater today than it was in the past, and we do things very differently now. While we are concerned, it is not always practical to apply today's environmental science, knowledge, and practices to previous decades.

[Translation]

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces takes all questions related to health and the environment very seriously. We care about the health of our members, employees and neighbours. We know that people associated with the Gagetown area are concerned about the testing. We take their concerns seriously and

we are committed to identifying and understanding them as part of finding out what happened at that time.

● (0930)

[English]

We take these questions of health and environment very seriously. I want to emphasize that we care very much about our members and about our employees and our neighbours at home in Canada and when our members are deployed abroad. We will continue our work to obtain relevant information, including outreach to people, as part of developing our advice to the government, and we will keep sharing new information as it emerges.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ellis.

We'll go to Mr. Guptill.

Just before I give you the floor, sir, I know this is a very important issue, and we're so appreciative of you coming here. We've not put a timeframe in terms of your presentation, so feel free to take as much time as you need.

The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Bryson Guptill (Director, Program & Service Redesign Modernization Task Force, Veterans Services Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs): Let me start by saying that Veterans Affairs Canada welcomes the opportunity to speak with you today about this issue. Clearly the spraying of Agent Orange that took place at CFB Gagetown over a seven-day period in June 1966 and June 1967 is of great interest to parliamentarians, to veterans and their families, and to other Canadians.

This committee is well aware that anything that has potential impact on veterans is also of great concern to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is particularly true when the health of veterans may be affected. As you know, Veterans Affairs Canada has a mandate to provide disability pensions to former and still-serving Canadian Forces members who incur illnesses or injuries related to military service.

This morning I would like to outline what the department is doing to respond to veterans who believe their health may have been compromised by exposure to Agent Orange at CFB Gagetown. I trust that this information will give committee members an understanding of just how seriously the department is taking this matter and what action is being taken to serve veterans and their families.

At the outset, I would like to echo the words of my colleague from the Department of National Defence with respect to the priority that is being placed on this file and to emphasize that we are working closely with DND and other departments to ensure an effective and appropriate response. We are doing everything possible within our mandate to address this issue. More specifically, here are some of the details on what we are doing.

First, a special review team has been set up, led by an experienced pension adjudicator and supported by a small team with expertise in adjudicating exposure-related claims. This will ensure that all new incoming applications are processed as expeditiously as possible. As you know, we have been actively encouraging all current and former Canadian Forces members who think they have an illness or disability related to the test sprays at CFB Gagetown to come forward. The department is ready to deal with these claims.

In addition, this team will review all existing cases in which an unfavourable decision has been rendered. More specifically, since the year 2000, when the department began keeping statistics on Agent Orange claims, we have ruled on 25 cases. To date, three disability pensions have been awarded—one in December 2000, the others in June and November of 2004. Two of these cases involve exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. Nineteen cases that have been denied and are under the jurisdiction of the department are being re-examined to determine if further action is warranted. The department is also making every effort to search our client data base to identify unfavourable cases prior to the year 2000. Rest assured that veterans affairs staff are following up on the 18 cases mentioned by my colleague from DND and will be actively looking for more.

I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you about the criteria the department will be using in the review and adjudication of claims. The normal process will be followed—that is, the same basic pension adjudication process that is used for other claims. We consider all published medical literature regarding the health effects of Agent Orange, including the findings from the U.S. National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine. The organization has conducted comprehensive science-based analysis of health effects of Agent Orange exposure and is the scientific authority used by the U.S. in relation to these kinds of claims. Indeed, it is considered the leading expert on all defoliants sprayed in Vietnam, including Agent Orange. This approach will ensure all factors are taken into consideration regarding exposure to Agent Orange and associations with various diseases and medical conditions.

One important fact you'll be quite familiar with is that the veterans affairs pension process is non-adversarial, and veterans are afforded the benefit of the doubt. Where there's no credible evidence to the contrary, any doubt that arises in the weighing of evidence regarding a service-related illness is resolved in the applicant's favour. As you know, the department is obliged to do this under the Pension Act.

• (0935)

I want to emphasize that Veterans Affairs is committed to being fair, flexible, and reasonable in reviewing these applications. Furthermore, as is the case with any pension application, should a client be dissatisfied with his or her first decision, there are processes in place for a departmental review, as well as a review or appeal to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

I know this is a simplistic overview. I'm prepared to answer your questions if you want to know more about our pension processes.

I understand the committee has expressed an interest in hearing how the American approach of presumptive rulings compares to the approach that is being taken in Canada. There are two important aspects to consider. In Canada, after determining that there is a disability, Veterans Affairs pension adjudicators must answer two

other questions: was the applicant exposed to Agent Orange or Agent Purple in the course of military service; and if so, is the illness or disability linked to that exposure?

With respect to the first question, the U.S. presumes that all Vietnam veterans were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides. This means the individual veterans are not required to show exposure, given the widespread use of herbicides in Vietnam. It is critical, however, to bear in mind the scope and magnitude of Agent Orange exposure in Canada, when compared to the United States. Between 1961 and 1971, the U.S. military sprayed more than 72 million litres of Agent Orange and similar agents for defoliation and crop destruction. My colleague at National Defence pointed out what the situation was in Canada.

The most widely used herbicide was Agent Orange. Millions of acres were sprayed. In fact we've done some research on this and determined that something like 4 million acres were sprayed in the United States, compared with what my colleague talked about in the Gagetown context, which was something over 400 acres—83 in final analysis.

This is a very different scenario from what we are dealing with at CFB Gagetown. DND has reported that spraying was confined to remote parts of the base and took place over a period of seven days—three in June 1966, and four in June 1967. In addition, reports suggest there were a limited number of people on the ground during the 1966 test. These are very important considerations when seeking to compare the U.S. response following the Vietnam War to the approach we have taken in Canada. This does not mean that some Canadian Forces members were not affected. They were, and we are taking appropriate action.

In Canada, exposure must be demonstrated to be based on the evidence presented. Adjudicators have flexibility in determining what form this evidence can take. In this way, our benefit-of-the-doubt provisions are similar to the U.S. presumptive rulings.

On the second question, about whether the disability is linked to the exposure, we apply the same evidence as the Americans. In the United States, exposure or presumption of exposure to Agent Orange does not qualify Vietnam veterans for disability pensions. Similar to Canada, payments are based on disabilities. In fact, many Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange have no serious medical problems, and others have disabilities clearly unrelated to their military service.

As I stated earlier, the findings of the National Academy of Sciences IOM are also considered by Veterans Affairs Canada in the adjudication of pension applications concerning exposure to Agent Orange. We are applying the same interpretation to illnesses associated with exposure to Agent Orange and Agent Purple as the U.S. VA.

On the communications front, we are assisting DND in carrying out an outreach to our veterans by encouraging any member who believes they suffer a service-related disability as a result of exposure to make themselves known to us. Our priority has been to make sure the veterans know they can contact the department if they think they have an illness that is related to this exposure, and that we are ready to accept disability pension applications.

● (0940)

We have a notice on our website, and in the upcoming edition of *Salute!*, our client newsletter with a readership of over 250,000, we are urging people to come forward. We have received more than 350 inquiries through our national client contact network. Staff responding to callers have been able to provide valuable information, including information on our disability pension application process. The VAC/DND centre is also receiving calls, to the point where we have provided additional resources to assist their staff in responding to inquiries. We are also seeing some success in these efforts.

New pension applications are also starting to come in. Approximately 120 have already been received, and we've been contacted by veterans whose claims predate the year 2000.

In closing, I want to stress the department's commitment to Canada's veterans and their families. Veterans Affairs will continue to make this a priority and to encourage any veterans who think they have illnesses related to exposure to Agent Orange or any aspect of their service to contact the department and apply for a disability pension. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guptill.

We'll go to questions from the members, and we'll start with Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): I believe Mr. O'Connor wants to go first.

The Chair: Mr. O'Connor.

Generally, before we start—to our panel—there are seven minutes for questions and answers. We try...

Ms. Gallant?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chairman, given the number of people here today and the fact that the issue is so important, would it be possible to extend the meeting time to 12 o'clock, at least?

The Chair: I have a request here. I think we have plenty of time. What I was going to suggest now, given the restrictions of the seven minutes, was that we all be a little bit flexible as we go around the table, to give the time as required for the questions and the responses, given the importance, as you say—and we all agree—of the issue.

I'm inclined to believe we're going to continue for as long as it takes, and I'm not going to restrict it. You can be assured of that.

So within the seven minutes—to colleagues on the committee and to the witnesses—rest assured I'm not going to restrict it; if anything, we're going to be very flexible within a reasonable time, so that everybody has an opportunity to get in, and then we'll go to second and third rounds.

Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ellis, I listened to your briefing. If I could sum it up in a few words, you're essentially saying there's not much of a problem, there's not much to worry about, and this happened 40 years ago and we have different attitudes. We may have different attitudes towards the environment today from those we had then, but the medical effects of the chemicals haven't changed. So whatever occurred to the people in 1966-67, if we used the same chemicals today we'd have the same effects.

I've looked at your map and the test areas. Could you tell me if these test areas were isolated, in the sense that somebody put a fence around them, or were they accessible to soldiers, civilians, berry pickers, whoever?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I'll make a couple of comments, and then I will ask General Romses whether he would like to add anything concerning fences or any of those issues.

The first point is that I did indeed describe these areas on the map as very remote areas that were difficult to access. They were chosen, for one thing, for the mix and density of the forest to test the products, and they were chosen in an area where in fact they were quite remote on the base.

The testing was done, as I said, in a very controlled and careful and small-scale manner, and it is highly unlikely that civilians outside of the base would have been exposed to either Agent Orange or Agent Purple. There were, as I said, plots designated for testing the defoliants, and then buffer zones in between, and some plots left without any use, so that comparisons could be made as to how effective the products were.

All of the information we have clearly indicates this was done very carefully and in a very controlled research and scientific way.

I don't know about any fencing, and I'm not sure we even have those records, but I'll let General Romses comment, if he has anything to add.

● (0945)

Brigadier-General R.R. Romses (Commander, Land Force Atlantic Area, Department of National Defence): The only thing I would add is that yes, it was a very remote area. No, there was no fence physically put around the test area, but that's because it was a very remote area and it was conducted under test conditions.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: But your map—I'm just going by the map here—shows that the green line and the blue line touch the highway that cuts the camp in two. It would seem, then, at least from this map, that it would be relatively easy for somebody driving in a car along the highway to stop and go in there or for people to access, certainly, one end of this. My memory is that this isn't actually the configuration of Gagetown 40 years ago, because they've opened up areas. These test areas—and I don't know why they chose it that way—actually touch the main highway, so there is a possibility, even, of casual contact with this because they were touching the main highway going through the camp.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Well, sir, I would like to respond to that.

Indeed, part of what we want to do as we do some outreach to people in the community is fact-finding. We are very open, and we will be following up on this on Thursday in Gagetown. If there is anybody who, from that three-day period and the four-day period in those two years, has some factual information that they were travelling along that road or has a concern related to that, we would like to know about that. We don't have that information ourselves right now, but we will welcome it if people have information they can provide about those specific periods the testing actually took place.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: My memory is that a lot of these areas—maybe it's changed now—back in that period had a lot of water in them. In fact, we used to be able to go up on hills sometimes and start digging on a hill, and we'd hit water. I'm just wondering if these chemicals that were sprayed there also somehow got into the water table, because there are the villages and everything around here. We have to go back 40 years, but when the people were testing, did they take into account the possibility that some of this chemical would have run off into the water table?

BGen R.R. Romses: I think I would just add that clearly, in that area there are swamps, as there are swamps pretty much throughout the Gagetown training area. So yes, there is definitely water in that area. The comments have already been made, however, that the spraying was done at a very middle treetop level in various specific areas that were marked off and identified and that most of it would not have penetrated the foliage. There's a remote possibility that some would have reached the swamp, the water, but again, that would have broken down very quickly as well because of the heat.

Ms. Karen Ellis: As we did say, we will be doing some soil and water testing of those test areas this summer. I'm not sure we will find much or what we will find, but we will do that testing this summer and we will share the results.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Given the experience of the Americans with Agent Orange and Agent Purple, once an area is sprayed, are there any longer-term effects? Is the soil contaminated? Does it go beyond a few days? Is there a long-term effect of putting these chemicals in the soil?

Ms. Karen Ellis: Our understanding is that there's a very quick breakdown of the product, that it degrades very quickly, within a few hours, and that there is very little risk of it enduring for any period of time in terms of permanent contamination.

As I said, we'll do some testing this summer. It's many years later and I'm not sure what we will find there, but we want to take that extra step to make sure we can comment on that. Our understanding of the science and chemistry of it is that it does degrade very quickly, and even within hours and a couple of days it would basically be gone.

● (0950)

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: I think I heard you say it, but I want confirmation that Agent Orange—or yellow or purple, whatever all these different colours are—none of these agents was used in any other Canadian Forces base or installation.

Ms. Karen Ellis: I will repeat what I said earlier. Based on our available records—and we've been looking—and on our knowledge

to date, the only indication we have of these agents being tested by the military in Canada is at CFB Gagetown at the time these two tests were held. That's the location and that's the testing that happened. That's to the best of our knowledge to date with the records we have. We have no indication of it being done elsewhere.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Okay.

Do I still have time?

The Chair: You're close to seven minutes, but we said we were going to be a bit flexible.

By the way, colleagues, if I may interrupt, I've just been informed by the staff here that this room is booked for another meeting at 11 o'clock, so we are obligated to exit this room. There is a facility available in this building in Room 306 from 11 o'clock on, so we've made arrangements to move into this room to continue.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Given the short time, then, I'll cease my questions for now and pass on to others.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. O'Connor.

I have Monsieur Bachand next on the list.

[Translation]

Mr. Bachand, you have the floor.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to tell Ms. Ellis and Mr. Guptill that they did an excellent job of defending the departments of Defence and Veterans Affairs in their presentations. However, as members of Parliament, we do not defend the departments, but the people who are grappling with a major problem that they are having trouble getting you to understand.

Faced with this situation, they call us or come to our offices. Some tell me they have heard about Agent Orange and Agent Purple on TV. They identify the place they were at a given time and talk about the fact that they have certain problems.

So we are trying to defend these people. I am very disappointed in your presentations. However, if I were Minister of Defence, Ms. Ellis, I would give you a promotion today. It would be the same for you, Mr. Guptill, if I were Albina. You defended your department very well.

You appear to be trivializing the matter.

[English]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I don't think it's appropriate to berate the witnesses. I think the question should be put, but the discussion should be relevant to the matter at hand. The berating of witnesses is just not appropriate.

The Chair: All right, then.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Aren't you sensitive this morning!

Hon. Keith Martin: Of course.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chairman, the other representative of the department is angry too, and that is normal.

It is not our duty to please the Department of Defence or the Department of Veterans Affairs, but to defend people who are currently defenceless. I believe I am entitled to ask my question and to make a preamble as I see fit. I was just about to explain why the facts were being trivialized. We are being told that it was just seven days, 128 gallons, two barrels and 88 acres. That indicates that from the outset, they want to take a defensive position rather than to truly help people.

Ms. Ellis, I want to remind you of the remarks you made on your own site. You say, for all of your employees:

I am personally responsible and liable for the protection of the environment as I carry out my duties.

As a member of the regular or reserve Force, or as a civilian employee, I am required to act with due diligence [...]

When we talk about due diligence, we mean carrying out a duty promptly. But we have known that these effects exist for more than 30 years. Can we talk about due diligence here?

[...]—or reasonable care—in my daily activities as directed by the environmental laws of my country.

You provide clarification about these laws and then you say:

How do these laws affect me?

Then you say:

They have particular significance to me because they stipulate that I am personally responsible and liable to protect the environment as part of my work.

If an accident causing damage to the environment should occur as a result of my action, (or lack of action) or the direction I gave (or failed to give) to people who report to me, I am the one who would have to prove in civilian or military court that I did exercise due diligence [...]

Under the current act, you must in fact prove that you did exercise due diligence.

This applies to all levels of personnel in DND, from the new recruit to the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Deputy Minister and indeed, to the Minister.

It is clear to me that in this case, due diligence has not been exercised. It is a problem for the victims of these incidents.

Mr. Guptill, you say that you intend to listen carefully to veterans and to truly devote your attention to them. However, only three out of 21 applications have been accepted to date. As you know, under the act, when a person is not satisfied with a decision, he must first take an appeal to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. Moreover, if the situation persists, a class action suit against the department becomes a possibility. In this case, there is a real problem, and people who will not obtain a settlement through the board will have to turn to the courts.

I am going to let you respond to that. I apologize if I have given you the impression that I am being a bit harsh. I am not usually like this. I have often said that to my colleagues, who do recognize my critical capacity. The fact remains that I did not really get the sense that you intended to strongly defend the victims of these incidents.

You have the floor.

• (0955)

Ms. Karen Ellis: I would be more than happy to answer you.

Mr. Bachand, the issue of diligence is very important. As I said, this is not the first time that we have discussed Agent Orange. We have already discussed the matter two or three times, publicly and in the House of Commons.

Next Thursday, we will hold an information session in Gagetown. We plan to indicate to people in attendance where they can find a first point of contact that, in turn, will provide them with information on the steps to follow. This initial contact may be the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development for civilian employees of the Department of National Defence. I fully understand your emotion. This is a very important issue for people, it affects them, and we are aware of that. We want to give them an opportunity to talk to us and we will listen to them.

My team and I are doing research. We are working very hard, sir, to update the background and the facts. Next Thursday, I hope to be of great assistance to people in the region and to provide them with an opportunity to talk to us.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Guptill, would you like to add anything?

[English]

Mr. Bryson Guptill: You mentioned in your comments that the number of people who have been awarded disability pensions for exposure to Agent Orange is relatively small, and I would agree that it is a relatively small number. I think it's also significant that two of the three people who have been given disability pensions for exposure to Agent Orange are in fact veterans who served with their U.S. counterparts in Vietnam, as opposed to Gagetown; there's only one person who has been successful in getting a disability pension related to exposure to Agent Orange in Gagetown.

We are reviewing those cases just to make sure we've considered every possible exposure these folks may have had and to also consider whether or not, in our initial adjudication, we were reasonable. That's why we've set up this review process. So we'll be reviewing, as my statement mentioned, the cases that have come to our attention.

We've also invited people to come forward if they haven't come forward before to express their concerns and apply for pensions from us, if that is appropriate.

As I mentioned in my statement, we have now 120 new applications that have come forward in the last couple of weeks, whereas previously we had only 25 applications—and this in spite of the fact, as my colleague pointed out, that this issue was reviewed quite extensively in the early 1980s, and then in the mid-1980s and the late 1980s.

So there has been quite a bit of interest. There have been people who believe that they have been disabled as a result of the spray program, and we're looking very aggressively at their applications. We've set up a special review team to do that, and we'll get on with the job just as quickly as we can.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I have one last, very short question. Congressman Lane Evans had chronic lymphocytic leukemia added to the list of conditions under which you granted a pension to Mr. Sellar. Why would we try to reinvent the wheel? The US National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine talks about 13 conditions related to Agent Orange and Agent Purple. Would it be possible for the Department of Veterans Affairs to simply take the list from the US Department of Veterans Affairs and apply it in the same way in Canada?

[English]

Mr. Bryson Guptill: That's exactly what we do, in fact. We use exactly the same list the U.S. does, and in that regard we rely on the United States research and the list of conditions, including chronic lymphatic leukemia, which is one of the conditions we look for concerning exposure of Canadians. As you've pointed out, two of the individuals we're talking about were diagnosed with that condition.

I think it's important to make sure people have actually been exposed in some way to these chemical sprays before jumping to the conclusion that they might have been impacted. That's essentially what the Department of Veterans Affairs process does. There are other conditions on the list that are quite common conditions among the Canadian population, so due diligence requires that we investigate what their exposure was. We're very generous, I think, in our benefit-of-the-doubt provisions, in making sure we err on the side of veterans in this issue.

Normally the courts look at these issues from the point of view of a balance of probabilities. If you're judging these issues, a balance of probability in the court process is trying to determine whether or not you should make a decision in favour of the applicant. But in Veterans Affairs, our legislation clearly stipulates that we give the benefit of the doubt to the veterans who come forward with claims, and that's something we'll do in this case as well.

The Chair: Merci.

We'll go to Mr. Blaikie.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I hope the committee would agree that my suggestion at our last meeting that we have the officials come before us to give us this briefing has proved to be useful, and I hope ultimately even more helpful than it has been so far in determining what the government has done over the years. I say this in the clear knowledge that one can't hold the current witnesses accountable.

This was raised in 1981 by two NDP members of Parliament, former colleagues of mine, Terry Sergeant and Simon De Jong, and at that time a request was made in the House of Commons, on January 26, 1981, that the government monitor the health of personnel, as well as the people living in the immediate vicinity where the tests might have taken place. There was the same kind of answer then as there is now in some ways, which is to minimize, to downplay. In fact, at that time the Minister of National Defence said there were only eleven military and two civilians involved in the whole thing. That was Monsieur Lamontagne.

My question really has to do with that interim period. This was raised in 1981, and we know what's been happening over the last little while, but really, we don't know what happened in the eighties and nineties with respect to this. Even in your own presentation, Ms. Ellis, you say, "In 1981, a United States military report was tabled in the House"—by these members of Parliament—"and according to a media report DND quickly took action to examine the background of the tests and reported the results to the public."

Are you telling me that DND is dependent on media reports for information about what it does? Or could you not tell us what DND did on your own hook—i.e., what did DND do after this was brought to the attention of the government in 1981?

You say they examined the background of the tests and reported the results to the public. Do you have a copy of the report to the public at that time? Do you have the results of the examination of the background of the test? Because you're saying now, later on in the same page, "We're trying to reconstruct what happened 40 years ago." Well, in 1981 it would have been only 16 years ago or 15 years ago, and presumably something was done at that time. Yet I don't have any sense from your presentation that something was done and you don't really have access to it—or perhaps nothing was done, because now you're saying you're having to reconstruct what happened 40 years ago.

I'm just wondering what did happen after the 1981 revelation. Or is there sort of a black hole between 1981 and now? There certainly was the impression in the House and otherwise that this was brand-new information—"Oh, gee!"

Anyway, I wonder if you could address those questions. What did happen after 1981?

• (1005)

Ms. Karen Ellis: Thank you for raising this. I think it's an important point. I'll certainly see if General Romses has something he can fill in on that one as well.

You're absolutely right. I did indicate that there was a media report that referred to DND's response in 1981.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: I saw the clip of the news broadcast at that time. It said the surgeon general was going to be looking into this and reporting. Did the surgeon general ever report? Do we have that report?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I honestly cannot answer your question right now. As I said, I have been working on the file for about three weeks at this point, and certainly this is an area that we'll want to follow up on as part of putting the whole picture together, as part of our research. So I'm glad you raised it and it's certainly something we'll look at.

I'm going to see if General Romses has anything to add, any background knowledge of that 1981 response. It's certainly an area we need to get more briefed on and to find materials, in fact, to try to answer your question.

BGen R.R. Romses: There was a very extensive airing of this issue both in 1981 and 1985. Indeed, what that was leading to was a presentation of the facts, so that people had a firm understanding of what occurred in 1966 and 1967, and to ensure people had an overall awareness so that, again, informed decisions could be made.

There were tests done in 1985. We have the results of those tests.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: What kinds of tests?

BGen R.R. Romses: The storage site tests.

•(1010)

Ms. Karen Ellis: I mentioned there were some barrel dumps. It was not found to be Agent Orange that was the contamination, but we did tests on that because the concern was raised about them.

BGen R.R. Romses: As I say, we do actually have the results of the tests.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: I think there's a missing link here between what the government claimed was going to happen after the revelation in 1981 and here you are, as representatives of the department, and you don't seem to have a clue about what happened after 1981. I think that's very strange. I know you've only been on the file three weeks, and I don't want to beat you up about it, but somebody deserves something about the fact there's so little information about something that was revealed so long ago.

Still you're saying that it's up to the people who were in Gagetown, that they have to come forward. Why isn't the burden of proof the other way around? Even just for finding people who may have been exposed, why aren't you doing research to find out who was there then, who may have been in the vicinity, etc., and getting hold of them to ask them if they have any of these diseases? Why is the burden of proof on conceivably very elderly veterans, by now, who are supposed to pick this up in the media somehow?

Ms. Karen Ellis: As I mentioned, we are doing two or three types of things to try to fill in the picture and to answer, in fact, some of the very questions you are asking right now, sir. The first thing is indeed to look at the archival records. For example, the department did not keep nominal rolls of who was at Gagetown in the 1960s. And General Romses can correct me if I'm mistaken, but I don't think they started keeping full lists of names until maybe later in the 1970s.

As I mentioned, part of our challenge is this. We do have 18 names and we're going to follow up on those. We're hoping that by talking to those people we would be able to identify others who may have been involved in the testing. Those are the kinds of steps we have to take to try to make sure we get a fuller list. We may never know exactly every name. We're going to have to do our best to get the highest number we can to follow up.

Secondly, we also want to invite people who may have information that can help us build that picture or perhaps identify who was there. We don't see it as putting the burden on others. We're seeing it as a combined effort that could give us a fuller picture on the file and enable us to develop our analysis and our advice. It's more of an asking for that assistance if people have relevant information. As well, we are working very hard and it's a top priority to research files and to answer the very questions you're asking in a fuller way, because we have partial information at this point. Some

of it is records and the way records were kept, and some of it is indeed having to reach out and contact people to see if that can provide us with other leads for people who may have been there.

General, I don't know if you want to add anything on record-keeping. I don't think we had everything as complete as we would have liked from the 1960s.

BGen R.R. Romses: No, that's fine.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: It strikes me as odd that the record-keeping was so poor in the 1960s. I remember going down to the National Archives with my dad to find out who was in his squadron in 1944, and they had the whole list there—mug shots and everything. Now we can't figure out who was at Gagetown in 1966. I just find that a little bit strange.

You mentioned that Gagetown was the only place this happened. Can you say with certainty—the U.S. was clearly much more into this, so to speak—whether at any time the U.S. might have used Agent Orange or other kinds of defoliants on an experimental basis where they were located in Canada, like at Argentia? Have you checked to see whether they were using it there?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I'm afraid we don't have any information that indicates that.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Have you asked?

Ms. Karen Ellis: As I said, we've made contact with the U.S. Department of Defense. We want to follow up specifically on the Gagetown issues. But again I really want to be clear that to the best of our knowledge to date and with the records we have, which we've looked at, we have no indication that the Canadian and U.S. militaries did any spraying of these defoliants anywhere else in Canada.

As to the other part of your question, I'm not aware of anything. But I can't say anything more than that right now. On what I know today, I'm not aware.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Are there still barrels of Agent Orange or other kinds of pesticides or chemicals stored on bases?

I've had it brought to my attention that there are concerns or rumours about the base at Shilo. The member from Bathurst brought it to my attention that people there believe there are chemicals stored in the ground there in various places. Are you familiar with this?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I'm not familiar with that. I don't have any knowledge that I can share with you right now.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: You can take that one as notice and look into it, okay?

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

•(1015)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you for coming, and I thank Mr. Bill Blaikie. I think it was a good idea to have this. They're giving a lot of good information to the public, so they'll know how comprehensively you're dealing with this, and the avenues available.

I have to agree with Mr. Martin. I think it's not fair of Mr. Bachand to make comments without getting more specific. I can't imagine, with such a huge department as Veterans Affairs, that you aren't listening. There are so many appeal mechanisms for veterans, I can't imagine that anyone's not being listened to. It would be great if we could have the details, if there is a particular problem. But I'm sure the veterans appreciate all the care you're taking in this, and the fact that you're going to Gagetown on Thursday.

On the person whose claim was accepted, could you explain what their involvement was back when they had their exposure to Agent Orange?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I can't go into details on individual cases, but generally speaking, the individual has to show they were exposed in some way. Then on the basis of that exposure we determine whether they developed some disease or disability from that. As a result, our adjudicator establishes what we call entitlement.

Once the entitlement is established, we determine how disabling the condition is. Then there is an assessment process, when we establish, in reference to a table of disabilities, the level of disability, assign a percentage of disability, and pay the individual a tax-free pension on a monthly basis for the rest of their life.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Do we know if any Americans who were involved in activities in Gagetown at the time have put claims through their system?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I'm sorry, I do not know that today. We can try to follow up with the DOD in the United States, but I can't guarantee when I'll get an answer or what answer I'll get. I can certainly ask the question.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: The way your map looks, it looks like it's a very remote area, and it's not likely people would wander into it. Was that the same then? Is my understanding of the map correct? Is it a fairly isolated part of the base?

BGen R.R. Romses: Yes, at that time it was very isolated. Those sectors were selected because they were isolated and because of the nature of the vegetation that was there.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'd like to go back to the question that General O'Connor was asking. When you were talking about the plots, there were different plots, if I remember correctly. I would assume it would be likely that you wouldn't start a plot right at the road. Is that correct?

BGen R.R. Romses: I think you're quite correct.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: You said you did testing of groundwater, or the ground below where the agent was dropped, in 1981?

BGen R.R. Romses: No. In 1985 the tests that were done were related to the general herbicide program on the base where there were storage drums kept, because there were a lot of rumours in 1985 that Agent Orange was stored in those areas. So there were tests done around those locations just to confirm. And yes, there were soil tests done related to that, but they had nothing to do with Agent Orange.

Ms. Karen Ellis: It was found that Agent Orange was not among the contaminants from that dump, and it was also found that there wasn't a lot of extensive contamination. It was checked for that reason.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: So in 1981, when this first came out, were there any soil and water tests done of the area just to see if there were still any problems left over from residual Agent Orange?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I don't believe so.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: How quickly does Agent Orange dissipate in sunlight? Can it get into groundwater? Does that become a problem?

Ms. Karen Ellis: To the best of my knowledge, I understand that it usually degrades within about four to six hours. I probably would have to check in terms of timeframe when it's degraded by sunlight. It may be that within a day or two it would be mostly dissipated. I would need to get a scientist or a chemist to give precise timeframes, but my understanding is that there is a rapid degradation of the matter. It doesn't have a long-lasting kind of effect.

• (1020)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: So you're saying that potentially within 24 hours after it was sprayed, there could be no harmful effects in that area?

Ms. Karen Ellis: My understanding of this, from people who have a science background, is that within a few hours it would be largely degraded by sunlight and absorbed by the forest canopy, so it would not likely have gone down to the ground and groundwater levels.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I think it would be very reassuring for the people of Gagetown if you could confirm that before you go on Thursday.

Just to put this into context, how much do you spend on environmental contamination cleanup every year in the department?

Ms. Karen Ellis: We spend about \$100 million a year on environmental activities in the department. We have over 1,000 contaminated sites across the country that we have listed, prioritized, identified, and are in the process, year by year, of slowly and steadily cleaning up and managing, according to their risk level. We have about 200 environmental officers across the country at all our bases and wings who help us work on this, and we do take the environmental issues very seriously.

Over the last 15 years, like everybody else in government and in the private sector and in households, we have significantly increased our environmental awareness and efforts. I feel that the Department of National Defence has a very good record in terms of the way it's handling environment, both at home and on deployments abroad. I've personally had a chance to see how we treat the environment on operations abroad.

My point is that we take these issues very seriously. And considering the resources available, relative to the mission of the department, and what the forces are trying to do for the country and for the world, I think we spend and invest a good amount on environment, and I think we do take great care to fulfill those obligations and responsibilities across the country. So our investment is significant.

Of course, we have access to the federal contaminated sites program announced by the government. And we've been able, because we have such a large proportion of the sites for DND to take care of in Canada, to get a good and fair amount of that federal pot to help us do the work, plus we invest our own money as well. So I feel there's a lot going on to protect the environment. As well, we assess, of course, health and environmental risks and put them in order so we can take care of the worst first.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Just one last question, a short one.

I think you mentioned that there's going to be testing this summer for residual contamination from Agent Orange in the area, in the water and in the ground. But if it dissipates in 24 hours, why would you think there'd be anything to test?

Ms. Karen Ellis: As I say, it's very unlikely we would find any residue, but because people have a lot of questions and want some reassurance, we feel that we should take that additional step to do the tests and share the results.

It is, of course, four decades later, but I think it's part of our good-faith commitment to say we know there are concerns out there, we do want to take some extra steps, and we do want to tell you what we find or what we don't find. So we will work, with whatever information we get, to provide whatever other information we need to the public.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Hinton, please.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you.

Good morning. And just in case you didn't hear one of the responses that came from Mr. O'Connor to a comment made by Mr. Blaikie, he suggested that every unit kept lists every day of who was on base. So it shouldn't be that difficult to go back and find out who could have been exposed.

In 1985 a briefing to the New Brunswick cabinet revealed that from 1956 to 1964, fixed-wing aircraft applied mixtures of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T to keep areas clear and brush-free. The same briefing revealed that in 1964, a spray application accident occurred: 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T were being applied by fixed-wing aircraft, and a temperature inversion and increasing soil temperature suspended the spray above the target species. Several hours later, the increased winds carried the spray to the upper Gagetown and Sheffield areas.

Now, the crown is on record as having paid \$250,000 in compensation for crop damages, and I would like to hear your comments regarding that particular issue. Earlier you were saying that spraying was very limited and very confined. When it's aerial spraying, obviously it can't be, but I wonder if you'd like to comment on that particular incident.

I'll be sharing my time with my colleague, by the way.

• (1025)

Ms. Karen Ellis: When I described the three days in 1966 and the four days in 1967, those were the tests with Agent Orange and Agent Purple that were very carefully controlled, done when there was low or no wind. So that was very specific, and I stand by what I said about how carefully those tests were handled.

You are referring, indeed, to a spraying accident in 1964, and my understanding is exactly as you recounted from the material. I certainly don't have any further comments, other than to say that obviously the crown realized there was an issue there. There was an accident, it's on the record, and they took action to pay compensation to the garden market owners whose crops were affected by that.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: The agents in question, Agent Orange and Agent Purple, are dioxins. Is that correct?

Ms. Karen Ellis: No. Just to explain, dioxins are produced when Agent Orange and Agent Purple are manufactured. Dioxins are something that happen in the manufacturing process. As I said earlier, we do not know the concentration of the dioxins in the Agent Purple and the Agent Orange used in those tests. That's something we are going to try to find out, but it depends on the manufacturer, the production run, whatever the concentrations were of the component parts. That's information that we don't have today.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: But 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T are components of Agent Orange?

Ms. Karen Ellis: They are components, but I can't tell you what the mix concentrations were, so I can't tell you what concentration of dioxin was produced in those particular batches. We don't have that information.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Okay, but the same kinds of agents are in both, which is the point I was trying to make about the spray.

I do have to share my time.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank my colleagues and Rick Casson, who is at the table, for allowing me to be here.

Mr. Chairman, Base Gagetown is shared by two members of Parliament, Andy Scott and me. Mr. Scott has the base proper, if you will, and Oromocto, and I take in probably 90% of the training area. I have a big interest in this, not only for the military but for the civilians involved.

I want to take exception to a lot of what Ms. Ellis had to say. I really can't believe how she downplays the impact, in her statement, of the use of Agent Orange.

Mr. Chairman, I want to point out that a strip four miles long by twelve hundred feet wide is a big area. That's going to take us into the next town and village, and in fact deep into the heart of Quebec across the river. That's a big area, and I don't think she should downplay it; the size of the area is significant.

Much of what we heard from Ms. Ellis and the government witnesses is not accurate in terms of the breakdown of those chemicals. It is just absolutely not correct. I'm using information that has been provided to me by Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk, senior vice-president of Hatfield Consultants, British Columbia, who has studied this subject for over ten years, as well as the U.S. military.

What he tells us, and other scientists will tell you, is that this is a toxic substance that lingers for decades after its use and application. What I'm reading in your briefing note, on page four of your report, is you're saying that the majority of Agent Orange sprayed in Gagetown "would have been absorbed by the forest canopy or would have broken down in sunlight, with very little reaching the ground". That is absolutely incorrect and would fly in the face of every scientist who's ever studied that toxic chemical. Why you would ever say and believe that is beyond my imagination.

On top of that, you talk about the U.S. military. In fact, on page five of your report you're suggesting that the Institute of Medicine in the United States has published information on this: "It maintains a list of illnesses for which there is sufficient or limited evidence for an association with Agent Orange. It has not found that Agent Orange exposure is the cause of any illnesses and the associations..." and you go on. You're disclaiming, and the fact is it's absolutely incorrect.

The U.S. Institute of Medicine has been studying Agent Orange, in fact on veterans, for years and releases a biannual report on its findings every year. So far the institute—and this is important, Mr. Chairman, for the committee to hear—has linked Agent Orange to chronic lymphocytic leukemia, a form of cancer; soft tissue sarcoma, a form of cancer; non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a form of cancer; Hodgkins disease, a form of cancer; and in addition, chloracne, and I don't understand that disease.

I'd like to know where you're getting your information. This information is absolutely not accurate. The facts of the matter are, as the members have indicated, the spraying pattern, four miles long by twelve hundred feet wide in areas inhabited by civilians; the water table, which my colleague has pointed out; the fact that this lingers in the ground for dozens of years, possibly hundreds of years. In fact, if you are doing your research you'll find out that in Vietnam, as a result of the spraying of this chemical it is being blamed for thousands of cancer and birth defects attributed to it in Vietnam today, simply because it's still lingering in the ground. When you talk about the chemicals that were sprayed, when you talk about a 50-gallon drum being sprayed, just remember it's diluted with hundreds of gallons of water, because it's that powerful.

In fact, in your briefing on page three, you're talking about a total of nine—

• (1030)

The Chair: Mr. Thompson, if I may....

Mr. Greg Thompson: Could I have permission, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You do have, sir, but if you do want a response, you have to understand that they need some time to respond as well.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I appreciate that.

In addition, on page three of your report you're talking about a total of nine herbicide products that were tested in 1966. You don't tell us which ones they were and how many gallons of those were used.

I'm being very critical of your report, as other members have been, and I can't believe you're dismissing the impact of this as lightly as you have.

I'll leave it there, Mr. Chairman, and see how Ms. Ellis responds to some of that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Maybe a statement or comment...I'll leave it to your discretion. But quickly, if you can, because it was shared time, and we're trying to be flexible for everybody.

Ms. Karen Ellis: My information has come from the Institute of Medicine, to which you refer, and from the CF Surgeon General, who supports those findings. The institute has made associative links, and I've stated that; I think we're saying the same thing on that point. But it's not a direct cause of illness. An association has been found, and as my colleague from Veterans Affairs has explained, there is a very generous approach to listening to and working through the applications of veterans who have concerns about those associations or the exposure.

Second, I'm not familiar with the work of the particular scientist you've quoted. I know there are probably many different scientists and doctors who've looked at the issue and they may have different opinions and findings, depending on the amount of product used, the concentrations. In terms of making a comparison of Vietnam and Gagetown, the amounts would have been exponentially greater in Vietnam. I simply can't comment on those particular findings; I'm not knowledgeable on that.

I do take this issue seriously. I am not trying to dismiss people's concerns. I simply want people to have factual and accurate information, and I am working very hard with my team and my colleagues to try to get as much of that as we can. Where there are unanswered questions—getting more precision on the breakdown of chemicals—we will follow up.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Ms. Ellis, but I want to say this to Mr. Thompson.

In all fairness, what I had here, sir, was Ms. Hinton, and you were also on the list in the next round. I didn't know you were going to share your time. So I will make you aware that you're on the list to come back. That sharing I think deprived you of more time, according to the list. So you will have the time coming back. In all fairness, I'll maintain you on the list for after.

We'll go to Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to all of you for being here today.

It's very difficult to try to establish what took place 40 years ago. Our retrospect-o-scopes are always accurate, and it's easy to apply what we know today to what happened in the past.

At the end of the day, the care of our veterans is the most important thing. I'm really happy and I want to thank you all very much for how quickly you've been seized with this issue, how rapidly you've moved on it. As has been voiced before, you're going to Gagetown very quickly this week to engage the population there. That's something I know they will appreciate, and I want to thank you all for doing that. I know all of us want to get to the bottom of this and establish whether or not there's a cause and effect.

At the end of the day, what we have to do, as you've said, is establish a link between exposure and an array of diseases that do tend to occur with increasing frequency with age, whether we're talking about chronic lymphocytic leukemia, as was mentioned before, or type two diabetes or an array of other malignancies and chronic diseases that have been listed here. All of those do occur with increasing frequency.

Teasing out and trying to separate those that are a result of exposure to a chemical 40 years ago is difficult. But at the end of the day I think it's worth while to know that linkage is a function of two issues. One is exposure; the other one is dose.

I just wanted to again emphasize the point of my colleague, Mr. Bagnell. Do we have any sense of how long it takes for these herbicides to become inert? That time course is extremely important. I think this was mentioned before. I think if we bored down into the U.S. studies, we'd get a sense of what the half-life is. That's very important. Things like the isotopes of uranium have half-lives of thousands of years and are terribly carcinogenic and mutagenic.

It's important for us and for the public to know what half-life we're talking about with respect to these agents. Do we have a sense of that at all?

• (1035)

Ms. Karen Ellis: As I mentioned, from the knowledge I have today I've shared what I think are the appropriate estimates. But I obviously have the team working to look at all those kinds of reports, because if there's any more precision or information on that, we're going to look for it and we'll share it when we have it. As I said, we will do some tests this summer to see what the situation is.

I absolutely acknowledge that it's very important to have accurate and fuller information on that point, and we are researching it right now.

Hon. Keith Martin: The other issue was on the exposure time. I just did a quick calculation. It was 0.03% of the entire area of the base, I think, over a period of seven days, two gallons. Contrast this with what was occurring in the United States, where it was a 10-year period over millions of acres, millions of gallons of exposure. These are entirely different issues. While it may be attractive to make linkages because of what we presume, it's important to bore down into the science and establish those linkages. I just wanted to know if we had any sense from the scientific research on the U.S. experience that you've been able to look at, in the short period of time you've had, as to what kind of a dose-response time limit we're talking about where we get into possible cause and effect.

I just want to correct my colleague from the other side. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in 2003 said that some evidence had emerged within the scientific community that exposure to herbicides

such as Agent Orange was associated with CLL. With respect to the other array of diseases he was mentioning, from chloracne to the lymphomas, respiratory cancers, prostate cancer, porphyria cutanea tarda, and an array of other diseases, there's a presumptive link, not an actual link.

I say that because it's important not to scare the public about this. Some of these diseases do occur as we get older. I think all of us here want to make sure that care and due diligence is there for our veterans, that they do receive the care they require when they need it. I think it's also important for us not to introduce an element of hysteria into the general public that might cause people to assume that because these elements were sprayed in a remote area near to where they live, they are going to somehow be at risk.

I hope when you discuss this in Gagetown that it is put into context, the dose, the time, the level of exposure. And if you can get from the U.S. a sense of what type of exposure they are assuming puts a person at risk, that would be helpful. I don't know if you have a sense of that.

Ms. Karen Ellis: I don't have that now, but it's clearly a priority for us as part of getting the kind of information we need to share. And we'll do our very best to find out as much as we can on that aspect.

• (1040)

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Desrochers, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our guests who have come today to talk about this important and sensitive issue.

From the outset, I would say that if a single service member or civilian has been affected by this spray, it is already one too many.

Mr. Guptill, I was startled earlier when you mentioned that the process was the same as it is for all veterans' files. I would like to point out that the processing of these applications has been going so well that, for some time now, we have periodically been hearing from people who are demanding the creation of the office of an ombudsman because of the delays and the length of the process.

How can you explain that, while these people are living with stress and anguish waiting for their situation to be resolved, the only solution that you have considered has been following the normally established process, as you pointed out to us today? Why have not you talked about giving special treatment to these people who discover, perhaps many years later, that they are sick because of a situation that dates back several years?

[English]

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I should clarify that I didn't mean to say that the process we're going through is going to be a lengthy one, or one that doesn't give the proper priority to these folks who are concerned about the exposures they may have had.

We have, in fact—and I mentioned this in my statement—set up a special review team to look at these issues on a priority basis, to review, in fact, the folks who have applied for disability pensions related to Agent Orange exposure in the past. In fact, we're going back to even before we started to keep track of these folks in the year 2000. We're going back to look at anyone who's applied with some of these conditions that might be indicative of exposure to Agent Orange or other types of sprays of this nature. So we're giving it a very high priority.

That being said, we do deal with a lot of disability pension applications. As you probably know from other times that we've appeared before this committee, the number of applications we currently have for disability pensions is at an all-time high. They are in the order of about 2,000 new applications for disability pensions a month.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: There are 2,000 in total, but how many of them deal with the case we are discussing today? Could you also tell us how long it takes to process an application?

[English]

Mr. Bryson Guptill: I think I mentioned in the statement that there are some 25 people who have applied due to exposure to Agent Orange, and that is in the past. However, there has been a substantial amount of interest in this issue in the last couple of weeks. We received about 350 new inquiries since this attention has been focused on the Agent Orange issue, and we received, in this last period, just in the last couple of weeks, 120 new applications for disability pensions.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Those are statistics.

[English]

Mr. Bryson Guptill: That is certainly a dramatic increase in the uptake of pension applications in a short time.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: You were talking about statistics. What I want to know is at what pace you are processing these applications. I do not want to know how many applications there are. I want to know if you are using a special process, how you are processing the applications, and how long it takes.

[English]

Mr. Bryson Guptill: We have set up, Mr. Chair, a special review team of experienced adjudicators who have knowledge in these sorts of exposure situations. This group of adjudicators is working out of Charlottetown on a priority basis, and we expect them to deal very rapidly with these applications. I can't give you an exact timeframe because it may take some time to track down the military records of some of these folks, but we'll be looking at them as quickly as we can and will give this issue the priority it deserves.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: May I use the rest of the time? Thank you.

I have a question for Ms. Ellis or Mr. Romses. You are in charge of evaluating what has happened in the case of service members as well as civilians employed by the Department of National Defence.

Who is in charge of the civilians who are located around the base and who might say that they have been affected by one of these conditions and that they attribute it to Agent Orange? Who will look after these people?

In the US, Congress has recognized that children of veterans with spina bifida are entitled to a pension so that they can be looked after. Who will look after the children of Canadian Forces members? In fact, many people are currently claiming that Agent Orange is responsible for their child's state of health. Perhaps you could answer that question.

• (1045)

Ms. Karen Ellis: To answer your first question, I will say that if people were civilian employees of the department at the base, the department that can help them and inform them as to the processing of their requests is the Department of Human Resources, which administers the act dealing with compensation for workers.

[English]

So essentially, the part that is Labour Canada runs this legislation, and it's worked together with the province.

Mr. Claude Bachand: But what about civilians who are around the base but who are not military people?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I thought you asked about people on the base who were employees.

Mr. Claude Bachand: No. Outside of the base, the civilians, the ordinary people—who takes charge of them if they have something to ask for, if they say they are victims of Agent Orange?

Ms. Karen Ellis: The only thing I can say about that is that as we go to Gagetown, the only step we can take as part of trying to find out about the testing periods I've described in those two years is.... If people can help us find out any additional facts, if they have any experience and would be able to tell us about it, if they were there at those dates and feel they were exposed to it, they can tell us that.

That is not a compensation-type process; it's not a vehicle for them to pursue their particular situation. We can only do fact-finding with civilians who were not employees on the base. There are avenues for them already.

Mr. Claude Bachand: And spina bifida?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I honestly don't know about the issue of spina bifida, sir. I'm sorry.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)): We have a half-hour bell going on here for a vote that's going to happen at a quarter after. We've made arrangements to keep the room longer than eleven o'clock, so we don't have to be out of here at eleven. We'll get as many questions in as we can.

Mr. Rota, and then Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for coming out.

The question I have is regarding the testing. You mentioned you were going to be doing some testing during the summer. I'm hearing conflicting reports about the life of Agent Orange, some of which say it goes on for 40 or 50 years or whatever, yet others say it dissipates within hours of being hit by sunlight. What exactly will you be testing for, and what is the purpose of the testing that will be going on this summer?

Ms. Karen Ellis: As I mentioned earlier, the testing this summer is essentially to look at soil and water samples of those actual test plots that were used in 1966 and 1967, to see if in fact there is any kind of residue of contamination from the Agent Orange or Agent Purple. It's really to try to confirm, I think, whether there should be any concern about residue there, again, four decades later.

Mr. Anthony Rota: So it's a preliminary test just to see if we have to go any further, then.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Yes, I believe that would be the way we would do it, to see if there's any further research required.

As to your other point, I would certainly agree with you. There are very much conflicting scientific kinds of opinions, and as I say, you can probably have different scientists who would have different views on the life of such products. Again, just to reinforce, it would depend on the dose, the concentration, and the length of time that these were used. There are obviously a huge number of variables that would affect that kind of breakdown period, so we would concentrate on the work we did in Gagetown for those two tests and try to do the best assessment we can, using scientific sources to help us make that assessment.

There may be information that I don't have with me right now, but my staff is working and we're going to do everything we can to provide the maximum we can on that point.

Mr. Anthony Rota: The other question I have is regarding the swath of land that was sprayed in 1967. I noticed that the range complex Enniskillen is nearby.

Maybe I'll direct this to Brigadier General Romses.

I'm looking at the range complex Enniskillen. Was that in place when the Agent Orange was sprayed in 1967?

• (1050)

BGen R.R. Romses: I'm not certain, to be honest with you. I'm going to quickly see if the base commander is aware of that answer.

The answer is that it was.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Then I'm going to ask a question that was brought up by Mr. O'Connor. Would you have a list of everyone who was taking part in any operations on that range?

It seems like it butts up against that range. Do you have a list and have you checked into all the attendees or anyone who was on that range at the time, or the day, or within a week?

Ms. Karen Ellis: I'd like to make a couple of points, and then I'd like General Romses to add anything he thinks is useful.

I think it's important to clarify that what I said was that in terms of people actually involved in the testing itself, on the three days in 1966 and the four days in 1967, we don't have the complete information. We have the names of 18 people. We're going to follow

up with them, and we're going to try to develop as complete a list as possible of who was actually involved in the testing. That's what I said about incomplete information.

The other point I made was that nominal rolls—and I will ask the general to comment on that, since I am not a military member—were not kept fully in the 1960s. I'll ask him to talk about what information would have been kept for records of military people training at Gagetown at the time. He would be the one who would know.

BGen R.R. Romses: Certainly, as was stated earlier, in those years every unit would have had nominal rolls. There's no question about that. There were nominal rolls at the time. The question is, are we now in possession of those nominal rolls?

We have a process today whereby, annually, units submit their records as part of an annual historical report, but that started only in the early 1970s. So from the 1970s on, we have all that sort of detail, but not necessarily for the 1960s.

I'm not saying that somewhere there may not be a list of names from this unit or that unit that somebody has or that is in a file somewhere. That may be, but we have to find that document.

We do know, as has been mentioned, the names of 18 people who were involved in the 1966 trial. We know the names of the units that were involved in the trial as well. So now what we have to do is dig down further to try to find out the names of the people who were in the unit at the time. That's all part of the research that is ongoing.

Mr. Anthony Rota: It's my understanding that the Government of New Brunswick, at some point, sprayed some large quantities of Agent Orange. Are you aware of that? Do you know when it happened, and do you know exactly where that spraying occurred?

Ms. Karen Ellis: We are aware that.... You mean the Government of New Brunswick?

Mr. Anthony Rota: This is my understanding—the provincial government. That's my understanding.

Ms. Karen Ellis: We are aware that the New Brunswick Power Corporation did some spraying. We're aware of that. I don't have details on where, but I know it's on the record.

Mr. Anthony Rota: You'll be looking into where it happened and what possible.... I know some of the reports suggest the wind, or wind patterns, could have affected it, or spraying in different locations. I'm wondering if that would have affected the study. I'm just wondering if you're aware of it and will be looking into it.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Well, I am aware that New Brunswick Power Corporation did some spraying. I know that much. I can't comment on the Government of New Brunswick. I simply don't know what they would have done, when or where, so I won't even try to comment on that.

Certainly, as part of fact-finding, I guess we can ask if there is any information on that. I don't know how much information we would get from that power company. They obviously are in the private sector. It is on the record that they did do some spraying.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Very good.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Again, I wouldn't know what batch they used or anything. I can't comment on the details of their situation.

Mr. Anthony Rota: They would likely have records you could ask for, or requisition.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Well, they might have records, but whether or not they share those records, I can't answer.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Okay. Very good.

The Chair: We're going to go to Mr. MacKenzie, only because we know in a little while we're going to have to go off to the chamber for a vote.

Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): One of our biggest concerns is the lack of information that has been shared by the government agencies with the public. As of perhaps today, we have one paragraph that can be found on a Veterans Affairs Canada website. Little or no other information is available to the public electronically. Is it still the same today?

• (1055)

Ms. Karen Ellis: Today we're here to give you as much information as we have, and we will be sharing that.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I understand that, but from the public's perspective, there's one paragraph on the Internet that gives it. Why haven't we put the information out there that we gleaned in 1981 to 1985?

Ms. Karen Ellis: That's a good question. We will be obviously pulling together everything we have into a public information package that we will be giving out on Thursday in Gagetown, and we will be getting that onto websites and information. We're working together with Veterans Affairs Canada, Labour Canada, and others, making sure people know where to get information and have it. As I said, as we fill in the picture and become more able to provide information, we will do so.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: We had that information there; we could have had it there five years ago. We might not be in this position today if we'd shared that information. We seem to have some culture of secrecy, when we should share the information.

BGen R.R. Romses: Sir, I agree with you. We seem to go through this every 20 years. The trials were in the sixties. That led to a great deal of speculation by the eighties. That led to the 1981 sessions, which led to the 1985 sessions. Now there's been a 20-year gap, and we're going through exactly the same thing. So I quite agree; we need to take action so we're not doing this 20 years from now.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: There is one other small area. In your briefing, you indicated we had some spraying in 1966 and 1967. A document has been released indicating we sprayed only in 1966, with 2.5 barrels of Agent Orange. In fact, you're saying it occurred over a two-year period.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Yes, as I've described it. As I just laid out in my remarks, which you have a copy of, those are the accurate records

and facts that we have over the two-year period, and the amounts. I've tried to be as careful with my estimates as I can.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay. Now, we also have some documents that indicate we were spraying chemicals at least as early as 1956. They were 2,4-D and 2,4,5T, and the 2,4,5T is reported to be the main source of dioxin, which is very toxic. Have we looked at those issues with respect to health issues for personnel around Gagetown?

Ms. Karen Ellis: You're asking about the longer-term program. I'll let the general....

BGen R.R. Romses: I'll comment about our herbicide program, which has really been in place since the 1950s, and first of all I'll give you some background. We've used herbicides there since the 1950s in order to reduce brush in the training area. That helps reduce the risk of forest fires and it keeps our manoeuvre areas open.

We originally used soldiers for that process—I'm just trying to give you the reason, what led us to herbicides—to keep the brush control going, and they physically cleared things with axes and machetes. Obviously, that took an awful lot of man-hours and was very inefficient. We also used machine cutting, but that was very expensive and it left stubble, which ultimately ended up injuring soldiers; it also destroyed the ground cover and caused erosion. That's what led folks in the fifties to see if herbicides could be used as an effective brush control.

I would state that the herbicides they used back then, of course, were commercial herbicides. They were used not just in Gagetown, but they were used by the general public in their day-to-day lives across Canada, and they were used by companies across this country. That's the setting in which herbicides were used.

I would also make the statement that even today at Gagetown we have a herbicide program. We continue to use it to control vegetation as part of a fire prevention plan but specifically in our impact areas and for firebreaks. The reason for that, of course, is that those are demolition areas and we don't want to injure people by cutting in those areas, and it's the most effective way to do it. But of the whole training area, which is 110,000 hectares, we do that annually in about 455 hectares to 500 hectares, so a very small portion of the training area is used.

I have a staff of eight environmental officers who are monitoring the environment in the Gagetown training area, and we end up doing it under the direction and inspection of certified independent monitors, so it's a very controlled process today.

• (1100)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I have a small question. We've heard complaints from people who have filed their disability forms and have been told that if they don't get them back in 30 days, the file is closed. Is that an accurate assessment?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: No, it's not. They have a period of three months in which to provide additional information, and if there's a delay in getting records from the military, there is no timeframe. The process we have in terms of what we call the delayed application process is.... What we were finding was that people would put in an application in anticipation of a long delay, maybe years and years before they actually were prepared to provide the background information; they did that simply to establish an effective date. So we established a process around that that said if you apply for a disability pension, you have to provide the information we want at that stage or within three months after that.

The Chair: I know we have about four minutes to go to the chamber for votes, and I know I have two more. Ms. Gallant and Mr. Thompson, we do have a vote, and what I will do, with your agreement, is suspend this meeting if you so wish. We can return immediately after the vote, but it's your privilege simply because you're on the list, Ms. Gallant and Mr. Thompson, who is sharing time. But we do have to get out of here, because we have about three and a half minutes to get to the chamber.

Hon. Keith Martin: This was supposed to go to 11 o'clock, and I think many of us have commitments—

Mr. Greg Thompson: Well, Mr. Chairman, can't we just put the question and then see where we go—

The Chair: Why don't we quickly put the question? I don't know if there's time for a response—

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Chairman, there's a point I want to make here. I'm going back to Ms. Ellis's report, on page 5, where she's dismissing the connection between Agent Orange and cancer and related diseases. But that doesn't square with the department's decision to award Commanding Officer Gordon Sellar a compensation package as a direct result of his association with Agent Orange, and there's no secret that this is out there. He was awarded that and there is a direct link, so how can you possibly square the fact that you're dismissing this with awarding him a pension and compensation based on that association, an established link with Agent Orange?

The Chair: Mr. Thompson, we're not here to discuss a specific individual case. With all due respect, it's a private matter, which I think you're more than entitled to take up with the Department of Veterans Affairs specifically. I'm sure they would be more than happy to accommodate you.

Ms. Gallant, I know that you've been deprived of your time. I apologize. Do you want to close with something? I'm more than prepared to bring it back.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay. I have a couple of quick things.

At the time of this spraying, children and spouses recall distinctly making contact with this. They were warned to stay inside, but even so, the children would go out and pick mulberries, etc., off the bushes. They don't remember the date, but they remember the fact that U.S. trucks were at the motel with these barrels. The coincidence leads us to believe that they were potentially exposed, but you have a qualified statement saying that civilians outside the base did not come into contact with Agent Orange. What recourse do the spouses and children have if they indeed have been exposed to this as well?

The Chair: Very quickly.

Ms. Karen Ellis: I think that's a very good point and question. I would actually have to go back and talk to Vice-Admiral Jarvis, who runs our HR personnel for the military side, to ask that question, Madam. I don't know the answer. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There is a measurable test, but only a few labs throughout the world conduct these blood analyses and the testing of the adipose tissue in which the dioxins build up. Are the veterans required to pay the \$1,500 to \$2,000 out of their pockets to specifically determine whether or not these agents are in their systems?

Mr. Bryson Guptill: No, there wouldn't be any requirement to determine there's an agent of that nature in your system to in fact get a disability award. Our process is totally on whether you are disabled as a result of this exposure. There's no health testing required to determine dioxin levels. That's not part of the process.

• (1105)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The committee would appreciate a list of the other herbicides that were employed.

Ms. Karen Ellis: We have that, I believe, and we can provide it.

The Chair: In closing, let me then thank you for being here. Let me say that, on my part, this ongoing fact-finding mission is very much appreciated. But more importantly, the way that you're reaching out by being in Gagetown on Thursday I think shows a very proactive approach towards this issue.

Thank you for this information session. It was really geared to give us an update or a briefing so that we can respond to our constituents, specifically in Mr. Thompson's and Mr. Scott's areas.

Ms. Karen Ellis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We have to run off to the vote.

We're adjourned.

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