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Chair

Mr. David Sweet

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• (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Bonjour à tous. Welcome to our 28th meeting. I'm observing this morning that it's a little bit like a newsroom. I don't know if you've been in a newsroom, but it's all chaos, and then it's five, four, three, and when they get to one, it's all organized. It seemed to be that way just a minute before our committee meeting too, and now it looks so professional.

We're greatly pleased to have the Historica-Dominion Institute with us. We had Mr. Diamond and Mr. Chalifoux here about six months ago. Since then, there's been a grand merger. I know the committee would be willing to hear about any of the good work that you do, but one of the things I should point out from our conversation is that there is clearly some interest in what this merger means for your activities—how it might enhance them, change them, or maybe even give them a different focus. If you want to highlight that, it would be fantastic.

Mr. Cohen, you said you had some opening remarks. I'm not certain how many others do. But I will leave you to go ahead at your own pace and begin, and then we'll go to the regular round of questioning.

Mr. Andrew Cohen (President, Historica-Dominion Institute): Thank you very much, Mr. Sweet.

We're here together. All of us will make just a few brief opening remarks, and then we'll be in your hands for questions, which we'll be delighted to take.

I'm Andrew Cohen. I'm president of the Historica-Dominion Institute. With me is Linda Brunet, who is managing director with Encounters With Canada; Marc Chalifoux, our executive vice-president; and Jeremy Diamond, who runs our national office.

I'll talk just briefly about who we are. We're here today largely to talk to you about what we do with veterans and in military history. Our background is very brief. We were, at one point, the Dominion Institute, which was founded in 1997 by three young men, including the Honourable Michael Chong, who now sits in the Conservative caucus, Rudyard Griffiths, and Erik Penz, and the Historica Foundation, which was founded in 1999 largely with the support of Charles Bronfman, formerly of Montreal, now of New York.

On September 1, after a long and interesting courtship that went on for, depending on how you count it, one, two, three, or four years.... It was not a marriage in which either party rushed into the arms of the other. Both decided in May, but on September 1 the Historica Foundation and the Dominion Institute merged. The reason that these two bodies came together...and when I say came together, I mean that the organizations were of different age, experience, and culture doing different but complementary things in the realm of history, citizenship, and democracy. At our core, as we went about reimagining ourselves and now go into the new world in which we are not two voices but one, our mandate, our mission, is indeed history, identity, memory, and democracy.

That is what we do. I'll soon pass the mantle to others who will talk about what we do specifically in these fields. We are about a \$10-million organization. We run programs across the country. We have offices in Ottawa, Toronto, and Edmonton. We publish the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, which has between four million and six million hits a year. Linda Brunet will tell you about Encounters With Canada, the country's largest youth forum. We run a project called stories of the Second World War, and the memory project, which Marc and Jeremy will talk to you about, and we do the battlefields.

We have a number of elements in what we do, but at our core is a deep feeling that Canadians don't know enough about their past and they don't know enough about their citizenship. Our mission, our *raison d'être*, is to increase awareness on both those counts, to promote the idea of an active, engaged citizenry that knows its past and feels comfortable with it. I guess it would be fashionable to say you're all about the future in your organization, but in a sense we're all about the past. We like to think we're about the future of the past.

With that, I'll hand this over to Marc Chalifoux, who will give you a little more detail about what we do.

• (0905)

Mr. Marc Chalifoux (Executive Vice-President, Historica-Dominion Institute): We're here today to talk about the merger of the Historica Foundation and the Dominion Institute.

I will start off by saying that mergers are extremely rare in the charitable sector in Canada. What we've accomplished between these two organizations actually happens very seldom and is the exception rather than the rule.

The reasons for our merger, as Mr. Cohen indicated, were several months and several years in the making. We were two organizations that operated in a similar space, so there were obvious synergies between our programs—and we'll get back to those. We are also an advocacy organization, advocating for a better understanding and a better appreciation of Canadian history and Canadian citizenship, so the possibility of creating Canada's largest organization devoted to those themes was of great interest to us. And we are not-for-profit organizations. We do not have shareholders, so any reduction in overhead and administration costs that we can realize as a result of this merger is reinvested in our programming. Those would be the main reasons we merged.

I was talking about synergies between our programs. I think there is no area where this is more evident than as it relates to military history and programming related to veterans. From my colleagues Jeremy and Linda you'll be hearing about almost a dozen programs that target different audiences: students, teachers, veterans, and the general public.

The programs take place in different settings: in classrooms across the country, in Ottawa, and on the battlefields of Europe. They take place across different media, such as first-person accounts in classrooms, storytelling over the Internet, on the big screen and on the small screen, and with programs that run anywhere from a 60-second commercial to a one-week Encounters with Canada experience.

Jeremy.

Mr. Jeremy Diamond (Managing Director, National Office, Historica-Dominion Institute): Once again, thanks for having us here today. It's great to be here.

I'm going to give you a brief overview of some of the core veteran initiatives that we work on daily at the Historica-Dominion Institute. First and foremost is the Memory Project Speakers' Bureau, a program that started in 2001 with about a dozen veterans in Toronto. Over the last eight years, it has grown to about 1,500 veterans who share their experiences with young people in classrooms across the country every year. This fall, we are excited to celebrate the one millionth student that's been reached by the memory project, an amazing milestone for the project and its humble beginnings in 2001.

In this project, we engage everyone from veterans from the Second World War right up to returning soldiers from Afghanistan and everything in-between. Recently we've become the official speakers' bureau of the Royal Canadian Legion, so we have a great relationship with legion branches and Dominion Command as well.

The program has been funded over the years by Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage, and recently we've had some excellent, high-profile events with Prime Minister Harper and Minister Thompson, and with some of you on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs earlier this year.

Our newest large veterans project is called the Memory Project: Stories of the Second World War. It's a really exciting initiative in which we are going to be going out across the country over the next 18 months and recording the stories and digitizing and scanning the artifacts and memorabilia of thousands of World War II veterans.

We're going to be creating an archive that will become the definitive account of the Second World War based on the memories and experiences of those who were there.

We all recognize the urgency of the situation with our veterans, who are now about 87 or 88 years old. The next couple of years is going to be key in making sure we create that necessary legacy for our young people. We're going to focus on commemorative anniversaries, such as the 65th anniversary of D-Day, just past, through next year's 65th anniversary of the end of the war and the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Generous funding has come from the Department of Canadian Heritage for this project. As I was saying, it will run until March 2011, when we expect to have thousands of profiles up on the website. We've already started that process.

The Canadian Battlefields Study Tour flips our approach to veterans on its head a little bit. Instead of reaching out to students, we reach out to teachers and encourage them to travel to the battlefields of Europe to learn a little more about what the experience was like for soldiers during the Second World War and the First World War. They go to Belgium and France and come back with that knowledge and experience in order to then speak to their students and incorporate this into their curricula and lesson plans.

This is an incredible opportunity for teachers. Military historians such as Terry Copp and Blake Seward run these battlefield tours every year. They tour for 11 days across Europe. This is funded by Veterans Affairs Canada, again, and the Canadian Battlefields Foundation. It's a great opportunity for teachers to inform the kids with intimate knowledge of what it's like to visit those battlefields.

The two final programs that we run are local and focus on the Ontario area. One is called the Ontario Veteran Community Archive, which is funded through the Trillium Foundation. This is an opportunity for us to reach out to the communities and ask if they have stories of veterans who are their friends and family members. Instead of having us travel out there to record those stories, we encourage them to visit a user-friendly website, record the stories on their own, digitize and scan some of their medals, letters, and photos, and then upload them to the website. We're going to create a map of Ontario showing the breadth of the stories we'll be able to capture. The website is online now, and we're hoping and expecting to have hundreds of profiles up by next summer.

Finally, Veteran Appreciation Day is something the institute has worked on since 2006. It's a local initiative. We've visited 21 communities since 2006. We've worked with the mayors, MPs, and MPPs in those communities to proclaim the date as Veteran Appreciation Day. The key to this program is to do it outside of Remembrance Day and thereby have an opportunity to celebrate not only the service and sacrifice of our veterans, but also the contribution they continue to make in the community.

Your chair, Mr. Sweet, was kind enough to attend one of our events a couple of weeks ago in Hamilton. It's a really exciting opportunity to gather together the whole community, shake the hand of a veteran, and thank them for what they've done and for what they continue to do in the community.

● (0910)

[Translation]

Mrs. Linda Brunet (Director General, Encounters with Canada, Historica-Dominion Institute): Good morning.

I am very proud to introduce you to Encounters Canada, which is the largest youth forum in Canada.

[English]

It was created in 1982 and was acquired by Historica in 2006.

[Translation]

Our program lasts 26 weeks per year. We run the program like a school. Our program coincides with school calendars, from September to November, then from January to May. I spoke with several of you earlier, about young people who visit you. Every week, youths participate in Encounters with Canada. They phone their members of Parliament and ask to meet with them.

[English]

I'm very proud that our kids call most of you and ask to meet with you, because they come from your ridings. Every week we have a mini-Canada representation, so every week we're fortunate enough to have kids invited to come to Parliament, and some of you have come to our office to meet the kids and have lunch with them. I thank you for that.

We're very honoured to have three themes that are sponsored.

One is the Vimy Foundation, which is sponsored by the TD Bank. It is a brand new theme for us that we will have from April 4 to April 10, 2010. It's called "Canada's Coming of Age". The Vimy Foundation was created in 2006 to raise awareness of the importance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge to Canada's coming of age. The foundation initiatives include sharing the remarkable story of Vimy with youth through the establishment of the prestigious Vimy Prize scholarship for high school students. We already have over 130 kids who have asked to participate in that week. It's in April, so already it's a week that is very well sold throughout Canada.

We also have Canada Remembers week. Since 2002 we have partnered with Veterans Affairs and this week is funded by them. This year it's from November 8 to November 14. I have to admit that this is the week that is the most emotional at the centre. The kids who come for this week are the kids who want to be part of remembrance. We have 138 beds, and already 141 kids have applied. I don't know how I'm going to do this one, but we'll have cots there. It just goes to show how important this week is to the kids of Canada.

The Canada Remembers program of Veterans Affairs welcomes youth to learn more about the sacrifices and achievements of Canada's veterans as well as those who died during service and those on the home front who supported their efforts. Youth are encouraged

to become involved in remembrance activities that will help to preserve the legacy for future generations of Canadians.

One way in which the program does this is by providing a variety of learning resources and projects that are designed to support learning activities linked to Canada's military history. The program focuses on a core group of activities, which include developing innovative learning materials, providing commemorative information to the general public, research, and providing and presenting learning opportunities for youth and educators.

The program targets Canadian youth as its primary audience and stresses a quality of excellence in all its activities. In carrying out the effort, the department often partners with Canadian educators, veterans' organizations, community groups, and other interested parties from across the country in the development and delivery of learning resources and projects that may be used in a variety of learning environments.

We also have the peace module. The peace module is done every week for an hour and a half. Major Wayne MacCulloch comes to the Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre to make a multimedia presentation to Encounters with Canada participants. Afterward they go to the Beechwood Cemetery, where they have a candlelight ceremony and they pass the torch to one another. This is very moving for the kids.

To have 138 kids who are from 14 to 17 years old at the centre makes for a very active centre, but when they come back from this candlelight ceremony at Beechwood Cemetery, you can hear a pin drop in the centre. Not a word is said. We give them time to reflect afterward because that's how moving it is for them to be doing this.

These are the three programs relating to Veterans Affairs and the Vimy Foundation that we present to the kids every year.

Thank you.

● (0915)

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: The institute also has a media production program. We develop learning tools and learning resources for teachers.

[Translation]

We are responsible for the Canadian Encyclopedia, which contains over 40,000 bilingual articles, all available online, dealing with all aspects of Canadian history and society, including military history. It is a free resource that is subsidized by the Department of Canadian Heritage, which is provided free of charge to classrooms, teachers, and the public at large.

The Heritage Minutes is probably the most well-known program that is run by the Historica-Dominion Institute. The last time the Heritage Minutes were produced was in 2005. The 2005 Military Minutes were made possible through the support of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to mark the Year of the Veteran.

[English]

The Historica-Dominion Institute also produces learning tools. In your handout kits, you have our most recent learning tools, which are Korean War education kits. They're based on newspaper articles from the day and they ask students to really interact with Canada's past as it was told during the day. The institute was also involved with the *Passchendaele* film and helping students, through an education guide and a writing contest, to learn more about Canada's First World War history.

Andrew.

Mr. Andrew Cohen: Just in conclusion, as we look to the future, we'll continue to look for ways to run our programs better, for synergies. We'll continue to improve existing programs.

We look for new projects. One of our big challenges is using the new tools of social media to reach young people. Young people are very important to what we do, not just in terms of military education, but also voter education. We're very interested, wearing our democracy hat, in the turnout among young people in voting. Their voting turnout, of course, is dropping; it's less than the national average, and it's one of those things we hope to address.

We lead advocacy campaigns related to history and citizenship and to anniversaries. We're very big on anniversaries. We think Canadians should remember. As we all know, there's a very big anniversary coming up next April and May—the 65th anniversary of the end of the war. We will be working in particular with the Dutch embassy here in Ottawa and the government of The Netherlands in celebrating and observing the liberation of Holland by Canadian Forces in 1945.

We'll also be looking beyond that. We'll be looking at the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy, which takes place next year. Also, the War of 1812, for those of you who are interested, will be one of our newer projects. That 200th anniversary is coming up in 2012.

So that is the future. We thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and we're now open to questions.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll be interacting with you quite a bit on the Battle of Stoney Creek of 1812, as well as the HMCS *Haida* in Hamilton. I look forward to that.

Now we'll go to the Liberal Party and Mr. Oliphant for seven minutes.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you. Congratulations on your marriage. I think it's a wonderful set of possibilities and a synergy that can bring together two very interesting and dynamic groups.

I have about 23 questions, but I'm going to try to limit them.

All congratulations to you. I've read your stuff and everything is good. I'm wondering what the blocks are to furthering your work. The blocks could be a couple of things. They could be resources or

they could be attitudinal and cultural. I'm just sort of wondering where your direction needs to go as you develop your new mandate as a merged organization.

What is it that you need to tackle and, then, how we can help you?

Mr. Andrew Cohen: Well, I think we wouldn't exist if we lived in a country in which everybody knew everything there was to know about this country and its past. We would not have a reason for being here. We would not have a *raison d'être*.

An hon. member: Neither would they.

Mr. Andrew Cohen: Maybe neither...?

An hon. member: Just kidding.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andrew Cohen: I keep thinking of Sisyphus, the poor guy in classical Greece who was always pushing the rock up the hill, and it was always rolling back on him. We consider our challenge to be pushing that rock up the hill. We consider it our mission to do what we can to inform and educate Canadians and make them aware of what is a rich and distinctive past.

But that is the challenge, and it is a challenge in a country in which many of our provinces don't teach history. Or, if they do teach history, they don't teach it in a way that really reaches kids. It's social studies or some variation of that; it may not indeed be history. There is a report card that the Dominion Institute published in its life and we will continue to do that. So there is that attitude of living in a society in which what you're saying may be falling on deaf ears. You hope that's not so, but that's the challenge.

Then, of course, there are resources. We're not unrealistic. We know that we're not an essential service in life. We are not the police. We are not the fire service. We're not as sexy, perhaps, as some causes. We're not about cancer. We are history and we are awareness and we hope we can make that case to our very generous donors in the private sector and, of course, the government, which accounts for much of what we do. But that is always a challenge.

Those two things, as we go forward, are what we're conscious of all the time.

Marc may want to add a comment.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: I think the point is correct. When you look at the high school level in Canada, you see that only four provinces in Canada require a mandatory course in Canadian history. In every other province and territory you have a course in social studies, which would be your mandatory subject, and really, let's face it, that's a mishmash of a bit of history, a bit of geography, a bit of civics, a bit of economics, and a bit of philosophy, all of which are very good things, but the historical narrative gets lost.

Our work is really to complement and to provide learning tools, learning resources, and learning programs that allow teachers to make the teaching of Canadian history interesting and relevant and really make it come out of the textbook. That would be one challenge.

As for what this committee can do about the teaching of history across the country, that really is a provincial jurisdiction, so it's a constant struggle. That's where our advocacy role comes in and plays a large role.

The other thing I would say is that we live beside a country that is very good at telling its own story and talking about its history and its past. In Canada, we've generally been too timid and too shy to do so. That's where our media program and our production of resources come in, for everything from heritage minutes to the *Canadian Encyclopedia* and the kind of survey research we do. It really comes in and fills a void, in a sense, or what is too close to a void, in regard to Canadians telling their own stories.

● (0925)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: That's good.

I wanted to ask the tough question first. Now I have a couple of little questions. On veteran appreciation days, I've been through the package. I went through it last week and I've given it to my staff for them to organize a day. It is very much geared at small media market areas, smaller communities, and communities traditionally held by my Conservative opponents.

It's very difficult for me to plan that day in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, or even Halifax, so we're planning a cenotaph day, probably focusing on Sunnybrook. Is there any possibility that you can help us on that issue with the larger cities where we have three million people? I come from Sault Ste. Marie, with its 70,000 people, where it's much easier to do that. How do we do this?

Mr. Jeremy Diamond: Yes. We've done one in Sault Ste. Marie before now. I think the concept works best with the smaller or mid-sized communities. This past summer, we tried to target communities that would act as hubs. So we'd bring together surrounding communities from London or around Hamilton or around Windsor and incorporate them into the planning of the event. We'd have them go back with some of those details and some of that knowledge and then plan it in their own communities.

It's a bit tougher in some of the larger communities. There are, let's say, a lot more levels of approvals. There's a lot more planning involved. A lot of the larger cities do large Remembrance Day ceremonies and may not see this as an opportunity.

I think that trying to carve out a little space for what's different about this event may be a way of going about it. These events are in the summer and, in a way, it's very easy to get people together outside a cenotaph attached to a local Legion branch and have the reception there. We've already had about five communities that have been to an existing Veteran Appreciation Day over the summer come to us in the last couple of weeks and say they're now holding them in their communities. I think it works best in the smaller to mid-sized communities, but I don't think it's impossible for the larger ones.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Well, I'm offering myself as a model for Metro Toronto—

Mr. Jeremy Diamond: Great.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: —so we can do that.

Mr. Jeremy Diamond: Thanks.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I have one other little question. All of our military activity—maybe not in 1812—has been in international partnerships, with allies, NATO, or the UN. Are you developing international partnerships? Can we be of help on that? I understand the liberation of Holland, but I'm talking about something different. I'm talking about that basic concept of global citizenship, global activity, and how we foster that activity in Canada in a larger way without diminishing Canada's role.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: The Canadian Forces, particularly as exemplified by our veterans, has really been one of the key instruments through which Canada's role in the world has been exercised. It's really shaped Canada's place in the world.

In the classroom, that is something we really try to bring out. Particularly in social studies classes, that is one of the approaches through which teachers teach and use the Memory Project Speakers' Bureau, for example, particularly when it comes to post-Korean War veterans, so there are peacekeeping veterans, veterans from the Canadian Forces.

Could we build better ties with international organizations and international bodies? Yes. Most of our work has been particularly within Canada. We have excellent ties with some of the embassies, but it's a pan-Canadian program and our largest partner would be, other than Veterans Affairs and the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Royal Canadian Legion. It's an untapped opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Oliphant. That's the expiration of your time.

On Mr. Oliphant's point, it wasn't a veteran appreciation event but a memory project event that happened in Ottawa. Ottawa isn't as big as Metro Toronto, but I thought the event, just off Elgin at the Legion there, was well attended and served as a pretty good model for a big city.

Monsieur Gaudet, you have seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You may find my question to be boring, but I will ask it nonetheless. How many people is the Historica-Dominion Institute able to reach out to? How many people do you believe are aware of your existence?

I will be frank with you. Before your presentation before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I was not at all familiar with your organization. You're going to have to find a way to make sure people know about you. Veterans don't really use the Internet. They never have and they never will. How do we reach out to young people? This causes a problem for me. I'm not saying that your program isn't good, it is most certainly a good program. But it can't be considered a good program only by employees of the institute and the Memory Project. It must be a program for all Canadians.

● (0930)

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: First and foremost, we are a public education organization. If we are unsuccessful in reaching out to a larger audience, we would be failing our mandate. So you're entirely right.

Our organization is only six weeks old, but our merging organizations and programs are 12 years old. Our programs are better known than our organizations. It speaks to the very nature of what we do. Every week, approximately 130 young people participate in Encounters Canada. Since 1982, 80,000 young people have taken part in the program. More than 3,000 youths participate each year. The Memory Project reaches out to approximately 175,000 students in their classrooms each year. This year, we will be breaking the one million mark, and will have reached out to over a million young people. Since 2001, one million young people have been visited, in their classroom, by a veteran. Without the program, those visits would never have taken place. The Heritage Minutes were broadcast for more than 10 years, and reached out to millions and millions of Canadians. The work that we carry out on public opinion research is published in newspapers, broadcast on television, and reaches out to several million television viewers and readers.

Do we get the recognition in return? That's our challenge. Nonetheless, the array of our programs reaches out to thousands of Canadians; some of them reach out to millions of Canadians throughout the country, in each province and territory. Therefore, you are right; but our work does reach out to a broad audience.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I understand, but I don't want to see this project collapse. Personally, I think it is a good thing, but people must be aware of its existence. I don't know if you have forgotten about the legions. There are legions in almost all of the ridings; sometimes there are even two or three in each riding. Perhaps it would be a good thing for legion members to lead or teach these programs.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: Our contacts with the legions, be it at the national, provincial or community levels, are excellent. They comprise an essential tool that allows us to carry out our work. Encounters Canada works in close collaboration with the Royal Canadian Legion, as well as with the Memory Project. The history project on the Second World War would not allow us to reach out to the thousands of veterans were it not for the network of legions. They are an essential partner, and an essential institution.

Another sector of the public that I did not talk about, that plays an extremely significant role in the work that we do is that of history professors, social science and humanities teachers. It's a very difficult segment of the public to measure. We work with thousands of teachers every year. It is through them that our educational programs are given. If we reach out to one teacher, we reach out to five or six classrooms, which translates into hundreds of students. That is another approach in our work.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I agree with you.

I would like to know if you have a vision. There is the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War and the Gulf War. Right now, we are in Afghanistan. Is that included in your program? If we wait 40 years before talking about the Gulf War, everyone will have forgotten.

I thank the veterans, because I've had many opportunities to attend Remembrance ceremonies in France and in Belgium. Those people know their history. We can see that they are attached to it. Here, we talk about the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War for a period of one week on the French CBC's

information network, RDI; but after the 11th of November, everything is over, and forgotten for at least a year, there isn't any follow-up.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: No. The very essence of our work is to transmit the flame of remembrance, to keep alive the memory of the sacrifice made by veterans, and not just for one day or one week out of the year. The Veterans' Appreciation Day program does exactly that. We dedicate an additional day, at another time during the year, to recognize and celebrate the contribution of our veterans.

I think we can do a better job, as a country. A huge portion of our work serves to reinforce exactly what you were talking about.

With respect to other conflicts, the memory project relies upon speakers who are veterans of the Second World War, as well as soldiers who have just returned from Afghanistan only a few weeks ago.

● (0935)

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Even our peace missions are part of our heritage.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: Absolutely. It is a huge part of our military history in Canada, and a huge part of Canada's role in the world. We are always seeking out educational tools to facilitate this teaching. We have noted over the years that the tools on the Korean War were underused by teachers. Often, we only talk about the First and Second World Wars. There is some brief talk on the Cold War, but as far as the Korean War is concerned, it gets maybe half a lesson. This is exactly why we have developed a newspaper that we have distributed to you. It is one way to help teachers in their teaching of the Korean War and to help make those explanations more accessible.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Thank you.

My colleague has a brief question to ask you.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): With respect to the educational tools that you have developed, are schools relatively open to material on military history? How have schools reacted?

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: Our trademark, our name, carries a certain level of credibility, and legitimacy. Therefore, we are specifically recognized for issues related to military history, and as an organization that provides reliable and quality products.

We do not deal with provincial departments of education nor with school boards. We work directly with teachers or with schools. Upon development of educational tools to help deliver the Memory Project, as an example, the number of e-mails received in our inbox requesting these tools kept on growing. It is therefore a sign that our tools are being used in classrooms. Everything is developed so as to be easily reproduced, reprinted, and photocopied by teachers. Things must be developed in the most straightforward way possible, and follow the curriculum to the furthest extent possible. Teachers have a lot of material to teach students. Therefore, what is given to them must be directly related to what they are teaching, or at least provide a parallel track to their curriculum.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen.

Now we'll go on to Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all very much for coming here today. I wish you good luck on your amalgamation.

First, I want to thank you personally for the great job you did in honouring the Speaker last night. I thought that was a wonderful thing to do. It was a great reception, and Mr. Milliken, regardless of the political affiliation he's attached to, is a great Speaker. It's really wonderful that you recognized his longevity and his duration in that very difficult job. Congratulations on that.

Also, I see my friend, Norman Crew, in your picture. I really appreciate that. That's the Battle of the Atlantic ceremony. He's a merchant mariner. I appreciate this and I'll let him know it's there.

As well, in your encounters with the children you do a great job, because they contact us every month looking for money to get up here. I'm sure that all of you get this as well.

My next comment is more of an observation than a criticism. I mentioned this to Veterans Affairs as well. In your documentation here, I don't see anything on the Boer War and the South African conflict. It is not on purpose, but it just seems that we've forgotten all about that one. This was the war that gave us the direction and the ability to fight World War I, because of all the lessons learned from it. Unfortunately, we seem to just forget about it. I don't mean that as a criticism. It is something you might wish to look at in the future.

The other one, of course, as you know with regard to the Dominion Institute, is that a few years ago a motion was passed in the House to recognize the passing of the last person from World War I. Mr. Babcock is 109 now, but hopefully he'll live for many years from now. But if and when he passes away, the government has indicated that a significant commemoration—not necessarily a ceremony—will take place. The Dominion Institute of that time was part of this.

With the two of you joining now, can you please elaborate to the committee on what your plans are to work with the government in terms of commemorating not just Mr. Babcock, but all those men and women who served on the home front and overseas during that terrific battle of that time?

• (0940)

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: That was a 2006 campaign of the Dominion Institute. That would probably be a perfect example of the kind of advocacy work that we take on. We developed an online petition and a media campaign asking the government to offer a state funeral to the last World War I veteran when he passes away.

We had the opportunity, Jeremy and I, to meet Mr. Babcock last January. He's an amazing man. Over 90,000 people signed the petition in five days and then the House of Commons adopted its motion.

We will be front and centre whenever that sad day comes. It will be an event of national significance, I think, not particularly for Mr. Babcock but for what he represents for the thousands of Canadian soldiers who passed away before him, and for the importance and the impact that the First World War had on Canada and how it really shaped Canada. I think there will be what you would call a teachable

moment there, in a sense, and an opportunity, and I hope that we will as a country take the moment to reflect, to commemorate, and to remember, whenever that sad day comes, what Canada's role in the First World War was.

The stories of the Second World War project that we're doing at the moment, which is a project to record the oral history of Second World War veterans, is part of the lessons learned from the First World War. As a country, we waited too long to record the stories, to capture the memories, and to create a legacy of the First World War, and now that moment has passed us by.

We can't let that happen again. This is something that the Historica-Dominion Institute feels very strongly about. There is an opportunity now. Our veterans of the Second World War are 87 years old, on average, and the time to do it is now. Otherwise, we will find in 15 or 20 years that it is largely too late.

Mr. Andrew Cohen: Something you may want to know, Mr. Stoffer, although we haven't formally come out and said anything yet, is that we feel strongly that November 11 should have a greater stature in the Canadian consciousness. When I was a child, at 11 o'clock on November 11 we stopped. Everything stopped in school. Growing up in Montreal, I remember that even in supermarkets a siren went off. Everything stopped in Canada, the way it does in the State of Israel today on their memorial day.

We have thought about pushing the idea that we return to that and that at 11 a.m. on that day we stop for one minute. We are hoping to push that out in the next month. I think it will have the support of many Canadians and, we hope, your support.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: My last question for you is on Canada's recent history, on our Mac-Paps who served in the Spanish Civil War, on the nine men who were killed in August 1974 in Syria in the plane crash, and also on the Medak Pocket guys in Bosnia.

I was speaking to the modern-day veterans and they're very pleased that the Second World War and Korea are getting all this recognition, but our modern-day veterans, because the history is not that old, seem sometimes in the shadows a bit, not necessarily left out, but in the shadows. Are there any thoughts to moving them forward, to bringing up that modern-day history? As you know, our youngest veteran now is 20 years old. Can we bring their stories to light as well?

Last but not least, Veterans Affairs Canada is here. I think they're doing a really cool thing with school groups for the younger students in regard to the animals that served in the war. There was some talk about.... I remember that at the recent ceremony we were at there were stamps revealed this year by Canada Post. Some of the veterans were suggesting a monument showing the humble beasts that served and died, which is similar to what's in the Memorial Chamber. I'd like your thoughts on that if at all possible.

Mr. Jeremy Diamond: Remembering the post-Korean war veteran is a really important point. With Veterans Affairs Canada and the contribution agreement that we're in the middle of right now, in our second year of a three-year agreement, the focus over that three years is to engage more post-Korean war veterans to become speakers in the speakers' bureau and to at the same time encourage teachers to request those same veterans to come into their classrooms. So it's kind of to take a metric with maybe 70% or 80% Second World War veterans—and after three years it would be down to about 50%—but to take post-Korean war veterans up from 10% or 20% to about 40%.

It's an important thing. I go to peacekeeping ceremonies each year. We have a great relationship with the Canadian Association of Veterans in UN Peacekeeping. I get more and more teachers requesting personnel who are currently serving to come in and speak about their experiences.

I think one of the great points that teachers have made to us over and over again is that it would be useful to be able to compare the generations, to compare the conflicts, by having a 30-year-old veteran come in and have a 90-year-old veteran come in and talk a little bit about the similarities and differences in that experience and what young people can learn about that. There are more similarities than differences, a lot of kids find, so that is a real goal of ours, we feel, to reach out to that group of veterans. They're really important to the project.

● (0945)

Mr. Andrew Cohen: In an ideal world, I think we would like to commit the same kinds of resources to stories of later conflicts as we have committed to stories about the Second World War. There is our peacekeeping story. We've lost some one hundred peacekeepers. That's not as many as we've lost in Afghanistan, but we'd like to record all of our stories. It's something for the future. It would ultimately include Afghanistan as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

I believe it was a Buffalo aircraft that was shot down over Syria, and there's a replica now. This past summer, we had a big ceremony at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, where we dedicated this Buffalo to the lives of those who were killed. You can add to your knowledge that the Warplane Heritage Museum is available for ceremonies of this kind.

Mr. Kerr.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Welcome. The appreciation you're hearing for what you're doing goes right around the table.

I'd like to go back rather than forward for a moment, because there is a lot of interest in these matters. There's a new energized feeling among young people and students and a lot of it can be attributed to what you're doing.

I had the fortune—or misfortune—of starting my career as a history teacher and I want to talk about it for a moment because I think it's relevant. It's the word “relevant” that I want to concentrate on. We did a great job in the past of making sure we didn't understand any more than we had to about how Canada was built. I'm criticizing my profession as much as anything else.

I raise this because the difference that I always saw between the United States and Canada was that they are extremely dramatic and have a huge film industry, and whether it's accurate or not, they still use it. We wanted to hide from all the horror stories that developed our country and I was always puzzled by that. But I love 1812 because it's one opportunity to remind them that they didn't win every battle and every war that ever took place.

Because it is pre-Confederation, I wanted to go back further for a moment. One of your biggest challenges, and one of ours, is that one of the downsides of our wonderful Confederation is that we have a federal-provincial system. Education is absolutely provincial. You were not mandated as a young person to learn about the history of your province and your country as part of your task in life. You did not have to ask how you got here or what you became. We've tended to gloss over that.

In my neck of the woods, down in Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, I know that a lot of our history is built on the great conflicts between the French and the English. It's almost like you're embarrassed to talk about people fighting, dying, and leaving a legacy that was essential to developing our country. I think this is extremely important.

I could go on about that, but what I'm driving at is that we sometimes want to focus on the peaceful and ignore the violent. That's nice, but it's not honest or accurate. There has been a lot of violence in every society that ever developed and I think young people should understand that. People don't like war or want war. But guess what? The most successful thing mankind has ever done is to make war on one another.

If you read our history books, you will see that they are very generic. They're not challenging. They don't get at the root of the thing. They don't come out and ask young people, “If you were in a position to make a decision, what would you have done and how would it have affected your life?”

I think we'd all agree that we have to honour what's going on. But I think there's a gap back there that we have to look at. How did we become a nation, before we became a nation? What makes up this huge and great country we have? We're missing the point that sometimes it wasn't always nice and friendly. There was some very serious stuff.

If you could go back as king and control the education process, how do you think you'd drive it so that the ones that count the most, the young people, would start off by recognizing that they have an obligation to learn how our country was developed? And by the way, the military was a huge part of how the country was developed, just as it is today in our international role.

We talked about international relations, about building alliances. How do we build alliances with the provinces as we look at this historical challenge?

● (0950)

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: One body that could be useful would be the Council of Ministers of Education, where there is cooperation between the departments of education and the provinces.

Is there room for federal leadership? Yes, there are possibilities. I think the ideal situation would be one where the school system in every province in Canada is focused not just on training young people to become the workers and consumers of tomorrow, but also on training them to be the citizens of tomorrow. That piece often gets lost.

Learning about science and technology is extremely important. Learning literacy and numeracy skills is all very important, but learning about Canada's history, where we come from as a country, how our institutions developed, and how we developed and evolved as a country, that is extremely important. Otherwise, how can young people make sense of the big questions facing us as a country?

Without understanding what Canada's role in the world once was, how do young people engage in a debate about what our position should be in Afghanistan? How do you deal with questions of parliamentary reform or democratic reform if you have no sense of Canada's parliamentary tradition or how our parliamentary institutions evolved?

I'd say that as a baseline, as part of our Canadian history report card, we ask that every province in Canada mandate two courses in Canadian history at the high-school level. At the moment, only one province in Canada does that, and it's Quebec. It recently redeveloped its history program in grades 9 and 10 and it is an excellent course. It is one that could be taught across the country and it would be held in very high regard. British Columbia has a social studies course over a few years, which is excellent and is largely history.

Those are provinces to whose level I think we could aspire. They are provinces that take Canadian history seriously. I think part of taking that seriously is teaching it at the high-school level. A lot of excellent history education takes place in elementary school, in junior high school, and in middle school, but there's something about the high-school level, just before young people graduate from the last level of mandatory education, just before they reach voting age. It shows what we take seriously as a country or as an education system.

I'd like to see more provincial departments of education taking Canadian history seriously at the high-school level, history that starts at pre-Confederation, goes to the present day, and touches all sorts of aspects, from military history to social history to economic history and gender relations. There's so much. It's a rich history.

The story of Canada is a proud story and it's one that we should be proud to pass on in the classroom and on the big screen and the small screen. That's it. There's a role for the federal government there as well. There's a role for organizations like our own. There's a role for the provinces. It's a large field.

The Chair: That was a complex question, it required a complex answer, and it exhausted the entire time, Mr. Kerr.

A voice: *[Inaudible—Editor]*

The Chair: No, not at all, sir. I take it that Mr. Andrews will be back for his questions.

Madam Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Every time you speak to us, I am just so impressed with the fabulous work you're doing. I thank you on behalf of all Canadians.

Following up on Mr. Kerr's issues, which are so important, there's just not enough. Remembrance Day is coming up and I am making every attempt to engage the schools in my riding. I can tell you that there is almost a resistance, and there are excuses that they are a very multicultural schools and so on and so forth. People are going to find all kinds of excuses like, well, we may offend somebody.... You know what I mean. I could just.... Well, I won't say what I would like to do, but it's just infuriating that this is Canada and we have people who don't want to talk about the war and don't want to talk about the past.

Going on to what Mr. Kerr said, how much work are you doing with the provinces to make scholastic changes so that we are teaching more in our schools? If you don't know your history, it will repeat itself. A lot of our kids think war is glamorous. They think it's all just super stuff. They have to understand about the loss of life and just how violent and awful the war was. If we can't get that taught to them in our schools, never mind recognizing Remembrance Day. It's a real problem.

What are you doing with the provinces and how forcefully are you pursuing changes in some of the education systems?

● (0955)

Mr. Andrew Cohen: Marc may want to answer that, but before that, I would make a general statement. I'm saddened to hear about what you've been seeing, because I taught in a university for eight or nine years and my sense was that awareness among young people was actually growing around Remembrance Day. I was impressed that there was a greater interest.

There was a period in the 1970s and 1980s, I think, when the military was seen as something bad in this country. We weren't in a shooting conflict as we are now in Afghanistan.

My sense in the past little while is that there has been a greater awareness and a greater appreciation, so I'm disturbed to hear what you're saying, particularly when schools say that they are multicultural and cannot talk about this. I find that odd.

We have made efforts with the provinces. Marc may want to address that.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: Probably one of the things the institute is best known for is our polling. We've been doing polling on Canadians' knowledge and appreciation of Canadian history for 12 years now. Over the course of those 12 years—and I think I presented this the last time we were here—we've moved the dial forward on Canadian military history. Knowledge of Canadian military history has increased over the past 12 years.

Knowledge in other areas of Canadian history, such as political history, has gone down. There's more work to do, but our efforts are paying off. Efforts like the Year of the Veteran and the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge do pay off in the public consciousness.

In working with the provinces, we do advocacy work first of all. We've talked about the Canadian history report card, and that was a direct effort to lobby for changes to the curriculum, to have the teaching of Canadian history taken more seriously by every province. We assigned grades to each one. We also have a project, benchmarks for historical thinking, that works directly with the provinces to improve the quality of history education in the curriculum by using primary sources, by using notions of historical thinking.

As a very large organization, we have a number of tools and a number of levers that we can pull. Working with the provinces is clearly one. The most efficient route we have found is working directly with teachers.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How do you advertise a program for teachers on the issue of the tour of the battlefields? How do you advertise that program to them? That's the avenue. The teachers have to take that interest. If you can get even one teacher per school, which is part of my campaign in the next while and which I've been trying to do since I've been on this committee.... I'll let you know what my success is following Remembrance Day week.

One point is the battlefield program and the other is that we rarely hear much about women when it comes to this whole issue of our veterans. I understand why the focus seems to be more on men, because more men have participated, but are you doing much to try to elevate the role that women played when it came to the different wars?

Mr. Jeremy Diamond: Absolutely. More and more, it seems, we get interest from women veterans who want to be involved in telling their story, and it's for that reason: they don't feel that young people know about it, or that young people think they know the "veterans story", which often comes from a male perspective.

Being a woman and having extra challenges, let's say, during the war and in the 1940s is something that I think a lot of young people and teachers want to hear about. We are increasing the number of women who are involved with the program. We have a very good relationship with the Wrens, the Women's Royal Naval Service group, and they are very active in the community in sharing those stories.

Also, the Stories of the Second World War project is really aimed at becoming, as I said earlier, the definitive legacy or the definitive account. That includes as many stories as possible of women who were involved in the Second World War. You can't tell the story of the Second World War by telling it from only one perspective, so it's linguistic and it's cultural, but it's also gender as well in regard to making sure that all of those stories are told.

As for the connection we've seen by working with Girl Guides and other organizations, the connection made between a woman veteran and a young woman or a girl in elementary or high school is incredible, because initially they don't see that level of what that person went through. I think we're starting to do more of that and we're finding a really good response from it, too.

•(1000)

Hon. Judy Sgro: That's terrific.

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: On the battlefields tour, that's exactly it. What we are trying to do with that program is to pass on that passion for military history that you can only get by seeing it first-hand. It's like the memory project, but for teachers. We get teachers telling us constantly that at the end of the school year, at the end of learning about World War I or World War II, the best part of the class for students was hearing first-hand from a veteran who was able to answer their questions and was able to talk with them, saying, "I did this" and "we did that". That's what we're trying to do with teachers.

If we make it part of their professional development programs, that's how we reach out to history and social studies teachers. "This is part of your professional development," we say, "come and see the battlefields, learn about it, and then develop lesson plans that build on that experience". When you reach one teacher per year and they have five classrooms, they tell a colleague, and the next year they have five more classrooms. So there's the word of mouth and then we do all sorts of marketing campaigns to reach out to more and more teachers. Again, that operates as a bilingual program. We have a group of English teachers and a group of francophone teachers.

Mr. Andrew Cohen: You may be interested to know that we have a team of about 12 researchers conducting the stories of the Second World War. These are the people interviewing our veterans, and they're mostly all women, as it happens.

The Chair: Thank you.

That's the expiration of your time, Madam Sgro. The same goes for Mr. Kerr. It's not a delight for me to say that.

Now we'll go to Mr. Mayes for a brief question.

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you.

When you're younger you get excited when you meet the rock stars who produce the music you listen to, and when you're older you get excited when you meet the authors of the books you read. I just want to say that the two books by Mr. Cohen that I have read were great, and they're worthwhile reading for my colleagues.

You mentioned that the institute is forwarding democracy. I think it's important that the story told is not only about events, battles, and personal experiences, but also about why they fought. This is kind of a follow-up to what Mr. Kerr had to say. There's a sense out there that if we had a big international group hug everything would be good, but history doesn't tell us that.

I'm wondering about communicating that to our educators and having that as part of your message: forwarding democracy and the freedom to vote, speak, and assemble. I went to Africa for three weeks this past summer. It was very sobering and motivating to me as an MP to see how great our country is because we stand for law and order, democracy, and most freedoms.

Could I get some comments on that?

Mr. Marc Chalifoux: We have seen a lot of civics teachers in Ontario in the past few years. Ontario is the only province that has dedicated a course to civics, in which young people learn the value of active and purposeful citizenship. Several high school teachers requested that the memory project speakers, the veterans, come into the classroom to talk about citizenship through their eyes. Part of that is about democracy building in other countries.

Teachers request visits on various aspects and we try to connect them with the right veteran speakers, so it's not only remembrance related. It's talking about Canada's role in the world. It's having a soldier who was on a peacekeeping mission or in Bosnia or Afghanistan talk about the work they did and what it means for Canada and Canadians.

We've also seen in the past that classrooms request visits during elections to talk about the importance of active citizenship and voting as seen through the eyes of a veteran. Veterans really have a unique perspective on the importance of exercising citizenship through voting.

Mr. Jeremy Diamond: We often reach out to ESL and LINC classes as much as we can to talk about certain issues that relate to new Canadians. We've had veterans go in to speak to them—a much different kind of audience—about the war. So it's not about bombing missions and troop movements; it's more about why they joined up and what it meant to go over there to represent Canada and fight for

freedom. You're talking to a group of people who in many cases have come from war-torn countries themselves, so that dialogue is really unique. We seem to be getting more and more interest on that level.

We have another project called Passages to Canada, which is sort of a sister project to the memory project, but it encourages prominent immigrants or refugees, instead of veterans, to speak to young people about their experiences. We match up a passages speaker and a memory project veteran to speak about citizenship during Citizenship Week, on flag day, or at different times of the year. It's really effective and can be very memorable, not only for young people, but for new Canadians and adults as well.

● (1005)

Mr. Colin Mayes: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayes.

It's 10:05 and we have scheduled our business session, but I want to be sensitive if a committee member has a burning question he or she wants to ask before we thank those from the Historica-Dominion Institute.

I think you've already heard this from a couple of members. Thank you very much for your presentation and for the good work you do.

Mr. Cohen, what two books would Mr. Mayes be talking about?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andrew Cohen: I have copies here if you like.

A voice: They're for sale at the back of the room.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go in camera now.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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