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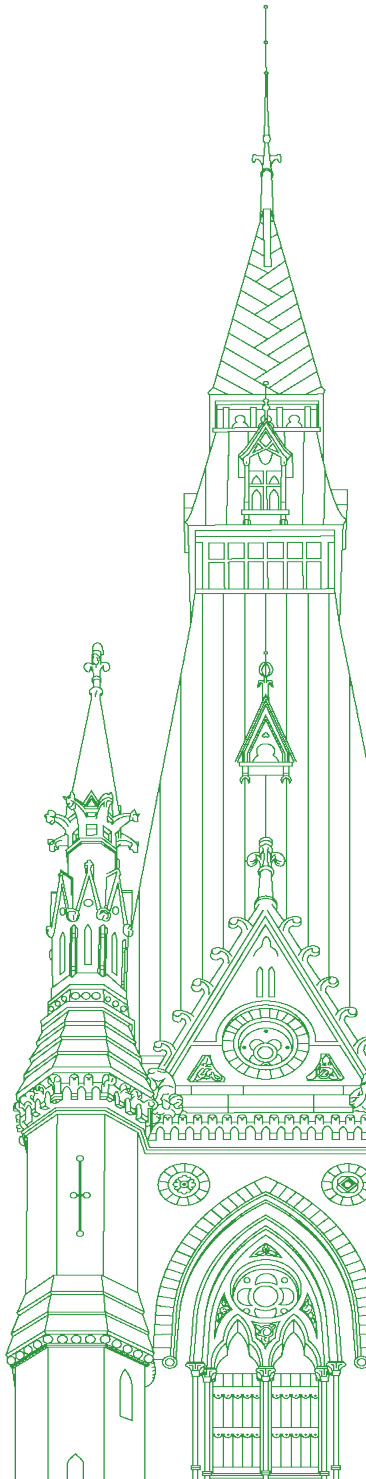

Chair: Mr. Bryan May

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Monday, May 10, 2021

● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 25 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Today's meeting, of course, is taking place in a hybrid format.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on October 27, 2020, the committee is resuming its study on the strategy for commemorations in the 21st century.

Welcome to all the witnesses who have taken time out of their day to join us and help us with this study today.

I will introduce all of you individually. Then we'll do a round of opening remarks, five minutes from each of you. Then we'll go into questions.

Appearing as individuals we have Lieutenant-Colonel Jacques Borne. We also have retired Major James D. McMullin; retired Master Corporal Sean Smith; and Lee Windsor, associate professor of history, Gregg Centre for the Studies of War and Society, University of New Brunswick. Representing The Halifax Rifles, we have Corinne MacLellan, honorary lieutenant-colonel.

Thank you to all of you for being here today.

As I said, each witness will have five minutes for opening remarks. After, we'll proceed with rounds of questions. When you get to the one-minute mark I'll be holding up my signal for one minute left. Don't panic, a minute is a long time to wrap up your thoughts, but please do conclude your remarks. One of my roles is the official interrupter. I do apologize in advance for those whom I have to interrupt to play referee today.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jacques Borne, the next five minutes are all yours, sir.

[*Translation*]

Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Jacques Borne (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Should we abolish the November 11 commemorations? What is the purpose of military commemorations? Do we want to abolish this holiday? Did we bring our children to the cenotaph on November 11 prior to the pandemic?

I give presentations to high school students during Veterans' Week and I bring with me special guests, such as a corporal who was injured in Afghanistan. Our current generation looks at the past differently. It is not unusual to commemorate happy events such as the end of the war, the rescinding of a discriminatory law, or the prowess of an inventor or a hero.

Commemorations can be national or local events, which are held on a regular or occasional basis. A commemoration is an official ceremony organized to retain in our natural consciousness an event of collective history and to serve as an example or model. It engages the entire country. Senior officials must attend commemorations and gather together citizens to enhance the collective memory. Commemorations give rise to events that take place outside of the ceremony. National ceremonies commemorate the memory of different facts, great men, combatants, and civil and military victims.

I am currently a board member of the National Field of Honour, the military cemetery in Pointe-Claire. More than 22,000 soldiers of all ranks have been laid to rest there and many commemorative ceremonies are held there. I am certain that one third of those present here today are not even aware of the existence of this special cemetery in Pointe-Claire.

I attend many commemorations especially as a member of the 3rd Montreal Field Battery of Artillery and also as the person in charge of the museum. It is a mobile museum. We have three trucks dating back to 1943, three 25-pounder cannons, a Jeep ambulance and, believe it or not, two 1818 cannons, and it is all in working order. The 3rd Montreal Field Battery of Artillery goes to 10 different locations during Veterans' Week. We participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Montreal. We are often invited to national holiday celebrations. We participate in municipal holiday celebrations. Every year, the 3rd Montreal Field Battery of Artillery starts the IRONMAN Mont Tremblant by firing a cannon.

We have a mobile museum that is not officially recognized. Why. According to an archaic law, to be part of the Canadian museum network as an official museum, the vehicle or cannon must be anchored to concrete and not be operational. Yet our vehicles and cannons are artifacts and we use them constantly to train and inform people.

There are 30 members, former members of the military, who volunteer for these activities more than 30 times between May and November each year.

As the funeral director for the Association du Royal 22e Régiment, I regularly meet with the families of deceased soldiers and look after funerals.

I am telling you about all these activities to show you that commemorations are still important in Canada.

Lest we forget. *Ubique*.

● (1540)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Up next for five minutes, we have retired major Mr. James McMullin.

Mr. James D. McMullin (Major (retired), As an Individual): My name is Jim McMullin. I'm 82 years old, and I served my country faithfully and honourably in a military uniform for 38 years: 17 in the ranks, 21 as an officer and the last 10 as a major. My position within the military was financial administration.

My dad went ashore on D-Day and fought in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. My oldest brother died in Germany, a lance corporal serving at Soest. He is buried in Hanover, a product of the Cold War. My younger brother served 25 years, including in Cyprus, and my sister Winnifred Chafe was selected as a sponsor of the ship HMCS *Glace Bay*.

Too young for Korea and too old for Afghanistan, I have served Canada from Victoria in the west to Halifax in the east, which included two tours in isolation, in Pagwa River and Moosonee. I was taken by DOT helicopter to Moosonee, as a representative of the Canadian Forces and as a universal blood donor, to give blood on at least eight to 10 occasions. I also served five years outside of Canada: two years with Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and three years in headquarters at the Canadian Forces Base at Lahr, Germany.

I have been married to the same lady for 62 years, who has supported me in my military life while raising three sons through 12 moves. In retirement, I have no contact with the military nor with any political organization. I have, however, spent my retirement promoting the work of Canada's military. For these initiatives, I have been recognized on television and in newspapers. They include books I wrote: one on a First World War Victoria Cross recipient, one on wartime airmen from Cape Breton and one on Cold War veterans. I have also made approximately 40,000 placemats depicting all aspects of our past and present military, for display in our son's restaurant in the weeks leading up to Remembrance Day.

However, the reason for my presentation before this committee is to convince Veterans Affairs that they have an obligation within their mandate to promote recognition and remembrance for all veterans.

The seventh Book of Remembrance is a commemoration that keeps with the original intent of all Books of Remembrance, that is, to be a substitute grave for loved ones who may never be able to visit the actual grave of a husband, son, daughter or other relative to see their name inscribed in memory. My brother is interned in a grave in Hanover. He was killed in an automobile accident and is not in the Book of Remembrance. There is no substitute grave where his family might ever recognize his death.

In the early fifties, to support its obligation within NATO, Canada moved land-based troops to northern Germany as a component of the British army on the Rhine, while the air division was set up in France and southern Germany. From the onset of the mission, the number of deaths among our military serving to fulfill our Cold War commitment was a problem, with the first occurring in the northern sector in December 1951. Eventually, in total, over 200 were buried in Germany and 300-plus were buried in France, Denmark and Great Britain.

Any death in the military is investigated. A board of inquiry determines if the death was directly attributable to the military and, if so, generally provides survivor benefits. There is also a summary investigation, which goes deeper and could include legal action. Their results were never used for entrance into a Book of Remembrance.

Initially, when the seventh Book of Remembrance was approved, I, like many Canadians, understood it would include the names of all military members killed and buried outside Canada since the sixth Book of Remembrance. My brother's exclusion only came to my attention after my younger brother attended the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower in Ottawa with the intention of viewing his older brother's name. However, it is not there.

Over the next 10 years, I reviewed every military cemetery in Europe with interned Canadians and cross-referenced the graves with the seventh Book of Remembrance. I have learned that approximately 396 of our serving members are not remembered. The Book of Remembrance was commissioned to give those miliary personnel and their family a memorial in Canada, the nation for which they served. For example, the Book of Remembrance for the Second World War includes those killed in action, those who died as a result of accidents or illness while in service and those who subsequently died of injuries relating to service.

● (1545)

Why are those who died during the Cold War treated differently? In Europe in the old days, our troops faced a defeated and sometimes defiant society. I personally witnessed this during our first tour in Europe in 1971 while trying to find my brother's grave near Hanover, which was considered a hotbed of animosity. I was driving a vehicle with SHAPE's—Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe—Belgium plates. We were chased, hollered at and refused accommodations in a hotel, to the extent that our children were terrified. If it was so terrible in 1971, what was it like in Hanover in the early fifties?

The high rate of deaths among our military, with the exception of air accidents investigated separately, was probably caused by a combination of events, including cultural adjustment, boredom, highway speeds, alcohol and animosity created by a defeated society. For example, an area around Werl, Germany, was named "suicide corner", revealing the carnage suffered by our military members. Similar deaths were occurring in the south, where our air element was located.

To resolve some issues, recreation specialists were even tasked with requesting local families to take in military members for visits during holidays. In the case of my brother, a Dutch family volunteered. They had made friends with Canadian soldiers who liberated their village on the road to Nijmegen during the Second World War. It is possible that he was coming back from visiting them when he was killed.

I have used all my resources to get the names of all deceased veterans who were posted, died and buried outside Canada during the Cold War into the seventh Book of Remembrance, but I have failed. In reviewing your strategy, I will pass on the hope that you will take the time to appreciate the meaning of the Books of Remembrance and use your power to ensure all deceased veterans who were posted in foreign lands and where they died—for whatever reason—and are buried, are given a place of remembrance in the nation they served and will always be remembered.

This appearance is the culmination of a quest that has occupied more than 10 years of my life. There were times, based on negative responses I have received from both Veterans Affairs and the Legion, that I wanted to quit. However, I still believe that all war veterans who have died serving overseas—where they were sent and are buried—deserve to be properly thanked by their entrance into the seventh Book of Remembrance. Further, their families deserve to have them returned home, at least symbolically. This committee has the power to make this happen, and I'm sure it would be met with approval from the hundreds and perhaps thousands of relatives and friends of the deceased.

At this time, honourable Chair, I will end with a plea to all present. All our deceased veterans buried outside Canada deserve to be remembered. They died while representing Canada, but some are completely forgotten. Please use your power to get them remembered.

I thank you very much.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McMullin.

Up next we have Mr. Sean Smith, retired master corporal.

Mr. Smith, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Mr. Sean Smith (Master Corporal (retired), As an Individual): Mr. Chair, vice-chairs, honourable members, good afternoon.

My name is Sean Smith. I served in the Canadian Forces primary reserve as an armoured crewman, with the British Columbia Dragoons and the South Alberta Light Horse, from 1986 to 2001. Thirteen of my 15 years of service were full-time, including tours of duty with the United Nations in Cyprus and NATO in Germany.

I am the ninth generation of my family to serve Crown and country, dating back to Sergeant Robert Perry, a Loyalist who served with Jessup's Loyal Rangers during the American Revolution. My family has been involved in almost every Canadian conflict, foreign and domestic, from the War of 1812 to the end of the Cold War. For me and my family, remembrance is not a day or a month in the year, it is every day.

It is with this history in mind that I have the honour of presenting my suggestions on how we, as a nation, can better remember those who have served and sacrificed for Canada, while continuing to recognize the ongoing service of those who proudly wear the uniform of our country today.

Veterans, serving or retired, are living history of our nation in war and peace. Unlike memorials of stone or steel, they have the ability to share the experiences of wars fought and peacetime duties done. Growing up, I listened to my father telling me stories of service in the UN in the Belgian Congo in 1963-64, and I read my great-grandfather's memoirs of serving with Sam Steele in South Africa during the Boer War. It is these stories that connect me to remembrance. While well-known stories of valour and sacrifice of some of our nation's heroes are important, they are not stories that directly connect the majority of our youth—the carriers of our memory—to our collective history.

I am sure MP Brassard can attest to the difference between a child simply seeing a firefighter and a child who has a chance to talk to a firefighter or watch them work. I am sure that member of MP Samson can attest to the difference between a child learning something from a book and a child learning something from an experience in person. Making those connections embeds a memory with meaning.

Throughout our country, there are people and organizations that have committed themselves to creating living memories. Al Cameron, of Veterans Voices of Canada, has been recording veterans and their stories for years, so they do not get lost in time. The Memory Project, an initiative of Historica Canada, works to connect veterans to schools and organizations, allowing veterans to tell their stories and experiences first-hand. They are people who are passionate about ensuring these memories never get lost or forgotten. I strongly believe that connecting these organizations to the government resources, archives and support, aiding them in furthering their efforts and supporting their passion, will help ensure that so many of these stories will be shared and recorded and not lost to the ages.

As a person who works with youth, I can tell you with certainty that to engage our youth in remembrance, we need to make a greater effort to connect them to that remembrance. We need to challenge and aid our youth to discover their own connections to the history of war and peace in our country. A youth who looks at a photo of the Vimy Ridge memorial might remember it. A youth who looks at a photo of Vimy Ridge and says that his great-great-grandfather fought at Vimy Ridge, that will most definitely be remembered.

In closing, I would like to stress my belief that the future of remembrance does not lie in the hands of you and me. While vital to remembrance, memorials and markers are only physical touchpoints to the people and places of our past. To create real remembrance, we must work harder to connect our youth and citizens to those who are the living memory of our history, as well as connecting them to their own family's part in that history.

Thank you.

● (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Dr. Windsor, you have five minutes, sir.

Dr. Lee Windsor (Associate Professor of History, Gregg Centre for the Studies of War and Society, University of New Brunswick, As an Individual): Honourable members of the committee, thank you for this invitation to be heard on the question of the future of commemoration in Canada.

I'd like to acknowledge my fellow veterans here.

I'm here before you today as a professor of Canadian military history, which means I don't have to wear a tie. I'm the external historian on the Veterans Affairs commemoration advisory group, CAG. I'm also here as a veteran myself.

From all of these three perspectives, I see that the time is now to recognize today's veterans. That is going to require substantial effort and a rethink, given how the vast part of our commemoration energy focuses on those who served in the First and Second World Wars, and, to a lesser extent, Korea.

You know it. All of you know it. The days when parades were full of First and Second World War veterans are long gone and our Korean veterans are aging. Thankfully, it seems that more and more younger veterans are showing up on November 11 to fill the ranks. Sometimes it's on parade, but often it's standing quietly in the crowd, maybe with their ribbons fixed on a civilian jacket, like Corporal Smith.

The problem we face is that the Remembrance Day and Veterans Week traditional program was conceived for and by those who collectively endured two world wars. They shaped the social and cultural practice that was meant to help them endure the traumatic loss of so many thousands of their friends and family members who lay in cemeteries that they could never visit. The people who remember that loss and who gather to remember on Remembrance Day are now the minority. The majority of Canadians who remain, including so many new Canadians who come from places that experienced the two world wars very differently than our country did, need new ways to understand Canada's past.

Most importantly, today's veterans need to see change. They need to see themselves in commemoration programming. I've had the good fortune, through service on the commemoration advisory group, to attend summits with representatives of dozens of modern veterans organizations who speak for tens of thousands of Canadian Armed Forces members who served after Korea. It is clear from those conversations that modern veterans are not asking anyone to forget about those defining world war experiences, or to stop acknowledging the accomplishment or the loss from those two conflicts. Most of the veterans I know, myself included, are proud to be associated with the achievements of our predecessors. The military culture on our bases, in our units and in our traditions constantly reminds serving and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces that they carry on that legacy. You've heard that message already today.

However, members who served since then have also accomplished great things. Sometimes you might not be able to see the impact they made in Cyprus or Bosnia. They couldn't see it at the time because the result wasn't clear until years after they came home. It's high time we helped people understand what modern Canadian veterans have done for the country. Modern veterans need it for their good health. To endure extreme stress, armed conflict and danger, and to bear witness to the suffering of innocent people in dozens of war zones around the world without recognition or validation from one's fellow citizens or from one's prime minister creates a potential for an injury to the soul.

I know that Veterans Affairs staff have recognized internally the need for a new commemoration strategy. Our commemoration advisory group agreed and helped to shape and draft the strategy that I believe you have all been briefed on.

The problem to solve for the staff and for the CAG is how to bring these new stories into the equation and not abandon the old or forget Canada's wartime accomplishments and losses. The solution, I think, is simple. It is not to give up one for the other, but to fully integrate them and draw out the continuities and the issues of cause and consequence.

The concept we see is that, from 1914 to the present, there is a clear pattern of Canada playing a major role in international coalitions seeking to maintain peace, order and stability in the face of armed aggression, from rallying to the defence of Belgium from foreign invasion in 1914, to Poland in 1939, all the way through to Afghanistan and the current missions in Iraq and elsewhere. There is a clear link to post-1949 missions. They're designed to achieve the same goals, albeit in the face of different and varied challenges.

● (1600)

Members in more recent decades served the same ideals and the same goals, to protect Canadians at home and to build a better and more stable world, and to stand up to those who would use armed aggression as a political tool. The danger for them was ever present, even when bullets did not fly.

Sure, the nature of military service in the last 70 years got a heck of a lot more complicated. It is harder to demonstrate the impact of service. You cannot point to the hill capture or the city liberated from Nazi occupation. Success, on many of these missions, comes when things grow quiet, or stay quiet, however tense.

Our greatest challenge in getting this message across is a lack of awareness, because Canadians did not share in these modern conflicts with veterans the way that the whole nation went through the two world wars as one people—well, that's a debatable issue. It will take much work to help people today see all the ways that modern Canadian veterans have served, to build meaningful understanding of what Canada has asked its soldiers, sailors and aircrew to do on our behalf. They have always stood ready to do whatever was asked of them, from rescuing people in disaster zones through to going to war under the United Nations' authority.

Clearly, the consensus growing here is to target that programming on public education, because reaching the next generation in the classroom is the best way to ensure that the service of all veterans is understood first, then integrated and then maybe remembered. I see that this strategy can reach new Canadians who have moved here from every part of the globe, often fleeing from wars in the aftermath of war and destruction in their own countries. Many of those new Canadians might be able to relate to Canadian Forces' peace and stability missions or humanitarian aid missions in the past 70 years, and that might, in turn, generate their interest in the longer history of CAF service in the two world wars.

Last, I want to add that veterans do not want the story sugar-coated. They want their efforts recognized, in honest terms, so that Canadians might understand what they did and what they endured. This can go a long way towards their health and well-being.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Windsor.

Up next is Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel MacLellan.

The next five minutes are all yours.

● (1605)

Ms. Corinne MacLellan (Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel, The Halifax Rifles): Thank you to the steering committee members and you, Chair May, for this opportunity to provide testimony.

My earliest understanding of commemorating and respecting the sacrifice of those who serve came naturally growing up in Cape Breton. I know I'm not alone on this call today, Mr. McMullin.

My grandmother named her sons after family members lost in the First World War and had several brothers who served in the Second World War. In our community, men like Dr. Mike Laffin never spoke of their service, when their heroics were undeniable and often spoken of by others.

My father joined the effort to restore the World War II installation in New Victoria as a tribute to these service members. Fort Petrie remains there today. The founding members of that volunteer committee still operate it as a seasonal museum on one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline in North America, but I am biased in that, I think.

Remembering where you come from is baked into your DNA in Cape Breton, which stays with a person for life, no matter where you call home.

A little more than seven years ago, while having coffee with a colleague, she mentioned something that resonated very deeply with me. “Do you know that thousands of Canadians all went to war from right here?” We were sitting just a stone's throw away from the Halifax harbour. Of course, we all know that the Canadian Armed Forces have a long and proud history in Halifax; however, it had never occurred to me that thousands of those who lost their lives in the Great War in fact took their last steps on Canadian soil on the Halifax waterfront. It was a profound realization for both of us as we sat there. The images of the feelings of people, not far from where we were, saying their last or forever goodbyes weighed heavily on both of us.

There was no big event, no marker of this particular place as a sacred ground that captures the far-reaching impact of those goodbyes. Thousands of people would visit the Halifax waterfront and leave, not knowing of this significance outside of it being a tremendous tourist destination with proud Maritime traditions and also historically connected to one of the largest man-made explosions which, of course, only happened because of the city's pivotal role in the Great War. Those are dots that are not always connected for everyone, including our kids who are in grade school.

War museums around the world do this on such a grand scale. Here in Halifax, I felt that we also had sacred ground for the nation that we could mark. We all felt, as sort of an ad hoc committee that we formed, that it should be acknowledged in some meaningful way.

Initially I was told that the government didn't do monuments or infrastructure any longer, so we collected, or re-collected, ourselves, and we thought perhaps we could stage a re-enactment of troops marching from the armoury to the Halifax waterfront, as they would have 100 years ago, to mark the centennial. That idea was rife with problems and logistical issues, and we ran out of time.

Then, on meeting some local military historians, I was introduced to Ken Hynes, curator at the army museum in Halifax Citadel. I shared the idea of somehow marking these last steps. We talked about trying to do something, anything that was low cost, that we could practically shoulder ourselves as volunteers.

Then there was a conversation I had with Nancy Keating, a dear friend, a well-known artist and someone with a very proud history of family service. In an instant, she seemed to elevate the entire discussion, literally and figuratively, and began sketching at that table what would become the Last Steps Memorial Arch that stands on the Halifax waterfront today.

It was at this point that it seemed possible, but even the most modest of ideas took what felt like a Herculean effort to get people to see how easily this could be and why it was so important for so many.

One of those people was Andy Fillmore, in his previous tenure in the province of Nova Scotia. He and his colleagues seemed to embrace this idea without reservation for what felt like the first time in all of the discussions we were having. I had always held the centennial of the departure of the 25th Battalion from the Halifax waterfront in May 1915 as an artificial deadline for kind of giving up trying to do something. It was fast approaching May 2015, and you don't get another chance at a centennial—or I don't think anybody's figured out that science yet.

Nancy then developed a conceptual drawing of an arch reminiscent of the gangways that connected the ocean liners seconded into service during wartime, as well as the historic victory arches of Europe. The illustration was breathtaking. Pier 21, Parks Canada and so many people and organizations could really see the vision now. It was something that was understated but powerfully meaningful with just three words that said it all: The Last Steps.

We unveiled the concept on the centennial of that fateful departure. However, we did not have one cent committed to the build. You could call it a gamble, I guess, but we believed others would see the importance, and they did. Halifax Foundation, the City of Halifax, Develop Nova Scotia—all supported the idea instantly. We did come to find out that the federal government would support maybe not the type of infrastructure that others maybe thought, but this was modest enough, I think. They became an anchor funder through ACOA.

Concurrently with this, I was introduced to some visiting representatives from Belgium. I shared with them the idea of our Last Steps. It seemed so small to them, as their country is just steeped with memorial tourism and is peppered with monuments, but they were on our team. They remained supportive from afar and we stayed in touch. I was able to visit them many times. I would learn that over 30,000 of our war dead are buried in Belgium. I could see first-hand how their graves are cared for and their stories are cherished. I wish every Canadian had the opportunity to visit these battlefields and the scarred but beautiful countryside of Flanders to feel that kind of pride. There's nothing like it.

Because of this, The Last Steps now has a sister arch in Belgium called Canada Gate, also of Nancy Keating's design. It is proudly in Passchendaele, the very place where Canadians fought in one of the most costly battles in our nation's history.

None of this would have been possible without the Army Museum, Major Ken Hynes, and so many bright lights along the way who kept pushing and putting one foot in front of the other. At times, I simply felt like a witness to it all. Whether it is The Last Steps, a ceremony, or a virtual event, the act of remembering, no matter how hard it may seem, can never compare with the service and sacrifice of our forefathers and mothers. These projects are worth doing for everyone, every year, and for every story there is to share. They are all sacred. Canadians have left an indelible mark around the world. It is our responsibility to uphold their memory in creative but, more importantly, meaningful ways.

In closing, two years ago I was given the greatest honour of my life when I was appointed as honorary lieutenant-colonel for the Halifax Rifles. It came as a great surprise. My learning curve continues to be quite steep. However, I have absolutely noted that for the men and women in my unit, seeing a nation that does not forget where it comes from can sometimes be payment enough. But we know that we can always do better. Our regimental motto is *Cede nullis*—yield to none. As a country, the least we can do is to be unyielding in our gratitude and in our support of those who serve today and to meaningfully commemorate the service of those who have passed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go right into the first round of questions,

First up is MP Wagantall for six minutes, please.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Thank you so much, Chair.

Oh, my word; this is when I get really frustrated. We have so many phenomenal witnesses and such a small amount of time to even begin to try to respond to you all. Thank you so much for what you've shared with us today. I think if our young people heard even what we heard today, it would ignite something in them. That was so powerful. Thank you.

Mr. McMullin, thank you so much, right off the top, for everything you've shared, and the passion and the personal connection you have to this opportunity you have taken to make a difference, in regard to our Books of Remembrance. I wrote down twice through your conversation, about the 396 not remembered, "Why not? Why not?" Later on you expressed your frustration, and about almost stopping your efforts, with the reasons that were expressed by VAC and the Legion. Could you tell us a little bit more about the rationale for not recognizing these individuals in their service to Canada?

Mr. James D. McMullin: This is the book I produced, and you can see it lists everybody who died, and the difference being the ones who are left out.

To answer your question, I have no idea. I wrote to the Legion, I wrote to Veterans Affairs, I wrote to the Secretary General of NATO in Brussels, because I was there, and I wrote to everybody else in between.

Along the way, I even produced a booklet about the air force people who died in New Waterford. I have done everything possible, but I have given up. I hate to say this in front of people, but I think Veterans Affairs is a dictatorship that does what they want. I have no connection with them.

When my dad came back from overseas in 1945 or 1946, there were seven of us boys in one bed and three girls in the next bed. Veterans Affairs got my dad a beautiful home. It's still in our name today. There was no indoor bathroom. Veterans Affairs got him, with a shortage of iron, a septic tank in Saint John, New Brunswick and had it shipped to Glace Bay.

When my mother died at the age of 48, Veterans Affairs helped my dad get a job as a cleaner in the post office. He left the coal mines and worked in the post office. I had the utmost respect for Veterans Affairs, but I don't anymore.

Why? Why have they done this? There's no cost to it.

● (1615)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Sir, are you saying that you never heard any response back to your inquiry?

Mr. James D. McMullin: I had all kinds. I left them in the other room. Some of them I shredded. Some of them ignored my intelligence with the responses I had. The answer comes right at the last sentence—no, they shall not be remembered.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you for not giving up and for giving us an opportunity today to be challenged.

Mr. James D. McMullin: Thank you very much.

Just remember, I'm 82 years old.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Gotcha. Thank you so much.

I have time, I hope, for one more question at least.

Mr. James D. McMullin: I'm sorry I took up so much time.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: No, you were wonderful. Thank you so much.

Let's see, there were conversations here, and I've highlighted some things that were said.

No recognition or validation equals “injury to the soul”. That is something, Mr. Windsor, you had expressed. I think we've heard that during other testimony in regard to those who have been left out significantly.

Do you want to just elaborate a little bit more on that? That was a profound statement to me, because I believe that to be true.

Dr. Lee Windsor: I believe it to be one of the most important issues on the table here. We know that moral injury is a component of mental wellness. I'm not sure if you've been introduced to that term with regard to it being a component of post-traumatic stress injury or disorder or operational stress injuries.

Certainly, we have seen it be an aggravating factor in recent suicide cases for veterans who have served in Afghanistan, many of whom have questions about their service there and whether or not it.... Given that the entire world is now looking with interest to determine the outcome of that mission, in the absence of government recognition of that service in Afghanistan, veterans are left to their own devices to fall back on media statements that it was a waste and a failure. Therefore, if you pulled the trigger and killed someone, or if you lost a fellow soldier in combat or suffered an injury yourself, posing the question to yourself as to whether it may not have been worth it in the first instance is a powerful burden to put on someone.

That's Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a case where there has been some degree of public recognition, even if it's grassroots recognition from the people of Canada, as well as the government, at least in the early years of the war. But when I mention the case of injury to the soul, I think mainly about those veterans who served in the 1990s, my own generation, and not just from personal bias but from an awareness that at the end of the Cold War, we saw a tremendous spike in global conflict and a tremendous ratcheting up of the level of violence. I'm sure Sean can attest to this too, from the look of the ribbons he's wearing on his chest, that peacekeeping became peacemaking. I'm sure you're familiar with this phenomenon. We see too the spike in mental illness and mental injuries and claims in Veterans Affairs as a result of the massive growth in exposure to combat trauma in Somalia, in the former Yugoslavia, in Cambodia and of course in Rwanda.

● (1620)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Windsor. I let you go on there for an extra minute.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: No problem. It's all good testimony, but I do have to interrupt, I'm afraid.

MP Lalonde, you have six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Hello everyone.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their testimony and their service to our country.

[*English*]

I want to say thank you to all of you for your hard work towards remembrance. Thank you, as well, to the veterans joining us today for your service and bravery.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Windsor, I have a question for you.

[*English*]

I understand that your work, and the work of the Gregg Centre at UNB, has been focused on Canada's military history, and you actually went to Afghanistan as a historian.

During your testimony, you mentioned the importance of veterans seeing themselves in commemoration, and you also reflected on the social differences between modern conflicts and traditional ones.

I was wondering if you could give us some insight into possibly what's missing on how commemoration of modern military engagements like Afghanistan and Bosnia should be handled, compared to the traditional conflicts of World War I, World War II and the Korean War.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: Thank you for the question, Mrs. Lalonde.

[*English*]

This is a complicated issue, I think, because of the tremendous degree.... Well, it's complicated, but not terribly.

I think the core issue—and perhaps I wasn't clear enough in my opening remarks—is that there's a tremendous amount of prior public knowledge about the First World War and the Second World War in our society. People know about them. People are familiar with Vimy. People are familiar with Juno Beach. In part, they're familiar with them because in Remembrance Week, the news media outlets carry stories from these places. The collective memory of those events endures, even as the generations pass on.

We don't do that kind of media engagement or education work to explain why Canadians deployed into Bihac or Drvar, or why they went to the Medak Pocket. Certain people know—people with family connections, people with special interest—but it's not mainstream knowledge. It's not part of Canadian curriculum.

One of the issues we're working on here at UNB's Gregg Centre is to try to find ways to integrate it into curriculum in every province. The simple way to do it is really an easy way to do it. That's why I mentioned, at the end of my remarks, that education is really the key. If people don't remember, if we don't have a national collective memory of this, we have to build something from scratch. We have to build a national education program, because otherwise there's nothing to remember, except by that small number of people who endured this.

I guess that's the heart of it. I think the work we all have to do together—those of us who are interested in recognizing modern veterans—is to identify good practices for public education. That maybe is the biggest difference with the way that we used to do things in commemoration.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: You talked about one of the projects about education.

Are there other projects that you or other colleagues are working on that would advance remembrance?

● (1625)

Dr. Lee Windsor: Yes, indeed.

One of the challenges, too, is that the collective memory of the two world wars is so strong. There's plenty of history that's been written about these things. There's plenty of access to the historical records and to documents, and to the participants in those tremendous and dramatic events. In the case of modern service, many of the official records are, necessarily, still classified, and the numbers of my colleagues who research and write in the area of modern service are far fewer. There are not as many books on the bookshelves for people to pick up something and learn about these events. The information available on the Internet is pretty thin.

One thing we're looking at doing, both in the commemoration advisory group and here at UNB, is to try to find ways to get more documents out there, more evidence, more testimonies, more interviews with people like Master Corporal Smith.

I'm going to have to follow up with you afterwards Master Corporal, and Major MacLellan as well, and Mr. Borne. These are all people whose memories of service we need to capture. If we can't release official documents, maybe we can get more video testimony with veterans made available, so that students can look at that in the classroom, and the general public can use it too.

In my opinion, as an educator now myself—this is my second profession—that's where my personal focus is going to be, and the focus of our team here.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much for this.

I'm going to end with you, because I believe I have a few minutes.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Well, I will thank you all for coming and joining us today.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Lalonde.

Next we have MP Desilets, for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, esteemed colleagues.

I wish to say hello to all our guests. Once again, I congratulate them for their service to our country.

Mr. Borne, congratulations again because, if I am not mistaken, the National Field of Honour Cemetery in Point-Claire was designated a national historic site of Canada in 2009.

Can you confirm that Sergeant Léo Major is buried at the National Field of Honour?

LCol Jacques Borne: Sgt. Léo Major was buried at the National Field of Honour Cemetery. This soldier, who has been called Quebec's Rambo, was in the Régiment de la Chaudière and later joined the Royal 22^{e} Régiment.

After serving in World War II, he served in the Korean War. During World War II, he single-handedly liberated a village with his special tactics. He did not always follow the rules, but he always reached his objective. That is why a special street at the National Field of Honour is named after our Quebec Rambo.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Can you tell me what Mr. Major's grave looks like? Is there something that sets it apart or is it like all the others?

LCol Jacques Borne: I do not know, but, usually, whether a veteran was a general or a simple soldier, a plaque is always placed on the lawn. Everyone receives the same treatment, whether they are a soldier, general or hero.

I will look into it and get back to you.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Do you know if there are other places in Quebec like the National Honour Field of Pointe-Claire?

LCol Jacques Borne: No, I do not believe so.

Mr. Luc Desilets: As far as you know, there are none in Canada either?

LCol Jacques Borne: In Canada, there is the cemetery in Ottawa.

Mr. Luc Desilets: That is the only one then?

LCol Jacques Borne: Yes.

● (1630)

Mr. Luc Desilets: The National Field of Honour is nevertheless impressive. More than 20,000 people are interred there. That is a lot.

On another note, can you tell us what the presentations you give to students are like?

LCol Jacques Borne: Veterans' Week is an annual event. The Quebec Veterans Foundation gives me materials to hand out to these students.

My presentations are quite popular, because the professors find that it is interesting having these discussions during Veterans' Week. I bring guests with me to the presentation. The students participate in discussions and ask many questions about the wars. It goes very well.

Unfortunately, the last guest who attended my presentations, Corporal François Dupéré, passed away recently. He was a hero of the Afghanistan conflict. You can't imagine how popular he was when we introduced him and he spoke about his experience in Afghanistan.

It is important to educate our young people so we can continue holding our commemorations.

Mr. Luc Desilets: You are speaking to a former principal. I completely agree with you.

I would also like to know what youth find interesting about these presentations.

LCol Jacques Borne: The adventure.

Mr. Luc Desilets: It's the adventure they find interesting?

LCol Jacques Borne: Yes.

It's fine to say that we will fight for our country, but that is not the only reason. We also enlist for the adventure, to have a different experience. We want to experience something other than civilian life.

Mr. Luc Desilets: A few years ago, the army had a good slogan. If my memory serves me well, it was “There's No Life Like It”.

LCol Jacques Borne: Yes, that's right.

Young people are influenced by movies like *Rambo*, starring the actor Sylvester Stallone, and by what they see on television. They want to have a new adventure.

Mr. Luc Desilets: How old are the students who attend these presentations?

LCol Jacques Borne: Most of the time, they are attended by high school students.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Students of French and English high schools, is that right?

LCol Jacques Borne: They are attended mostly by students of French schools. I have on occasion given presentations at English schools.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Is there funding for these presentations? Does your organization pay for the presentations?

LCol Jacques Borne: No, we volunteer.

I am sometimes given $50 to cover my travel expenses, but I don't earn a living from it. I volunteer my time.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Borne, thank you for your commitment. You are well-known and respected in Quebec, and it's easy to see why.

Mr. Chair, I have no other questions at this time.

LCol Jacques Borne: Thank you, Mr. Désilets.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Your résumé is impressive, Mr. Borne.

LCol (Ret'd) Jacques Borne (As an Individual): Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. I certainly appreciate the fact that Rambo is now going to be in Hansard. That was great.

Up next, we have MP Blaney for six minutes please.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for your testimony today, and of course, I always recognize the incredible service that you have given our country.

Mr. Smith, it's very weird not to call you Sean.

I think what we've heard today and in all the testimony is that commemoration is a process of remembering our history and also valuing the service that people have given to our country. I thank you specifically for your testimony today.

I know you've worked a lot with youth. Have you done a veteran's presentation to youth and if so, what do you do to make it memorable?

Mr. Sean Smith: Thank you, MP Blaney. Yes, you're right, it's weird.

I've been part of the Memory Project with Historica Canada now for several years. I quite often get invited to various schools in my area to make a presentation.

For example, I went to a middle school. I waited until all the students were in the gym, then made some quick calculations in my head. I told everybody to stand up, and I said they were the Royal Newfoundland Regiment on July 1, 5:00 a.m. Then I had them all sit down except for the first two rows and I said they were the Newfoundland Regiment on roll call, July 2. Seven hundred of the 800 men who went over the top that morning died or were wounded, and only 63 showed up the next morning for roll call. That impact, that visual, makes an impression on the students, on the teachers. Words get lost, but visuals embed a memory of that moment.

When I went to Vimy Ridge on Remembrance Day 1990, I was one of only four Canadians there. The irony is that the brigade had deployed for training to head to the Gulf War. There I stood under a memorial on Remembrance Day, and we were off to war again. That memory is embedded in me forever because I lived it. Being able to share that memory with youth makes all the difference in the world. This is why I'm so eager to make sure that kids have the ability to meet veterans like me, World War II veterans who are still with us. We have one locally, Carl, who I hope will still be alive to make that final trip to the Netherlands to be recognized for the liberation. I'd like kids to meet Carl because he is a living embodiment of a moment in our history. Nobody can tell that history like a person who has lived that history.

As Dr. Windsor mentioned, you can't talk about the Medak Pocket and expect people to understand it. You need to have somebody who was at the Medak Pocket to understand it. My buddies came back from that messed up, but they need to share that story. It's important, as you can tell.

● (1635)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

Sean, I'm sorry to keep pushing you.

Why do you think engaging our youth and working towards connecting them to the past will be so successful for their own futures?

Mr. Sean Smith: As the saying goes, those who forget their history are doomed to repeat it. I don't think that sits any closer than looking at the youth today and having them not understand what that past really means.

As Mr. Windsor pointed out, there's a lot out there about World War I and World War II but not anything substantial about Bosnia or Yugoslavia. Afghanistan is front and centre because it was in the media all the time, but the individual aspects of Afghanistan are lost. They're still there. They're amongst us. They're amongst the veterans.

That's why people like Al Cameron, who has Veterans Voices, is recording all of these interviews with veterans. World War II, Korean, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Rwanda are all points in time that we still have a connection to because the people who are connected to them are still with us.

We can't look at a written word and understand the emotion that goes behind it. A guy I served with in Cyprus killed himself six months after we got back. People don't know how much of an impression that has on us until they actually have an opportunity to speak to us. I want to get to a point in our lifetime where I can go into a school on Remembrance Day to talk about something and not have some kid come up to me and ask, “Hey, did you kill anybody?” I would have never considered saying that to a veteran coming into my school when I was a kid because it was still very present in our minds.

There's a long, long road.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Smith, for sharing that important perspective with us today.

Up next, we have, for five minutes, MP Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses today for their extremely compelling and powerful testimony.

Sean, it's okay to cry, man, because I cry all the time. This is an emotional thing for all of us sitting on this committee.

I want to pick up on Ms. Blaney's theme about youth. I was critic for Veterans Affairs during Vimy 100. I went there. I also went to Beaumont-Hamel. It's unbelievable the sacrifices that the Royal Newfoundlanders made. Of course, with regard to Vimy, we all know the story there.

It really was a life-altering experience; there's no other way to describe it. Many people who were on that trip as part of the delegation felt the same way. I said in the House at the time that, just as many pilgrimage sites exist for religious or other circumstances, whether it's the Taj Mahal or the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, I think Vimy should be Canada's pilgrimage site for young students.

I know there's a lot of engagement within high schools across the country. There were thousands and thousands of students were there. I ask, “How can we do that better?” because I think it's that important.

● (1640)

Mr. Sean Smith: The thing that really hits home with Vimy is the memorial itself and parts of that memorial. You cannot look upon that single female statue looking towards Givenchy, and not be touched by it.

If only we had some means of bringing a part of that memorial to the people—those 11,258 names that are engraved on that wall—where people could touch and feel and understand, they could see names that say so-and-so served as such-and-such because they joined at 14 and celebrated birthdays fighting at Vimy Ridge. Those are touchpoints that you cannot talk about that would get that emotion across.

Mr. John Brassard: That is powerful.

Before I went, I put out on my social media feed that if anybody had a family member whose name was on that, I would take pictures of their names and email those back to them. The level of gratitude was just profound.

Sean, you're absolutely right. It's just amazing.

Mr. McMullin, I want to go to you. The Books of Remembrance were such a profound part of Parliament when they were in Centre Block and now in West Block. The name of my wife's uncle Robert John Westgate is in there. We actually sat in for the page-turning ceremony. We showed the video to my mother-in-law, and she still cries, to this day, because she remembers the day he was killed. Oftentimes during a moment of pause in Parliament, I would go down there, just to look at the books of commemoration and reflect on why it is that I have a seat in our symbol of democracy.

I want to just throw a couple of those names into the record here, Mr. McMullin, if you'll indulge me: J.T.M. Levesque, sergeant, Royal 22nd; Commander St. Jean, rifleman, Queen's Own; Private Mason, horse artillery. How simple a process should it be for these names to be put into the Book of Remembrance?

Mr. James D. McMullin: In the first book I produced, I showed everybody who died—from all the graveyards—and then I went to a second book and I just produced the names of the people who were left out of the Books of Remembrance. Now, in the first book I say that Veterans Affairs took it upon itself to say that you, even though you were in Germany, a long way from your parents and you were killed in a car accident, are not in the book. I'm not picking on the air force. Don't get me wrong. I was air force. An hour before you left work you serviced an aircraft. The aircraft went up in the air and crashed, and the pilot was killed. He's in the book. You're not in the book. The jobs were not exactly similar, but you were both a long way from your country. Your country sent you there. The 1950s were not a time when you said, “Oh, I don't want to go there.”

I was in Halifax in the winter of 1956. A troop train arrived from Quebec City. The provost had secured the troop train, and it went right into the station in Halifax, and they closed the station. It was too late. There was a snowstorm and there was no supper for the troops. I was stationed there. I went and knocked on the door to see the provost. I spent about three hours running back and forth to a restaurant to get these soldiers coffee. At 12:00 they marched across Pier 21 and I went back to my barracks. At 3:30 in the morning I heard the SS *New York* blow as it cleared Halifax. The next thing I heard, my brother was killed. I wonder—

● (1645)

Mr. John Brassard: To Mr. Smith's point, these are the stories we need to hear, direct from those who were there.

Mr. James D. McMullin: I wonder how many more people, soldiers I brought food to that night, are buried in this book, and nobody seems to care. They are the only soldiers, the only military members who left Canada. I've worked on the First World War from John Bernard Croak. I've worked on them all. How many people know that they're the only ones who were posted from Canada, know where they died and by whatever cause, and that they are not remembered? I think that's wrong.

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you for the time, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brassard.

Thank you, Mr. McMullin.

Up next for five minutes we have MP Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to welcome all the witnesses. For those who have served, I thank them for their service.

Ms. MacLellan, your presentation was impressive. You've been appointed as an honorary lieutenant-colonel. I've had the honour of being able to congratulate a couple of constituents who have also received that. The calibre of people with whom you serve in that role is extremely impressive.

You talked about that and you talked about the Halifax Rifles and the commemoration. I had a look at your biography. One thing you didn't talk about, which I'd like to hear more about, is your role with the Belgian government as an in-Canada representative, and how you were able to amp up the commemoration, on their behalf, of Canadians visiting Belgium. Could you talk a bit about that and about what we as Canadians may be able to learn from your work in that regard?

Ms. Corinne MacLellan: Absolutely, and thank you so much, MP Casey. I did have a lot of that in my first draft, but I realized my time was so short that I had to edit it down.

To say that this commemorative work during the commemorative period changed my life would be an understatement. I did touch on it. With the representatives for Belgium who I met, we built up a kinship, but actually what they did was to say, “Wow, we have such a close relationship with our Canadian brothers and sisters that we need to really make a better effort in Canada to highlight what we're doing to commemorate them.” I said, “I'm here to help you”, so we embarked on a three-year program. I did eight missions. I took largely Canadian media to the battlefields of Belgium. Mr. Brassard was talking about Vimy. I also was there for the centennial. Yes, these things are absolutely incredibly life-changing.

One of the things that has always struck me, and I guess part of the reason why The Last Steps.... It was so poignant for me to go to Ypres and the Menin Gate to see the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate. All of the people we are listening to on this call are not asking for a lot. They're asking for recognition in name for service. Nobody is asking for very much. That's my experience with the people I've been working with.

I don't know if it's because the Belgians are closer to a lot of these things, but the Last Post ceremony is a very effective way to address all of these battles that aren't in history books quite yet, the way they need to be. I know that Mr. Smith talked about this, and Mr. Windsor. Families can participate in that. They can be recognized every single night—I think we're at 40,000 nights in a row—at the Menin Gate. You can submit your family to the Last Post society, and your family can go there and be recognized.

If I'm being completely honest, when we put up the Last Steps, my hope was that we could have a program like that. It wouldn't have to be here in Halifax. It doesn't matter where it is—just in Canada. All of those people could be recognized in name for their service, and their families could grieve and have some closure. I'm sure that some of you on this call have been there for the Last Post ceremony. The sister monument idea was to create a portal between Belgium and Canada, because we have such a close kinship and they have such a reverence for our service.

I'll close really quickly, because I know that I don't have a lot of time. One point I wanted to make, which was in my original speech, was that I had a tour coming through the Flanders Fields museum and I had the opportunity to meet the curator there, Mr. Piet Chielens. He was so happy to meet us and so excited to talk with Canadian media, because his whole raison d'être in life was the two Canadian soldiers who were buried near his home in the Belgium countryside. He went into this line of work because he had to research those brothers, and then he went on to become the curator of the Flanders Fields museum. He then met a man named Peter Jackson and worked very closely with him on *They Shall Not Grow Old*. He was just poignant in the way he spoke to the media that day about the impact of Canada on that country.

It is just the most unique experience you can have as a Canadian to go there and be recognized in the way that we are and to feel the service. It's not something that we see in history books. It's something that you really feel. That's why I think that for Vimy 100 it was so incredibly important for those 25,000 young people and Canadians to go there and really feel and see what that recognition looks like.

● (1650)

Mr. Sean Casey: Ms. MacLellan, I've been to the Menin Gate twice in my parliamentary responsibilities. You did a great job of expressing what you feel as a Canadian there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Up next we have MP Desilets, please.

You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Windsor, as a military historian, you are very familiar with archiving procedures.

In your opinion, what historical time period is the basis for the classification of documents detailing military operations? How does this vary?

Dr. Lee Windsor: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

Actually in just the last couple of weeks, I sent some emails to my colleague, who is the government historian on the commemoration advisory group, on this issue. I'm not sure if he's testified before the committee or not; he is Dr. Steve Harris, the senior historian for the directorate of history and heritage at CAF. We're starting to send feelers out to Library and Archives Canada to see about declassification of unit records. We're probably only going to be able to go up to the 1950s and 1960s, or maybe the early 1970s. The reason we're doing this speaks to the issue we've all been speaking about, which is how to engage young people.

I've been taking groups of students and soldiers on staff rides and study tours for 25 years. Every time we take people overseas to France, Flanders, Italy and Germany, they have those personal experiences. The way we accelerate them is to make it personal, to have them pick a personnel file and be able to engage with archival information about a family member, someone from their town or from their provincial or regional regiment.

That same formula is the recipe for how we do this in the future to build connections that leverage student interest. Don't force them to learn something. Let them pick what they want to learn by harnessing their connection to Canada's military past, because they all have one.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Is it in some way detrimental to veterans that there is not more openness in that regard or that it may not be possible to get one's hands on the archival content?

● (1655)

[*English*]

The Chair: Give a very quick answer, please.

Dr. Lee Windsor: The message we're hearing is that UN declassification is more complicated than straight Canadian government declassification because of our service and participation with our NATO and UN allies. We're going through a process, but you can help the process. I suspect that a committee recommendation and endorsement for declassification would go a long way, so put that on your to-do list, please.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Windsor.

Up next, we have MP Blaney for two and half minutes, please.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: We'll put it on our to-do list, for sure.

Sean, I'll come back to you. From your perspective, would the recording and sharing of memory be limited only to veterans?

Mr. Sean Smith: No, definitely not. My grandmother sent three of her men across—my grandfather, my father and myself. My mother did that twice.

The stories from the home front are just as impactful as the stories from overseas and the front line. The stories of a Silver Cross mother are invaluable to making an impression on people of what it's like to actually lose somebody you love overseas. It has to be part of the record.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: All the work you do in reaching out to young people.... I know the amazing work you do here in our community with cadets. I also appreciate that. Can you just tell us why you to it?

Mr. Sean Smith: It's because it needs to be done.

We don't carry memory just in us. We carry it in our children. I learned everything I learned about my military family history from my parents and from my grandparents. My children know about military history because I was part of it. I was in Germany when the wall came down. I was in Cyprus when the UN got the Nobel Peace Prize. I was at Oka. I'm part of Canadian history. My family is part of Canadian history. My family carries the post-nominal title, United Empire, given to us by Queen Victoria for the service of Sergeant Perry during the American Revolution. It's all part of us and every Canadian has that connection to that history.

It's to be able to give Canadians access to all that archival information, help get this stuff declassified and then connect soldiers and families so that they can tell the story. I found medals at a pawn shop and had them mounted and put into a frame, so that I could give them to a family who has lost the medals. It connected their family to the history of a family member who served.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm afraid that's time, Rachel. Thank you.

Next we have MP Davidson, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Good afternoon, witnesses, and thanks very much.

Lieutenant-Colonel, Halifax seems like it's got a lot going on. There must be so much federal funding going out there. I thought for sure that you were going to talk about the Sherman tank called Hellfire. I've followed that along with much interest. I am wondering if you were at all part of that memorial with the tank.

Ms. Corinne MacLellan: Yes, I was. You are all covering off everything I had to edit out of my speaking remarks, so thank you.

It was not an entirely simple operation. It was a little bit tenuous when we had it on the crane at the CN rail yard. CN was approached to return the tank to B.C. Obviously, it's a pre “end of an era” tank.

I also sit on the board of the army museum, so I was able to lean on my dear friend Ken Hynes, again, for some of the pedigree attached to that. The folks at CN were accommodating, but we didn't have any subject matter experts there. It was a little bit of an exercise, an intermodal exercise, because it involved trucks, trains and everything, but it was really quite something to be a part of.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thanks for that. I want to let you know I appreciated that. I was following along, and I'm sure there were some obstacles.

Lee, we're actually spending, I think, around $1 billion on the new Centre Block with the huge visitor's centre, and a whole new Centre Block here in Ottawa. There are so many commemorative things that take place in Ottawa.

Has the government or have you been a part of any consultations on improving the stories and the commemorative centre in the new Centre Block, including the huge new visitor's centre that we're going to have there now?

● (1700)

Dr. Lee Windsor: Well, you're scratching a New Brunswick itch of mine about the amount of investment in Ottawa and Ontario versus.... It's wonderful. In the CAG, we've been dealing with the Afghanistan memorial. I'm a jury member on that issue, as well.

Your question speaks to the challenge we have there. How do you build a memorial for Afghan veterans, and for the people of Canada, that's going to be in Ottawa? Not everyone is going to get to it in their lifetime. It speaks to the central problem that this committee has, that we have, that all of us have who are interested in this commemoration.

How can we create a variety of programming that will reach every kid, every household and every citizen, even in remote and rural parts of Canada? Making digital content, digital learning, available to people is clearly the way to do it. The challenge we have is that there are many people in the space, and they're not necessarily talking to one another.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Let's hope they all get talking to each other, and we create a great commemorative centre in the new Centre Block.

James, I have a Silver Cross mother who works for me. We're always struggling to see more commemoration for Afghanistan vets.

Is it time, James, that they have their own Book of Remembrance?

Mr. James D. McMullin: I'm not really sure of the question. As I said before, I was too young for Afghanistan.

I sit here and listen to everybody speaking. I lived in Belgium. I was at Vimy Ridge so often that it just passes over my head. I have visited the Somme Valley. Yes, when you get into anything, we should remember. Yes, we should remember today as well as yesterday. That's why—

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thanks, James.

Mr. James D. McMullin: Sorry, I talk too much.

Mr. Scot Davidson: No, no, you don't. It's all good. Thanks, James. I appreciate that.

I will go back to the Lieutenant-Colonel and all the good work you've done with Belgium. I don't know if you've heard of the Westlake Brothers Souvenir Association. It brings students over from France. I am wondering if there's more work we can do with other countries.

You have a commemorative called The Last Steps. It's a memorial, and the association has done one in Belgium. Is there more teaming up the Government of Canada can do with other countries to innovate, and have more people visit Canada? We can visit there, and drive the whole process.

Ms. Corinne MacLellan: Absolutely. They have actual bodies, Holland and Belgium in particular. They have budgets that are dedicated to Canadian commemoration, so they work a little bit more strategically to unlock that and co-operate. I did it for three years. We did a lot of things on a shoestring. It's just a matter of getting there, and getting them here too. It's a two-way street. We definitely want them to come here. It was part of putting up The Last Steps. It was a portal idea. You have to come back this way, and spend some tourist dollars in Canada.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thank you so much. We'll lean on MP Fillmore for more budget.

The Chair: Up next, for five minutes, is MP Amos, please.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. Thank you to our tremendous witnesses.

This has been a really interesting discussion. I would like to go around the horn and ask a question about the museum of war as a mechanism to achieve commemoration. It's obviously an institution of national significance, and it's one that is situated very near to my riding. I have a number of constituents who work there. I'm really interested in getting the reflection of this learned group of witnesses on the successes and areas of potential improvement of the museum in terms of how it achieves the betterment of Canadian commemoration,

Perhaps we could start with Corrine, then Lee, then over to Sean and finally to James.

● (1705)

Ms. Corinne MacLellan: I had a really good experience working with the War Museum when we launched. The organization I worked with was Visit Flanders. I was a Canadian representative for them. We wanted to launch their Passchendaele 100 program, and they could not have been more accommodating. They helped us do a press conference. They hosted a reception for us with certain stakeholders. I found it them be a great asset.

They also have a loans program with regionally specific artifacts. For example, at the army museum at the Halifax Citadel, when we know we have a particular former service member from the area and/or we have a particular anniversary coming up, we can put in a request for a particular artifact. We'll display it. Some people may have seen lately that we had a special type of bagpipes from the First World War. They've been quite helpful with those kinds of things.

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Windsor.

Dr. Lee Windsor: It's a powerful question, and it's a tricky issue because you raise the challenge of differentiating between history and education versus commemoration.

I'm sure you are familiar with the War Museum mandate. They are not technically in the pure commemoration game. They are in the business of educating and informing Canadians about Canada's wartime past, including the recent past, and they have to walk that line. I have to do that myself, teaching in a university.

There is a time and a place for commemoration; there is a time and a place for learning, but as I mentioned before, now is a time of learning in order to expand our commemorative activity. I think the War Museum has an important role to play as one of many national and regional institutions that can help add firepower to this fight.

Sean's work with Historica Canada and the Memory Project is one way to do that. The War Museum's key contribution is their website, which makes primary documents available for students and the general public so that they can learn about the past. That is a powerful and important learning tool online, and also their data bank of interviews and oral histories. They have something in the order of 500 oral histories banked. That constitutes an important source for us to build out the story of Canadian military service. They are a critical partner.

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Smith.

Mr. Sean Smith: Most communities that I've been in have a museum of some sort. The Canadian War Museum has more than enough artifacts. The last time I was there was 1975. I think the one thing that stood out in my mind was that the one medal missing from the medals room was my dad's from Belgian Congo.

I think there's an opportunity for the museums of this country to work with the War Museum and have mobile museums. Bring those museum pieces to the museums of every community. It doesn't have to be at Remembrance Day. It doesn't have to be Remembrance month. Remembrance is when it arrives.

We have a class A museum in my community. There's a room specifically designed for something that they want to show off. This is an educational opportunity that can go year-round. If the museum has the resources and the artifacts to deliver to the museums around the country, the living history with video and those artifacts is an impactful piece for everybody.

Kids get to see things for the first time that they might not see any other time.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm afraid that's your time.

Up next we have MP Wagantall for five minutes, please.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you so much, Chair.

Mr. Smith, I have to admit I didn't know anything about the Battle of Medak Pocket. I just googled it and started reading. Oh, my word.

There are two paragraphs here I would like to read:

> The battle would change the face of peacekeeping, and influence how the Canadian military approached post-traumatic stress disorder.
>
> But as the soldiers returned home, the public was learning of the torture and death of a teenager at the hands of Canadian soldiers in Somalia. The violence of Medak raised questions about peacekeeping the government didn't want to answer.

I have quite a heart for what went on in Somalia and the whole issues around mefloquine, the inquiry and the disbanding of the Canadian Airborne. It hugely impacted the response of our government even in this case as well.

As hard as it may be to talk about, how does that make you feel when you realize that political implications often end up being the reason that you're in the situation you're facing today in regard to educating our youth?

● (1710)

Mr. Sean Smith: I lived through that. I was working in Land Force Western Area headquarters during the Medak Pocket Operation when I was posted in Edmonton. We had so many updates on what was going on with the troops over there. You're right. At the time we were also dealing with Somalia, and I was quite literally ordered not to wear my uniform to work because we didn't want to leave that impression on the general public. The military just shouldn't be seen.

It hit us hard. Then, with the disbanding of the regiment, I can't even describe how we felt other than unneeded. It was the most heart-wrenching moment of my life that I served my country because of a family of service, and suddenly they didn't want to talk about you because there's bad stuff happening in the public. It was dark.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you for sharing that.

I certainly hope that there will be opportunity to correct the record on a few of these things.

Mr. Sean Smith: You and me both.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: A lot of them.

Thank you so much for being willing to be here today. I deeply appreciate that.

I'm going to comment to my friend from the salad bowl wanting to see things increased in Ottawa.

This is something that I think needs to be heard. I'm from Saskatchewan. This is a huge country, and we do not have access to Ottawa. I have had two school groups come to Ottawa so I could show them the Hill. It costs a fortune; you can go to Paris for what it costs to go from my home area to Ottawa. I would highly encourage anything that we can do. If you are concerned about reaching our youth, we need to give them hands-on experiences like Mr. Smith was talking about, to be able to see and hear.

I can tell you, a lot of those who served in the Battle of the Atlantic were from my province. Prairie people are great sailors. I would just like to say that I'm not. I was on the HMCS *Fredericton*, and it was the worst experience of my life, so it wouldn't be me, but we need to reach out across this whole nation far more than we are and be very proud of what our armed forces have done, and let our young people know that.

That's just my affirmation of that.

I would like some comments on that. Mr. McMullin, in your conversations around these ones who have been missed out, we need to hear their stories. You've talked about a lot of them. How do we get that on record in the way that we need it done?

Mr. James D. McMullin: I don't really know. My dad never talked much about the military. We talk about military museums. I've been to the one in Mons, Belgium. It's probably the nicest museum in the world, and the smallest.

How do I get them? I wrote books. I have books here. I'm writing all the time. I give them away. I've sent them to Cape Breton, a whole book on servicemen.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Sir, I would like a copy of every one of your books, and I would love to have all those placemats, if you still have them available, for restaurants.

Mr. James D. McMullin: I'll send you copies. I only have one here. Whoever gets it will have to make one for everybody.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I promise I'll do that.

Mr. James D. McMullin: I'll just go quickly. The First World War and John Bernard Croak, his book, where he's buried...airmen from Cape Breton who lost their lives in the war, and there are some from New Waterford....

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay, we need these.

Mr. James D. McMullin: There are people who are not in the Book of Remembrance, and the list goes on. Yes, I'll send you a copy, but I can't send one to everybody there.

● (1715)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: That's understood. We'll make sure everyone gets a copy. Thanks so much.

Mr. James D. McMullin: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Up next we have MP Fillmore for five minutes, please.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Thanks, Chair. I'm going to direct the first of my questions to Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Corinne MacLellan.

In full disclosure to my colleagues on the committee, Corinne and I are friends. We came to know each other through the project that she discussed, The Last Steps. Corinne, I wanted to use your honorary rank and title. Two years ago, when I heard you had been granted that, it just felt so right. I was so proud. I just want to use it every time I can.

Congratulations again.

Ms. Corinne MacLellan: Please do.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: You're going to wear that rank out. I know you're so busy just doing everything you can all the time.

To my colleagues, please google “Last Steps Memorial Arch” and take a look at the work—the Halifax arch, the Passchendaele arch. They're remarkable. I liked how you described them as portals connecting the two sides of the ocean.

You've also raised a number of times the army museum at the Halifax Citadel here in Halifax. I would encourage members also, if you have a spare minute, to google it, or better yet visit the army museum there. It covers the entire military history of Canada, with incredible relics and artifacts, coming right up to contemporary wars. Another friend, an Afghanistan war veteran, Jessica Wiebe, is an artist. She has an exhibit in the army museum called *The Art of War*. Her drawings are absolutely heartbreaking and moving. I went to her because this idea of commemoration has to carry through different generations, different conflicts, and also through peacetime.

Canada and the world lost a number of people last year with the tragic helicopter accident that was assigned to HMCS *Fredericton*. We had the Snowbird accident with Captain Jenn Casey. We do need to find ways to commemorate all of these men and women.

I want to now tie that need to a recurring theme that comes up in our committee, which is youth. How do we activate youth, get them involved? As Master Corporal Smith said, we don't just carry the memory in us, we instill it in our kids. We put it in our youth and they carry it, and then they pass it along.

We heard ideas about curriculum, about travel. The Vimy 100, maybe there's something that could continue to go on for schoolkids.

Maybe I'll start with you, Lieutenant-Colonel MacLellan. Have you had any thoughts about this idea of youth, of travel, of commemorating people who have lost their lives in modern times?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Sorry to interrupt. I said “Loo-ten-ant”. I meant to say “Lef-ten-ant”. I just wanted to apologize to you for that, Lieutenant MacLellan.

Ms. Corinne MacLellan: That's okay. My CO would have corrected you, for sure, but that's not my role.

Andy, thank you for recognizing Captain Casey. Jenn was a very close friend of mine. I feel her with me right now. One of the greatest honours of my life was to read the family's statement when she passed.

This would be so meaningful to her, that we're talking about educating youth. It was her daily job. She was a public affairs officer, but she also was very instrumental in the interactive programs on the ground for the Snowbirds in public education and media relations.

I'm trying to answer your question. It's hard for me to get it out because it's an emotional time. We're just one week away from the anniversary of her death, right now.

When she died she was doing Operation Inspiration and looking forward to the ways that we commemorate and at those unique things that we can do to engage youth. This is a legacy of hers.

What it inspired me to do was a program called Operation Bluenose. We asked everybody to light up blue the first weekend of the sailing of the *Bluenose*. It was to give everybody an opportunity just to shingle something for us all to hang on to. We had a rough go here in Nova Scotia in the last year. It was surprising to me, to see how many people.... Obviously we had the Cyclone thing. We engaged all of the families. We engaged communities. People were pulling out their blue Christmas lights and whatnot and putting them on their front deck in the middle of July.

I'm off topic a little bit. I know a lot of the witnesses here have mentioned ways to engage, whether that's through digital media or telling stories.

This will be my last comment. One thing we did during the Flanders work that I was doing was a poem exchange for *In Flanders Fields* between a school in Poperinge, which is very near where John McCrae's military hospital was, along with a school here in Halifax. Each class read a stanza and then they had a Q and A afterwards. Some of those kids are still in touch today.

That's a very long-winded answer to say I think there are so many ways that we can do this. But it is absolutely something that's not going to happen naturally. We have to put effort into it.

I'm so pleased to hear all of the people speaking here of the work that they're doing. I want to thank you all for your service.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you.

Up next, we have MP Desilets, for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Windsor, I would like to ask you a brief question.

Last week, during a committee meeting, the witnesses talked about something that united them, and that is the categorization of conflicts. As we know, a peacekeeping operation, for example, is not a counter-terrorism operation.

In your opinion, does this classification affect how we commemorate the service or sacrifices of our veterans?

Dr. Lee Windsor: Mr. Desilets, I apologize, but I know very little French.

[*English*]

I will proceed in English.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: One does not apologize for speaking French.

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: It's a complicated issue, to say the least. I think the differentiation between them might speak to what Lieutenant-Colonel MacLellan was just addressing about how to engage youth. In any given classroom, you have 30 kids with a variety of interests, some interested in humanitarian aid, when it comes to, say, a world issues class. Imagine a classroom could pick from a roster of missions and students pick the one that interests them the most. One is interested in peacekeeping and in the establishment of UN peacekeeping with UNEF I in Suez, one has a parent who was in Afghanistan and they want to learn about the Afghan mission and another is a second-generation immigrant from Central Africa and they want to know about the Congo mission.

So let the students make a decision about what they're going to study in the classroom, based on that personal connection, and let them talk to each other about what makes them similar and different. I think what's similar about them is that every soldier who's dispatched, every soldier, sailor or aircrew member, are all doing the same job. A veteran is a veteran whether you serve on active operations or not. But there is a difference in the way they serve, and I think it's time to be honest with Canadians about how complex and diverse that is. So let's embrace the diversity, but we're going to have to talk to people about it in a complex way, and not assume they're too ignorant to get it. I think Canadians are a lot smarter than we give them credit for.

The Chair: Thank you. That is your time, sir.

Up next we have MP Blaney for two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Today has been a very impactful day. I represent 19 Wing here in my riding. I remember going there to spend a day and talking to some of our serving members. They said they train until they do it automatically. There's no fear, there's no anything, there is absolute training and action. I carry that with me all the time when I think of our veterans and what they've given, and how finely trained they were to do the work they needed to do.

Dr. Windsor, Mr. Smith talked about how impactful it was to not feel needed, to have to almost hide his service, which was really impactful for me. You talked about young veterans needing to see themselves represented when we remember, when we have a commemoration.

I'm just wondering if you could talk about what that would look like, if you have examples. You talked about how they need it for their good health, you talked about the wounded part, but I want to talk about how remembering and commemorating is good for their health.

● (1725)

Dr. Lee Windsor: The problem is that every veteran defers to the generation. There are many issues to work through. Every veteran defers to the generation that served previous to them. Did you notice how Sean spent a lot more time talking about the First and Second World Wars than his own service? Veterans are modest. I missed Medak, but I wrote the report on Medak afterwards as an intelligence operator.

I'm not sure, Ms. Wagantall, but the paragraphs you just read, I think I might have written them; I'm not sure. I'll have to check the attribution on that. Veterans today won't ask. They quietly ask if I can mention their mission at the Remembrance Day service, but don't take the attention away from the First and Second World War because they had it rougher than we did. The Second World War veterans said the First World War guys had it rougher. The Korea vets said the Second World War guys had it rougher. This is a challenge for us in that Canadian soldiers, sailors and aircrew members are humble, and we in some respects need to pull it out of us, just like we needed to pull it out of Sean.

The Chair: That's almost exactly time, Ms. Blaney. Thank you.

Up next, for probably about a three-minute question, Mr. Brassard, please.

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I want to thank everybody who has taken the time to be with us today. As I said earlier, this has been some very compelling testimony on not just the importance of commemoration, but the fact that we all need to work harder at doing it and much better at doing it as well. I do want to say thank you.

I want to say thank you to you, Mr. McMullin, for your family's service of 38 years, your own service in the military as well as that of all of those who served. It really is a generational thing. Many families have multiple members who serve in our armed forces, and it is incumbent upon us to remember that service.

My last question is to Mr. Borne.

You talked about the machinery and the artillery that you use for parades. You referenced the unofficial mobile museum, the artifacts, and the 30 military members who look after this. Oftentimes those open up conversations. I think in my case about the Central Ontario Peacekeepers and the investment that they've made in the LAV. They've had support from Veterans Affairs on that. How much more support would we need to give organizations like yours for these conversation starters, not just the people who are there, but the machinery and the mechanisms like the cannons that you spoke about, etc?

LCol Jacques Borne: We do not have any support from the government. We tried once, and we had no answer. But our equipment is worth about $200,000 now. We fund it ourselves. It's our own company; it's our own equipment. It does not belong to the army or to the government. We have the help of the honorary colonel.

Let's say for instance we go to the Ironman for the kickoff of the competition. They give us a grant or a certain amount of money. We don't need that much money, but what we would like to be is recognized as a museum in order to partake in the exchange of equipment with other museums. For instance, we wanted a 19 radio from the Second World War. There was advertising by all the museums asking if anybody would like to have one. We answered that, yes, we would need one. They said no problem, but a week after, they said we were not accredited so they were not allowed to give us one. We would have to be accredited as a museum. So the solution was they we bought our own 19 radio.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you, Mr. Borne.

I am sorry for not asking my question in French.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

That brings us to the end of the two hours today. It also brings us to the end of this study, and I want to just take a moment to thank all of the witnesses here and all of the witnesses over the last couple of meetings who have helped us with this study. I look forward to the report and to being able to present it to the House.

Thank you again to all of my colleagues and all the folks in Ottawa who allow us to be heard across the country.

I will just remind those on the committee that the next meeting is on May 12. It will be our first meeting on service dogs for veterans, with an appearance by departmental officials.

Thank you very much, everyone.

The meeting is adjourned.