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# Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg





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Monday, October 7, 2024

• (1545)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting 107 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motions adopted by the committee on Thursday, March 9, 2023, and Tuesday, December 5, 2023, the committee is resuming its study of the recognition of Persian Gulf veterans and wartime service.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders, and Ms. Blaney is participating by video conference.

Colleagues, I would like to introduce our new clerk, Marie-Hélène Sauv . She's new to the committee, but she's not new to the job, and she's well versed in the procedures. We're pleased to have her with us today.

I will introduce the witnesses we have with us.

[English]

I would like to welcome our witnesses with us today.

From the Department of National Defence, we have Major-General Erick Simoneau, deputy commander, military personnel command; Brigadier-General Luc Girouard, director general support, chief of joint logistics; and Dr. Sean Graham, historian, directorate of history and heritage.

[Translation]

From the Department of Veterans Affairs, we have people who are regulars at the committee, including Amy Meunier, assistant deputy minister, commemoration and public affairs branch.

[English]

We are also joined by Mr. Pierre Tessier, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy, planning and performance branch, and Mitch Freeman, director general, policy and research.

[Translation]

Welcome, everyone. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

We'll begin with Veterans Affairs Canada, so I invite Pierre Tessier to take the floor for the next five minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Tessier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members, for the invitation to appear before the committee today. As a veteran myself, I especially understand how Canadian veterans and their families have dedicated their lives to our nation's service. This service deserves to be recognized. I would like to thank the veterans and their families who are in the room or are watching today for their service.

Veterans Affairs Canada plays an important role in remembering and recognizing the enormous sacrifices made by those who have served in uniform.

[Translation]

These sacrifices are recognized in two ways: through commemoration and through benefits and services. Veterans Affairs Canada gratefully acknowledges the dedicated service of all veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces, including those who served in the Persian Gulf.

We value the ongoing and active dialogue between veterans' organizations, the Minister's advisory groups, veterans, their families, stakeholders and parliamentarians, which allows us to hear important perspectives on how best to recognize Persian Gulf veterans and other modern-day veterans.

[English]

The practice of categorizing military service is a CAF/DND process done with the interest of providing CAF members and veterans with the benefits to which they are entitled from National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada.

This categorization helps to determine what kinds of supports or compensation they should receive. Modern veterans benefit from a comprehensive framework of benefits and services, such as pain and suffering disability benefits, treatment benefits, financial benefits, rehabilitation benefits, education and training benefits, case management services, mental health programs and many others. This programming supports the various needs of the veterans community.

When it comes to determining eligibility benefits and services under the Veterans Well-being Act, two key principles come into play: the insurance principle and the compensation principle. These principles help to decide whether a veteran's medical condition is related to their military service.

The insurance principle, which provides 24-7 coverage, works like an all-inclusive insurance policy. Under this principle, if a veteran is serving in a special duty area or during a special duty operation—an SDA or an SDO—any medical condition that is diagnosed, established or aggravated during that time is automatically considered to be related to their service.

The compensation principle is different. It applies when a veteran's service doesn't fall under the special conditions of an SDA or SDO. Under this principle, to qualify for benefits there must be evidence that their medical condition was directly related to their military service.

Throughout Canada's military history, we have much to honour and remember. However, not all veterans feel connected to the stories of military achievements that occurred long before their time.

While we will always pay tribute to the pivotal events of the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War, we are increasingly focused on honouring Canada's modern-day veterans and operations. This includes those who served in the Persian Gulf and other missions in the Middle East in the 1990s.

• (1550)

[Translation]

We'll continue to ask modern veterans what kinds of commemorative and recognition activities interest them most. They should be able to recognize themselves in everything we do to honour them.

I can assure the committee that our department understands the importance of recognizing modern-day veterans, including those who served in the Persian Gulf.

[English]

This year, for example, in March we recognized the 10th anniversary of the end of Canada's mission in Afghanistan and 60 years since Canadians joined the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. In June we marked the 60th anniversary of the end of the United Nations operations in Congo, which included approximately 300 Canadians.

We're also making sure to recognize and remember those who served in domestic missions. For example, in recent years we've marked the 25th anniversary of our military's response to the Red River flood in Manitoba and to the crash of Swissair Flight 111 off the coast of Nova Scotia.

The veterans who supported these and modern-day operations are most deserving of being recognized for their service.

[Translation]

We will continue to do all we can to ensure that all our veterans are represented and recognized for their service to Canada.

[English]

I and my colleagues, Ms. Meunier and Mr. Freeman, would be pleased to answer your questions.

[Translation]

Thank you very much for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Tessier.

I would now like to invite Major-General Erick Simoneau to take the floor for the next five minutes.

**MGen Erick Simoneau (Deputy Commander, Military Personnel Command, Department of National Defence):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As you mentioned, my name is Major-General Erick Simoneau, deputy commander of military personnel command in the Canadian Armed Forces. With me today are Brigadier-General Luc Girouard of the strategic joint staff, and Sean Graham, our military historian.

We are pleased to be here to answer your questions regarding our policies and processes related to benefits, compensation and recognitions related to operations in order to support our members who, as you know, are willing to risk their lives in the service of our country.

[English]

In terms of areas of responsibilities, I would like to note that the Department of National Defence is responsible for serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, while responsibilities related to veterans' compensation and benefits reside with our colleagues from Veterans Affairs.

As it pertains to the process in which operations are classified as either special duty areas or special duty operations, General Girouard will be able to provide greater details as required on those aspects.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing discussion as it pertains to wartime service and special duty service. I think that it's important to point out up front that applying these categories is not meant to signal greater or lesser respect for service members and veterans, nor are such categories indicative of a lesser degree of risk on the part of those deployed. Rather, these categories are derived through analysis of risk and hardship for each operation based on their own merit.

Again, General Girouard will be able to dive into those aspects as required.

• (1555)

[Translation]

As I mentioned, veterans' benefits are the responsibility of Veterans Affairs Canada. That said, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces work closely with Veterans Affairs Canada to ensure that these benefits are and continue to be well suited to the needs of our members and veterans.

Thank you for inviting us here today. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your remarks, Major-General Simoneau.

We'll go to the first round of questions. I would ask my colleagues to indicate who they're speaking to.

I invite Mr. Blake Richards to take the floor for the next six minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Thank you.

I'll start by taking up Major-General Simoneau on the suggestion that Brigadier-General Girouard may be able to provide us with a bit more information about the differences or distinctions between active service, special duty service and wartime service.

Could you maybe enlighten us on the differences there, for clarity for the committee?

**Brigadier-General Luc Girouard (Director General Support, Chief of Joint Logistics, Department of National Defence):** Thank you very much for your question, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

As was said, my name is Brigadier-General Luc Girouard. Important to answering this question is the fact that I'm representing the strategic joint staff, which is one of the highest organizational levels in the Canadian Armed Forces, providing advice to our chief of the defence staff.

Our mission at the strategic joint staff is to provide timely and effective military analysis, decision support and command enablement to the chief of the defence staff, who is the principal military adviser to the Government of Canada.

That aspect is important to how I will proceed with the following answer. I believe the question centred around the main differences between wartime service and special duty service.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** That's correct.

**BGen Luc Girouard:** I'll just consult my notes there for one second, please, if you will.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** That's my time, I assume.

**BGen Luc Girouard:** When it comes to special duty service, subsection 2(1) of the Veterans Well-being Act defines the term "special duty service" as service in a designated special duty area or a special duty operation.

For these two areas, we can boil it down to the evaluation of risk. In a latter sense, it can also evaluate the hardships that our serving members will be serving under.

Again, it's important to highlight that it is focused for serving members and not specifically for veterans—

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, but we only get so much time, so I'm trying to make sure we get to where we need to be.

What you're telling me, I think, essentially, if I were to boil it down into a very short sentence, is there's a determination that's made about the risk level, and that's what determines the difference between special duty service and wartime service. If I were to boil it right down, is that fair? Am I accurate in reflecting what you've said there?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** Thank you—

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Just try to make it brief, please.

**BGen Luc Girouard:** We do not make the difference. From a Canadian Armed Forces perspective, we do not consider wartime service when it comes to how our members are going to be...or under what conditions they're going to be serving. It is all about the special duty service and what levels of hardship and risk they will be compensated for.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Okay. I'm not sure I'm clear, but I'm not sure we're going to get there in the short period of time we have.

What I hope I'm not hearing is that somehow we've determined that those who served in the Persian Gulf or Afghanistan were not under an incredible level of risk. I almost feel like that's what I'm hearing, and if that's what I'm hearing, that's concerning to me, because they clearly were. Frankly, they served in wars, and I think you would probably agree with me, but I know you have to read what's on your page.

Let me ask this. I don't know if the answer will be different, but I'll ask both DND and VAC, and if it's the same answer for both, one of you can provide it, but if it's different for both, I'd like to hear from each organization.

In terms of insurance coverage for those who are injured in fighting, whether it be in a special duty area versus in what's designated as a war, is there a difference for those two types of service?

• (1600)

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I can take the question, given it's compensation-related: There is no difference in the coverage 24-7 around the insurance principle for both of those.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** We have actually heard testimony from veterans in this study who indicated to us that their understanding of the policy is that the coverage of injuries under special duty service is, in fact, significantly less than what it would be if it's considered wartime service. Are you indicating to us that this is not accurate? Do veterans of conflicts—for example, the Persian Gulf or Afghanistan—actually get less than a Korean War veteran would get, for example?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** The way I would frame or answer the question is that it's a bit more; it's not just the coverage. VAC legislation and programs have evolved through the years. Persian Gulf veterans can fall under what is called the Pension Act, which also includes wartime service if they applied for disability before April 1, 2006, before the Veterans Well-being Act came into effect.

Under the Veterans Well-being Act, if they have another condition as a result of the initial condition after this date or they have a new condition as a result of that service, the Pension Act disability pension covered economic and non-economic factors into the pension, whereas the Veterans Well-being Act that came into force on April 1, 2006—

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Are you indicating that it's more in relation to the 2006 changes? Are you saying that there would be no difference otherwise in the treatment of a Korean War veteran, a Persian Gulf veteran, an Afghan veteran or any other veteran?

**The Chair:** Mr. Tessier, you have 15 seconds to conclude, please.

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** That's correct. The main difference between the Pension Act and the Well-being Act and the treatment between different groups is the April 1, 2006, date.

There are some nuances between war service and others—SDO, SDA—in the Pension Act, but where there are differences, Veterans Affairs ensures that every veteran is taken care of, especially around long-term care.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

Before I go on, I'd like to welcome Mr. Mel Arnold, who will replace Mr. Fraser Tolmie.

Welcome.

Mr. Wilson Miao, you have six minutes to ask questions, please.

**Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First I'd like to thank our officials for joining us today from both DND and VAC.

I'd like to direct my following question to the National Defence official.

When the Governor in Council placed a Canadian CAF member from service to active service, who is informed of this classification if we're focusing on the Persian Gulf war?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Active service is a construct that is tied to the Pension Act. The current legal legislative framework around an operation stems from the Veterans Well-being Act. The Minister of National Defence has been delegated authorities, as was mentioned by my colleague here, to approve special duty service, either through operation or area.

The whole construct of analyzing the risk and hardship to derive the proper compensation of benefits stems from the Veterans Well-being Act. It's not triggered by active service or not. It's rather an SDS, a special duty service, and that's what my colleague here could dive into as required, but it's an analysis of the risk and hard-

ship for every operation to which the Government of Canada, through the GIC, sends us or deploys us towards.

• (1605)

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** Thank you for sharing that.

In comparison, if I were to compare the Persian Gulf War right now with the Korean War, what is the difference based on this?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** The legal construct around those two operations is different. One, the Korean War, stems from the Pension Act, and every operation thereafter is covered through the Veterans Well-being Act, as I just described.

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** What is the reason the Gulf War is not included as active service?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, this is a question that would be better answered by the Department of Justice. It's legislative in nature. All I can say is we have to operate within the bounds of current legislation, which is the Veterans Well-being Act.

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** Thank you.

Could you please share with us how officials from DND use the mission classification system to determine whether a typical service is a wartime service compared to a special duty service?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, that's a little bit like the same question we received earlier. It all boils down to the current legislation that is in place that we must abide by. There's no wartime service terminology in the Veterans Well-being Act. There's rather a nomenclature of special duty area and operations, which we—

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** Is there no policy to address that?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, this is not a matter of policy, but rather a matter of legislation in place, and we operate within the bounds of current legislation.

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** I'd like to direct my following question to the official from VAC.

In the sense of commemoration, right now, having spoken to our Gulf War veterans, they are not experiencing commemoration as they would if they were a Korean War veteran or took part in other special duty service. Can you share a little more on that piece with us?

**Ms. Amy Meunier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs):** Thank you. I'd be happy to answer that question.

I just wanted to thank those veterans who served in the Persian Gulf. I know that they've brought to the attention of all of us the need to increase recognition and commemoration of modern efforts. I appreciate their raising this and bringing this to our attention.

VAC has a 10-year commemorative strategic plan. It's available on our website. It sets out how we will go about commemorating and recognizing post-Korean conflicts. Just in the last year alone, in 2023, with regard specifically to the Persian Gulf, our Veterans' Week materials profiled the Gulf War and talked about other efforts in Asia. We also, this year, commemorated the 33rd anniversary of the end of the Persian Gulf. We tend to do larger ceremonies on fifth anniversaries.

For Veterans' Week this year, we also have more learning materials that profile Gulf War veteran Bettina Fuchs, who talks about her service there. It's an important period of time, given that it was the first time women served in combat roles during that era.

We also, if you look at the 10-year strategic plan referred to as "CAF around the world", you'll see that each year we will focus on the region in the world where Canadians have served. Next year will be CAF in the Americas, and I'm really excited that in 2026 it will be CAF in the Middle East. I very much look forward to working alongside veterans of the Persian Gulf and others who served in the Middle East to find the appropriate ways to commemorate them and to bring more attention to their service so that Canadians can participate in that effort.

• (1610)

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** Thank you.

I have a quick question. There has been some discussion about recognition on the National War Memorial. Can you briefly walk us through how dates are recognized on the National War Memorial?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Sure. I'll just start by saying that the National War Memorial was unveiled in 1939 to commemorate Canada's response to the First World War. At the time, people probably were thinking that it would be the war to end all wars, but unfortunately that wasn't the case.

In 1982, it was rededicated to include the Second World War and the Korean War. However, over that period of time, it came to symbolize the sacrifice and service of all Canadians who served in the pursuit of peace and freedom.

In 2014, there were two additional inscriptions added, one of which is the inscription, "In Service to Canada", and that's to recognize all those who have served in the past, who are serving today and who will serve in the future.

For all of the missions that are captured by "In Service to Canada", if you look on the National War Memorial website, it lists all of the places where Canadians have served that fall under that banner.

If we look at the missions that are reflected on the memorial, which are inscribed individually, you have the South African War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War and Afghanistan. Arguably, those are the five largest missions with the greatest number of casualties, so those are inscribed individually.

In terms of the Persian Gulf, that would be captured under "In Service to Canada". I do recognize that perhaps not everybody fully appreciates what that means, and I look forward to coming up with some options to make sure Canadians are clear about what that means.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Meunier.

We'll now give the floor to Luc Desilets for the next six minutes.

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

Good morning, colleagues.

Thank you to our many guests for being with us today.

Mr. Tessier, in your opinion, which department is responsible for our two categories of veterans, those considered to be wartime veterans and those on special duty? Is it the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of National Defence?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Thank you for the question.

[English]

I'm trying to understand the context between the two, because there is the categorization of missions—special duty area and special duty operation—and then the difference between the two acts.

I'll start with the two acts, and if that doesn't answer the question, we can then go to the SDA versus the other pieces.

As I said earlier, the SDA, or wartime service, as per the two acts, does put in place the insurance principle, which means 24-7 coverage during those operations. Whether that's in the Pension Act or the Veterans Well-being Act, that remains the same. The Veterans Well-being Act was put in place in April—

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Mr. Tessier, everyone has a definition in mind when it comes to categorizing the type of war. Who makes all those decisions, the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of National Defence?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** I'd like to speak to that, if I may.

In my opinion, it's neither, because we act in accordance with the laws that are in effect. In 2006, we went from the Pension Act to the Veterans Well-being Act to update services for Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans. The new legislation was put in place for a number of reasons.

It's not really about the terms we use; it's about the tools available to support our members.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Be that as it may, there are two categories of veterans. Do I have that right?

• (1615)

**MGEn Erick Simoneau:** I would say that there are currently two categories of veterans. There are those who served in the First World War, the Second World War or the Korean War. Those veterans are covered by one of the two acts. Veterans who served in other wars are covered by the other act.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay. Does that seem right to you?

**MGEn Erick Simoneau:** That's not up to me.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I appreciate that, and I was expecting that answer.

My understanding is that there are two categories of veterans. Someone who lost a leg in the Korean War will be entitled to specific compensation, but someone who lost their leg in the Gulf War will get 40% less. Do I have that right?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'd like to say something, if I may.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Sure.

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Mr. Chair, I would like to correct something.

Under the Pension Act, anyone who applied for a disability pension before April 1, 2006, would have been covered through the Pension Act. It's not necessarily that one act covers only war service veterans; it covers all veterans who applied previous to April 1, 2006, and any subsequent claims they would have. Anybody who applied after April 1, 2006, would have been covered through the Veterans Well-being Act.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I'll rephrase my question.

We have some Gulf War veterans here. Do those veterans get the same benefits as veterans of previous conflicts? Do they get the same amounts for the same injuries?

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'll go back to the premise of the piece, which is that the VAC legislation has changed over the years. Even up to 2006, the Pension Act would have had a number of changes over its lifetime since the Second World War.

The Pension Act and the disability pension itself covered economic and non-economic factors in one pension, whereas the Veterans Well-being Act that came into force in 2006, superseding the Pension Act, is a broader approach to veterans' care and benefits, based on the needs of the veteran, and facilitates the transition to civilian life.

There was a reason that there were advocates for the new well-being act. It includes additional financial benefits. The two are separate in the way they're applied. They're different acts. It includes disability benefits, rehabilitation services, health services, educational assistance, continuing care and quality of life.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Mr. Tessier, I really like you, but am I to understand that ensuring fairness would require a bill to amend the Pension Act and the Veterans Well-being Act? What we've been hearing here for weeks is that there's no fairness.

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Yes, the act itself would have to be amended.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** So things aren't fair right now, and the act would have to be amended to change that.

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Any changes to benefits impacting veterans, including those who have been within current designated SDAs regarding the current operations, would need a decision by Parliament, and they would require analysis and consultation. It does not mean that one is better than the other. They are different, and they were put in place for different reasons.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

Before I go to Ms. Blaney, I'd like to make a comment. I've been listening to the questions, and I get the sense that folks around the table want to dig a little deeper into this issue.

Mr. Tessier, you talked about April 2006 and the benefits and all that, whether for veterans or for the Department of National Defence. There's something here we aren't managing to sort out, so if you have any documents you can send the committee to support our study, that would be helpful. We still have some time left, so maybe we'll figure it out by the end of the meeting.

[English]

With that, I'd like to invite Ms. Blaney to ask questions for six minutes.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate your intervention.

I have several questions.

I want to start by saying I feel like I'm finally getting a grasp on it, and then suddenly, I am completely lost again.

My first question is more of a request than a question, and it's for Mr. Tessier.

To come back to what I'm trying to get clarity on, could you provide to the chair a chart so that we could look at the detailed difference between a Korean War veteran and a Persian Gulf veteran who are both filing for the same benefits? I heard my colleague use the example of the loss of a leg earlier.

Could you include the amount of each of the benefits? What I mean by the amount of the benefit is the financial value of each of those benefits. What we're hearing very clearly from the Persian Gulf veterans is that there's a distinct difference. What I need to understand is where that difference is. I've heard some members of this committee say that the only difference they see is the access to long-term care beds.



I want to know what the benefits are that they get and what the dollar amount is, even if it's a range. Could you let us know what part is taxable and what is not taxable, and what each veteran would have to do to have their claim adjudicated and appealed, if necessary?

Is that something you could do for us?

• (1620)

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'd be happy to provide that documentation to the committee.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you. That would be extremely helpful.

My next request of you, because I know you're such a kind man, is for another document.

Do you have a document that describes for people like us what the difference is between the Pension Act and the Veterans Well-being Act?

I think that's probably a question that's very hard and complex, and it will take a lot of time to answer. Is there a document we could look at that compares them that you could send to the committee?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Definitely we can provide a document that compares both.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you. That would be really helpful for us as we do this study.

I'm going to come to National Defence now.

First of all, I want to thank all the members in uniform in this room for their current service. I deeply appreciate it.

I represent 19 Wing, here in the Comox area. I have a lot of love for the people who serve there, because they take really good care of me and have certainly taught me a lot.

I heard that the legislation is the issue. I'm hoping you can help me understand this. I know the Korean veterans fought a fight very similar to the one we're seeing the gulf veterans fight right now. When they were added to wartime service, was it through a legislative method? If it was not, by what method were the Korean veterans added to wartime service?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, maybe I'll pass the first portion of the question to my historian for the why.

What I could tell you up front is that the legislation was passed in 1985. At that time, we had three wars—World War I, World War II and Korea. That piece of legislation encompassed those three wars.

Is there anything you want to add, Dr. Graham?

**Dr. Sean Graham (Historian, Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence):** Yes. The designation of "special duty area" dates to the sixties. The first reference to special duty area comes in 1965.

A challenge with Korea specifically is that the veterans of Korea were included in the war veterans acts prior to that, and then the

special duty area was declared in the 1960s. We see multiple changes to that in various orders in council.

It was done through orders in council prior to a change in legislation, which provided the authority to the Minister of National Defence.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you. That's really helpful to have on the record.

I'm going to ask National Defence again and let you guys decide who's the wisest person to answer, because you know your expertise far better than I do.

What we're hearing very clearly is that there is a concern that the way the terminology is used does not necessarily fit the task that is given.

Is the term "war service" being phased out? We have the special duty service. Is there any sort of movement or exploration about doing something around terminology like "active service"?

What we've heard very clearly from the veterans who have served and who are the experts that what they were tasked to do was incredibly dangerous and incredibly impactful on their lives, and they're not feeling that recognition after that service. One of the veterans even said that they did different types of service and that this was very much active service and was not special duty service.

I'm wondering, in terms of the terminology, if there is there any exploration about broadening that. Are we going to be using the term "war service" any longer, or is that something we're changing?

• (1625)

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, I'll make my best attempt to answer this important question.

It presumes that the legislation is an issue here, which I don't think it is. The two pieces of legislation are distinct in their own right. The current legislation actually provides, from a serving CAF member's perspective, all the required authorities to our minister to actually declare a special duty service. That then clinches that a committee will look at the risk factors and the hardships, from which will derive proper compensation, benefits and recognition, so all the tools are there to properly support CAF members when deployed.

The fact that we don't use "wartime service" in the current legislation doesn't negate any level of effort, from an official's perspective, to support the members. We feel that all the tools are there to actually provide for and support our members.

I hope that helps.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Blaney.

Let's go back to Mr. Blake Richards for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Thanks.

I have a quick follow-up question.

I think it was you, Major-General, who mentioned the legislation in 1985, which would have mentioned only World War I, World War II and Korea, as you said.

What piece of legislation was that?

In order to accomplish what the Persian Gulf veterans and the Afghanistan veterans would like, would it be as simple as adding those conflicts, or others that might qualify, to that piece of legislation? Is the fix that simple?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, I did mention 1985, which is the Pension Act. It has now been superseded or supplanted by the Veterans Well-being Act, for various reasons. I'm not the expert to dive into that.

What I can tell you is that with the Veterans Well-being Act, the Minister of National Defence now has proper authorities to approve a special duty operation or area, which, as I mentioned earlier, clinches the whole analysis of risk and hardship to provide for our members.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Thank you. That helps.

I'd like to turn to Veterans Affairs. It's probably you, Ms. Meunier. I think you're the head of the commemoration section.

We know from the last meeting we had that the Minister of National Defence had not met with the Persian Gulf veterans association, although we understand he has now reached out to them. Interestingly enough, it was after being called out for not meeting with them. This is good, but it's sad that it took that for it to happen. I know your minister met with the Persian Gulf association.

Can you tell me how many times either you, as head of the commemoration section, or other senior members of Veterans Affairs have met with Persian Gulf Veterans?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** We've formally met, sitting face to face, three or four times, or maybe five. I speak to some representatives weekly. I'm in constant contact. I know my director general of commemorations has had conversations, as well as the former associate deputy minister and our deputy minister. I might not be able to put an exact number on that.

We've been in constant communication.

• (1630)

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Would it be fair to say that there have been dozens of communications, or more?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Yes, I think that's fair.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Whether these were meetings or other forms of communication, in the time you've had with the Persian Gulf association, can you tell me what the specific asks were from those veterans to you or the department, and whether those requests were then brought to the minister?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** During my tenure, they have ranged from questions about what is inscribed on the National War Memorial to improving recognition for Persian Gulf and other veterans, such as those who served in Afghanistan or Rwanda. We've talked about benefits and services. Questions came today about the Pension Act versus the Veterans Well-being Act.

Yes, I would say that the minister is aware of those conversations through briefing material, as well as directly from the veterans.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I'm sorry. Can we back up a second, if you don't mind?

You mentioned improving recognition and you also mentioned benefits and services. I think we've established what those were.

Can you tell me what they were specifically asking for, in terms of improved recognition? What were the specific requests?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** The most specific one is for Persian Gulf to be inscribed on the National War Memorial.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** What I'm seeing here is a bit of a pattern. These guys are asking for this. I don't think it is a difficult thing they're asking for.

We've seen delays in the construction of the national monument to the mission in Afghanistan. We've seen this committee being stymied by government members when we were trying to get documents produced in order to find out why the Prime Minister interfered to delay that. We saw a directive come out banning prayer at Remembrance Day ceremonies, which we were able to push back on. We saw the 10th anniversary of the end of the mission in Afghanistan come around last spring, with lots of speculation among veterans and even at the CBC about whether the department forgot until the last minute and failed to plan a proper ceremony or purposely wanted to keep it small. We've seen a lack of Canadian flags in the colour party at official Canadian events for the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

We heard that the Persian Gulf veterans are asking for something pretty simple here. I guess what I'm wondering is this: Why is it so difficult for this government to simply honour the legacy of Canadian veterans? There are so many examples, and it seems to be a pattern.

Can you give us any insight into that?

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. Richards, but the time has gone. We have until 5:40, so you will be able to come back and get answers from the witnesses here.

Mr. Sean Casey, you have five minutes. Please go ahead.

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

To all of the folks in uniform here today, thank you for your service.

Ms. Meunier, I'm sure you've been at the committee often enough to know that you have the right and ability to respond to any of these questions in writing once the committee is done, once the session wraps up. It's too bad that you weren't afforded enough time to be able to answer that rather scathing indictment of your work.

This is for Mr. Tessier. We heard this evidence, Mr. Tessier, on September 19. Bear with me, please.

When veterans talk about 'disability benefits', we are primarily talking about the single and sole benefit that every veteran gets. There is only one. That is the monthly disability tax-free injury benefit. In the context of wartime service, that's \$3,000. That's the maximum amount. It's a \$3,000 tax-free amount of money that if you are 100% incapacitated, you will receive \$3,000 tax free.

Later paragraphs read:

In the context of the Veterans Well-being Act, they've reduced that number to \$1,200.

That monthly disability benefit is by far the most contentious piece of data when it comes to veterans. Again, a German bullet pays \$3,000. A Taliban bullet pays \$1,200.

My question to you, sir, is this: Is that true?

• (1635)

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'll walk through both pensions. I think it's important.

Really, what's being referenced here is the difference between the Pension Act and the Veterans Well-being Act, and both acts are different. VAC legislation programs have evolved through the years, as I've said.

Persian Gulf veterans can fall under the Pension Act and receive the pension for disability under the Pension Act if they applied for the disability pension before April 1, 2006. They will qualify under the Veterans Well-Being Act for any other condition as a result of either their initial condition after this date or if they have a new condition that's resulted from that service. The key is April 1, 2006.

The Pension Act's disability pension covers two things. It grouped economic and non-economic factors into one pension, whereas the Veterans Well-being Act that came into force in April of 2006 separated those two items. In replacing or superseding the Pension Act, it became broader in its services. It has the pain and suffering compensation—which is in non-economic benefits—and it includes the additional pain and suffering for someone who has integration issues going back into civilian life. Those are the non-economic pieces.

The economic piece is primarily around the income replacement benefit. It is a benefit that provides 90% of a veteran's previous salary in the military if they cannot return to work after they've retired.

Those are the two main differences in how I would explain or capture that.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** I'm going to offer something else up to you and ask you if you agree with it.

Wartime service veterans and special duty veterans receive the same benefits for any service-related injury or illness under the Pension Act or the Veterans Well-being Act. The only exception would be the eligibility for long-term care.

Do you agree with that?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I would say that under the Pension Act, war service veterans and anybody who applied through the Pension Act for a pension before April 1, 2006, would have access to the same disability pension. There would be some minor differences around long-term care.

Under the Veterans Well-being Act, as I've described, there's a disability pension, which is called "additional pain and suffering"; an IRB, or income replacement benefit; mental health benefits; and other items.

With respect to long-term care, for any veteran who comes forward and has a need, Veterans Affairs has taken care of them and continues to do that, and continues to look at long-term care into the future. As long-term care in our provincial jurisdictions evolves, we continue to look at this in ensuring that our veterans are well taken care of into the future.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

[Translation]

We'll go back to Mr. Desilets for two and a half minutes.

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

Mr. Girouard, in your opinion, is the Department of Defence in charge of developing the policy on service medals and the wearing of official and civilian uniforms?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** I'm going to ask Major-General Simoneau to answer your question.

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** That's called delegating upward; that's perfectly fine.

Making sure that we recognize members effectively and appropriately is really part of Military Personnel Command's mandate.

That means it's up to us to manage all policies related to recognition. We do not take this task lightly. We're very serious about it. We have two committees, including a subcommittee that I chair. Those committees make recommendations to the chief of the defence staff, who then asks Rideau Hall to award those recognitions to our members.

As with pay and benefits, each operation is examined on its own merits, and time is a factor as well. Just because an operation starts at a certain level of remuneration and recognition doesn't mean that it won't change over time, because the risk level changes, too. We're seeing this very clearly in the Middle East and Europe right now, as the level of risk and difficulty changes. We adapt to the circumstances, and it's important to keep that conversation going.

• (1640)

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I'm coming back to you, Mr. Girouard.

You received three glowing commendations for your accomplishments in Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Who gave you those commendations?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** They were awarded to me after each mission by the chain of command, by the military.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Were you awarded three Canadian medals by Canada?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** They're not medals. They're the little insignia I'm wearing here. They're not related to the mission as such, but rather to the actions carried out during that mission.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Is it the same thing for the commendation for Kuwait?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** It is.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Was that in connection with the liberation of Kuwait?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** It was not in connection with the liberation of Kuwait. It was during the mission against the Islamic State, at the support base that was in Kuwait. It wasn't during the Gulf War.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay. Was the liberation insignia given to you by Kuwait?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** No. I didn't serve in Kuwait in the Gulf War.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Desilets, thank you very much. I'm sorry, but your two and a half minutes are up.

[English]

Let's go back to Ms. Blaney for two and a half minutes.

Please go ahead.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to come back to National Defence.

I heard your response to my question. It's a little bit confusing, but a bill was passed in 1985, I believe. It encompassed the three wars. I think that orders in council made changes in the interim. If I got any of that wrong, can we make sure that's clarified?

Then I heard that in modern times, it's the Minister of National Defence who decides what type of service it is, and a committee decides the amount of benefits. Did I get that right?

If so, can you tell the committee a little bit more about who is on the committee, who's in charge and how they determine the benefit amounts? Who are they appointed by?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** I will answer the first portion of your question, and I'll pass it over to General Girouard for the second portion.

It is correct that the Pension Act was passed in 1985. At that time, they were trying to provide the best compensation benefits to veterans and service members, and we had three wars' worth of people to support at that time.

On April 1, 2006, the second piece of legislation came into force. They are two different pieces of legislation; they're akin, but they're different. Every claim that was put in and every type of recognition, compensation and benefit for serving members came under that umbrella. The Veterans Well-being Act is the umbrella for everything after 2006, so that's correct, in that sense.

I'll pass it over to General Girouard.

[Translation]

**BGen Luc Girouard:** Thank you very much.

[English]

I can speak to the composition of the departmental hardship and risk committee. It is chaired by a member of the strategic joint staff, Brigadier-General Huet, the director general of operations. On the committee there are also members representing the RCMP, one member representing our joint operations command, and the committee secretary. There are obviously other members on the committee. The deputy chair is also a member of the strategic joint staff. There are advisers who represent our health services community and our intelligence community, as well as a list of ex officio members on the committee itself.

Within that committee is a subcommittee with similar representation. It's meant to do more in-depth examinations on specific questions that the committee might be dealing with.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Dowdall, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the guests for being here today. I also want to thank them for their service.

This has been an interesting study thus far. Really, what I've gotten out of it since it began are two things, quite frankly. One is the recognition issue, which I think you must hear quite regularly. The second is that perhaps there's a financial implication to it.

I know that you're bound by policy, Mr. Tessier, in that you have to follow the latest Veterans Well-being Act. You kind of sound like a mortgage broker or an insurance agent, just giving me all the paperwork. Is that perhaps flawed, in some ways?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'd go back to the premise of the legislation that we have: No specific legislation currently would allow us to—

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Yes, that I understand, but do you not think, as a professional in that industry, who I imagine would get...?

I want to read this email, just to get your response. This is what I get regularly. I just got this response in the committee:

Hello. I have served as an air staff officer in Canada's joint headquarters in Bahrain from October 1990 until March 1991. I was sent on two days' notice a few months after I got married, with zero idea of what I was getting into and absolutely no idea when or if I would be coming back.

The Canadian government has been unfair to those of us who have proudly worn the Canadian flag in the Persian Gulf, not recognizing us as war veterans when we're in fact involved in a war.

If the government actually cared, which they clearly don't, they would understand that this service we so freely gave in the face of unknown circumstances was due to our devotion to service and our willingness to go for Canadian values.

He's calling for us to fix it.

What would be your answer to an individual giving me that email or phone call? What would you say?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** From a departmental perspective, currently we continue to work within the bounds of our legislation to provide the best services we can to our veterans, and—

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Then the legislation is probably flawed, to some degree, because there are a lot of these individuals. That's what I'm trying to say.

Basically, what I'm trying to understand is that we're here, we have individuals who have been lobbying for this since I believe 2017, and really nothing's happened. Has there been a study on this? I think the financial part might be an equation. Has anyone in the policy department looked at it and said that if we did happen to change this, if we did go through the legislation—because we have been asked for seven or eight years—what would be the issue and what would we have to deal with?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I would actually go back to the Veterans Well-being Act, which has been updated a number of times since 2016 to add a number of benefits.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** But what I'm saying is that for the Persian Gulf veterans who are here, for what they've been asking for in terms of the differences between the two acts....

I understand that you're definitely bound by policy and that it's not your issue, but has there ever been a study by the departments, or by any department at all, to say that if we did happen to change things, this is what it could possibly cost us to do that? I think the other side of it, the recognition, is probably not as hard to deal with.

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** The Pension Act has been in place since 2006, so it's been a number of years. The approach that I've seen—I've been at Veterans Affairs for two years—is to continue to build off the Veterans Well-being Act and improve it. There have been changes—

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Has there ever been a study to bring some of the issues into that act for Persian Gulf vets?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'm sorry...?

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** In all of these meetings we've had, they've asked for things. Has anything been studied from a financial perspective? I think you can deal with the recognition part. The financial part is the part I'm interested in.

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** All I will say, because I don't want to premise what the government or others....

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Contextually, I can say that the last large study would have been prior to 2019, with the implementation of pension for life, which was part of the Veterans Well-being Act. It was a fairly substantial study that took into account feedback from veterans.

• (1650)

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** It was five years ago, but not for the Persian.... You haven't put any of their information into the program to see what some of the things they're asking for would cost.

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** There would have been information coming from all veterans who served post Korea. It's not just for the Persian Gulf.

I understand why you're asking that question specifically and why we're here. However, it's considering all the missions and all

the veterans who have served since Korea. All of that was factored into the analysis in 2019 for those changes.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** When is the next update?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Currently, there are no planned changes to legislation that I know of at this time.

If there are changes to designations and associated risks, we will work to develop options and work with counterparts to update legislation. This would be the approach that would happen. We talked a lot in this committee about barriers. That would be the path to updating legislation, if it were to happen.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I would now like to welcome Ms. Lianne Rood to the committee.

I invite Ms. Hepfner to ask questions for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I am going to switch gears a little.

We are in Women's History Month. I would like to thank not only all who are serving but also veteran members for their service. I will also point out and thank all women veterans and the service-women serving this day.

Assistant Deputy Minister, you mentioned briefly, earlier in your testimony, a woman who served in the Persian Gulf. I wrote down "Bettina", but I didn't get her full name.

Could you tell us more about the role of women in that particular conflict, and also about the evolution of women's participation in the armed forces?

Maybe I'll start with you, then move over to.... I know we have a historian on the panel today as well.

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** It's Bettina Fuchs, and her story will be profiled this month, along with those of several other women veterans who shared their stories with us. That will be shared throughout the month.

I might turn to Dr. Graham to cover the history of women in service.

I will say that over the last number of years, we've taken more steps to make sure we're capturing the stories of women veterans, building in lesson plans and learning material. Each year, we send out to educators five million packages of educational material that is related to commemoration recognition. We'll be focusing on women veterans so that as youth read this information, they become much more aware of the roles women have played over the years.

I'm sure Dr. Graham can tell us a bit about how women have played a key role throughout history.

**Dr. Sean Graham:** I will say briefly that women have always been an important part of the armed forces, dating back to the First World War, when they were primarily in a medical capacity as nurses. There were changes in the Second World War, but they were still in non-combat operations in theatre. They were in different capacities. Certainly, nursing was a significant part of that. As mentioned, the Persian Gulf was the first time they were in combat operations.

Of course, women are an essential component of the armed forces today, in all capacities.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** I have a friend who joined the infantry reserves back in the early 1990s, so I saw from her perspective that it was a big transition.

I'll go back to you, Assistant Deputy Minister. We recently finished a study in this committee about the experience of women veterans, and we heard that a lot of women don't even consider themselves veterans. Does that report inform your work going forward?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Yes, it does inform our work, and it certainly aligns with what we had been hearing directly from women veterans, such as the frustration of showing up at commemorative events and being asked if those were their uncle's, their grandfather's, their father's or their husband's medals.

Part of what we need to do is make sure that we are profiling women veterans so that people don't make assumptions about women in service. It's really important that we share those stories far and wide and be very clear about what their service was. Those of us in the military or commemorative space are familiar with it, but the average individual in any city across Canada or around the world should know very well where women have served and of their very immense contributions to the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1655)

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** In our last committee meeting, we heard from veterans—and I don't have to qualify that I don't fully understand everything—that they have certain medals they're allowed to wear over their heart, and there are other medals that have to be placed on the other side. We heard today that part of this is compensation for the veterans, the difference in the service, but a big part of it is feeling valued for the service and the work they did when they were sent overseas.

Major General, I see you're reaching for your button, so I'll let you start. Thank you.

[Translation]

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** I'll speak to that, if I may.

[English]

Thank you for the question. It's a great question.

Medals are not related to benefits or compensation. They're really about recognition. There's an order of merit on where the medal stands on our chest, but it really has to be provided by a head of state or equivalent, so that's what drives it to be worn on one side or the other side.

I had the exact same conversation with my veteran friends before the committee appearance. As long as it's provided to you by a rec-

ognized head of state, it's worn on this side, the left side. All the ones that we receive from other countries, other states, usually go on the other side from the Canadian decorations. Those are the criteria.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** Thank you. I think that's my time.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Hepfner.

Colleagues, I'd like to make a proposal that we start with a round of six minutes each, and we will have five minutes to close, or would you like to go back to five minutes as usual, and so on?

I said at the beginning that we would start at six minutes each. Because we have time to have a six-minute round, would you like longer questions instead of five minutes? You can split the six minutes.

It will be six minutes, then.

I'd like to start with Mrs. Wagantall for six minutes, please.

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

Thanks to you all for being here.

I have my notes and I'll do what I can. I've been here for nine years, and I still don't understand it. I hear all the time that our veterans live in confusion. When you spoke to the fact, I heard that there are categories now in compensation, and there are many more benefits, and that along with the new veterans charter have come higher backlogs and more of a sense of insurance requirements to prove over and over again that they qualify for what they're applying for.

I think we have a level of sanctuary trauma that we hadn't seen prior to the new veterans charter. I appreciate the challenges that you folks have, because I understand that your role here is to implement and do what you can to improve veterans' circumstances.

Would I be accurate in saying that we're still in the circumstances of trying to transition to the new veterans charter in the hearts and minds of our veterans? I'll take a quick yes or no from someone.

Mr. Tessier, do you sense that? Do you know that?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Mr. Chair, I don't believe I can speak for the veterans who were here previously as well.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Okay. Thank you. I'm sorry I didn't write down names; I should have.

World War I, World War II and the Korean conflict, that section of combat that our armed forces have experienced, you indicate were defined by the large effort—just the volume and size of it, and the greatest number of casualties—whereas modern-day war, it would appear.... We use this term “modern-day veterans”, and you determine that it's no longer wartime but that they're in a special area or special operation. You indicate that you analyze the risk, and that's along with hardship.

Is the risk analyzed before they go, during that service, or afterwards? How do you come up with the level of risk? We hear from these veterans that they went in thinking one thing, and then they were told, “This is how it is now,” and then what they experienced was war in their hearts and minds.

Go ahead, Mr. Girouard.

• (1700)

**BGen Luc Girouard:** Certainly today's serving members deploy under the current legislation. There is a level of analysis done at the highest level of the Canadian Armed Forces, and recommendations are made to the minister prior to their deploying.

That said, there's nothing better than having boots on the ground or eyes on the ground to offer a specific assessment. Through the initiating directive from the chief of the defence staff, the chief orders the force employers to make an assessment and a justification for special duty operation or special duty area.

There is also a report—it is a classified report—that is generated by the task force commander who is on the ground in that area, making recommendations related to that risk. They consider the threat intelligence report as well, and that is all rolled into one report.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Everyone who goes over to serve, then, would be under that same umbrella, regardless of what they potentially could or actually did experience. I don't see a lot of difference there because, quite honestly, I could never do this. I know it. Just the thought of it is enough.

For those who are suddenly going over and being told this, is that an umbrella of care that is guaranteed for everyone who has boots on the ground and is part of that theatre?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** There is an initial assessment, and each mission evolves. Every hardship and risk level is adjusted as the mission evolves. The initial tasks related to that mission might evolve over time, and so would the hardship and risk levels, which are then tied to specific levels of compensation.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I think I'm hearing you correctly. If I were going over there, I would go, “Forget it, man. You're not telling me what I'm getting into.” I understand that in a lot of ways, you can't know until it's happening. However, with where I see war going in this world, can you please explain to me how you would ever think that you can even determine those circumstances to the level you would need to? We are going into a whole new world of combat, and we're probably not going to have what was, in the old days, the largest effort or the greatest number of casualties in the same way that we have before.

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** For what we call “Roto 0”, which are the first boots and sets of eyes on the ground, they're not quite sure

what they're getting into, and that's why we're very deliberate in initiating new operations.

We send a small team of experts to make those assessments. Once they're done, the information is brought back to Canada, and it informs everything, from compensation and benefits to training and making sure our troops know what they're getting into. First-class forces prep our troops to go to deployment.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** If that's the case and you're truly doing that, how would you not come back and say that those circumstances, such as in Kuwait and Rwanda, were war? How do you come back and not...? Is it because war no longer exists within the legislation of Canada's...?

That's a yes. That's the bottom line.

Thank you.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Quickly, if you have a....

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Was that six minutes?

**The Chair:** Yes, it was exactly six.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** That was a very fast six minutes.

**The Chair:** Now let's go to Mr. Randeep Sarai for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of the members who serve and all of the rest of you for participating and actually shedding light on this.

Before I go into my question, my colleague Mr. Casey was finishing at the time and wasn't able to....

Ms. Meunier, maybe you can table the answer to his question afterward. I think he was asking, if I'm right, about commemoration for Persian Gulf War vets, how it has been done and what's available to them. Maybe you can table that at the end.

My next question would be for the historian, Dr. Graham.

If you could maybe highlight.... What we're hearing here, and I think we're all very interested in this, is that currently there is nothing to table something as a war.

What would you see as process for people like the Persian Gulf War veterans to have a distinction be made that they are war veterans? What is the process?

Would it be this committee, by what we hear and recommend, and then an order in council by the Minister of National Defence? What's the process that you see, based on the legislation?

You've probably studied it more than anyone else here.

**Dr. Sean Graham:** Thank you for that question.

I'll note that I'm a historian and not a legislative expert by any means.

In terms of the reclassification of the Persian Gulf from special duty area to wartime service, I can't speak on that process temporarily and what has happened. I've studied the designation of Korea in the past and how that had changed. In the past, it was through an order in council.

Relative to this particular change, I would yield to my colleagues in policy and legislation currently, as opposed to looking at it from a historical point of view.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Historically, it was done by an order in council.

**Dr. Sean Graham:** We did see additions to special duty area through the sixties, seventies and eighties through orders in council.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** After 2006, we haven't seen that done?

**Dr. Sean Graham:** I have not studied up to the 21st century on that question.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Veterans Week is a month away and this year's theme was unveiled by the Minister of Veterans Affairs as "CAF around the world".

To officials from VAC, can you talk about why this theme was chosen? What sorts of initiatives has the department planned to commemorate this theme, in particular to focus on these modern conflicts?

I'll let you guys choose who wants to answer.

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** That's probably me. Thank you.

The CAF around the world theme comes from the 10-year strategic plan, which is about putting greater emphasis on post-Korean and domestic operations. Each year, there's a particular theme picked.

Throughout this year, we have focused in on activities connected to or profiling Rwanda. There is some learning material related to the Persian Gulf service and learning material related to women in modern conflicts.

We will, in a month's time—all security elements still in check—be going back to Cyprus with approximately 200 individuals to revisit where they served. That will be as part of the 50th anniversary since the war and the 60th anniversary of the peacekeeping mission there.

Last year, we focused significantly on peacekeepers. All of our missions and themes were around that.

I know that we talk a lot about events and activities and, of course, during Veterans Week, we will see many of those here in Ottawa and across the country. What's also really important are the learning products that I spoke about earlier that are connecting youth to military history and the accomplishments of the Canadian military. As I mentioned, there are over five million products that are shared with educators across the country. It's pretty significant.

For the stories that we are accruing from more modern missions where Canadian Armed Forces have served around the world, and going back to the theme, we push those stories out on our com-

memorative social media channels, where there is an audience of a million plus. A million Canadians have quick access to each of those stories or connections.

This Veterans Week, we will be having some of the signature events we've seen in the past. For example, the candlelight ceremony at the Canadian War Museum will include a focus on Cyprus. There's also a learning day that will highlight the service of women, as well as the RCAF. In each of the elements, we are focusing on modern veterans and on our CAF around the world.

As well, last year we introduced a new element to Veterans Week, which is "open mic" night. Many veterans have told us they have found healing and community connection through music. We hosted three open mic nights last year, and they proved to be very successful. In fact, after the one in Ottawa, I received a message from several veterans who indicated that they hadn't left their homes in over two years, but because it was community and it was music, they felt comfortable coming. An individual is now getting services and benefits from the department, which is a very positive thing.

I'm happy to say that we're hosting three more this year. It's something that we hope to incorporate. Again, it's connecting.

We use the words "traditional" and "modern" a lot, but there are those missions that we don't often hear enough about. I take that up as the challenge on how we promote them and put more recognition into them.

Thank you very much for that question.

I'm sorry....

• (1710)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you for your answer.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Sarai.

[Translation]

We'll go to Mr. Desilets for six minutes.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Mr. Girouard, why can't veterans wear the Gulf and Kuwait Medal on their uniforms?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** Thank you. Unfortunately, I'm going to once again ask Major-General Simoneau to answer you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Girouard, we have to respect the order of command. No, I'm just kidding.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Major-General Simoneau.

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** I just don't know anything about that medal. I'm just guessing here, because I don't know exactly what you're referring to, but if a head of state gives a medal to a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, maybe they could wear it on their uniform. The rank of the person who awards the medal is what matters here. It has to be a head of state.



**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay. Mr. Girouard, correct me if I'm wrong, but was it the Kuwait Liberation Medal that the government awarded you?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** No. These are commendations.

[English]

It's not the "what"; it's the "how" you did your job.

[Translation]

Commendations are not considered medals that recognize—

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Kuwait awarded it to you, though, right?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** No, it wasn't Kuwait. It was my chain of command, my Canadian superiors, who awarded it to me.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay.

Do people ask you why you can't wear it anyway? I understand Major-General Simoneau's logic, but do people ask you that?

**BGen Luc Girouard:** I think Major-General Simoneau answered the question.

However, I would add that there is also a principle of dual recognition: A person cannot be recognized twice for the same mission. If a Canadian medal was awarded for a particular mission, a medal from another country could not also be worn.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I understand. That's a good answer.

Mr. Tessier, we know that financial compensation is a problem. Does the department have any studies indicating how much the government would have to pay out annually to achieve equity?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I'll answer in English.

[English]

I think the best way to approach that is to provide the documents that I have offered to provide to the committee, which provide a comparison between the two acts and provide all the information that we can around the two pieces.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** The department isn't interested in knowing how much. Are we talking \$1 million a year or \$2 billion? I have no clue, and neither do my colleagues. I should think you'd be in the best position to know, no?

• (1715)

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** At the moment, we are acting in accordance with the current legislation. If things were to change as a result of this committee's work or the armed forces' designations, we would do the same thing we would with any legislative change of any kind.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I understand.

The financial part of the equation is clearly a problem, as we've heard from veterans.

However, recognition is an issue too, and that's not just about the monument or prestige. It's also about personal recognition, and these veterans don't feel recognized for their participation in a real war, if you see what I mean.

Major-General Simoneau, I see you nodding your head. Do you agree with that?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** I was nodding to indicate that I understood the question, not that I agreed with what you said.

I would just say that a declaration of war is an act of Parliament; it's not up to departments. To the best of my knowledge, the Government of Canada has not declared war since World War II. That is what informed how the legislation evolved, and that is why the term "war" is not used. However, that does not prevent us from supporting our members by providing them with adequate compensation, recognition and benefits. I can assure you that, for all Canadian Armed Forces members who are deployed, we take the level of compensation, recognition and benefits we give them upon their return from a mission very seriously.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I hear what you are saying. However, the fact remains, and by cutting funding, every witness we have heard from is telling us that they do not feel recognized by their government, that they fought in the Gulf War, but they notice that it is not the same as the others and that it is not considered a real war.

That brings me to the notion of risk. You know a thing or two about that. However, to me, a war is a war. We have heard stories about the Gulf War where there was destruction all around. I do not think we need to get into the number of deaths, but the risk is clear.

I would like to add something. I may have seemed harsh during the meeting, but I understand your personal point of view a bit. You have a boss and you have to do something. I understand that you are laying some of the burden on us by saying that it takes legislative change. I heard that loud and clear, just like my colleagues, and we will very likely have something along those lines in our recommendations.

However, internal or accidental recommendations can also help. I do not know if I am being clear. Again, I understand your position, but I cannot believe that people like you are totally unaware of the fact that these people who went to the Gulf War are not getting the same recognition as the others. I cannot believe that.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

Now we will move on to Ms. Blaney for the next six minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you so much, Chair.

I think, just for the record, that I'd like to get a little bit of clarity.

To those folks from National Defence, thank you again for answering all my questions and for seemingly being able to understand what I'm asking, even though I don't have the correct words at times.

Could you explain to the committee what the criteria are for adding a foreign service medal to the Canadian honours and awards system? I think that would clarify some of the questions my friend from the Bloc was asking.

**MGEn Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, those are the two committee levels that I was alluding to earlier.

Number one, when we go on operations, there's the committee that meets to understand the risk factors and hardship. From that, there's the committee that I chair that looks at the proper recognition. If a foreign service medal, for example, is warranted, or if there are some gaps in recognition—and we always compare with previous operations to make sure we're well calibrated—those are the recommendations we make to our chief of the defence staff, and then onward to Rideau Hall and the government.

I'm not sure if I properly answered it, but that's how it works.

• (1720)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Okay. Thank you so much.

I want to come back to Veterans Affairs as well. We've heard really clearly, repeatedly, that the challenge is the different types of pensions that are available. I'm trying to get some clarity, because there's definitely a challenge here with the Persian Gulf veterans in terms of being recognized. Also, economically, they're concerned about the resources that they get because of the element of danger in their service.

If new legislation had not been passed in 2016 on the pension, the Veterans Well-being Act, we would have obviously stayed with the Pension Act that was in place prior. I want to get that clarified. I'm wondering about that.

The second thing that I want to get clarified is if there is frustration within the veterans realm based on a date you get this and then on another date you get that, and how that is managed. What is the process that you go through to evaluate what the two different pensions do and what that means for veterans in terms of fairness?

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** Perfect.

I might ask my colleague Mr. Freeman to add to the second part, potentially.

You're correct. Hypothetically, if the Veterans Well-being Act was not put in place in 2006, the Pension Act would still be in place, and anyone serving in that time frame would still be eligible—hypothetically—for the same pension.

However—

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** However, there are a number of reasons that the Veterans Well-being Act did come into effect. The acts are different. They're based on two different pieces, and they're looking at a variety of different veterans who are releasing from the Canadian Armed Forces.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** How do you manage the differences? Perception is reality, and if veterans are feeling like this group is getting this and we're not getting that, and vice versa, I imagine there would be some tension.

I'm wondering, in terms of creating a sense of fairness, how you manage that gap.

**Mr. Pierre Tessier:** I might ask Mr. Freeman or Ms. Meunier to talk about the engagement and pieces that have occurred over the years.

The differences, as they evolved, are really meant to support.... We use the term "modern-day veterans", but it's really the evolution of veterans. They might release at the age of 23 because they were injured coming back from a mission, and we ensure that they have the right supports in place, whether that's education and training benefits or retraining, or they might not be able to work anymore, and we ensure that they have the same level of compensation from a financial perspective in terms of the income replacement benefit.

It really is a difference from 2006. They're very different in nature and they look to serve a demographic and a group that continues to evolve and change. That's why there have been multiple changes to the Veterans Well-being Act over the years.

Mr. Freeman?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mitch Freeman (Director General, Policy and Research, Department of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Chair, if there's still time, I will just add a couple of thoughts.

From the hypothetical case of the Pension Act and this April 1, 2006, date, any veteran who came forward prior to April 1, 2006, was adjudicated under the Pension Act, whether they were special duty service, special duty area or a regular force member. Subsequently, after April 1, 2006, any member coming forward would be adjudicated under the Veterans Well-being Act. There are some nuances there that we'll certainly provide in our written submission around how, if a decision that was previously adjudicated under the Pension Act gets reassessed after April 1, 2006, it continues to be under the Pension Act.

If a new condition comes forward, what I would highlight from a special duty service point of view is that this really creates automatic service attribution. When a veteran comes forward and has a service-related condition, the first step in either act is to determine if that disability was caused by service. When the veteran or the member comes forward with a condition related to their deployment in a special duty area or special duty operation, that service attribution is considered automatic. The veteran need not do anything further to determine that this condition is service-related, and then the suite of benefits is available to the veteran.

The distinction that Mr. Tessier made at the very beginning is around long-term care. The Pension Act did specify certain entitlements to war service veterans from World War I and World War II, particularly around the evolution of long-term care throughout the country, remembering that this started after the Second World War when hospitals and provincial systems were quite different from what they are today. In fact, there were federal hospitals run by the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide that long-term care and those services. As those evolved into provincial systems, so did the long-term care services.

All veterans today who come forward have access to long-term care. The distinction is between the previously owned federal hospitals and the community facilities provided through provincial authorities. That is what I would highlight as that distinction.

Then, Ms. Blaney, around consultation, in fact, the new veterans charter, which was the name in April 1, 2006, evolved into the Veterans Well-being Act, which has evolved several times since 2006, and most recently, as Ms. Meunier noted, around the pension for life. That was the result of the analysis and the studies: to return to a monthly type of pension for life for veterans.

I wanted to highlight some of that as I listened to the testimony today, just to make the distinction that coming forward with special duty service does not necessarily mean that you get access to something that another veteran doesn't. Veterans' benefits are needs-based, so when a veteran comes forward today who has maybe an employment challenge, the Veterans Well-being Act has tools that provide for employment, be it the education and training benefit, career transition services or rehabilitation from a vocational point of view. While that veteran is going through a vocational rehabilitation process, the income replacement benefit is there to ensure the financial stability of the veteran and their family.

Those things did not exist with the Pension Act. When a veteran came forward prior to April 1, 2006, and said, "Look, I'm really okay, but I need support in finding a job," we were limited. Now those tools are there.

As you continue your study, I'd certainly recommend that the committee think about the broad spectrum of services that are available from the Veterans Well-being Act. Of course, disability is an important component of that, but think about it in the broad aspect of ensuring that veterans still have the tools supplied by Veterans Affairs for the wealth of issues that they may be facing as they transition to the civilian world.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Freeman.

We will have two other interventions of five minutes each.

Mr. Freeman, on that note, as you know, our analyst has a lot of experience, because he's been with the committee for more than 10 years. I would invite him to make a clarification or something, and we will come back to those questions.

**Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher):** I have a small clarification. It's to avoid a misunderstanding about the—

**Mr. Sean Casey:** This will be the toughest question you're going to get today.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré:** No, no, it's not a question.

**The Chair:** No, there's no question. It's only a clarification.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré:** I will do so in French.

Mr. Simoneau made an honest mistake and that is okay. Laws in Canada that were adopted before 1985 are all dated 1985 because the laws of Canada were consolidated that year.

The Pension Act was adopted by order during the First World War under the War Measures Act. It became the Pension Act, per se, in 1919. It underwent many changes. However, it was absolutely not adopted in 1985. I wanted to clarify that to avoid any confusion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Simoneau, do you want to respond to that before we move on?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** I can only say thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Paré.

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards, you have the floor.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I think we've covered this pretty well. I don't have a whole lot more to ask, to be honest with you, but I have one question I wouldn't mind asking, because I don't think I've heard this come up at all today.

In some of the previous testimony in this study, it was mentioned to us that other allied countries, like Australia or the U.K., for example, have a different system for categorizing wartime service. I believe we were told they have recognized their Persian Gulf veterans as having served wartime service or some kind of equivalent to that.

I'm not sure who I should best direct this to. It's probably the Veterans Affairs officials, but I'm not sure.

Could you give us an indication as to whether that's accurate? What do you know about some of our allied countries? Is there anything you think Canada could learn from those designations in other countries?

• (1730)

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Perhaps I'll start from a Five Eyes perspective.

Certainly the United Kingdom and Australia would refer to it as "warlike". As you said, it's similar to an SDA or SDO, but they would have different nomenclature. The U.S. is a little more robust in the reference to war; they played a different role in the war as well.

We do track with our Five Eyes colleagues in this regard.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Are you saying that for the most part—with the exception of the U.S.—you would consider the designations that other countries have as equivalent or similar to our special duty service? Is that what I heard you say?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Yes. I can't tell you offhand exactly what their reference would be, but it would be along the lines of the special duty operation or special duty area. For example, the U.K., New Zealand and Australia recognize the Persian Gulf on Remembrance Day or Anzac Day. They put it part and parcel into regular commemorative activities, versus stand-alone activities.

There are cenotaphs and monuments in some of our Five Eyes partner countries. Similarly, there are about 40 cenotaphs and plaques across Canada that make reference to the Persian Gulf as well.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Is there anything you've seen in any of these other countries that you would say we could emulate? Are there things they have done that we could do better here, or are there examples we could draw from?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** I can't point to anything in particular. I know Mr. Davis made reference to a monument being built in the U.S., which the federal government has contributed to financially.

Clearly, there's more recognition that's required, so we're looking forward to doing just that.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I want to ask you about the U.S., because you mentioned it. Before I do that, though, you just made the comment that there's more we can do. Could you give us some examples of things you think we could do?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** As I mentioned earlier, the Canadian War Memorial has a website associated with it that provides links to information related to the various conflicts and missions that are represented in the inscription of "In Service to Canada". That's really wonderful, but if you're walking down the street and you visit the national War Memorial, it might not be that clear to you, so I think there are some steps we could take to make that more evident.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** A lot of the focus today has been on the Persian Gulf veterans, but I know there are Afghan veterans making these calls, and we just haven't had a chance to hear from them in this study yet. It's too bad we didn't have you at the end of the study so that we could ask questions based on the Afghan veterans' concerns as well. I think we have several of them coming to see us on Thursday.

What more could you be doing to recognize their service? They fought in a war too, whether some people want to admit it or not.

Could you give us an indication of that? We won't go into the monument issue, because we've been there before. I certainly disagree with much of the position that's happened with the current government and what's been going on now, but we won't get into that.

Aside from the monument, which darn well needs to get built, what else could the government do to recognize our Afghan veterans better?

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Thanks.

One thing is making sure that we're connecting them with youth and with others to share the stories and capture the individual experiences that occurred there.

We have talked about the Afghan monument, but that's a very important piece. I'm happy to say that construction unveiling has moved from 2027 to 2026. We just had a land blessing that took place last week, which is a very important part of that.

● (1735)

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I'm glad to hear that. It's still not soon enough, in my opinion. It should have been done years ago, and 2026 is still too late, but the sooner the better.

**Ms. Amy Meunier:** Yes, and we're continuing to work with the Afghan veterans and with those still in service to determine what makes sense for them.

You made reference earlier to the 10th anniversary. We built that ceremony in consultation with those who served. We heard feedback that some were not ready for large affairs; they're still in their recovery and they're still grappling with understanding their roles, so we want to be respectful of that.

As we continue, we will certainly increase that connection. Our website also has quite a bit of information on service in Afghanistan, and we're capturing more and more stories.

Thank you for that question.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Meunier.

Mr. Sean Casey, you have five minutes, and that's all.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to direct my first question to Major-General Simoneau and/or Brigadier-General Girouard.

I'm going to come back to the testimony we heard on September 19. The testimony was that there exists a policy within Veterans Affairs Canada, policy 1447, entitled "Disability Benefits in Respect of Wartime and Special Duty Service—The Insurance Principle". The testimony we heard bemoaned the fact that there was no such policy within CAF.

First of all, I presume you're aware of that testimony, but if not, trust me: That's what was said.

Can you explain whether such a policy is necessary within DND, and if not, why not?

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, I'm not familiar, evidently, with Veterans Affairs Canada's policy 1447. I presume it has to do with compensation and benefits for veterans. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I wanted to be clear that we are looking after the serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We have policies in place not to support veterans but to support serving members.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** I'm sorry to interrupt, sir, but just so you know, one of the main concerns was that this particular policy issued by Veterans Affairs actually contains definitions of "wartime service" and "special duty service". I think the issue was that the lack of any definition or clarity from DND was something that made the impacted veterans quite unhappy.

**MGen Erick Simoneau:** Mr. Chair, what I can tell you from a DND/CAF perspective is that we're implementing as per the legislation in place, which doesn't have wartime service enshrined in it. Therefore, we're using the legislation that we have, to great effect.

Let me be clear: The compensation, benefits and recognitions are state of the art for Canadian Armed Forces members. We have, through the Veterans Well-being Act, delegated authorities to our minister to be very responsive and adaptive, allowing him to approve special duty service and to launch Canadian Armed Forces forward when the world needs us.

Again, we're concerned about veterans as well—and let me be clear on this—but our focus and our policies are aimed at serving members.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** I'll go over to you, Brigadier-General.

You talked about the analysis of risk and hardship that goes into your assessment of each special duty operation. Then what I heard you say was that the analysis is not static and that it changes, even over the course of the mission.

What would the impact of that moving assessment be on those who are serving? Can you give a concrete example of how a change in the analysis of the risk or hardship would directly impact a member of the forces?

● (1740)

**BGen Luc Girouard:** Yes, sir. As I mentioned, the assessment is evolutive. It adapts; it evolves. It is reassessed every 18 months, at

a minimum. If there are significant events or significant changes to the threat that is perceived in theatre by the chain of command, by the task force commander, those would automatically trigger a review at the strategic level, and those changes, whether that's to hardship or to risk, would be clearly communicated to the chief of the defence staff, who would then be able to adjust those rates, if you will. There would be a clear financial impact to the members who are deployed.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

On behalf of the committee members, I want to thank all the witnesses for their participation in this study on the definition of "war", "wartime service", and on the difference, the process of determining, and the criteria for veteran's benefits.

I commend and thank the representatives from the Department of National Defence: Major-General Erick Simoneau, deputy commander, military personnel command; Brigadier-General Luc Girouard, director general support and chief of joint logistics; and Sean Graham, directorate of history and heritage.

I also want to thank the representatives from Veterans Affairs: Pierre Tessier, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy, planning and performance branch; Amy Meunier, assistant deputy minister, commemoration and public affairs branch; and Mitch Freeman, director general, policy and research.

I also want to thank the entire technical team, the interpreters, our new clerk and our analyst.

● (1745)

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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