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Chair

Mr. David Sweet

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)): Order.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

[Translation]

Good morning, colleagues.

[English]

I gave a few minutes' grace before we got started. We have some new folks, and they needed to get acquainted.

We have a new clerk, of course, Jacques Lahaie. He started the morning with some problem-solving right away; we had the refreshments in a different place, so we didn't have any staff chairs for the government side. That has been done very quickly, and I'm very appreciative of that.

Welcome back from the summer, everybody. I hope you've come back refreshed and ready to work hard for veterans. I'm certain that you are.

This is our twenty-fourth meeting. Unless the committee has some other idea—as you know, I've always been at your behest—next week, of course, is a constituency week, but when we come back, hopefully our House leaders and whips will have agreed on the composition of the committee. Then we'll have the election of our chair and vice-chairs and get into new business for this next session.

Yes, Madam Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Are you expecting changes as to the composition of the committee?

The Chair: It is my understanding that this hasn't been decided fully yet. That's why I'm mentioning it. I'm assuming that this will be looked after during the week we're away.

We were recessed, of course, and have come back, so we have to elect a chair and vice-chairs. Then we'll have a business meeting right after.

Hon. Judy Sgro: So we're probably still looking at a couple of weeks before we are able to say what kind of committee business we might be suggesting to deal with.

The Chair: One week.

Our constituency week is next week. There's not much we can do about that. It's not a parliamentary week.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I had sent over several suggestions for things that I thought we might want to look at in the fall session. I welcome the opportunity for us to have a discussion.

The Chair: Absolutely. Those are the things that will be debated here in the committee and for us to decide on and then pass forward.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): You're not concerned that Larry's going to join us permanently or anything like that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): I'd be happy to be here.

The Chair: Monsieur Gaudet.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Chair, a rumour has been going around since the beginning of the summer. I do not know if it is true or not, but I've heard that the Saint-Anne Hospital is being transferred to the Quebec government.

Is that true? Could we get a report on that? Rumour has it that a report was submitted and sent to Quebec City. Could we get a copy of that report?

I would like to hear the committee's opinion on this because our veterans want us to keep Saint-Anne Hospital for those dealing with post-traumatic stress. If our soldiers do not have a specific place specializing in this condition when they return from Afghanistan, we will pay the price. So I would like some information on this. I do not know if you or the parliamentary secretary are aware, Mr. Chair, but I would very much like to pursue this matter at the next meeting, on Tuesday after our week off.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Gaudet.

I certainly would not venture, as the chairman of this committee, to speak for the government.

Perhaps Mr. Kerr has a comment.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Yes, Mr. Chair, I would certainly undertake to get that. If necessary, perhaps we could invite the deputy, if it seems appropriate, but I'd leave that to your discretion after I've found something out.

I'm not aware of any specific decision at this time, but I'll check into it for sure, if you'd like.

The Chair: With Mr. Gaudet's concern, this may be part of the debate around what will be handled as future business when we get back the week after next.

If there's no further inquiry from the committee, we'll welcome Mr. Sullivan, director general of the Canada Remembers division. He is going to give us a sneak preview of the upcoming initiatives of Veterans Affairs Canada regarding remembrance week.

We're greatly looking forward to your presentation. As I mentioned to you in a private conversation beforehand, we're also looking forward to seeing how we, as members of Parliament, can be catalysts and leaders in our communities to enhance the efforts that Veterans Affairs Canada is making.

Please go ahead, Mr. Sullivan, with your opening remarks. I think you're familiar with the tradition of committees. We'll have a rotation of questions.

● (0910)

Mr. Derek Sullivan (Director General, Canada Remembers Division, Department of Veterans Affairs): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to be here. I think it's very timely to be here talking about Veterans' Week just a couple of months before Remembrance Day.

I had an opportunity to brief some of the members of this committee in Charlottetown in June on the overall work of Canada Remembers. I'm very pleased to be back to talk specifically about Veterans' Week.

[Translation]

Some of the presentation will be given in English and some in French. I can also answer questions in French.

[English]

I would like to give you a bit of an overview of what is planned for Veterans' Week this year and identify some opportunities where members of Parliament can assist in taking a leadership role in encouraging Canadians to become involved in remembrance.

Our greatest objective is to increase awareness of Canadians in the service of Canadians during times of war, military conflict, and peace. But it's not just to make people aware. What's important is to have them go beyond awareness and understanding to take action and personal responsibility for remembrance. It's not about the Government of Canada honouring the service and sacrifice of Canadians; it's about Canadians honouring the service and sacrifice.

In remembrance activities we're also trying to ensure that Canadians, in particular veterans and their families, are aware of the services and benefits that are available from Veterans Affairs. We always cross-promote between remembrance and the benefits and services of the department. The same happens in venues where we are making Canadians aware of services and benefits; we're also encouraging them to become involved in remembrance.

[Translation]

Measures consist of motivating Canadians to take personal responsibility for remembrance.

[English]

We want to encourage high levels of participation of Canadians and increase the engagement of youth and educators in remembrance, in particular during Veterans' Week. The future of remembrance is in the hands of our youth, so it's critical that we

ensure they are aware of what Canadians have done and continue to do in defence of Canadian values. It's critical that we encourage them to take leadership roles. You'll see some specific things we're doing with youth, as I go through the presentation.

We want to increase the visitation to and use of the Veterans Affairs website for the purposes of remembrance. There's a tremendous wealth of resources on the website and many ways that people can use those resources to become involved in remembrance.

On the messages this year, the overall approach is to encourage action on remembrance. The tag line this year is a call to action: "How will you remember?" So it's challenging people to answer that question themselves. What are they going to do personally to remember and honour Canadian sacrifice?

We have messages for the general public, but we also have specific messages targeted toward key groups: youth, Canadian Forces veterans, and educators.

[Translation]

It is important to tailor messages to audiences such as youth, members of the Canadian Forces and veterans.

● (0915)

[English]

Some Canadian Forces veterans do not see themselves as veterans. Some in the Canadian public do not see modern-day veterans as veterans. So part of our work is to ensure that people understand who is a veteran and the importance of the service they have provided to Canada.

In addition, this year we are recognizing the 65th anniversary of the Italian campaign. This is a campaign that took place between July 1943 and February 1945. During the autumn of years that end in four and nine, we recognize all of the service during the Italian campaign.

As I mentioned, the messages also reflect the commitment of Veterans Affairs to provide the necessary services and benefits to veterans, young and old.

There are activities that take place, of course, in the national capital. There are also events and ceremonies, as well as other remembrance activities, that take place across the country in communities both large and small. We have a number of events and ceremonies that will take place overseas this year, during and around Veterans' Week. We work with hundreds of external partners as well in remembrance. We'll talk a bit about each of those.

[Translation]

There will be a nationwide launch of Veterans' Week. We are in the process of finalizing arrangements for the launch.

[English]

It's possible that this year the launch of Veterans' Week will be outside the national capital. We're looking at some options and working with some community groups to come up with the best possible launch for Veterans' Week. There are many events that take place in the Ottawa area, so we are trying to ensure that we have some high-profile events outside this area and from coast to coast.

There will be, in the national capital, an annual candlelight tribute. This event takes place in partnership with the City of Ottawa. It pairs young people with veterans, and together they bring candles. It has a very high level of participation, usually over 1,000 people. It's a very large event here in Ottawa.

Just before Veterans' Week, which is November 5 to 11, there is often an unofficial launch to Veterans' Week in the Ottawa area.

[Translation]

The Senate ceremony will be held this November 6.

[English]

As always, there are statements and standing orders in the House of Commons.

The Encounters with Canada program is one that is now under the umbrella of Historica. It's an organization that brings together, 26 times a year, about 130 or 140 young people from 15 to 18 years of age, from every province and territory, for a week of learning about Canadian citizenship. Each year, during or around Veterans' Week, one of their theme weeks is specifically dedicated to remembrance. It really encourages and equips these young people to go back to their communities and become leaders among their peers in remembrance.

The Remembrance Day ceremony, of course, as always, here in the national capital and in most communities across Canada, is organized by the Royal Canadian Legion on behalf of the Government of Canada.

There are a wide range of activities taking place across the country. Many community groups are supported by our community engagement partnership fund. We have been receiving partnership proposals from groups across the country for the last few months, and we expect to see many more over the coming weeks.

Again this year there will be wreaths provided to parliamentarians. In fact, the initial wreath that is provided to each parliamentarian, each member of Parliament, is going out this week. It will be arriving in your constituency offices in the next few days. There is a letter accompanying that wreath that provides information on how to order additional wreaths, should you require additional ones for laying at other ceremonies in your riding.

Overseas, this year as always, there will be ceremonies at Vimy Ridge and at Beaumont-Hamel.

● (0920)

[Translation]

The Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial.

[English]

They will be held on November 7 and 8. There will also be a ceremony in London at the Canada Memorial in Green Park, which is across from Buckingham Palace. This is a newly acquired memorial. It had been falling into disrepair. The group that had established the memorial in the 1990s was no longer able to take care of it and had largely disbanded. The memorial has now been taken over by the Government of Canada and it is the responsibility of Veterans Affairs to maintain and operate it. So the High Commission in London, as it does each year, will be organizing a ceremony at the Canada Memorial.

As well, there will be an overseas delegation, again to recognize the 65th anniversary of the Italian campaign. It will be leaving on November 26 or 27 and will be returning in early December. The delegation will include veterans of the Italian campaign, representatives of the national veterans organizations, and parliamentarians. Letters have gone from the minister to the parties in the House of Commons as well as to the government and the opposition in the Senate, inviting the House leaders to nominate representatives to that overseas event.

In terms of external partners, there are literally hundreds of partners with whom we work in organizing Veterans' Week activities. Beginning here in Ottawa, we work with all of the other federal departments. All of the departments have Veterans' Week material on their websites, and many of them undertake specific activities with their employees, and with their constituencies as well, across Canada.

This year, of course, there is something unique: the Olympic torch relay. There will be 12,000 Canadians carrying the Olympic torch, and 120 of those spots have been provided to the federal government. The decision was made that all of those 120 spots would be offered to veterans. So we worked with the major veterans organizations across the country and they have selected 120 veterans who will carry the torch from October 30 until the beginning of the Olympics in communities right across Canada. All of the promotion associated with this is restricted exclusively to VANOC, the Vancouver Organizing Committee. They guard very tightly how all of that is promoted. But certainly Canadians will know that many of the people carrying the torches are veterans, modern-day veterans as well as older, traditional veterans.

There is a vignette on remembrance that is produced each year and is made available on television and through the Internet. It is going to be available as well this year in the 126 Service Canada locations across the country. As Canadians go into these sites, they'll be exposed to the remembrance messaging and the call to action, encouraging them to become involved in remembrance.

I earlier mentioned Historica's Encounters with Canada. In addition to the Canada Remembers theme week, in all 26 weeks of their activities each year they have a component of their citizenship program that specifically deals with remembrance.

We began a new partnership with the Canadian Football League last year. Before the eastern semifinal and the western semifinal again this year there will be a tribute to veterans in the stadium, just in advance of the coin toss. That will also be broadcast on TSN, reaching about 1.7 million Canadians with the tributes to veterans before the games. And of course there will be about 60,000 in the stadiums. We won't, however, know the location of those tributes until the regular season ends.

● (0925)

As well, for some years we have worked with the B.C. Lions. In their last home game of the season they do a tribute to veterans as their entire half-time show.

So that's our work with the Canadian Football League.

We're also working with other sports leagues to have tributes for veterans. The Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, for over five years, has had tributes to veterans before each home game during Veterans' Week in all of their locations, except of course the one that is based outside of Canada in the United States.

This year, on October 19, there will be an unveiling of a new stamp by Canada Post, depicting the National War Memorial. That will be another thing Canada Post is doing to support Veterans' Week activities.

[Translation]

We have sent educational materials to every school in Canada.

[English]

All 16,000 schools in Canada receive the pack that was just distributed to you a moment ago. It provides a sample of the Veterans' Week learning materials produced for this year. You'll notice there are two pieces in newspaper format. One is *Tales of Animals in War*, for students from kindergarten to grade 6, and another is *Canada Remembers Times*, for students from grade 7 to 12. It has more sophisticated and more in-depth material and information. The younger age group, of course, receives information on remembrance with a different approach, one that is more tailored to their age group. It uses animals who had ancestors who served in wartime: elephants, carrier pigeons, horses, and Winnie the Pooh, who was the mascot of the Winnipeg Grenadiers. It uses animals as a way of introducing remembrance to younger children and an understanding of what Canadians have done.

These have been extremely well received by educators across the country. This is the third year of this approach. It has had a very, very positive reaction from educators across the country. It provides the opportunity for teachers to then order class packs of 30 of each of the materials. There are lesson plans and a teacher's guide, so that teachers can use them in their own innovative ways but also according to the lesson plans provided. If you want teachers, who have very, very busy schedules and jam-packed curricula these days, to teach remembrance, it's a good idea to make it easy for them. That's what these materials do. They're also sent to 6,000 other organizations: every branch of veterans organizations across the country, military family resource centres, scouts, guides, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and other community organizations across the country as well. Many of them order materials as well. Last year,

1.3 million pieces of these materials were ordered by educators across the country.

I've already mentioned Historica and I won't mention it again.

The other comprehensive learning materials that are available from us free of charge, as well as on our website, are promoted at teachers' conferences, at conventions of social studies teachers, and by history teachers across the country. These materials are developed by former educators who are on our team. When they meet with educators across the country, they're speaking the same language.

As well, we work with the provincial ministries of education, who are responsible for the curricula, to ensure that our materials meet the requirements and standards of the provincial ministries of education.

As for web content, the Veterans' Week feature is already up on the website now. It provides the information on the learning materials and how to order them. There's a section on remembrance and ways in which people can become involved. There's a calendar of events. Last year, there were over 320 events across the country posted on that calendar—and that was up 45% from the previous year. We're encouraging people to use it as a way of promoting and making people aware of their events.

Some of the other products that are available include the Veterans' Week poster, and you'll see some copies of that in the sampler pack.

● (0930)

There will be articles in *Salute!*, the newspaper provided to veterans across the country. It has a circulation of 250,000.

As I mentioned, there is the Veterans' Week vignette that you will see on television across Canada. Last year it had tremendous coverage—I saw it many times. This year there is greater emphasis on that. There's an enhanced and expanded campaign with the vignette, but it has many other components. It will also have a much expanded component on the Internet this year. When you visit other websites, whether it's news websites, sports, or other popular websites in Canada, the vignette will be available there as well.

A new approach we have, which we began last year and is much expanded this year, is using the social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Our materials are available through YouTube, but we're also encouraging Canadians to use Facebook to get their friends involved in remembrance. They can develop pages on Facebook related to remembrance. Many Canadians in fact change their profile picture on Facebook to a poppy during this period and encourage their friends to do so. There are also fan clubs on Facebook. I received information about one in April from someone here in Ontario. His target is to have nine million fans of remembrance by Remembrance Day. He is working through Canada, the United States, and many other places. The idea is to take remembrance to where Canadians are, rather than trying to drag Canadians to where remembrance is. If we make remembrance a part of the everyday lives of Canadians, that's how to get them involved.

This year we are also providing some suggested tools and ingredients for remembrance activities on social media sites to young people. You don't need to tell them how to do things on Facebook, YouTube, and the other social media sites; you just need to provide them with the idea, give them some of the tools, and then get out of the way. They are much more creative in those areas than we are. It's a matter of providing educators with the ideas so they can assign projects in school for students to create videos, etc., that they can post on YouTube and encourage their friends to see.

That's my presentation.

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan. Thank you for beginning your presentation by reminding us that the government plays a leading role, but it's really a civic responsibility to remember, memorialize, and honour the great work of our veterans—women and men alike.

Just a reminder for our committee—and also because we have a clerk who is brand new—that the tradition since the 39th Parliament, which was the first Parliament we had a Veterans Affairs standing committee, has always been to go ahead with the seven-minute rule. If the answer requires more time than the seven minutes, the member will be cut off from questioning but the person charged with the responsibility to answer has all the time they'd like. Sometimes it may appear that some slots are disproportionate, but it's because of the nature of the answers required.

We'll start our rotation now with the Liberal Party and Madam Sgro for seven minutes.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you so very much, Mr. Sullivan. It's always fascinating to hear you talk with such passion about these issues. I think having you there they have the best person in the world for the job.

It's very encouraging to see the kind of information that's put out there. You indicated that over a million requests have come back. Were the majority of those from schools, or were there some from other associations?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: The majority were definitely from schools. The newspapers you see come in class packs of 30, so the total number of those pieces in the class packs was 1.3 million.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Fascinating.

The department is doing an absolutely wonderful job with all of this.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Thank you.

Hon. Judy Sgro: We had the opportunity in Charlottetown to get a good briefing from you. Certainly an area that I'm promoting extensively in my householders and so on is for people to go on the Canada Remembers website.

Any of this, then, the postcards and so on, are also available for us if we need them?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Absolutely. All of these materials are available free of charge to anyone who wants to order them.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Wonderful.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: There are householder articles that are produced regularly, including in the lead-up to Veterans Week, and provided to members of Parliament.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you.

I'll turn it over to my colleague, who has a pressing question.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Sullivan, and your staff for all the work you do. It's great to see.

One of your focuses this year is youth. That leads me to my question.

In my travels this summer, I found out something that was kind of disturbing. Remembrance Day is not a federal statutory holiday across the country. In my province, it is a statutory holiday. I just assumed that it was national, that across the entire country it was a statutory holiday.

I was speaking to my cousin in Toronto. She runs a day care, and she says that the schools are actually open on Remembrance Day. I find that a bit bizarre. In my province, everything is shut down.

This leads me to ask, what's the history behind this? Has the department pushed to make it a statutory holiday? Is there something in the works? Can you give me some history behind that? And how could we as a committee or as a Parliament perhaps push that issue a little more?

This is mainly for the youth; you have to take the time to pause. I remember the video we saw when we were in Charlottetown. That whole video sort of stuck with me, with the person shopping on that day. It sort of tied everything together. I was amazed by it.

• (0940)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Yes, actually, I can give you some of the history on that.

Most provinces in Canada do have November 11 as a statutory holiday. There are, however, some provinces that do not, Ontario being one of them. It is provincial jurisdiction in that case.

Ontario did have November 11 as a statutory holiday until sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s. They made a change and it is no longer a statutory holiday. But there is a debate about whether it should be, particularly in relation to schools.

There are some, including some veterans, who believe it's better to have students in school, learning about Canadian military history and about remembrance, on November 11. They feel it's better to have students involved in remembrance activities at school on November 11 as opposed to their being at home and perhaps not involved.

There is another body of thinking that says they should be out of school, participating in the community events that are very prominent in every single community across Canada. They should be taking their part with other involved citizens.

That perspective, of course, goes beyond students. It's for adults as well. If it's not a statutory holiday, then fewer adult Canadians will participate in the events. They'll be at work.

So there is a push and a pull, each with, I think, some reasoned arguments behind whether it should or should not be a statutory holiday. Veterans Affairs has not taken a position one way or the other.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Fair enough. I can understand both views. It makes some sense, but on the other hand, it makes no sense. I guess it's something for us to discuss and debate.

I have a couple of other questions.

The torch relay, if I'm not mistaken, will be ongoing during that week. On Remembrance Day itself—I may be wrong about this—is it in Newfoundland?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Yes, it is.

If memory serves, on November 10 the torch will be in Iqaluit. On November 11 it will be in Goose Bay, Labrador.

The torch is also going through many Canadian Forces bases. They are making a specific point of having remembrance as part of the torch relay on November 11.

Mr. Scott Andrews: My second question is in regard to the wreaths for parliamentarians. I'm very much appreciative of that particular initiative. I know I used it very well on Remembrance Day. The only concern I have with it in my particular area is that, like many ridings, I have 20 war memorials. There are 20 wreath-layings on that one day. They all expect there to be a Government of Canada wreath laid by someone, a representative of the town, myself or someone else. Sometimes you guys limit the number of wreaths that some parliamentarians can have.

I just want to put that in your thought process. As I said, I have over 20 wreaths to lay. My colleague Judy Foote has many more than that. It's a big deal. The legions in particular will call you up, and they expect you to show up or have someone show up with that wreath and lay it. So I want to thank you and give you that one little suggestion that you might keep under consideration.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

Mr. André, you have the floor.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Mr. Gaudet.

Good morning, Mr. Sullivan. Thank you for your presentation. I looked at your documentation, and it was very interesting.

From what I saw, you developed some promotional tools tailored to elementary schools and high schools. You also refer to the Veterans Affairs Canada Web site. Can people order materials in large quantities? If not, do they have to print out the teacher's guide and educational materials? In addition, how do you go about promoting the week in schools? What is the school participation rate?

In terms of mobilizing people for Remembrance Day events, some people have told me that they are organizing activities in their ridings in cooperation with municipalities and legions. Unfortunately, however, they are having trouble getting in contact with veterans

in their communities. Sometimes, the legions do not have all the information.

Do you have any suggestions for reaching more veterans? Are there any ways to help these people reach more veterans? According to them, there are only 10 or 15 people at some ceremonies. I am certain that there are veterans in some regions who do not know that a ceremony is being held. How can we reach more of them? Do you have any tools that could help?

● (0945)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Thank you for your comments. I will start with your third question.

Within our department, there are certain restrictions on promotion, more specifically, as it relates to veterans' privacy. We cannot give out veterans' names or details to organizations wanting that information. However, we do make efforts to encourage veterans to get involved in associations that are interested in them.

[English]

It's important for veterans organizations and community groups to reach out in their communities, through their own networks, to veterans. We work with many community groups and with veterans to have them become involved.

It's really important to remember that there are also younger veterans. It's not just the Second World War veterans but the modern-day veterans. We need to encourage them to become involved in remembrance, not as spectators but as those to whom tribute is being paid. As we have more success with that—and that is growing—we won't find communities that have a small number of veterans. In fact, that number will be growing.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André: If someone in a given community wanted to organize an activity to commemorate the events of September 11 or to honour veterans, could that person go through your department to promote the event, for confidentiality reasons? Do you offer such a service? Is it possible to connect people in this way?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: We have employees in a few places in Canada. For example, in the National Capital Region, we have lists of veterans who took part in various campaigns and battles. When there is an event to commemorate the Italian campaign or D-Day, for example, we send out invitations to the veterans who took part in those campaigns. That is also the practice in cities where we have offices and lists of veterans. And we often encourage veterans to get in touch with their colleagues and encourage them to participate.

● (0950)

Mr. Guy André: But you do not send out information on a given event to all veterans in Quebec and Canada. That is not a practice you have in place as it is likely impossible.

[English]

Mr. Derek Sullivan: There is not a list of veterans in Canada. There is no list that exists of all veterans in Canada. There has never been a business purpose for compiling one. In the government, we don't compile a list unless there is a specific business purpose for it; you have to have reasons for collecting data, under the Privacy Act.

We have lists of veterans who have applied for services and who are receiving benefits from the department. We have lists of veterans who have indicated to us that they would like to be involved in ceremonies, and we contact them at every occasion. We have a distribution list of about 250,000 for *Salute!*, which reaches many veterans across the country. There are approximately 750,000 or 800,000 veterans in the country today. So we reach as many as we can in as many ways as we can. We use our website to promote events in communities across the country, and we use as many ways as possible to encourage people to go to our website and become aware of events in their communities.

You had asked whether teachers can order the materials in printed form or whether they have to download them and print them. The materials are available in print form in bulk, and they can order them by telephone, on our website, or by contacting our offices, but by telephone and through our website are the main ways they order them. They can also download them from the website if they prefer, but the easier way, with the size and format, is to order from us. We have an ordering system that gets the material to them very quickly.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. André.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

Now we go to the NDP, with Mr. Stoffer for five minutes.

Welcome, Mr. Stoffer

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our new clerk as well.

Thank you very much, Derek, for this. I greatly appreciate it.

I have a couple of short questions for you. Concerning the materials you send out to the schools, do you send specific materials out to first nations communities and to the far north and the Inuit in their specific languages? I'm thinking of the Canadian Rangers in the Nunavut area, as well as some isolated first nations reserves throughout Canada. That's the first question.

Again, as our chair said and as you said, it's a civic responsibility to remember, but I've noticed one thing that we, as a nation, haven't done very well—and that includes me as well—and that is remembrance of the Boer War. There's nothing in this paper about the Boer War and nothing in here. I wonder why that is. I'm certainly not blaming anyone for that, but it was a significant event in Canadian history and we don't seem to be remembering the anniversary dates of that specific one.

Also, you talk here about Royal Canadian Legion Remembrance Day ceremonies. Does that include the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada Association?

And for my last question, the minister was quite straightforward when he was with us last time when I asked him about when Mr. Babcock, who is now 109, passes away. What plans would the federal government or the Department of Veterans Affairs have to recognize the World War I...not just Mr. Babcock, but all those people who served during that generation? Because once he leaves—which hopefully is not for a long time—that generation is lost. What

would Canada be doing to recognize that significant event in our history?

And I thank you very much for all the work you do.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Thank you.

Regarding the aboriginal languages, no, we do not have materials in languages other than English and French. At this stage, all of our material, everything, is available, of course, in English and French, but no, we do not have materials on remembrance in aboriginal languages.

On the Boer War, you're absolutely correct, there isn't anything in the Veterans' Week learning materials on the South African war. We do have material on our website, including our Heroes Remember feature, which has interview clips with veterans of many eras, up to and including those serving in Afghanistan today. We even have a few audio interview clips of veterans from the South African war on that feature. There is other information on the South African war, but it has not received the same scale of treatment as the First World War or the Second World War at this point. However, I will take a look at what we have and make sure that we're providing the kind of recognition of those who served in Canada's first war, really, as a nation.

As well, you asked whether those materials are sent to the Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada association. Yes, all branches of all veterans organizations are on the mailing list. So they all receive it.

Lastly, you had asked about the plans to mark the passing of Canada's last known First World War veteran. Mr. Babcock, as far as anyone is aware, is one of only three remaining First World War veterans alive in the world. There is a plan developed in consultation with veterans organizations as far back as when we started this, in late 2005 or early 2006, when there was a handful of First World War veterans left. The approach will be to mark it as the end of an era, the last living connection to a generation of Canadians who answered the call. At Mr. Babcock's request, it will not include a state funeral for Mr. Babcock. Both he and the second and third last First World War veterans were very clear on their intentions and what their request was. So the plan will be to honour all the generation of Canadians and Newfoundlanders—they were not part of Canada at the time—who served during the First World War. There is a comprehensive plan for doing that.

● (0955)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer, you have a couple of seconds left.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: All right, sir. I can pass my time on to my colleague, Mr. Kerr, if you wish.

It won't happen very often, but it's the new coalition.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I think it's appropriate that we just call that the rotation for the NDP and then go to the Conservative Party of Canada, with Mr. Kerr, for seven minutes.

Mr. Greg Kerr: And to think, Mr. Chair, I was going to compliment him on his shirt this morning, too.

Where was I?

First, Mr. Sullivan, it's good to see you again. You were correct in Charlottetown when you said we had only really touched on the topics. You wished you had all day to get into it. Certainly there's a lot of material there. Thank you for all you do.

We'll go back and forth on the education, too, and other things, but in your objectives, you stated that one of the things you are trying to do is increase the understanding of Veterans Affairs' services and benefits. Could you expand on how you're doing that? That's always a topic here, how we reach out to veterans and how we get the information around to Canadians. It continues to be a frustration, I know, so perhaps you could enlighten us on that.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: There are many ways that those responsible for the benefits and services programs promote them. I'll talk specifically about how we, in our remembrance activities, try to make sure that people are aware.

When we are organizing remembrance activities, whether here or, more importantly, across the country, we ensure that we have information available, whether it's brochures or people who can answer questions about services and benefits. When we participate in other people's activities, when we attend teachers' conferences, we not only have remembrance materials but information on the programs and services of Veterans Affairs as well, and we have our communications people, who are able to answer questions on how Canadians can get access to those services of the department. It's not unusual for a teacher to be the son or daughter of a veteran, or the husband or wife of a modern-day veteran. We use every opportunity that we have in remembrance to also make sure that people are aware of the services available to support veterans and their families.

•(1000)

Mr. Greg Kerr: I appreciate that. It is still frustrating to know that some veterans don't want to be recognized and don't want to be known publicly, so we have to keep it up.

On messaging, it was always a challenge, and I'm glad to hear of all the initiatives with youth. It is extremely important. You ask, "How Will You Remember?" I remember when I taught many years ago, often the youth response was, how could they remember when they were not alive? When you ask, "How Will You Remember?", it is the remembrance of as opposed to remembering.

I am wondering, on the awareness side with youth, if you are seeing a strengthening of that relationship.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: We are seeing a tremendous strengthening. I often refer to the years between the 1960s and the early 1990s as the dark years for remembrance. It was almost taboo in Canada to talk about remembrance. You didn't hear much about it in schools. I didn't hear much about Canada's military history when I was in school. During part of that period it was, in a way, an offshoot of what was happening with our neighbours to the south in the Vietnam era. During the 1990s things started to turn around dramatically in the country at large, but also specifically with young people and in schools. We are finding that the requests for learning materials are

growing, and participation by youth at events across the country is growing as well.

I remember a few years ago, during the Year of the Veteran, the CBC, along with other media outlets, was working with us on some of our early planning, and they told us that their national broadcast of the Remembrance Day ceremony had tripled in audience over the previous 10 years, from 1995 to 2005. They also do a crowd estimate, along with the RCMP, here in Ottawa in particular, and the in-person attendance and participation had also tripled over that 10-year period.

We're seeing many more young people involved, and many more young people are taking their own roles as leaders in remembrance. We are seeing many more activities led by young people in schools and in communities across the country. We see that through our Canada Remembers staff in the five cities across the country where they are located. They are getting requests for support and assistance, and sometimes ideas on what they can do. Youth groups, Scouts, are very prominent, but there are many other groups across the country. We are definitely seeing an increase in youth participation.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Thank you very much.

I'd like to turn to my colleague, Colin Mayes, for questioning.

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

Thank you for being here, Mr. Sullivan. I just want to thank you very much for the packages that are sent to my office, which I can use to do my part in remembrance.

One of the things I find to be just great are the posters. I always get a solid back put on the posters and go around to the various legions and hand them out so they can put them up. I don't know whether you contract that out or whether you have somebody on staff who puts these together, but the messaging on these is just great. Looking at this one that you have for this year, there is a young person looking at the picture she has drawn of her remembrance, with a vet standing in the background, and those who are serving today, and the poppies. It is great messaging. My favourite is the one of the young cadet standing in front of a mirror with a veteran standing behind with his hand on the cadet's shoulder. It talks about passing the torch of freedom to the next generation. I want to commend you on the work you do. It is great messaging; it is reaching out to young people, and it is a great message for our veterans.

One thing they do is limit the number of posters. I've been told that I can only get a dozen posters. I have eight or nine legions in my area, so that limits me in also giving them out to the schools.

•(1005)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: No, you can order as many as you want, absolutely.

Mr. Colin Mayes: Okay. Thank you very much for that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayes. That has exhausted your time.

I wanted to say, Mr. Sullivan, that this work is so good that you may want to put a warning on the vignettes that people need to be close to a tissue box. They're that powerful. I think it was the one from the year before last that had all the troops from all the different conflicts that Canada was involved in, and it was very moving. I commend you for that.

We're going to our five-minute round now and back to the Liberal Party.

Madam Foote, for five minutes.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Thank you for being here. Thank you for the presentation in Charlottetown, and congratulations on the incredible package of information and your own commitment to this work. It is obvious. I too want to compliment you on the work that has been done with the promotional and informational material.

You say there isn't a specific list of veterans, but you say there are 750,000 to 800,000 in the country. There are obviously more than that, because we don't have all of them, and you're telling me there's—

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I'm sorry, that's an estimate of the number that are alive in the country from using various census and other data that we've had over the years, and mortality rates—both traditional and modern-day veterans.

Ms. Judy Foote: It is too bad that we don't have access to a list, because what I'm finding in my riding is that a lot of my legions are in trouble, and they really don't know who all the veterans are. What we're finding is that a lot of legions are disappearing as the legionnaires that are there, the veterans that are involved, die. Even though we have volunteers who work very hard, the whole concept of having the legion and having veterans is all part of the rationale for existing, so those lists would be invaluable.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: The Royal Canadian Legion and other veterans organizations are making concerted efforts to reach out to younger veterans and to members of the Canadian Forces who will be veterans in the future, to encourage them to join veterans organizations and support the work of veterans organizations to enable those organizations to support veterans as well.

Actually, this just reminded me of an answer to one of the earlier questions, which was how we promote these in schools. We have a partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion that we began about five or six years ago in which we include in the pack that you have in front of you the material on the poster and essay contests of the Royal Canadian Legion. The quid pro quo is that the volunteers in the 1,400 or 1,500 legion branches across the country go into schools to follow up and ensure that the packages don't get stuck on the secretary's desk or the principal's desk, that they actually get to the teachers.

Ms. Judy Foote: So the packages are sent to every legion as well?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: They are sent to every legion as well, and they use that as a trigger for them to go into the schools in their communities to ensure that teachers are actually getting to see the package so that they can order the materials. It's in their interest, because they want to make sure the teachers are seeing their

materials. And they have a capacity that we could never have: they have boots on the ground in every community in the country. So they can do things we can't. And we can mail out their materials, which saves them a lot of money and doesn't cost us anything extra. It's one of many partnerships that are symbiotic.

Ms. Judy Foote: What is your definition of a veteran?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Each piece of legislation has a definition of a veteran for the purpose of the benefits. In terms of commemoration, remembrance, the definition is anyone who has served, has achieved their military occupational certification, and has been honourably discharged.

• (1010)

Ms. Judy Foote: So peacekeepers....

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Anybody who has served in the Canadian Forces and has been honourably discharged is a veteran.

Ms. Judy Foote: Okay.

Going back to the idea of a statutory holiday, I too believe it should be a statutory holiday. I understand the discussion around being in school on November 11 giving you a chance to actually do things to take notice of the day itself and what happened in our wars, but there's a week in which they can do that leading up to November 11.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: They can do it all year round too.

Ms. Judy Foote: Exactly.

Do you have any advice on how we could proceed to make this an issue? We have Canada Day, but of course the schools are closed then. We have Christmas and all of the other holidays, and November 11 is a day that I sincerely believe should be a statutory holiday federally.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: My understanding is that it is provincial jurisdiction, and I'm not an expert on the process for federal statutory holidays. The Department of Canadian Heritage is responsible for the administration of that, so I just don't know how that process works, if there were ever consideration of that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. McColeman is next for five minutes.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): I'm going to defer to my colleague, Mr. Miller.

The Chair: Mr. Miller, it's good to see you, sir.

Mr. Larry Miller: It's my pleasure to be here, Mr. Chairman. I have a great interest in veterans and the topic today of remembering them.

Mr. Sullivan, I enjoyed your presentation.

After hearing the comments from Mr. Andrews and Ms. Foote, I want to speak on the issue of a national holiday. When I first heard that we didn't have one, I remember my first reaction was, why not? Then I started thinking about it and talked to my veterans and the legion. The last time I looked—and I urge all MPs to check with their national veterans associations and the Royal Canadian Legion—they were vehemently opposed to it being a national holiday. I'm going to explain the reasons why.

Before I get into that, I'm going to make it clear that I'm not speaking for the government. Here in Ottawa all government employees have Remembrance Day off. I don't think that's right, because Remembrance Day should be about remembering and honouring our veterans, not having a day off work.

What the legion found when they looked into it is that in provinces where kids have the day off, 99% or more of them do not attend Remembrance Day events. When they're in school, a large percentage...and I apologize, I don't have the number with me, but I can tell you in my riding it's increased dramatically in the last five to ten years. It's been through the work of the legion promoting, and what have you. I've attended the Remembrance Day event at Chesley District High School in my riding for the last four or five years, and it is by far the best Remembrance Day event I have ever attended anywhere, whether it was in Ottawa or in my riding.

Mr. Sullivan, what can we do to encourage schools to have Remembrance Day events during Veterans' Week? To go back to Chesley High School, they have specifically stayed away from having their event on Remembrance Day itself, because the veterans want to attend events at the local cenotaph or legion. They are glad to participate if the school has it on another day. I can tell you that on whichever day the school picks, the auditorium is full of all the school children and dozens of veterans from the area. It's great.

That education, getting our young people to realize the importance of it, and getting them to attend—all that is very good. If they're at home they simply won't attend, for the most part. It's not because they don't want to; their parents are probably working, or whatever, or just don't choose to take them.

It's more a comment than a question, but what could we do to help encourage that kind of thing?

• (1015)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Well, the biggest thing is to continue to provide information in your householders, and encourage people to do that, including encouraging teachers and principals in any forum or opportunity you have to invite veterans into the schools. We support the Dominion Institute. Actually, it's now the Historica-Dominion Institute; they have merged as of September 1. We provide financial support to the Historica-Dominion Institute for their speakers bureau. They maintain lists of veterans from right across the country who go into schools to speak with students.

When you bring veterans and young people together, you don't have to script it; you just bring them together and watch the magic happen, because they make connections that are very personal to them and tell their own stories. Those are really important opportunities for young people to learn about remembrance from those who experienced the events firsthand.

There have been an increasing number of younger veterans. We've been strongly encouraging the institute to have more and more younger veterans as speakers in their speakers bureau, because it's important that students not just see this as remembering things that happened before they were born, but also pay tribute to what's happening today as part of their own experience, whether it's happening in Afghanistan now, or in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, or as part of the many other foreign and domestic activities of the Canadian Forces.

So it's important to encourage these events in as many ways as possible. It's a matter of talking to people through householders and using any opportunity you have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

Thank you, Mr. Miller. Your five minutes have expired.

If the committee doesn't mind, I'd just like to ask for a little bit of expansion. Was everybody aware of the Historica-Dominion Institute merger? No?

Could you give us a little background on that, please? All of us are very familiar with the Dominion Institute. We've had them before our committee a couple of times and were quite impressed with their work.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Actually, we have been partners with both organizations for many years. They are or were the two leading non-governmental organizations promoting Canadian history and citizenship in many, many ways across the country. Their purposes and objectives have been quite similar for many years, and they began to talk some time ago about combining forces and having one plus one make three.

Effective September 1, they have joined together. The boards of directors of the two organizations agreed to form a new organization. Their national office is in Toronto, where both organizations previously had their national offices. They have moved or are moving this month into new accommodations in Toronto. They will continue to have an office here in Ottawa at the Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre, just off St. Laurent Boulevard, for the Encounters with Canada program. And they will continue to have an office in Edmonton. Historica became the owners of *The Canadian Encyclopedia* some years ago, so they will continue to have an office in Edmonton for that encyclopedia.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

Now it's over to the Bloc Québécois for five minutes.

Monsieur Gaudet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This will not take that long.

I suggest that we observe Remembrance Day on November 11. If November 11 falls on a Monday, we observe the occasion on the Monday, since all members have the day off. If it falls on a Tuesday, it should be observed on the Tuesday. If it falls during the week, we could invite children. In my riding, we observe this day on Saturday or Sunday, and there are no children. Simple as that.

So it should be observed on the actual day, just like Canada Day and Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, the Fête nationale du Québec. Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day is celebrated on June 24 and Canada Day on July 1. Similarly, it should be November 11 for Remembrance Day. That is how it should work. If it fell on a Saturday or Sunday, we probably would not have any children, but if it fell on a weekday, schoolchildren could come and take part in the procession and ceremony. That is my suggestion.

I just have one question for you. Would it be possible to give every member a certain number of lapel pins, bookmarks and tattoos so that they could give them to a legion—not huge quantities, but 20 or 25 or so? I know that veterans and legion members really appreciate having lapel pins, bookmarks and the like. It brings back memories for them.

Thank you.

• (1020)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Lapel pins are available in legions across Canada, but legions have their own lapel pins and several other promotional products for Remembrance Day.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: A number of veterans do not have the lapel pin you are wearing. They could be given lapel pins and bookmarks.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Legions can order the lapel pins from the department.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I recommend that you give them to members, who could then give them to the legions. That might be a better idea since the items could be put away in a drawer somewhere and never end up being distributed. That is my personal opinion.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Fine.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gaudet and Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. McColeman, you have five minutes.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Thank you.

I would echo everyone else's comments from around the table, Mr. Sullivan, that the work you're doing is immensely important. Certainly the comprehensive nature of what's been put together is fantastic.

You know, I'm very fortunate to represent a riding that has been very active on many fronts for veterans. I just want to mention a couple of ideas that have worked really well in our riding.

One of them is what we call our Thank-A-Vet Luncheon. We hold this every year. Approximately 800 people show up to this event. It's turned into a very big event in our community. We actually get corporate sponsors, so it's at no charge to the vets. We send them complimentary tickets and we take a couple of hours during Veterans' Week to honour them. They're so appreciative. It's become

a local event of such importance that many organizations want to get involved with it.

I would be very happy to pass it along as a template to your department. There may be other communities that want to consider it. Certainly it's something that is looked forward to year after year. The minister came two years ago to the event and was part of it, so it's been recognized at a national level as well.

Secondly, I want to echo Larry's comments about high schools doing just an unbelievable job. We also have a high school in our community, St. John's, that does a spectacular job. It holds the finest events I've ever been to in honour of veterans.

Those are the types of things out there that other communities could be doing, I think, of course in addition to the great work that you're doing. I'm not suggesting that you should take these ideas and move them across the country, but I think other MPs should know about them. Certainly they are available for anyone to do.

In that regard, I'd like to know a little bit more about the candlelight tribute. Can you give me more details on who organizes that and what it's all about? I'm just looking for a little more detail on it.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I agree entirely about some of the things that are happening in schools across the country. They are outstanding events, and the best ones often are when the students themselves have organized them. They are the most moving. They're fantastic.

This includes our overseas events, which some of the members of the committee have participated in. Each time we have had an event organized by the youth on the delegation—not always, but where we've had larger numbers of youth—those have been, without exception, the most emotional events of the overall trip.

We do, in fact, spread ideas across the country. We do try to accumulate them and then disseminate them. No one part of the country has a monopoly on good ideas, so we try to spread those across the country as much as possible.

The candlelight tributes take place in many communities across the country. Each time, they're somewhat different. Each organization tailors it to what suits their needs.

The one that takes place here in Ottawa actually pairs a veteran and a young person. They together take a candle up and place it.

In other cases, they do it in cemeteries across the country where veterans' graves are in great numbers. They place the candle at dusk in front of each veteran's grave in the cemetery. The candle burns all night, or for a period of time, and they recover the candles to use them again in the future.

Each of these is somewhat different across the country. All are very moving.

• (1025)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Excellent.

On the tribute to the Italian campaign, you mentioned a delegation going to Italy. Is there anything else planned?

In my community, and in a lot of communities, we have a very large Italian population. Is there anything planned that could be used within communities?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Yes. Our staff across the country have worked with many community groups in organizing and supporting Veterans' Week activities, some of which take place three or four weeks before Veterans' Week but are under that umbrella. They sometimes look for ideas as to what the event can focus on. We encourage them each year to focus on some of the major anniversaries taking place in that year. This year, we encourage them to focus on the Italian campaign, as well as D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, the 65th anniversary of which was this summer. We provide them with printed material, with ideas on how they can do that. Understanding the history usually gives them ideas on how they will do it in their community.

Mr. Phil McColeman: When you say "they", do you mean the legions?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I mean legions and many other community groups.

Legions and other veterans organizations are absolutely leaders in remembrance across the country, but they are not the only leaders in remembrance. Big Brothers Big Sisters, scouts, cadets, guides, and so many other youth and community organizations, rotary clubs across the country, and other service clubs—almost all of them organize activities during or around Veterans' Week. I know the number of invitations we receive to participate or to speak at those increases every year, so there are many groups that do that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Foote, although this apparently is going to be brief, you have five minutes.

Ms. Judy Foote: I have two questions.

One, where do we go to get the material for our householders?

Secondly, on the contest, I know the deadline will vary from legion to legion, but what is the deadline for the provincial commands to get the material to Ottawa?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I'm afraid I have no information. That is entirely run by the legion. Our part in this is to distribute their material to the 22,000 addressees—the 16,000 schools and the 6,000 other groups. Beyond that, I just don't have the information on that. I'm sorry.

Ms. Judy Foote: So we'd get that on their website.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: On the householders, I'd suggest that the best route would be to contact the minister's office and they can provide information. That would come through the minister's office, I would think.

The Chair: Now we'll go back to the Conservative Party, for five minutes.

Mr. Lobb.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sullivan, we know where we are today as far as Canada Remembers is concerned. There has been quite a nice job done to date.

Where do you see the future, when you're looking out five, seven, or ten years, with Canada Remembers? How are you going to adapt and change, as obviously things change with our veterans? Could you just enlighten our committee on what you see moving forward?

● (1030)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: That's an excellent question. We're in fact devoting quite a bit of our attention to determining how we continue to evolve the activities of Canada Remembers, as both the nature of the veterans currently alive in the country changes and also the approach to dealing with Canadians.

We are evolving. I mentioned our increased use of the Internet and our support of young people using the Internet in their own ways to spread the word of remembrance. That's a part of the strategy.

Another part is that at the request or suggestion of veterans organizations over the last few years, we have made the size of our overseas delegations smaller and we have taken those resources and reinvested them in Canada, where both veterans and Canadians are. We have been doing that. The delegations are now smaller. We have had many more activities across the country and are providing more support to community organizations across the country, financial support as well as in-kind support.

The other thing we're doing at the moment is we are consulting with both Canadian Forces members and Canadian Forces veterans to find out how they see themselves being remembered. It's important that as the nature of the veterans who are with us changes, we are doing things in a way that is meaningful to them. So we are developing a strategy, not just for inclusion but also for honouring the modern-day veterans in ways that work for them.

We are also updating our strategy for youth engagement, taking account of the newer technologies. We have been doing that, but we have to do it continually, because the technology changes much more quickly than government does. Every time government tries to be cool with the technology, it becomes really cool with the technology that was current three years ago. So what we try to do is make the materials and the ideas available to young people and then, in many cases, get out of the way, because they know what to do. I have a 15-year-old and a 20-year-old. When I have trouble figuring stuff out, they are where I go. They are my help desk. The number of things my 15-year-old and her friends do on YouTube and Facebook and some of these other sites is remarkable. It's tremendous stuff. All we need to do is to try to channel some of that energy and enthusiasm in the direction of remembrance. Awareness and encouragement and support are what we can do with that.

Is that a partial answer to your question?

Mr. Ben Lobb: That's good, and I think your use of three years as a benchmark was generous.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ben Lobb: Do I have some more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, another minute.

Mr. Ben Lobb: That's great.

So as you look out and you see the future—I guess you will always continue to be looking at where you are today—one of the issues will be the challenges you have. A challenge, but also a success, quite possibly, could be with all of our new Canadians. How do we show and educate our new Canadians about the tremendous sacrifice our veterans have made for this country? With the time permitting, could you just enlighten us on these actions and initiatives?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Yes, that actually is also an interesting point, because many new Canadians don't have a shared history with Canada or native-born Canadians. But what's interesting is that very often it is new Canadians who are prouder of what Canada stands for and Canadian values than some of us who take those for granted.

The conversation is very often about values in remembrance: Canadians have answered the call in defence of Canadian values. When we have the conversation at the level of the Canadian values that are important to us, these are what new Canadians embrace very much. In fact, these are very often the reasons they have come to Canada.

We work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and as part of their orientation activities for new Canadians, we provide them with materials on remembrance to encourage the learning of Canada's history, including its military history. We've also provided some suggestions to the citizenship judges, who do the actual ceremonies, on including some remembrance messaging in their activities. This is something that we have offered, but we're also getting requests from CIC and their people for additional material.

•(1035)

The Chair: There's one round left for the Conservative Party, and that will complete everybody having an opportunity to question.

Mr. Greg Kerr: I think we're happy here.

The Chair: Questions are exhausted there.

Mr. Stoffer, you have five minutes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I don't offer this as a criticism in any way, but at the back of your poster it indicates that this poster pays tribute to those who have served the nation from the First World War to current missions. Is there any way that can be changed to include the South African conflict?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Not this year. That's printed in millions of copies already. That's a very good point, and it will not say that next year.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Okay, it's already done. Thank you.

Also, I don't mean this as a criticism, but I know the Canadian Forces are doing an excellent job in recruitment in our so-called visible minority communities, through the African communities, for example, in my riding in Preston, in first nations communities, and in new immigrant communities as well. But the previous posters and the current posters don't necessarily reflect that. If you were an

African-Nova Scotian child in Preston and you looked at this poster, you'd say, "That's really nice, but I don't see me in this."

I don't mean that as a criticism, but to offer the diversity of our nation—as you know, it's changing quite rapidly—when you look at our forces, it's an excellent opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds to serve a common purpose.

I think the government does a very good job in recruiting and focusing cultural training. When women started serving in combat roles and going on ships, as we all know, the navy did such a fabulous job in teaching men and women to be able to work together in confined spaces. They can teach us in civilian ways how women should be treated in a respectful manner. They did a great job. They also do that in the cultural communities.

The pamphlets do a great job with aboriginal and African historical concerns, but the posters that go out that everyone sees are fairly Caucasian in view. I just offer that as a suggestion, that in the future a little more diversity might be helpful.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Regarding this year's poster, you're right.

I'm not sure whether there are women in the poster. Yes, there are. There's a woman in it.

In fact, if you look back over the last number of years' posters, you will find that they do reflect the makeup of Canada, in terms of aboriginal veterans as well as visible minorities, men, women, French, and English. There is a diversity.

It's very difficult to be all things to all people at all times. We try to do that in all our activities, but you can end up with something that becomes quite artificial.

I take your point. It should reflect Canada, and I think we do that in most of our materials.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Maybe I'll say one last thing.

Mr. Miller talked about his schools and the great job they do. But there is one school in Mr. Kerr's riding, Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, and for anyone who's ever been down there....

Greg, do you want to take a minute to explain what that one teacher has done?

Mr. Greg Kerr: As long as you're supporting the government, you keep right on going.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: It's in Mr. Kerr's riding. Inverness High School in Cape Breton does it as well.

They have these walls of honour, with pictures and some medals of the individuals and the stories about them. The kids walk by them every day. In many ways, Remembrance Day is every day in that school.

At the Yarmouth high school, that one teacher started that initiative, and it's unbelievable.

Mr. Miller and Phil are absolutely correct. It's the high schools that do a tremendous job, supported by the government and DVA. So, good job.

• (1040)

Mr. Derek Sullivan: There are teachers in—

Mr. Greg Kerr: You're coalition-building. You're scaring me.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Truly, the Yarmouth high school does a great job.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Sullivan has a comment germane to our conversation.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: You're absolutely correct. There are many teachers and many schools that do fabulous jobs.

One area that has been very prominent in recent years has been the Durham region. A coalition of seven high schools has come together as “Durham Remembers”. They have organized many activities in Canada as well as overseas. They were key in helping to bring the 5,000 Canadian high school students to Vimy in 2007; about 2,000 of them were under the umbrella of Durham Remembers.

As well, there's a teacher in Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, who is unbelievable in what she has done. She has gotten the entire community involved in remembrance. In the announcements each morning, they honour the memory of the war dead from their community. They have the students do this. The students read the names of those who died on that day from all of the eras. I understand that they have a loudspeaker for their announcements outside so that most of the town can hear the announcements every morning as well.

There are so many initiatives that individual teachers in schools undertake across the country.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

I should say, too, to give credit where credit's due, that certainly in the city that I'm in, Hamilton, the municipality has done a great job. One of the councillors who happens to be in a riding I represent actually designated one of the roads as a veterans highway.

Three weeks ago, I was at a commemoration for Mark Anthony Graham, one of the soldiers killed in friendly fire. He was of Jamaican descent, as well, to go back to Mr. Stoffer's comment. A tree was planted and a plaque was laid in a park. We're trying to get the name of the park changed. It's called Olympic Park now because it has some history, but we're hoping that council will approve that it become the Mark Anthony Graham Memorial Olympic Park.

So some of our municipalities do a great job of making sure that there are city locations, city monuments, and memorials—again, at high schools, where all students pass them, all citizens pass them—to remember those, particularly from their locality, who have paid the price for our freedom.

Now we will move on to the Bloc Québécois.

You have an opportunity for questions.

All your questions are exhausted?

Okay. Then I have a couple of questions, if I may take the luxury.

Are the vignettes available to those who are lower-tech? You mentioned the glacial pace sometimes. For folks who are not tech-savvy, is there a DVD or CD available for them?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I'll have to check on that and get back to you. I know we have it on DVD. I'm not sure what we do in terms of distribution of that on DVD. We will certainly find out and get back to you on that.

It is available on our website, as well, at all times, and it will be seen on television sets across the country.

The Chair: Okay.

I don't want you to list them, but you had mentioned right at the beginning of your remarks that there were resources available on the website. Are they self-evident, easy to find? Is there a list of them at the left side of it, for instance?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: If you go into the Veterans Affairs website and click on “Canada Remembers”, you will find a wealth of information. There's a youth and educators section that lists a whole host of materials and activities for young people.

There is “Heroes Remember”, which is a collection of interview clips. These are the personal stories of veterans, their own experiences. It's not the history you'd read in history books, but it's their own experiences. There are over 4,000 interview clips on that portion of our website.

There's a Canadian virtual war memorial, which has the names of and information on the 117,000 Canadians who have died in service.

As well, with thousands of those, Canadians have provided us with photographs, articles, and letters to and from these war dead. We have posted those to the site as well. There are links to the books of remembrance.

There are many resources in that section.

• (1045)

The Chair: Great.

Again, you mentioned that you could get your event on the web calendar. Is that easy to do as well?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: That's through the website as well. Under the Veterans' Week part of it you will see the calendar, and it will have instructions on how to post your event.

The Chair: That's great, Mr. Sullivan. Thank you very much for your time.

I just want to move in camera for 60 seconds.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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