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Chair

Mr. David Sweet

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)): I wanted to wait for a couple more minutes, but we also have the other impending exit for Mr. Sullivan, who needs to leave at 9:50 a.m. for another meeting, so we need to use the time we have.

A special welcome to Mr. Murphy. I sat on the public accounts committee, usually under his leadership as chairman, so it's good to see you here, Mr. Murphy.

Good to see you, Mr. Parliamentary Secretary, as well.

Without any further ado, I will let Mr. Sullivan begin.

The focus of our meeting today was to be specifically what parliamentarians can do to assist in the activities of VAC, and Mr. Sullivan will also be expanding on what Veterans Affairs Canada will be doing as far as remembrance for Remembrance Day is concerned.

The witnesses we were to have after Mr. Sullivan were not able to make it today, so we'll have a shorter meeting. They will be able to come after we're back from our constituency week.

Mr. Sullivan, please go ahead with your opening remarks.

Mr. Derek Sullivan (Director General, Canada Remembers Division, Department of Veterans Affairs): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As the chair mentioned, I wanted to provide a little additional information or clarification on one of the questions that came up in our discussion three weeks ago related to Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday.

One thing I'm not sure I was completely clear on at the time is that November 11 is a statutory holiday within the federal jurisdiction. It was declared so in the Holidays Act, and I have a copy I could leave with the clerk if you'd like. So for the federal government and for federally regulated industries, it is a statutory holiday now. And in seven of the 10 provinces and in the three territories it is also a statutory holiday in Ontario and Quebec it is not a statutory holiday; and that leaves Nova Scotia, which is a little bit different. It prohibits certain commercial activities, but November 11 is not a statutory holiday there.

I hope that makes the status of November 11 a little clearer.

I'll leave the questions on that for later, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Please continue, Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: The other question raised in the last meeting that I said I would follow up on and get further information about was the vignette that has been produced for Veterans' Week and for the Veterans' Week advertising and promotional campaign this year. It was questioned whether that would be available on DVD as well. Yes, it will be available on DVD. We have a distribution plan for it across the country, making it available to community groups and a variety of other groups across the country. Should members of Parliament be interested in obtaining a copy, we can provide copies of that DVD of the vignette to MPs as well.

With that as the follow-up to some of the items from last time, I thought I would expand a little bit on what parliamentarians could do to assist in promoting Veterans' Week and Remembrance Day activities themselves. There are a number of things provided by the department and by the minister to parliamentarians. There is a householder and Web article that's provided to members of Parliament that can, of course, be used as members feel appropriate.

There is also this year a householder article and a Web article for the Italian campaign. This year we're marking the 65th anniversary of the Italian campaign, which took place from July 1943 until February 1945. This year during Veterans' Week, it is receiving emphasis in the activities that we're involved with across the country, and shortly after Veterans' Week there will be, as I think I mentioned last time, an overseas event to commemorate the sacrifices of Canadians in the Italian campaign.

There is also the sample package of Veterans' Week learning materials that is provided to members of Parliament, and any promotion of those materials that you can do within your constituencies to ensure that teachers and community groups are aware of the learning materials would be of great assistance. Sometimes those things, though they get to the schools, don't necessarily get to all of those people within the schools and within the community who could use them to assist in informing and engaging youth in remembrance activities. Any promotion of that would be of great assistance.

In addition, parliamentarians tend to know who the leaders are in their community activities and can encourage them to take on leadership roles in remembrance, to organize people in the community, whether it's youth groups or others, and encourage them to develop activities that would involve people, particularly reaching out to younger veterans and to young people in the school system, and in community groups such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Scouts. We work with all of these organizations, but we can always use assistance in encouraging them to really take an active part in remembrance.

We have an online calendar of events that is active all year round on remembrance activities and other activities that Veterans Affairs becomes aware of. It's available not only for the department to put activities on there, but for the general public as well to upload their events and their ceremonies throughout the year. It's most active at this time of the year, and last year, in 2008, there were 320 Veterans' Week events posted on the online calendar of events.

That is something that more and more community groups are now using to help promote their events, to make people aware of them in their own communities. In fact, last year it was up 45% to 320 Veterans' Week events, and it's growing as well this year. As of last week, there were already 55 Veterans' Week events and they're literally being posted every single day, so any assistance in promoting that would be appreciated.

● (0910)

A new feature will be added to that next week, on October 14. It's a geomapping feature. People can put in their postal code and it will give all the events in their local community, based on the events closest to that postal code. So that would make it easier, again, to search. As you can imagine, this database has many events in it, and this will make it easier to narrow it down to a particular area.

One of the things I think I mentioned last time is that modern-day veterans, the younger veterans, often don't see themselves as veterans. In addition, many in the general public do not consider modern-day veterans to be veterans. This is probably one of the most important areas where parliamentarians, as leaders in the community, could assist—encouraging these younger veterans to see themselves as part of the veteran community and also encouraging the general public and, in particular, community groups organizing commemorative activities to include them and have them participate not as members of the audience, really, but rather as part of the group to whom tribute is being paid. This is one of the most important areas where everyone's full energies really need to be applied. If we in Veterans Affairs and if parliamentarians, in all of their work with communities and in speaking in communities, continue to emphasize this, it will take us a long way further down the road to having a better understanding of the contributions and sacrifices of the post-war Canadian Forces as well.

As an extension of this, I would encourage all parliamentarians, in any speeches or opportunities you have, to talk to people in your communities. If you include remembrance in your remarks, it would help encourage people to take an active role, not simply a passive role. Remembrance is not only for November 11; it's all year round. If it could be included in all of your opportunities, or as many as possible, that would be of great assistance as well.

Veterans Affairs will be involved in activities from coast to coast. Our staff in regional offices work with community groups everywhere in the country, from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland and across the north. The Remembrance Day ceremonies themselves are organized by the Royal Canadian Legion in almost all communities. That includes the national ceremony here in Ottawa at the National War Memorial. It is organized by the Royal Canadian Legion on behalf of the Government of Canada, and it has been that way since the 1930s.

In some communities, Legion branches have closed or are not active or strong enough to lead the Remembrance Day ceremonies. And in those cases, it's usually the municipality or some other community group that has taken on the lead and has organized the ceremonies. But in the vast majority of communities across the country, the actual November 11 ceremony is organized by the Royal Canadian Legion.

In terms of other Veterans' Week activities, there are typically about 200 other remembrance activities, not the actual November 11 ceremony. Community groups approach Veterans Affairs for support through the community engagement partnership fund, and extensive support is provided across the country through that fund. But in addition to that, many groups do not require financial assistance to organize remembrance activities. What they often are looking for is advice, materials, and logistical support. And that is provided, as well, across the country.

● (0915)

The other thing I would suggest is that parliamentarians could also encourage people to go to the Veterans Affairs website and contact Veterans Affairs offices across the country for any assistance that they require for initiating and managing and leading remembrance activities.

Those are the suggestions I have, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

We have less than 40 minutes, because Mr. Sullivan needs to leave at ten to the hour for another meeting. I'm going to assume that some members might not have any questions, but that will still leave us tight for time. If it so pleases the committee, I'll reduce it to four-minute rounds right from the beginning so that everyone who wants to ask a question has the chance to do so.

We'll begin with the Liberal Party. Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you, David.

I have just one question. It doesn't really relate to remembrance—although in a way it does. We had a brief discussion on it at another committee meeting.

In the business that we're in, or that anybody's in, it's knowing your audience and communicating with your audience, with veterans. It sort of ties in with your comments regarding the modern-day veterans. The department has no list—you've said that the government doesn't compile lists of people—but maybe this is something we should really seriously have a look at. Maybe the Department of Veterans Affairs should have a list of who they can communicate with on short notice.

As you said, the modern-day veterans really don't feel like they're veterans. Your department doesn't have a list of any veterans, really, because you're not allowed to. Should we be having the discussion of allowing your department the ability to compile a list of veterans so that we, or Veterans Affairs, can communicate directly with the veterans in acts of remembrance, in keeping in contact with the veterans, in communications?

I know you guys do your best, but I think it's a lot of them coming to you rather than you going to them. It's a policy of government, or somewhere there, that they don't compile lists. Should we be having the discussion of possibly allowing the department to compile a list of veterans?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: There are a number of ways that we do communicate with veterans. The broadest way is *Salute!*, our newsletter, which has a distribution list of approximately 250,000 veterans and, in some cases, survivors, those receiving benefits with whom we have had contact and have agreed to provide us with their mailing address for receipt of the newsletter.

Salute! reaches 250,000 of the veterans, but you're quite right, that's not the full number. The full number is probably between 700,000 and 800,000 veterans living in the country today.

There has been discussion of compiling a nominal roll of veterans. It's quite an expensive exercise. It's quite challenging. Of course, there would be the ongoing challenge of maintaining it as people change locations, move, change contact information, and also, of course, pass away. But there has been discussion of trying to assemble that for a variety of program purposes in the department.

We do have, in addition to *Salute!*, some ways of communicating with veterans. Each of our local offices for Canada Remembers compiles, as they deal with veterans, lists of people who would like to be contacted by us when we're organizing ceremonies. Certainly here in Ottawa we have an extensive list of veterans. We understand what their service was so that as we organize events to commemorate particular anniversaries, we're able to invite veterans who served in that battle or that campaign in particular to make them aware of events that are taking place at the National War Memorial.

But it is a challenge.

● (0920)

Mr. Scott Andrews: It is a challenge. I think there are about half a million veterans out there that we don't know of or... Not that they're falling between the cracks, but we just don't have a mechanism to capture those people so that we can be proactive in communicating with them.

Is money the number one factor in that?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: No, I wouldn't say that money is the number one factor; there are a variety of issues. There has to be a specified purpose for gathering information on Canadians, and collecting an overall list of veterans is not something the government has done historically,

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

Now we'll go to the Bloc Québécois. *Monsieur Gaudet, s'il vous plaît, quatre minutes.*

[Translation]

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

Good morning, Mr. Sullivan.

Have budgets been set aside for November 11, budgets that could be used by legions or veterans' associations? Are there budgets to put on ceremonies to get people involved? It is all well and good to say that you are putting on a parade, but people just watch it out their windows. I think it would be a good idea to hold a gathering on the evening of November 11. Are there any budgets specifically for that?

[English]

Mr. Derek Sullivan: We have a budget for the Canada Remembers program that covers all our activities throughout the year. It's not broken down into specific parts for a particular day or anniversary; there is an overall budget. There is a program that provides assistance to community groups to organize commemorative activities. Again, it's not broken down by Veterans' Week and the rest of the year; it is throughout the entire year.

The lead for the November 11 ceremonies is the Royal Canadian Legion. They have been extremely clear with their branches and provincial commands across the country that they do not want their branches approaching the Government of Canada for financial assistance in organizing November 11 ceremonies.

Last year at this time the president of the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command wrote to all their branches and said that the November 11 ceremonies were the responsibility of the Legion, that it was one of their primary purposes, and they did not want any branches approaching the Government of Canada for financial assistance in organizing something that is part of their core business.

We do not have a separate or specific budget for November 11. We have a budget for the remembrance program, and we're always available to assist and support community groups in organizing their activities.

● (0925)

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I have to accept your answer, but I am still not satisfied. At one point, the government handed out money for festivals. Sometimes, there were five festivals in the same region, and all five got funding.

I am not suggesting that the government give money to every Canadian legion, but, at the very least, it could give money to one or two per province. Right now, everything is done at the individual level, and only the locals are attending, but no one else knows anything about it.

I am not sure what you think of my opinion, but in any case....

[English]

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Our funding is available for remembrance activities at any time of the year. It is the Royal Canadian Legion that has instructed its branches not to approach us for the specific ceremonies on November 11 because that is part of their core activity.

We're available to provide funding to groups. There is no change in the funding of community engagement projects for remembrance. We're available to support community groups. If there are groups in any part of the country that are organizing commemorative activities, we're very happy to work with them, support them financially with materials and advice and logistical support.

The Chair: *Merci, monsieur Gaudet.*

Now on to Mr. Stoffer, for four minutes.

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

Sir, thank you for coming today.

What role does DVA play in terms of remembrance programs on first nations reserves? The reason I ask is that there is a tremendous ceremony in Ottawa, but just down the road we have a fantastic aboriginal cenotaph—if that's the proper word for it—in memory of our first nations, and I don't see very many wreaths being laid around that on Remembrance Day, even though I did see one a couple of years ago. What role do you play in terms of first nations reserves across the country in assisting them in their Remembrance Day ceremonies?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: First of all, with relation to the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument on Elgin Street in Confederation Park, the major ceremony that takes place at that monument each year is in June, on National Aboriginal Day, and there's usually a fairly substantial ceremony then.

There are over 6,000 cenotaphs and monuments across the country recognizing service and sacrifice of Canadians in wartime. It's not possible for all 6,000 to have ceremonies at them every Remembrance Day, so usually most communities have major events at selected sites and the others serve as silent reminders throughout the year of the service and sacrifice. The major event here in Ottawa, the largest one—there are a number of them, actually, that take place in the Ottawa area—is at the National War Memorial about three blocks further up Elgin Street. You're quite right. I don't think there

is a formal wreath-laying ceremony at the Aboriginal Veterans Monument on November 11.

In terms of other communities, we do reach out to aboriginal communities through our regional staff in the Canada Remembers program, but in addition we've been quite pleased to see the number of aboriginal groups and aboriginal communities that are organizing remembrance activities, and we've seen an increase over the last number of years in the number of applications, for example, to the community engagement partnership fund to recognize aboriginal veteran contributions throughout the country. They have, of course, received support, and there's been quite an increase over the years.

We work as well with three national aboriginal veterans organizations, the National Aboriginal Veterans Association, the First Nations Veterans Association, and the Métis Veterans Association, and we include them in our overseas events, as you probably remember from some of your experiences, Mr. Stoffer.

As well, through these national organizations, we deal with their provincial and territorial groups and offer support to them as they would like.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Now on to the Conservative Party, Mr. Kerr, for four minutes.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome. It's good to see you again, Mr. Sullivan.

There are a couple of things I want to touch on, but I want to focus on the young veterans because I think that's where our big challenge on a number of fronts is going to be, and it plays a bit to what Mr. Andrews was raising. We're not allowed to just list, because a lot of these people don't want to be identified. They don't want us to simply put them on a list. They don't want to be acknowledged and so on. That continues to be a real challenge. My sense from when we're meeting some of them is that when they do, the department does respond fairly quickly. If they don't want to be identified.... It's almost like the Legion on Remembrance Day. They don't want the government up front in their face. That's very clear.

But let's talk a bit about the younger vets, because that's frustrating—I'm sure for them, but certainly for anybody who is interested, which would be all of us here and I think most Canadians. They are separate from the older vets and they want to be recognized differently from the Legion. I know you are in discussions with them, or their representatives. What are you finding? What do you think they're looking for that we can be helpful on, or how can we change our approach to bring them out or to reach out to them?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: That's a very good question. And you're quite right, we've been doing some focus group work with younger veterans to find out how they want to be recognized and how they want their service to be recognized.

It is different. They often see their service a little differently, at least initially. In many of the discussions, we asked whether they see themselves as veterans, and very often they say no. And a lot of it has to do with the deference and the respect that they have for the Second World War veteran. They recognize that there are differences in their experiences. But then when you ask them what the characteristics are that make a veteran, and they describe what those characteristics are, and then look at their own service, they realize that they've just described their service as well as that of Second World War veterans.

There was also a period when many Second World War veterans and Korean War veterans did not see the service of younger Canadian Forces members and Canadian Forces veterans as similar to their own. That has changed and we're seeing the veterans organizations, the Legion, ANAVETS and others, embracing the younger veterans and including them in their activities.

In terms of our approach, what we're doing, particularly with the younger veterans, those 40 years of age and under, is using different means and trying to reach them in ways that are not as relevant to older veterans. For example, as part of this year's campaign, we're using social networking media such as Facebook and YouTube, and Twitter and Flickr, to reach people who use those technologies for communication and for spreading the word among their peers. We're also, as part of the campaign, working with MuchMusic and Musique Plus—the French-language equivalent—music video stations, and you will see in the lead up to Remembrance Day information on those stations, and both stations have agreed that November 11 will actually be veterans' playlists for the day.

So we're looking at different ways to reach out to younger audiences of both veterans and the general public that are relevant to their experiences and where they spend their time. We're trying to take remembrance to where Canadians are, rather than trying to drag them to where remembrance has traditionally been.

We're also using social networking media materials to encourage young people to create their own messages on Facebook and YouTube and the other media, because they can do things that are more relevant than having a government-structured remembrance activity. We're also targeting particular parts of the Canadian public in ways that would be more relevant to younger veterans, as well, through working with the Canadian Football League and with others in the sports industry. There will be activities this Veterans' Week in partnership with the National Hockey League teams, the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, and other junior hockey leagues across the country.

So we're trying to reach them and include younger veterans in every one of the activities we're involved in, whether it's ones that we lead or, when we're working with a community group, we use our influence to ensure that younger veterans are included as well.

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

I have to say I'm impressed that you're using Twitter already. That's good.

We'll go to Madam Sgro, for four minutes.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Just quickly, Derek, it's very nice to see you back again. My apologies that I came in late, but I'm having a meeting conflict that's going to be continual around here.

When you talk about how there are 700,000 to 800,000 veterans and that we don't necessarily have a lot of contact with them, it goes back to earlier discussions that we've had about trying to reach out so that we don't end up with homeless veterans on the streets. We know their years of service, and you'd think there would be a way we could have a database so that we could track them to a certain extent. Sooner or later, they are entitled to certain services that they may have even forgotten about, and getting a letter from Veterans Affairs once a year may just tweak somebody who's in a lot of distress.

I realize it is very difficult to track that, and it's probably something tied in with DND, but are there any discussions going on between Veterans Affairs and DND on establishing a more solid database?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I'm not aware of that, but that's something I can get back to you on. I don't know where those discussions are or whether there's analysis going on at the moment on that.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Further to your previous comments on Canada Remembers, I have to tell you that since you were here last and talked about it, I have taken some time to distribute all kinds of stuff to all kinds of schools and things in my riding to try to beef up some response. I have had some response from some of them. We're in the process of organizing a variety of things in some of our schools. It's kind of a breakthrough.

If you hadn't pointed out Canada Remembers and all that's available to us, that wouldn't have been possible. I may not have success in all 36 of my schools, but I'm certainly getting through to some of them and will participate a lot in what's going on during Veterans' Week.

Thank you for all that information and the great work you do.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Thank you for your help.

The Chair: Thank you.

There are two minutes left, Mr. Murphy or Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews: No, we're fine.

The Chair: Now we'll go to the Conservative Party and Mr. McColeman, for four minutes.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): I have a couple of questions.

You mentioned earlier the DVD of the vignette that's available. How do we get that, Mr. Sullivan? Can we get copies of it?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: I think requests from parliamentarians normally go through our minister's office. We can get them to you that way. For the DVD, that's probably the most effective way.

In the sampler packs of the learning materials and all the other things we have available that are sent to your offices, there is information on ordering those in volume. We have a 1-800 line, and we have an online ordering system.

The DVD with the vignettes is a little different, because it's not generally available in volume to the general public. It's on our website. It will be on television. It will be appearing in many locations. It will be at NHL hockey games on November 10. For the DVD, the best route is probably through the minister's office.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McColeman.

There are three minutes left for the Conservative side. Does anybody have any other questions?

Go ahead, Mr. Lobb.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): My question is on the long-term care facilities for our seniors. Are there any efforts or projects being put forward to the nursing homes or long-term care facilities?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Our district offices are quite active in organizing events and bringing events into the nursing homes and long-term care facilities where there are veterans. Most long-term care facilities across the country organize activities, and many of them receive support or materials from Veterans Affairs. Many of these facilities receive support for the long-term care of the veterans in those facilities from the department. They have regular contact with departmental staff who are in the facilities to maintain contact with veterans and to make sure their needs are met. Through that regular contact, they are aware of what is available from Veterans Affairs. In many cases, our staff assist them with their activities. Certainly at Ste. Anne's Hospital in Montreal, there are significant remembrance activities in that facility.

Mr. Ben Lobb: The mandate for Veterans' Week is for students and educators. Obviously, every year you want to know if it was effective. How well is the message getting into the schools? It's obviously provincial territory as far as education goes. Is there a way for you to measure how effective the program is? Is there a way for the ministries of education in the provinces to show whether they support this or not, and why? Are there any indications?

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Quite a number.

As you know, we provide learning materials to schools. First of all, at the most basic level, we track the orders placed by teachers, and that's a good indication of what they think of the materials, because we don't provide them in bulk without request. They have to order the material. Then within each of the packages we send to teachers we include an evaluation form. We receive a surprising number of those evaluation forms back, because some people of course don't have the time or don't take the time to fill those out and provide us feedback, but many do. The feedback we've been receiving is that the materials are a tremendous improvement over what had been provided some years ago, very positive feedback on what teachers consider to be the effectiveness of the materials themselves.

We also work with the provincial ministries of education, who of course set the curricula for the school systems across the country,

and as we are developing the materials we provide the schools, we ensure that they meet the keys for the provincial curricula across the country. We apply for certification of our learning materials as either core curricular materials—that's our dream—or official curriculum support materials in the provincial ministries of education. Our success in many cases was having them officially recognized or even required by the provincial ministries of education for use in schools.

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

Mr. André, would you like to ask a question? We have a couple more minutes left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Your programming is very interesting.

My question is along the same lines as that asked by my colleague, Mr. Gaudet. To reach more veterans, as other members have pointed out, would it be possible to further decentralize a chunk of the budgets and activities so that communities with veterans, whether rural or urban, could take more responsibility for the Remembrance Day event?

For instance, I have been involved in a number of organizations, round tables and action groups over the years. And sometimes, in the health sector, we would put down \$2,000 or \$3,000 on a table, and people would join forces, get together and organize activities such as mental health awareness activities.

Do you know what I mean? Sometimes, giving local communities a small boost can cause people to take action, which can have a very positive ripple effect, in my opinion.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

• (0945)

[*English*]

Mr. Derek Sullivan: In fact, we have decentralized the spending on remembrance in quite a number of ways. First of all, we have Canada Remembers offices throughout in the country. In the province of Quebec, we have an office in Montreal that works with our district offices in Quebec City and elsewhere in the province for Veterans Affairs activities.

But to get directly to your point about the community groups, that is exactly what we have through the community engagement partnership fund. You're 100% on the mark that community groups can do a tremendous amount, often with a very modest amount of support from the government. The community engagement partnership fund supports small groups. Sometimes the requested contributions are \$300 or \$400, sometimes \$2,000 or \$4,000, for remembrance activities at the community level.

In addition, we have a sister program to that, the cenotaph and monument restoration program. As I mentioned, there are over 6,000 cenotaphs and monuments across the country. Sometimes all a community needs to bring one of these back to its former state and glory is some assistance. Sometimes the challenge just seems too great or daunting for a small community or small community group to take it on, and this program provides up to 50% of the cost of restoring a cenotaph or monument, up to a maximum of \$25,000 in program contribution. Between these two programs, we have approximately \$2.2 million available in funding. It's not available for the department to use for its own activities; it is exclusively for community groups and not-for-profit organizations across the country.

The response from communities has been tremendous, both for the cenotaph and remembrance initiatives in communities across the country. Both are extremely important parts of the program. The community engagement partnership fund has been around since 2001, and the cenotaph program was started in 2005.

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

I made an agreement that at 10 minutes to the hour we'd make sure you could make your next meeting. I think I actually have two minutes of grace here for you, Mr. Sullivan. Thank you very much for coming to our committee again and reminding us what we can do. Obviously, just listening to Madam Sgro and the actions she's taken, your words have not gone unheeded. We appreciate the opportunity to be equipped with resources.

We'll let you go to your meeting now.

Mr. Derek Sullivan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'll be brief, colleagues.

After our constituency work week, we'll be coming back on Tuesday. We will have the departmental officials from Veterans Affairs Canada give us an update of where they believe they are at with the new veterans charter and their recommendations for going forward.

On Thursday, the witnesses we were supposed to have for the second hour today will be coming, the new combined Historical-Dominion Institute. Then, of course, I'll be relying on members of the committee for suggestions for witnesses going forward.

I am going to have our clerk distribute a report that we did in the 39th Parliament on post-traumatic stress disorder. Madam Sgro has

distributed it to the committee before and has also sent me, as chair, a letter regarding some past *Toronto Star* articles and concerns raised by them, which Madam Sgro shares, about the treatment received by veterans returning from Afghanistan. So I want to distribute the PTSD study done in the previous Parliament. Of course, Monsieur Gaudet would be very familiar with that, as he was part of the committee at that time. With the report, you will have an idea of what's already on the record and then you can best select the kinds of witnesses you want and the path you want go on for investigation. That's all it's for; it's just a resource for you.

Madam Sgro.

● (0950)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Further to that, Mr. Chair, you also have a request from me and from the Widows on a Warpath group to do with Agent Orange. I know they've asked to come and speak to the committee.

There's a book by Chris Arseneault on the Agent Orange issue that you can get from the Library of Parliament. It's a small booklet; it's not a whole lot of reading. I say this in a totally non-partisan way. I've read that book and I've done some more research on it, and it's really quite appalling what happened there: the fact that many of our soldiers were used as guinea pigs to test out chemicals that were used in the Vietnam War. They couldn't test it on U.S. soldiers and they tested it on ours.

I'm raising the issue because I think we can't ignore that but should do whatever we can possibly do to raise that issue and talk more about it. We shouldn't be forgetting about the kinds of chemicals that were used then that we may be feeling the effects of today. Where it would go I'm not sure, but we're talking about veterans here, people who are suffering still today as a result of those chemicals. If you actually got the book from the Library of Parliament or purchased it, I think you would share my concerns. I think it's worthy of our spending some time on that.

I just put that out there. I know you have the request. But I think it's quite an appalling issue that happened in those days, and I think we need to have that awareness, as members of Parliament, on some of these things.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Sgro.

If there are no other comments, then this meeting is adjourned. We'll see you in one week.

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