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## **Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, April 15, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Sweet**



## Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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•(1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)):** *Bonjour à tous.* Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the seventh meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, today regarding the new Veterans Charter.

I just have a couple of quick pieces of business first.

Mr. McColeman.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** As we're well aware, this is the national day of mourning for Poland, and there are a couple of us who have been asked to express condolences at the embassy at 1:15. I'm wondering if I could ask the committee for the meeting to end at 12:45 to allow two of us on this side to be involved in those condolences.

Would that be acceptable to committee members?

**The Chair:** Agreed, 12:45 it will be.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** That gives us enough time. It will just be about right, if we can wrap it up at that time.

**The Chair:** That should be fine.

Is there any other business before we get to our witnesses?

Accordingly, I want to welcome Sean Bruyey, a retired captain who has served our nation, and his wife, Carolina. They will be giving testimony regarding the new Veterans Charter.

Sean, I think I've noticed you enough times at meetings here that you actually know the whole drill of submissions by witnesses, and even the rotation of questions. So I'm going to allow you to go ahead, and we'll just keep track of the time so that we stay within the maximum.

**Mr. Sean Bruyey (Retired Captain (Air Force), Advocate and Journalist, As an Individual):** Thank you, Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you very much for inviting me and my wife here today to testify on the new Veterans Charter.

In many ways, Canada's veterans were betrayed by the MPs who sat in the 38th Parliament. They passed the Veterans Charter in mere seconds on May 10, 2005, without even reading it. Their Senate colleagues did little better, granting it just two days of debate. At its heart, Bill C-45, now known as the new Veterans Charter, removed the lifelong disability lump sum for pain and suffering.

In contrast, when the subject of MP pensions, which affects only a privileged few, was raised in the 35th Parliament, it was the focus of a supply day debate, and when Bill C-85 was finally tabled, there was so much debate that a time allocation motion was required. So while changes to MP pensions were hotly debated over months of Parliament, the new Veterans Charter came in like a thief in the night, with the acquiescence of all four parties of the House of Commons. Ironically, the rapid passage of the bill occurred while most members of the committees on veterans affairs of both Houses had just returned from or were still in Europe celebrating VE Day.

Quite simply, VAC betrayed veterans and hoodwinked Parliament, and I am here to ask you to right that wrong.

Unstated at any point during the parliamentary process of debate is the real reason why VAC needed to pass Bill C-45 with such urgency. Its officials had recommended "a shift to greater use of lump sum payments combined with customized rehabilitation services...to regain control of an alarming future liability scenario". This was, however, hinted at by the testimony of Darragh Mogan when he appeared before the only Senate committee meeting on the Veterans Charter and admitted that the program "would pay for itself over a 15- to 20-year period". This is the best illustration of a hidden agenda in recent Canadian political history.

Make no mistake about it. The remainder of the programs in the charter for disabled veterans and serving members existed in one form or another before the charter was passed. This was not, as Minister Guarnieri claimed during the May 11 hearing to the Senate national finance committee, "an entirely new vehicle designed to deliver what the current system cannot". Louise Richard, Harold Leduc, and I were the only Canadians given an opportunity to testify to committee in opposition to the charter as it was written.

Indeed, we were all sold this new legislation based upon short briefings, which used such catch phrases as "opportunity with security", "widespread consultations", "case management", and "psycho-social rehabilitation", to name a few.

Although Veterans Affairs did not have a vocational rehabilitation or job placement program at the time, the SISIP vocational rehabilitation program had a long and successful history, and the CF had at least three job placement programs in operation.

Minister Guarnieri also claimed that the new system “will take us back to the same position we were in and enable us to provide the same level of re-establishment support we provided following the Second World War”. Then, ministers from each of a half dozen or more departments had been organized into a special committee. Experts from the military, medicine, rehabilitation, and representatives from the highest levels of the federal, all provincial, and most large municipal governments, industry, and community leaders all came together to create what was largely accepted to be the best re-establishment and rehabilitation program in the world at the time. Then, the deputy minister of Veterans Affairs personally recruited 34 individuals straight from the military to act as the senior managers to implement these new programs in Veterans Affairs, because he knew that veterans were the best to understand the needs of other veterans.

Veterans, whether wounded or not, were given health care, low-cost insurance, and financial assistance to re-establish. All were offered a choice of land grants, farming assistance, low-interest mortgages, university, or apprenticeships, as well as small business assistance. Meanwhile, any disabled veterans were provided with all of the above plus greater health care, the best case management and rehabilitation the world had to offer, and a monthly disability pension paid for life.

Whereas there were approximately a million World War II veterans, compared with roughly half a million Canadian Forces veterans, both deserve similar benefits and compassion for injuries suffered during their honourable service to this nation.

● (1110)

Whereas World War II benefits were designed by a committee of ministers, the Veterans Charter and its associated programs were almost solely authored by a modernization task force headed by a VAC director, Darragh Mogan, who called upon another VAC director, Ken Miller, to be his principal salesman. They presented the charter as a *fait accompli* to the greater Canadian government as well as to Parliament, veterans organizations, and the Canadian public.

To my knowledge, not one member of the task force in VAC has any military background, and reportedly not a single senior manager in Veterans Affairs is a veteran. More disturbingly, they had very little oversight or meaningful revision by superior or elected officials and have seen almost none since.

The minister promised reviews every two to three months in 2005, and later the department talked of regular reviews of perhaps every year or two years. As a result of my testimony in 2005 to the Senate, the department created the special needs advisory group, and then later the new Veterans Charter advisory group, to ensure that all those veterans who are disabled and their families are being appropriately cared for by the charter.

These groups have done good work, making approximately 299 recommendations for change to the charter. However, all suffer from the same process flaw. The people in charge of receiving the recommendations are the very same as those who authored the charter. It is therefore not surprising to note that fewer than half a dozen recommendations have even been partially implemented by VAC in the four years since SNAG's first report was submitted and that no serious consideration has been given to any recommendation that might involve financial consequences.

Had the real intent of the Veterans Charter been any other than saving money, such groups would have been convened before the legislation was tabled, so that all their recommendations could have been part of the original program; moreover, there would have been several committee hearings prior to its passage in the House.

True to the spirit of VAC's hidden agenda, SNAG's reports have never been made public, and the proceedings of these advisory groups are never published. In the same way, when the charter was created, only one or two individuals from each of only six veterans organizations were involved. Each was sworn to confidentiality and agreed to, in effect, unquestionably support the charter. These leaders could not share any details of the charter with their membership.

Amazingly, this is what VAC has called “the most widespread consultation in VAC's history”. It is frightening that they believe this to be true.

For the veteran and CF community, it is as though we are playing hockey by the rules on our side, but VAC's net is far too small to fit the puck and is facing in the opposite direction.

Canada's men and women in uniform have very high respect for our elected members of Parliament, and we ask you to do what we cannot. Please hold Veterans Affairs Canada accountable. It is unacceptable that VAC bureaucrats should be able to accept or reject any recommendations that affect the social contract between Canada and its veterans. It should be Parliament, and especially this committee, that instructs VAC to implement changes.

Somehow along the way, VAC officials and Parliament developed a highly dysfunctional relationship. Bureaucrats believe they can accept or reject whatever Parliament tells them, and Parliament has done very little to change such unbridled arrogance of certain VAC senior managers.

Let me ask some questions.

Would a lifelong disability pension not offer more security than a one-time lump sum?

In a world where university education is a prerequisite for government jobs, how can VAC promote the fast-tracking of veterans while excluding university education?

Would no-interest loans or grants like those offered to World War II veterans not offer more opportunity to start a business while veterans could still count on the security of a lifetime disability pension?

Why is it that public servants can use their rehabilitation time and income to contribute to their retirement pension but veterans cannot?

Why is it that public servants can arrange for a gradual back-to-work schedule, but the Veterans Charter does not allow this?

Why is it that not a single dollar earned by a public servant while on a rehabilitation plan of long-term disability is deducted, but half a dollar is deducted from a veteran on the long-term disability rehabilitation plan?

Should there be specific programs to help those disabled veterans who have been out of the workforce for years, sometimes a decade or more, especially when these veterans, in their thirties, forties, and fifties, still want to contribute, to be productive members of Canadian society?

•(1115)

Each of these questions is complex and deserves a comprehensive answer. Had the Veterans Charter been given proper public hearings before passage, we would know those answers. I hope your committee report will provide guidance in each of these matters as well as of my other 38 recommendations.

As SNAG recommends, the charter must be completely reviewed by both Houses, as if it is being seen for the first time, in its entirety, and the committees must be willing to rewrite the entire charter if necessary. This is because Canada's men and women in harm's way need to know that the Veterans Charter is not the work of cost-cutting bureaucrats in Charlottetown, but of their elected leaders right here in Ottawa.

Indeed, if given a broader mandate, this committee should ask whether the Prime Minister should apologize to those neglected or forgotten veterans from the decade prior to the charter's implementation and whether these veterans and their families should have been given or could still be given access to war veterans' programs. This committee should also examine whether maintaining VAC's headquarters in Charlottetown is a benefit to veterans or simply allows civil servants an even greater distance from their Ottawa political masters. It should also study whether the VAC should be integrated into the Department of National Defence. And not to be overlooked is whether a department charged with the care, treatment, and rehabilitation of veterans should have more than just a symbolic presence of veterans in its ranks.

I know I'm asking a lot, but this minority Parliament is capable of great things. If you're looking for resolve, I ask you to travel to Afghanistan and tell our soldiers that it is too difficult to change the public service because the public service is too powerful. Our soldiers may remind you of the challenges of patrolling the Panjwai district of Kandahar and their willingness to die in the service of the country they love. They hope they can count on you, each and every one of you, to accomplish this important mission.

Finally, I want to remind you that as an active opponent of the Veterans Charter as written, I have been singled out for reprisals by

VAC bureaucrats, as documented by nearly 13,000 pages of my personal government information held by Veterans Affairs and obtained through the Privacy Act. Many of you in committee have known me for several years. You may also know that I take great pride in my advocacy work, work which I hope will help Canada take the best care possible of its disabled veterans and their families.

In May 2005, while I was calling for Parliament to send the charter to committee for study, just as you are doing now, certain officials at Veterans Affairs coordinated their efforts to seek reprisals against me, principally for my opposition to the charter as it was written as well as my support for a veterans ombudsman. I now have in my possession these 13,000 pages of Privacy Act information that the department holds on me and on my activities as an advocate. At least 10,000 more pages exist, but they have yet to be provided to me.

What emerges from this information is a clearly documented and disturbing picture of public servants seeking reprisals against me specifically for my advocacy work. In possible violation of ethical boundaries and privacy legislation, policy officials who designed the charter, such as Ken Miller, worked together with treatment officials, such as Orlanda Drebit and Jane Hicks, to blend my advocacy efforts with my medical files. They blended them into briefing notes seen by cabinet ministers and MPs in an attempt to discredit me personally and my work. Their plan was twofold: first, to attack my credibility by falsely accusing me of defrauding the crown, while attempting to force me to be admitted to Ste. Anne's Hospital for a psychiatric assessment reminiscent of Stalinist tactics. The second part of the plan was for these officials to use highly personal information and distortions thereof in briefing notes.

•(1120)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, can you ask our witness to speak a little more slowly because the interpreters can't keep up with the speed of his remarks?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Slow down just a bit, Sean, for the translators.

**Mr. Sean Bruyea:** These briefing notes were given to the sitting minister whenever I carried out my advocacy work. The notes were principally 10 pages long and included the most intimate details of my pharmacological drug use, my financial benefits, my bladder functions, my mental health state, and excerpts from psychiatric and other medical reports. The briefing notes concluded that the only reason that I advocated was because I was mentally unwell, in the sense that in their opinion one would have to be crazy to advocate for change.

These briefing notes were sent to almost all of the VAC senior managers involved in the sections of policy and treatment. In fact, more than 400 Veterans Affairs employees have seen some aspect of my personal files. When I reported these allegations of reprisals to two separate ministers, the response—on the advice of bureaucrats, including Veterans Charter authors—was to ignore my allegations and instead refer me to a VAC psychologist.

When I reported the matter to the Prime Minister's Office, documents in my possession clearly show that the minister's chief of staff and the two most senior VAC officials briefed the Prime Minister's Office that although they could not talk about my allegations due to privacy, many soldiers in the Canadian Forces distrust authority, and that whenever VAC denies a request, the soldiers imagine a "conspiracy". Furthermore, these VAC officials told the PMO staff that PTSD is like alcoholism, and that the way to deal with my allegations was to refer me to a VAC psychologist.

I bring this matter to you to emphasize the almost unbelievable lengths to which certain VAC officials have gone to prevent any meaningful debate on the Veterans Charter and to resist all attempts to impose transparency on the department and this controversial new legislation. As a sufferer of PTSD and other service-related injuries, I'm a client of Veterans Affairs. At no time in my military service did it ever occur to me that I would face personal reprisals from bureaucrats for exercising the very rights I defended while I wore a uniform; I never imagined I would lose far more of myself, my health, and my dignity through malicious and vengeful actions of the government I fought to defend so that the same government could destroy me and my attempts to help all those disabled veterans and their families who need help the most.

By the grace of God and through the support of good friends and the love of my wife, we stood up to the department, and I'm still here.

I suspect that other veterans and Canadians who are thinking of speaking out are waiting to see whether anyone can call these bureaucrats to account. I hereby give Parliament responsibility to investigate and call to account those responsible for such grievous wrongdoing. If what happened to me is not addressed by Parliament, then there is nothing to stop VAC or any other government official from attacking those current or future clients of VAC, or clients of any other federal department, who would advocate for policy change. If VAC were as busy improving the Veterans Charter as they are at targeting their critics, our nation would be well served indeed.

Thank you.

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

Now we'll go to our first round of questioning. We'll go to Mr. Oliphant for seven minutes.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Are we hearing from Carolina now?

**The Chair:** Oh, I apologize. Does your wife have opening remarks too, Mr. Bruyea?

I apologize. Mrs. Bruyea, how long are your remarks? You're saying about three minutes.

Please, with my apologies, go ahead.

• (1125)

**Mrs. Carolina Bruyea (Veteran's Spouse, As an Individual):** Thank you.

When I met and married Sean, I wasn't a Canadian citizen. I moved to Canada and worked hard, like most immigrants, in order to become a valuable Canadian, receiving my professional accounting designation.

I was amazed by Sean's hard work in advocating for veterans and families, but since free speech hasn't always been possible in my country of origin, I was at the same time terrified for him. Sean reassured me that he and generations before him had sacrificed much so that any Canadian could exercise free speech without fear of reprisals, especially from government.

This inspired me, and then I started to believe that any Canadian could exercise his or her rights of free speech to bring about change. When Veterans Affairs first began their reprisals against Sean, I couldn't and didn't want to believe that such behaviour by Canada's government was possible. When we saw the reality of the intent and actions of the bureaucrats in successfully destroying Sean's commendable reputation to many politicians, including the Prime Minister's Office, I was shocked.

When I took my oath of citizenship, I wasn't as proud of the behaviour of my new country's government as I wanted to be. My husband and I suffered much personal loss during and after the reprisals carried out by certain Veterans Affairs employees. We lived in uncertainty and helplessness. If federal government employees can get away with such attacks, are we really safe in Canada?

Sean is a very good husband, and his dedication and sacrifice to help veterans is often beyond description, especially in light of the reprisals from Veterans Affairs that he has suffered. He hasn't received a single penny, commendation, or appointment for his advocacy work over the past 11 years, and yet he continues to help those who need help the most. He has done all this while suffering his disabilities and under negative actions from Veterans Affairs officials.

I plead with you and the rest of Parliament to investigate what happened to my husband, to shine a light on the public service officials responsible.

I came to this country believing it is a just society that doesn't permit autocratic and unethical behaviour by its government employees. Please prove to me that Canada is this just society.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bruyca. Again I offer my apologies for not being aware of your opening remarks.

Now we will go to our first round of questioning, to Mr. Oliphant for seven minutes.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you both for being here, and thank you, Sean, for being here again.

I'm going to try to narrow down to a couple of areas. Of the two I want to talk about, one is the inclusion of pre-Veterans Charter veterans into the charter, which is an issue you've raised that we have not talked about here: we have been talking about the review of the charter. The second thing will be particularly on income support and lump sum benefits. Those are the two areas.

I might preface this by saying that you may think you're not heard, but we are reviewing the new Veterans Charter. You may think you're not heard, but the Conservative government did appoint an ombudsman. There have been things that have happened that I don't think happened without your advocacy. Obviously you have a thousand recommendations—maybe give or take a couple of hundred. We're getting there, so hang in.

Let's go to the lump sum first. The minister has been here and has talked about the fact that the lump sum is part of the compensation for injury that, under the new Veterans Charter, people receive. There is an earnings loss benefit, there are possibilities for some other financial supports, and there is lump sum compensation.

Particularly, do you think we need to simply not have any lump sum, or do you think we need to have a lump sum plus ongoing sums, or a larger lump sum, as in the British system, with almost \$1 million Canadian of lump sum?

Obviously there are two portions of income support. Lump sum is one, and the earnings loss benefit is another. But there are some options. What are you recommending to us to look into further?

• (1130)

**Mr. Sean Bruyca:** Thanks for the kind words about my advocacy, first of all. I really appreciate them.

Regarding the lump sum, Mr. Oliphant, the reason they implemented the lump sum, the national finance committee of the Senate was told, is that this lump sum will help people get a start up

in life. They can use their disability lump sum to buy a house, start a business, or whatever else they need.

I have a serious problem with the fact that the lump sum is being recommended to be used for something that World War II veterans had in separate programs. They had small business start-up loans; they had mortgage assistance. So the reasons for creating the lump sum, for me, are bogus under those auspices. Given that a lump sum is given to disabled people, I think it is a bit morally or ethically questionable that we give a lump sum to people in their time of greatest need and distress, and that's usually at the time that they transition out of the military. It's a very difficult time in most people's lives. Even for the most level-headed people, it would be a far stretch for them to manage that money well.

Why are we breaking 90 years of a proven track record of providing a lifetime disability pension award to those people for a disability that lasts a lifetime? Why don't we continue doing it?

In addition, to get back to your question about the lump sum existing with other benefits, if we compare the chart of what benefits exist in the charter after April 1 with those that existed before April 1, you will find that, all things being equal, the only thing that dramatically changed was that Veterans Affairs now decided to take on or duplicate programs that already existed—SISIP, long-term disability, as well as vocational rehab. Take, for instance, the Canadian Forces income support for low-income support: barring the fact that it is a completely inadequate amount to help anyone who is in dire need, it existed in the same amounts in the war veterans' allowance.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** It was a repackaging.

**Mr. Sean Bruyca:** It was a complete repackaging. It was more of a turf war than anything. Veterans Affairs had been criticized for years for not taking care of these programs. Veterans Affairs should have implemented something like SISIP 30 years ago. Once again, National Defence took the lead where Veterans Affairs failed. National Defence continues to do that, implementing programs, helping people while they're in the service, getting them job training, instituting gradual back-to-work programs. Veterans Affairs is far behind in doing any of that, and it needs to be done. If the charter is to help the most disabled people, then why aren't there programs that are specifically geared to that, instead of to those who are lightly disabled and just need a new job? That's my take on it.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Can we talk a little bit about inclusion essentially of Cold War peacekeeping veterans and Gulf War veterans into the new Veterans Charter—if it's fixed, I guess? There's a little problem there: you might not want to include them, if it's worse. But talk a little bit about that, about where we should be looking at inclusion dates and whether we can do retroactive work, in your mind.

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** I think the concept of the original Veterans Charter after World War II is a good concept. I think the repackaging took catch words and catch phrases from World War II but didn't provide the substance. If we provide the same substance as existed in World War II programs to help people re-establish, then I think we can make a big step forward.

In terms of the pre-Veterans Charter population, in 1999 the study that started it all was called the Review of Veterans' Care Needs. In that study they said that the average age of CF veterans at the time was 59. Ten years later, with statistics and everything, we can probably assume that the average age has gone up maybe five or six years. So when talking about the average CF veteran, we're too late to help a lot of them, because they're over 65, for the most part, and it would be very difficult to integrate them into the workforce. But there are still, if you look at SISIP rosters, about 1,500 long-term disability clients who need some specific programs to help them integrate.

It would be my rough estimate that if we made these programs available, there might be somewhat fewer than 50,000 veterans. There are only 50,000 CF veteran clients of VAC right now. So we're not talking about a monumental expenditure of money, but we do have to consider including those CF veterans, because they were the reason—what they went through in their neglect was the reason—that the charter was created in the first place. The fact that there are not programs specifically for them is a severe tragedy.

• (1135)

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

Now we'll move on to Monsieur André, *pour sept minutes*.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Welcome to the committee. This is surprising testimony.

I'm going to speak from the same perspective as Mr. Oliphant. We are currently reviewing the New Veterans Charter, and a number of people have come to meet with us on the subject. I hope the government will consider the report that is prepared and the many recommendations that will be made. That's always desirable.

You nevertheless said you had experienced reprisals in your efforts to obtain justice with regard to your rights. As regards the public service, I would like you to explain to us a little about the type of reprisals you have experienced. And I'd also like you to give us some recommendations on the kind of assistance and support you would have liked to receive, but that you did not receive, from Veterans Affairs in your efforts over the past few years.

[English]

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Thank you very much, Monsieur André.

Just to clarify, is it that you would like to know the type of accompaniment that would be applicable to the reprisals?

So it is resolutions to help fix or prevent reprisals in the future—*si je comprends bien*.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André:** Yes, that's correct.

[English]

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** What I would like to say is that, first of all, I'm more than willing to divulge to this committee or any official body all of the body of the 13,000 documents. I've done a lot of research and summary, so I can provide you with all those details. I can give you some general areas. For instance, in addition to what I already pointed out, that when I handled my advocacy work a briefing note was.... For instance, on March 21 I held a press conference to recommend that the charter be sent to committee before it went into force, to have a last-minute look to see whether it needed improving. A briefing note was slapped on the minister's desk. It acknowledged that the purpose of the briefing note was that I was holding a press conference on the charter. In the briefing note was everything from, as I said, my medical details to excerpts from my psychiatric report, such as that I was experiencing "suicidal ideation".

I am trying to understand how that medical information had anything to do with applicability to my holding a press conference on sending the charter back to committee. The only rational reason is that they deliberately breached Privacy Act laws so that they could influence the minister, this from a party upon which, prior to their ascension to government, I had much influence. After these briefing notes started circulating, I started not receiving contact from, for instance, the previous parliamentary secretary. The minister, at the first meeting I had with him, promised he would follow up. He never followed up with meetings with me.

So it was very clear that they were effective about destroying my reputation, especially within the governing party.

In addition to that, I received phone calls. When I tried to meet with Minister Thompson, there were phone calls from two senior VAC bureaucrats. The gist of their phone calls was: "We know you're trying to talk to the minister. We recommend you don't try to do that. And by the way, you have no hope whatsoever of stopping this charter from coming into force."

That may not sound like threatening words. They control my financial security; they control my financial future. They controlled my medical care. It doesn't take someone to say nasty or incriminating words to scare the heck out of me and to scare the heck out of my wife. They have the power. They know what buttons to push, and they did.



What kinds of things would I like to see to remedy this situation? First would be a truly independent and powerful public service integrity commissioner; an accountability law that actually protects public servants coming forward. As you well know from the record of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, there hasn't been a single investigation in two years. Apparently there is no wrongdoing in the public service.

I submitted my report to her. She came back.... First of all, as a Canadian citizen, I am not protected from reprisals. In fact, according to her definition, I can't suffer them: it's impossible, because the legislation doesn't say I can. Furthermore, she said in the follow-up letter that public servants could not have harassed me, because public servants can't instruct other public servants to commit wrongdoing.

I'm not sure what bizarre world of logic that comes from, but it shows an office completely loyal to the public service and not to protecting the rights of Canadians.

• (1140)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André:** You say your medical file was not kept confidential. Did you file a professional complaint in connection with that situation? You no doubt filed a complaint with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Have any steps been taken to respect your rights, which were violated by officials and ministers? Have you filed a complaint? Are any legal proceedings underway?

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

[English]

What I did with respect to Veterans Affairs was I first reported the allegations as I understood them; I didn't have access to the documents at the time. Then, when I received responses, there was nothing about allegations in the letter, but it asked me to please speak to a VAC psychologist because, it said, I needed help. It was very upsetting for me.

I went to the Prime Minister's Office. I reported the allegations. I told you what happened.

Being in the military, we're a bit naive. We really believe that government is honest and that—

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André:** In what year did that occur?

[English]

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** The fall of 2005 was when I first reported my impression of what was going on. The involvement with the Prime Minister's Office was in August and September 2006, and then after that time I was engaged in a three-year process. I provided the department with all the details of what the reprisals were. I've offered to provide them with the documents. I've also provided them with free mediation: I've arranged for two federal departments to mediate the situation free of charge. I've followed the public service harassment guidelines, but they don't apply to me: I'm not a public servant.

The department then commissioned what it called a review of my correspondence, as opposed to an investigation. In this review they

claim they never received my original allegations; therefore the harassment never took place.

In the Privacy Act files, there are three hard copies sitting on the deputy minister's personal file that she holds on me—three hard copies of those allegations. Over 100 hard copies exist in the department. More than 50 Veterans Affairs employees had those allegations circulated among them. This investigation, which was concluded two days after I reported to the Senate veterans affairs committee my initial impression of the harassment, was closed by Veterans Affairs, saying they never had those original documents.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bruyey and Monsieur André.

We are now moving on to Madam Hughes for five minutes.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Thank you.

That was a great presentation. I can see that your wife has provided a lot of support to you to provide you with the strength you've had to continue this fight and to continue addressing the inequities in this charter.

I think we've been running into similar walls with this government, not only with your case as you're describing today, but also with what's happening with the Afghan mission and some of the documents we've been trying to get.

I want to touch base because I'm trying to get a little bit more understanding, and I think it's good to have it on the public record. You've indicated in your second point here that Veterans Affairs Canada should immediately set a target that 30% of all staff must be veterans. Your report is based on what you have been living and what you have been discussing with others. They are people who have actually lived it. Could you elaborate on that? I'm assuming that you want 30% of all staff to be veterans because you know they will be able to connect better with what is going on, on the ground. I'll leave that with you right now.

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Thank you.

Ms. Hughes, you're absolutely right. In the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans make up 30% of the entire employee workforce, and 25,000 of that 30% are disabled veterans. Veterans Affairs cannot answer how many veterans are employed in their department. I suspect it's because there are very few and because it's an embarrassingly low number.

It astounds me. Every federal department is obligated to set appropriate hiring targets for minorities, for aboriginals, for the disabled. Every department is also obligated to hire people who have specialties in the fields they represent. Transport Canada has to hire transport engineers. They have to hire inspectors who perhaps were airplane engineers, aero-engine engineers, or pilots. Indian and Northern Affairs has positions that specifically require some exposure to or involvement in the aboriginal culture, and Statistics Canada has to hire statisticians, yet Veterans Affairs is the only department that is not obligated to hire the very specialty they are supposed to be serving: the veteran.

You in the committee well understand the unique demands of military culture. There is no way that someone who hasn't served in the military can really understand what it's like to have served in the military and the transition into civilian life. It's absolutely inexcusable that they don't have any targets for hiring veterans in the department, let alone disabled veterans.

•(1145)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** My riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing is humongous, and throughout it there are quite a few legions. There are lots of veterans in the area as well, of course, and some of them continue to have difficulties with respect to being diagnosed with related illnesses that may come around. I know you've made the argument with respect to people who have disabilities of some kind, and we know that sometimes these disabilities don't show up right away, especially when they're mental disabilities.

You talked about treatment authorization centres and counsellors. Could you elaborate on that, as well as the importance of the changes you are requesting and how they would benefit those people? Are there other recommendations you can make with respect to accessibility for people who are looking to be diagnosed? I know of one case in particular in which they're indicating that we're not going to provide any service unless the person can prove it; the onus is on the person to prove that they have these symptoms or these disabilities.

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Thank you, Ms. Hughes. You've touched on the crux of the problem in Veterans Affairs.

Veterans Affairs has designed a host of programs. They are programs designed by bureaucrats to satisfy bureaucratic processes; they're not programs designed by veterans in conjunction with bureaucrats or medical experts. They're meant to satisfy Treasury Board demands. Treasury Board demands do not necessarily equate to the demands or needs of disabled veterans and their families.

What has happened is that Veterans Affairs is now an incredibly top-heavy organization that is far too isolated in Charlottetown, and whenever a problem occurs, you know the expression: it rolls downhill. It falls upon the front-line workers. The front-line workers have been given 45 pieces of legislation to administer for war veterans, and on top of that they've been given a whole new host of very complex programs. The charter is an incredible burden to the front-line workers. They're not given any extra staffing. They're meant to administer all of these programs all at once, while still providing what they say is case management.

An area counsellor, for example, has anywhere from 900 to 1,500 cases. It doesn't take a genius mathematician to realize that given the paperwork they're required to fill out by head office as they come up with new processes—which they do all the time—they can actually only devote approximately 10% to a maximum of 20% of their time to true case management. That means we're looking at probably 95% of their clientele not being served.

In addition, they have no authority to actually approve a lot of these processes. They can recommend them, but they have to go through another chain of command.

What do I recommend? Do away with the regional offices. Do away with the majority of positions in head office, because a lot of those are merely approving things that can be approved by the front-line workers. Enhance a lot of those positions in the district office with the vacated positions in head office and regional office, and also provide them with clerical staff so that area counsellors and client service agents aren't inputting these incredibly burdensome processes.

That should remain until we can actually have some veterans in place who can say that a particular process doesn't work, or have a medical person in place at Veterans Affairs who can decide that since some process isn't going to help a disabled veteran, the process should be gotten rid of.

•(1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bruyey and Mrs. Hughes.

I have a very respectful reminder. Our witness has been very good at answering questions, but the questions from the last two questioners were really outside the new Veterans Charter. We have been cautioned by the researcher in the past that he wasn't getting enough material in order to do a report, and I believe I was encouraged by some members to keep us on track, so consider that a small shepherding process.

Now we will go to Mr. McColeman for seven minutes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Thank you, Chair.

I trust that I won't go into the areas that you're trying to articulate we shouldn't move into. However, my first comment to our witnesses is to say thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Bruyey for being here. We can see that you're a highly decorated veteran, and I want to thank you for your service to this country. I say that with utmost sincerity, because we wouldn't live in the country we have unless we had individuals like you who are prepared to lay their lives on the line for our freedom.

As a new parliamentarian I have not been involved with the past development of the new Veterans Charter, but we have done a lot as a committee to get various opinions. We've been to Charlottetown. We've had a lot of people come here. We've studied the delivery models of other countries and compared what they provide for benefits, etc.

My observation from the start is that everybody looks at issues from their own frame of reference. You're a very strong individual, and very competent and capable as an advocate. I sense that your presentation is highly emotional, and you're also making some very strong allegations and accusations about the way the delivery system works today. As well, you're providing us with recommendations to move forward with a model that is vastly different from what currently exists today.

As I frame and drive to my question here, I have to say that in the visits and discussions with the bureaucrats who run this department now, I don't believe I had any sense of there being anything disingenuous about what they were doing. I didn't sense, as you commented on several times here, hidden agendas, or that they're bureaucrats obsessed with cost-cutting. In fact, I will lead into the first question this way: on doing some analysis—because I treat things from a business point of view and try to remove emotion from it—since the new Veterans Charter came into being, we've increased the funding, and hence the spending, to improve benefits for vets by \$1.93 billion. Are you aware of that?

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Yes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** What's your view of that?

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** What's my view of the spending?

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Yes. What's your view of the increase of almost \$2 billion in spending to assist veterans?

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Yes, I'm well aware of that. I'm sure the committee is familiar with the Pension Act. The fact is that there are mandatory increases that have nothing to do with government. Whatever government sits, those spending increases will occur, and in fact it was, I believe, in 2007 that there was a 7% mandatory increase for all veterans' benefits, precisely because the CPI wasn't keeping pace with the equivalent in the public service for employees' salaries.

My calculations are that probably half of that \$1.9 billion was actually a mandatory increase that no committee or sitting government should be taking any credit for. I mean no disrespect to you, but I think this is another piece of misinformation that the bureaucrats are providing you in taking credit for something that's not really their due.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** You also mentioned in your comments that you are a client of Veterans Affairs, so on your discharge you went through the process of applying and going through that process. I'm curious to know your experience in dealing with them and in getting the benefits awarded that you've obviously said you are receiving as a client. What was your experience? Did you have difficulty getting those put in place?

• (1155)

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Do you mean benefits for myself?

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Yes.

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Benefits for myself were non-existent, and I mean that. They were absolutely non-existent. I was not even briefed about SISIP long-term disability. The dark decade of the 1990s was a real shambles.

Having said that, please let me give credit to Veterans Affairs in terms of their front-line employees. These people, the majority of them, are super-compassionate people. They work super-hard, and they're overworked, stressed, and frustrated. If you speak with district offices, I think it'll be pretty clear that if district offices at random throughout Canada are asked how often a senior manager has come down and actually heard concerns directly from them, the answer will probably be, "Never". They've come and visited and said hi once every year, but never more than that, so I'm wondering, first, how the senior managers in Charlottetown, isolated from the main oversight agencies in Ottawa, can understand how the rest of the federal government is working.

Second, I'm wondering how those senior managers who are isolated from their district workers can understand what the real needs and requirements are for administering those programs directly to the veterans.

Third, they are not veterans. I mean no disrespect to you, Mr. McColeman; I understand that everyone wants to look at these things logically, but the point is that you have veterans who are disabled and have lost everything. There is a difference between World War II veterans and disabled CF veterans. World War II veterans were more than happy to get out of the military and integrate back into the workforce, and they were provided with all the programs, which were much more extensive than what exists under the new Veterans Charter, but CF veterans who are disabled want to stay in the military.

I cannot emphasize too much what an incredible blow to the soul, the self-esteem, and the actual sense of worth a veteran has when they're kicked out of the military and forced to go through bureaucratic processes. These are good bureaucrats, they're good people, but they're not good administrators and they don't understand veterans and the needs of those veterans. That's where the problem lies. They will come here sounding very professional, and they are very professional, and they're following all the processes, but they're not doing the job that veterans need them to do, and that's where the problem lies.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** On that very point, I made a note here as you were speaking—and it was brought up earlier—about lump sum payments. You were expressing the view that it's not appropriate and that you need a pension that goes on. Again, through our witnesses and analysis of this charter, we've heard testimony that says the opposite. Some people do benefit greatly and want lump sum payments.

I would suggest to you that for certain people in certain circumstances, a lump sum is totally appropriate, because they've expressed that to us. To exclude that possibility for those people would certainly not be very acceptable to them at all. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on those situations and how you would deal with those people.

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** I think there are a couple of questions. Would people be immediately happy if they received all their money up front? Probably, and I would think they'd be happier than if they were receiving just a small monthly cheque.

However, the big question has to be asked: how will they feel five years from now, when they realize that veterans who were disabled the day before they applied for the program—because it was March 30, 2006—are still receiving monthly money that they'll receive until they die? The veterans who spent all their money from the lump sum and were happy for a year or two have nothing to show for it.

I fully respect the rights of adults, and they deserve to have a choice between a lump sum and a monthly pension, but at the same time we also have a responsibility, a moral duty, in Canada to make sure those veterans are looked after and to ask the questions: "Why are you happy with your lump sum instead of a monthly pension?" If he says it's because he could buy a house, well, if I walk into a bank with a guaranteed-for-life monthly disability pension, I'm going to get very favourable terms on a mortgage, and at the end of paying that mortgage, I'll still have my monthly pension.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Mr. McColeman, you're way over.

We have finished our first round of questioning. Now we'll go to Madam Sgro for five minutes.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Bruyey, thank you so very much, not only for what you've done for us in the past, but also for what you're doing today and what you've been doing for 11 years. No doubt your frustration is very strong, but we are reviewing the charter, specifically because we want to hear from you.

In case you don't know, and I'm sure you do, this committee tends to work in a non-partisan way. It doesn't matter who's in government; mistakes are made. Our job is now to review this charter and try to make the necessary improvements. I appreciate you and your wife coming and commenting as you have and giving us these recommendations so that we can look at what we can do. I know that all of us have the same intent in this committee, and it's to try to make life better for our veterans.

You certainly raise a variety of issues, and the lump sum payment is one aspect that I think some of us have concerns about, but I want to ask you about the 299 recommendations.

You have a wonderful report here. It must have taken you a lot of time to put together. It's clearly reflective of your 11 years of advocacy. What keeps you going? It's 11 years; you and your wife have suffered personal pain and problems trying to deal with something that you wouldn't give up on. What keeps you going? Why do you keep doing it?

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** Thank you very much, Ms. Sgro.

In the military—I joined at age 17—I was taught very quickly that I was responsible for other persons' lives and that they were also responsible for mine. They fulfilled their duty looking after me while I was in the military; it's still my duty to help look after them now. A duty to Canada and to the other soldiers who have been in or are still in the Canadian military is ingrained deeply in me. If I see an injustice, I can't turn a blind eye to it; I have to speak up, and I would hope that most Canadians have that sense of duty as well.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** I applaud your determination, and I hope that as a committee we are able to make recommendations to go forward that achieve what we all want, which is that level of respect and comfort.

We have 299 recommendations, though, that you had put forward. Has there been any implementation of any of those 299 recommendations, other than two or three?

**Mr. Sean Bruyey:** I'm sorry; for the record, I didn't put forward those 299 recommendations. Those are a combination of all the recommendations from both the special needs advisory group and the new Veterans Charter advisory group. Of those, about 200 are non-overlapping recommendations, so they're highly unique. The remaining ones partially overlap or overlap fully. It's safe to say that in total there are probably about 250 different recommendations in the reports.

Have they been implemented? That's an excellent question. No, they haven't, and I'd like to speak quickly about the reason I think they haven't. It's because these recommendations, first of all, are going to the very individuals, Darragh Mogan and Ken Miller, who brief Parliament and tell everyone that the charter is a wonderful piece of legislation and only needs tweaking. Well, making 250 recommendations is not tweaking. This is a disaster. Any legislation, after five years, that requires 250 recommendations from only two advisory groups, plus my 38 recommendations, needs a complete overhaul.

In addition to that, when the committee makes recommendations, I would hope it's more or less an order instead of a recommendation, because I think it's ethically unjust to ask bureaucrats in Veterans Affairs to implement recommendations when they are more loyal to Treasury Board processes than they are to actually fulfilling their mandate to take care of veterans. It's understandable that way, but if you order them to do it—if the PMO orders them to do it—then there's no excuse. They have to implement them, and we don't put them in the middle and squeeze them between Treasury Board and what you are asking them to do.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Chair, have we received the list of the 250 recommendations?

**The Chair:** We've received them in the sense that we've had access to the reports, yes.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** They are in various reports. Could I ask that the clerk put those 250 recommendations together in a report and distribute the report to the committee so that we can look at those, in addition to your 38, as we move forward on trying to make a difference on this issue?

I suspect we will see you again after today and have you come back and work with us to try to make sure this charter is what we all want it to be.

Thank you.

•(1205)

**The Chair:** Thanks, Madam Sgro.

Is this a point of order, Monsieur André?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Chairman, I pointed out to our witness that the document currently circulating, which our colleagues now have in hand, was not translated in both official languages. I don't understand why that document is now in the hands of certain members, considering that it is not translated in both official languages.

I spoke about this with Mr. Bruyca, and we discussed the matter. I told him that his document had to be filed and translated in both official languages so that it could then be distributed, which is not currently the case.

I would ask you, Mr. Chairman, that these documents be handed over to you now so that we can have access to them only once they are translated in both official languages.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Monsieur André.

The documents in question, I believe, are not the property of the committee and have not been distributed by me or by the clerk. They were independently obtained directly from Mr. Bruyca.

I believe Mr. Bruyca has agreed to table the document. We'll have it translated in both official languages, and then the chair and clerk will distribute it as far as our responsibility is concerned. But anybody who has possession of those documents right now is outside of the control of the chair or the clerk, Monsieur André.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Chairman, I think this is a roundabout way of not respecting the two official languages. Documents that aren't translated in both official languages are sent to members' offices for them to use at committee meetings. I don't think that's the right way to do things.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Monsieur André, I will independently investigate your concerns; however, I do caution you that Mr. Bruyca is a citizen of Canada. He can e-mail, he can mail directly to MPs' offices as freely as he wants, and MPs can open their mail as freely as they like.

But I will look into this and make sure that there was no procedure of the committee with respect to both official languages that was breached, and I assure you that if there was, then you'll have the appropriate apology from the chair and we'll make sure that the practices are amended.

It's the same point of order, Monsieur Vincent?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** Yes, it's on the same subject.

This is really unfortunate because this document could have been useful during this meeting. But the document hasn't been translated. As my colleague said, we see that our other colleagues have the document and are using it. We would have appreciated having it translated so that we too could ask questions as relevant as those of our colleagues. However, we don't have the document in our possession at this time. I believe the clerk was informed of the fact that we should not accept the document and share it with committee members. We see that is not the case this morning.

Earlier you talked about your investigation, Mr. Chairman. Yes, it's true, we received the document at our offices. Any Canadian can send us a document. I entirely agree with you. However, when it comes to taking the documents that Canadians send to our offices and using them during a committee meeting when other colleagues don't have that opportunity since those documents have not been translated, that's another matter.

First, for reasons of fairness among members, this document should be withdrawn. If we had this document translated in French, perhaps we could invite members to use the document again in another question period during the day. In that way, everyone could be on an equal footing.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Vincent, again, I will review the procedures here. I don't profess to know the entire procedures manual, but I think it's beyond the scope of the chair to limit the documents that are brought into the room by individual members.

But let me look into the entire thing, and as I said, if there was any breach of protocol of the practices of the committee, I'll make sure they're amended.

Mr. Oliphant, on the same point of order?

•(1210)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Yes.

I just actually want to speak in support of the chair on this. I bring documents regularly to this committee that citizens send me. I bring letters. I bring all of that. I also speak in support of my colleagues. Now that Mr. Bruyca has sent a document out, it's absolutely appropriate that we receive it as a committee document, have it translated, and then distributed.

I receive things all the time, and I receive them in French sometimes so I bring them in French, not in English. I don't perceive there is a breach of protocol on this, but I hear it as a request to ensure this document is translated.

I'm supportive of you. You can continue to investigate, but I think you're doing a good job on this.

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

I think the comments have made it abundantly clear now to the clerk that he will do that as quickly as he possibly can and get the document distributed in both official languages.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** The first point, Mr. Chairman—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Hang on just a moment, please. We have a list of speakers.

We've gone over this quite a bit, but, Mr. André, are you on the same point of order?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André:** With regard to what Mr. Oliphant said, I disagree with him. I submit documents that are also in other various languages, even though they are often in French. This document that has been submitted is the witness's statement. That's very different from a working document. It is the witness's address that is in this document.

I suggest that committee members vote on whether this document should be immediately withdrawn from the meeting. I request on the subject.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** What document do you wish withdrawn, Monsieur André?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André:** I'm talking about the document that was submitted by the witness. That document is not in both official languages. I'm talking about the document that people are using and that contains the witness's address.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I can't call for a vote in a case that is beyond the scope of the authority of the chair. If people want to leave the room and shred their documents right now, I don't have any ability to stop them from doing that. I think it's a request that is beyond the scope of the chair.

We will now go to Madam Sgro, then Mr. Vincent, and then Mr. Casson.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** I think it's really important that all members of the committee have Mr. Bruyca's report. There's a lot of very significant information here.

The chair certainly hasn't done anything wrong, nor the clerk. These documents were submitted to our offices, and this is the language that I read them in. However, they're clearly at a disadvantage today in being able to ask Mr. Bruyca questions based on a report that we're looking at, so I think we'd be far better off to invite Mr. Bruyca to come back on Tuesday. By that time everyone will have the report in the language of their choice.

At this point it's not the clerk's fault, or yours, but this is an important document that we're looking at. Why don't we suspend our meeting today, reconvene on Tuesday, and ask Mr. Bruyca to come back? Then everyone will have a chance to ask questions without getting into motions and here and there.

That's my suggestion: that we adjourn the meeting until Tuesday, when all members will have this report in whatever language necessary.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Sgro.

Before I press that question to the committee, I'll just exhaust my list of speakers. Please go ahead, Monsieur Vincent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** I agree with Ms. Sgro.

Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Chairman, I agree with you that, if documents are submitted by other people, the committee can use them to ask witnesses questions. Today, we're talking about the witness's document, and that very much changes matters. It's not someone else who has sent you something so that committee members can ask a witness questions. It's the witness who is here who is submitting a report. We can question the witness because he is here in committee. The dynamic is thus completely different from that prevailing when we receive a document. It's that point that's important.

● (1215)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Casson is next.

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I know I'm just subbed in at this committee today, but I'm thinking in terms of respect for our witnesses. We were well into this meeting when this objection was raised, and I think you've handled it fairly.

I agree somewhat with Judy that we should possibly bring these witnesses back anyway, because of the extent of their knowledge on this issue, but surely we can agree as a committee to continue today's session with these folks. We've brought them in here. They've taken time out of their personal lives to come and advocate for veterans across this country on very serious issues they've been raising. To stop it because a document distributed to our offices wasn't in the two official languages, a document that had nothing to do with the committee, would be wrong.

If there are questions outstanding that the members opposite cannot ask because they do not have the information in the other official language, then those questions can be asked when these witnesses come back.

**The Chair:** Mr. Vincent, I just checked with the clerk to make sure. I thought that was the case. A motion to suspend is actually a dilatory motion. I'm being courteous in exhausting my speakers' list, but right after that we actually have to go to a vote on whether or not to suspend.

Mr. Kerr.

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

Actually Rick covered a bit of what I was going to say. I was thinking as this was going on that obviously we don't want to be discourteous to any of our colleagues, and I don't think anybody has that intent. We have less than half an hour left. If the witnesses have more they want to say today, that's fine. I would say we should certainly start another meeting off and make sure there is an hour guaranteed for the witnesses if they can come back. And I don't mind giving our time to the Bloc members to make sure they have the time to cover it. I agree that it's a little discourteous to simply suspend the meeting today. If they have some things they'd like to say today, that would be fine, but we're quite prepared to give you our time next time around if you agree.

**The Chair:** Let me tell you what the researcher was just relaying to me. In the routine motions we passed at the beginning of our session, one of the things we did not include—which we could amend and include—is that every witness be notified when they're contacted that if they're going to submit documents, those should be submitted in both official languages. And then of course if those documents cannot be translated before the meeting, the clerk would advise us that we couldn't meet until those documents were translated. I don't have the wording here, but I'll make sure we have the wording next time, and then, if it pleases the committee, we can have somebody move that motion and put it into the routine proceedings.

However, because the motion to adjourn is a dilatory motion, we need to go to a vote, and if that vote is defeated, then I'll recognize the speakers.

All in favour of Madam Sgro's motion to adjourn?

(Motion negatived)

**The Chair:** There are two people who want to express some concerns.

Mr. Vincent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** You see the importance this document has. You called us to order, Mr. Chairman. You told us that our questions were not relevant because they did not concern the amendment of the New Veterans Charter.

The report the witness gave us focused directly on the New Veterans Charter. If we had received that document, our questions would have been relevant. I believe that's the case for everyone. You called us to order, but, to go really to the heart of the matter, we

needed a translation of that document so we could ask those questions.

The witness's testimony concerned his experience more than the New Veterans Charter. If we want our questions to be relevant, having regard to the work done by the witness who provided us with that report, we must have the document.

● (1220)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Your point has been made well, Mr. Vincent.

Mr. McColeman.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Mr. Chair, I can appreciate the situation you're in here, which is one of trying to mediate—for lack of a better word—something going on here. The suggestion that was brought forward does not do anything to mitigate the situation that many of us experience, which is what Mr. Oliphant pointed out. He held up about four file folders full of personal letters he has received from individuals or information he has received on his e-mail.

Let's not get into a situation where you're going to create some kind of procedure here that is going to take up the time of our clerk and our researcher and that is not even close to being enforceable and/or reasonable to ask for. It's just my observation that this doesn't achieve much at all.

**The Chair:** Okay. I believe we've aired our concerns fully and completely. We spoke to this situation. We have 20 minutes left for the witnesses. There is Mr. Casson's comment that we've asked them to come here, they've invested their time, and we should appropriately be respectful of that and allow them testimony.

On to Mr. Lobb for five minutes.

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

Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Bruyca for coming today. I'm sure that after that last exchange there—

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair. Back to that vote that we just had to suspend the meeting, this side all voted in favour of that motion.

**The Chair:** You didn't vote, and I didn't see the NDP vote either.

**A voice:** The NDP voted.

**A voice:** I definitely saw them vote.

**The Chair:** I apologize. I have some other eyes here with me and we—

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** I didn't know it was a “raise your hand” motion or a “yea or nay” motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Andrews, if you feel there was an error on the vote—

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Yes, I do. Could you please call that vote again?

**The Chair:** All right. There has been a motion to adjourn the meeting.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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