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Chair

Mr. Greg Kerr

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We have a quorum.

We're very pleased this morning to welcome the Royal Canadian Legion representatives. They have been very faithful witnesses in the past and, as we know, certainly very important in the lives of our veterans.

So if we are ready to go.... Are you going to act as point this morning for your side? Okay.

I say good morning to Brad White, dominion secretary. You certainly went before. And it's nice to meet Steve Clark, director of the national Remembrance Day celebration, administration. Is that correct? Do I have that right?

Mr. Steven Clark (Director of Administration, Director of the National Remembrance Day Celebration, Royal Canadian Legion): Close enough.

The Chair: Okay.

Welcome, gentlemen. Certainly we look forward to your opening comments. You know the routine in terms of questioning and so on. We look forward to an active engagement this morning.

We always start, as I said, Brad, by inviting you to take about 10 minutes to do an introduction. We try to stick close to that, because we know that when Peter starts asking questions, he fills the wavelengths up pretty full.

Please, go ahead.

Mr. Brad White (Dominion Secretary, Dominion Command, Royal Canadian Legion): Honourable Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to the Royal Canadian Legion to appear before you today to speak on commemorative activities in the 21st century. On behalf of our dominion president, Comrade Patricia Varga, it is a pleasure to be with you here today.

[Translation]

We will make our statement in English, but you should have copies in both French and English.

[English]

I'm Brad White, the dominion secretary of the Royal Canadian Legion. Since my arrival at the Legion in 1998, I have been involved in pretty well every major commemorative activity the Legion has participated in, as well as being the past director of the national ceremony.

Accompanying me today is Mr. Steven Clark. He is my director of administration and he is also the director of the national ceremony.

As guardians of remembrance in Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion works tirelessly to keep alive the memory of the more than 117,000 Canadians who have fallen in the military service of Canada. But commemorating is more than just providing Canadians with an opportunity to stand in collective reminiscence of our fallen comrades at occasions throughout the year.

Commemoration is an appreciation of the past, an understanding of how past actions in wars, missions, conflicts, and peacetime will impact future generations. We recall our moments of triumph, and of course of tragedy, of excitement and despair. It is this understanding and appreciation that enables us to remember and honour our veterans. Instrumental to effective commemoration is of course effective communication. It is this philosophy that has led to a number of milestone programs and projects of the Legion, as we strive to never forget the deeds of the fallen and to perpetuate remembrance into the future.

Mr. Steven Clark: The major program of the Legion in fulfilling our mission to promote remembrance is of course the annual poppy campaign. Since the early 20th century, beginning in 1922, Legion members from branches throughout the country have distributed the lapel poppy.

By wearing a poppy, the international symbol of remembrance, Canadians will ensure that the memory and sacrifices of our veterans are never forgotten. It is so encouraging that every year approximately 18 million lapel poppies are distributed to Canadians during the two-week remembrance period.

This campaign culminates in the Remembrance Day ceremonies on November 11. The Royal Canadian Legion is deeply honoured and proud to organize and conduct remembrance ceremonies in hundreds of communities throughout the country, including the national Remembrance Day ceremony here in Ottawa.

The Legion's commemoration program also includes pilgrimages. In 1936 the Legion organized its first pilgrimage to Europe, when 6,200 veterans and family members travelled to Vimy for the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial. This program has since evolved into a biennial youth leaders pilgrimage of remembrance. Through their visits and experiences at numerous significant World War I and World War II sites in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, these youth leaders gain a unique perspective and unprecedented level of understanding, and upon their return, they have an audience of young Canadians eager to hear of the places and events they experienced first-hand. Participants in the pilgrimage succeed in promoting remembrance in a way that few can.

In the mid-20th century, in 1950, the Legion instituted an important remembrance program aimed toward youth: poster, essay, and poetry contests. Students from kindergarten to grade 12 are asked to show what remembrance means to them through their artistic and literary compositions. This has been a tremendously successful program, with over 100,000 students participating on an annual basis.

As the 20th century came to a close, the Royal Canadian Legion introduced the two-minute wave of silence as a millennium project. This was an education and communications activity, with the primary aim of reminding Canadians of the importance of taking two minutes of time to pause and remember at 11 a.m. on November 11.

We were also honoured to initiate and coordinate the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier project in which the remains of an unknown soldier from Vimy were entombed at the base of the National War Memorial on May 28, 2000.

We were also pleased that our suggestion that 2005 be declared the Year of the Veteran was accepted and instituted.

Mr. Brad White: Throughout our history, the Legion has maintained a leading role in the creation and care of memorials to the contributions in valour of our brave veterans and Canadians. Working in concert with other veterans organizations and the Canadian government, the Legion has vowed to ensure that the preservation of the records and memories of our fallen heroes and returning veterans continues in perpetuity.

These and other commemorative projects and activities led by the Royal Canadian Legion have been welcomed by Canadians, who have never hesitated to demonstrate their support in acknowledging the debt that is owed to those who sacrificed so much. We repay this debt in our remembrance.

What of commemorative celebrations in the 21st century? With over 100,000 students taking part in our annual remembrance contests and with audiences of up to 55,000 in attendance at the national Remembrance Day ceremony and over four million television viewers of the ceremony, are we really witnessing a resurgence of remembrance in the country? Will the traditional methods of commemorating remain effective as we progress through the decades of this century?

The importance of honouring our military heritage and paying tribute to those who fought and fell will remain a cornerstone of the Legion's mission. We will continue with our existing programs and

develop new national initiatives while remaining cognizant of the importance of participation in community-led events.

We believe that memorials and observances at cenotaphs are an important facet of any commemorative program. They convey a sense of national unity and a manner of recognizing loss, and they stand as our visual pledge to never forget. They enable Canadians in every community to share our common history of sacrifice and commitment.

We will continue to focus on educating youth on why we remember. This concept is paramount as we strive to raise awareness among all Canadians and those of future generations.

The Legion supports in-country recognition of significant anniversaries of milestone events, and to that end we have initiated internal discussions to recognize the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I in 2014 and the 100th anniversary of Beaumont Hamel in 2016. In 2017 we will observe the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the 100th anniversary of the Halifax explosion, and the 150th anniversary of Canada. In 2018 we will mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the World War I. I will add here that in 2026 we will also commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion.

For the Royal Canadian Legion, commemorative celebrations in the 21st century will continue in order to honour and thank our veterans. We will remember them.

Thank you.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

We'll now go to the NDP and Mr. Stoffer.

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

Thank you both very much for coming.

I don't know if I'll be here in 2026, but I hope you have a good party on that day.

I have just one question for you, gentlemen. The poppy is actually a trademark symbol of the Royal Canadian Legion, if I'm not mistaken. I'm just wondering if you can tell me how and when this came about.

Mr. Brad White: The poppy, of course, has been the symbol of remembrance since about 1921, when the idea was brought over. The Legion does own the trademark of the poppy, and we protect that trademark very rigorously all the way through the country. That actually came about in around 1948 through the act of Parliament that incorporated the Royal Canadian Legion. So today we try to make not only government aware but also other civilian organizations and commercial organizations aware that the poppy is the trademark. We use it for specific purposes, which is for remembrance, of course.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for being here. It's truly a privilege to meet you. I've heard a great deal about your leadership, so I'm pleased that I'm able to make your acquaintance.

You made mention of the fact that there has been great success in regard to commemoration, and I'm very impressed, especially with 100,000 students entering essay contests and poster contests. As a former teacher, I know the kind of work the Legion does in the schools to let kids know, to make them part of the commemoration and the remembering.

In light of the fact that it's the 21st century and things change and people have different preoccupations, what is the Legion preparing to do or thinking about doing or planning in order to maintain that level of interest and participation?

Mr. Steven Clark: One thing we're looking at is incorporating technologies that students would be following now. We have poster, literary, and poetry contests. We've also trialled a video contest where students can actually use their skills in digital media to show what remembrance means to them. It hasn't been widespread across the country. We're starting in British Columbia just to see if in fact it is successful.

For a student to enter into this type of media contest does require certain skills, certain equipment, and whatnot. The positive and interesting thing about the contest that we currently run is that you don't need any special equipment. Anybody can do it. It borders all economic areas, if I can say that. If you venture into something that requires specific video equipment, then there is some cost involved, unless things can be supported through the school. But we are looking at that. We are looking at ways we can embrace technology, moving forward, but with the same purpose: promoting remembrance.

• (0900)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much.

Now I know that one of the challenges the Legion faces today is declining membership. The reality is that members are aging and perhaps are not as able to attend or participate in Legion activities. Do you think the commemorations that you currently do and are planning to do will begin to appeal to that younger generation and bring them into the activities of the Legion as members, as volunteers, as participants?

Mr. Brad White: People talk about the declining membership of the organization. We have 342,000 members of the Royal Canadian Legion across the country, over 1,500 branches, not only in Canada but also in the States and Europe. About one-third of our members, 120,000 to 130,000 people, are actually those who have served, like me. The largest proportion of our membership are those who are associated, like military families. And then we have a very small percentage of average Canadians who have joined the organization because they believe in the ideals. I tend to look at the organization as an organization that not only looks after serving people or people who have served, but also that predominantly looks after their families.

We have instituted programs recently to attract the newer veterans from Afghanistan. We have a welcome home initiative that's just going on across the country. We have seen an increase in

membership. We've offered them a one-year free membership in the organization.

Today's military individual is a different cat from my days, 13 or 14 years ago. They use technology differently. They talk differently amongst themselves. And they have different experiences from what I experienced when I was going back.

So yes, we're trying to reach out to them and bring them in. They don't always want to join an organization or become part of the bricks and mortar. They want to make sure they're communicating with people with like experiences. So that's what we're going to do, reach out through what we're calling a "virtual branch"—develop a virtual branch so that they can have that ability to come together and talk about their shared experiences. Through that, as well as bringing them into the remembrance cycle, it's one way of attracting those members.

As I've said before, in my day, when we stood at the remembrance ceremony we were talking about our grandfathers, our great uncles, and everybody else. Today these individuals are standing at the Remembrance Day ceremony and they're remembering the guy who used to stand beside them, their friends who are no longer there. That's a heck of an impact. And that's why we've seen a bit of resurgence of people commemorating since about the year 2000, with the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It's also nice that Canadians have really cottoned on to the idea of commemoration and are actually going out and celebrating commemoration in November every year.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. White. We're a little over, but I didn't want to cut that off. It was very important.

Mr. Lobb, for five minutes.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm going to share my time with Mr. Lizon.

Thanks again for attending. Mr. White, this is certainly not your first time before the committee here.

The Legion's utmost goal, I guess, is to preserve the memory of the over 117,000 men and women who've paid the ultimate sacrifice. This little report we're working on is to look at commemorations and celebrations of the 21st century.

If you're looking ahead at the department or you're looking within the Legion itself, do you see any gaps at this time, as we're moving forward, that need to be addressed as far as commemoration goes?

Mr. Brad White: I would always say that the largest gap in anything is the awareness of Canadians of our military history. If Canadians were aware of our military history, they would be aware of the sacrifices that were made on their behalf. In Ontario, Canadian history takes up half a semester, or whatever, in grade 11. That's really not a lot of Canadian history. The knowledge of Canadians of military history and of the sacrifices made on their behalf is a big gap, I'd say. Since 2000 I think people are becoming more aware of what's going on.

Commemorations should centre on major activities, and this is what we've said here. We don't think it's necessary to go overseas every five years to commemorate a celebration. There are all sorts of celebrations that need to be done. We have to celebrate, basically, every theatre we were in—World War I and World War II, including the Italian campaign, which gets left off the battle map every once in a while. There are also the actions of the people who went through Africa. So we don't celebrate all of that all the time. We need to pick very significant commemorative dates—hundredth anniversaries are coming due now—and work on those projects.

● (0905)

Mr. Ben Lobb: Within the education field, from province to province, obviously during the week leading up to Remembrance Day most teachers try to incorporate a bit of that. I know the legions are very active in trying to be involved with schools at various levels if they have the resources and the ability to get in.

Is there a message you'd like to see us send to the departments or the ministries of education, through this report, to encourage them to look a little differently at the way they deliver their history?

Mr. Brad White: I would say the biggest message is to get on board. Through our means and our branches, we approach the schools annually. We have a lot of veterans who go into the schools to talk to the kids on Remembrance Day. They could be veterans from World War II, or what you might want to call modern-day veterans—peacekeepers, people who are serving today. It's really important, and we're also working through our provincial commands to approach those provincial bodies of education and get them to make sure they have a dedicated ceremony at their schools. Most schools do, but some don't, and some actually come to us and have us run the ceremonies for them in their gymnasiums on November 11. Really the message is: Take time to remember.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Can I turn it over to Mr. Lizon?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Thank you.

Good morning, gentlemen. You mentioned how you involve young people in your work. Is there something you do so that young people can actually meet one of you, people who are veterans? Despite the great technology we have, the Internet, I think person-to-person interaction is very important.

Mr. Steven Clark: We encourage interaction. One strong program is the annual poppy campaign. Veterans and Legion members are distributing the poppy, but we also encourage youth, particularly members of the cadet organization, to partner with Legion branches and Legion members to distribute poppies to the public. It was encouraging to see a youth and a veteran side by side distributing the poppy and promoting remembrance. That's the strongest and most visual message we can send nationwide. We have other initiatives, but that's the strongest one.

Mr. Brad White: In addition to cadets, you're talking about the guide movement and the scout movement as well. Branches across Canada are sponsoring and supporting youth movements, whether they're cadet movements, scout movements, or guide movements. They're involved with them and we support that. We are the largest supporter of the cadet movement in the country right now.

People should understand that we don't sell poppies; we offer them for a donation. That is one message. But the money that's gathered through the poppy campaign is kept locally to help the local veterans. It's not brought to the national level and it's not made part of the Legion funds. This money is very much a sacred trust from the Canadian people. We keep it separate. When a veteran is in need, whether he needs a new roof or maybe new teeth, all he or she has to do is approach the branch, make the application, and we're there to help with those poppy trust funds. That's what they are: trust funds to look after our veterans.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): First of all, thanks for coming, gentlemen. I'm a proud member of Prince Edward Island, Branch No. 1.

Our focus here is on remembrance in the 21st century. It seems to me that a key to that is the health of the legions. I wonder if you could comment on the overall health of the Legion movement, of the Legion organization, and the biggest challenges you face. I realize we're taking it a bit away from commemoration, but I think the health of your organization and commemoration are very much intertwined.

● (0910)

Mr. Steven Clark: The organization realized a few years ago that the number of our members was declining. We instituted a new category of membership, which is an associate category. It is for family members in the organization. We also instituted an affiliate category in 1998. You don't have to have any association with the military as long as you subscribe to our purposes and objectives. Back in 1998, we had less than 100 members. Currently we have over 63,000 in that one category. We realized that with one-third of our members having served, there are two-thirds that have not. We're continuing to build on that area while trying to draw in those who have military service. It is a challenge for branches, but it is a challenge that the branches have met. They're developing initiatives, and we will continue to be a viable and strong force.

Mr. Brad White: I'd just like to add that the Legion is like any other volunteer organization right now. It's a little bit different because we're a veterans-centred organization, but any organization out in Canada in the main street today is having difficulty getting volunteers to come into it. There are too many competing activities going on. Branches in their heyday were big. They had large infrastructure. A branch that had an infrastructure supporting 2,500 members may now have only 500 members. Those are the types of transitions that the organization is starting to go through now. I'm happy to see that there are a lot of organizations, not only in the Maritimes but all across the country. A lot of the branches are doing just that. They're realizing that their infrastructure is too big, and they're starting to downsize into better types of buildings that they can actually survive in for longer term.

The strength of a branch is always at the community level. They're there to support the community and the veterans in that community. That is the real strength of the organization. We're trying to give the tools to the branch now to improve their membership drives and to improve their outreach to the community so that they can actually go out in their community, tell them what they're doing, and attract members to come in.

In a large part of the country, branches are the mainstay of the local community. They are the focal point of the community. When you get into a large urban centre, sometimes that focal point tends to get diffused a little bit with other competing organizations. We're working on our strengths, on transition, and on trying to attract new members.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thanks.

Just as a direct follow-up to that, what do you see as the role of the Government of Canada? What can the Government of Canada do to help you achieve what you want to do?

Mr. Brad White: As you know, we're a not-for-profit organization. We're not a government agency, and I like to say that because it allows us to advocate, as we need to advocate, on behalf of veterans.

A lot of provincial and municipal organizations allow the Legion not to pay taxes. This is a big bonus for a local branch because they put back into the community quite a lot of money every year. So if they're exempt from the taxes at the municipal and provincial levels, it's a big deal for them that they don't have to pay those taxes. That way they can actually continue to fund the infrastructure in their programs. That would be one big assistance to the organization.

The next is not paying HST on the poppies and the wreaths. That's a big assistance because it allows us to put money back into programming. We're thankful that it has finally gone through, and we're able to move forward with that.

As we move forward, I would say that if we could encourage municipalities to exempt Legion branches from paying taxes, that would be a big bonus for the organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we have Mr. Daniel, for five minutes.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Thank you very much for attending this hearing. I look forward to your answers.

Clearly the demographic of all the veterans is changing. I believe we have more younger veterans than we did in the past. My question is what programs—new programs or initiatives—would you like to create in the future should you have the funding to do so?

• (0915)

Mr. Brad White: One of the best programs we have is our service bureau. These service officers across the country assist all veterans. I've heard them called post-9/11 veterans and modern-day veterans. The Americans have terminology for them. We assist all veterans. We're trying to make them aware that we have these professional service officers, who are people who have served as well. They're not government bureaucrats. They're not members of VAC. We assist these individuals in filling out their first application for pension benefits, and we help them to move through that process of benefit application into Veterans Affairs. That is one of the primary programs that we have to assist the new veterans. We're going out to the Canadian Forces and the VAC to make sure that those people are aware of that.

This program that we have, the Welcome Home initiative, is focusing on assisting those people as they make those transitions.

New or other types of programs? We are looking at ourselves internally right now to find out what programs we've had for many years that need to be transitioned forward a little bit. That's an interesting process that we're involved in right now.

Out of that, I think you'll see some other new programs, and the virtual Legion branch is one of them, where we want to have means to let these members communicate back and forth. We're looking at all our programming right now to see where we want to transition.

Members of the organization normally want to have shared experiences with other members. That's really what a Legion branch is all about—sharing those experiences and providing them with some place where they can come together and talk about their experiences.

Mr. Steven Clark: If I may add a quick comment, talking about the modern-day veterans or the current veterans, we find that a lot of veterans tend to be closer to their particular regiment or their particular area of service, so a regimental association is quite strong and quite important to them. The Legion realizes that, and we have established a veterans consultation group to which we invite representatives from a number of veterans organizations to talk about common issues. They don't have to be members of the Legion, but we're all there for the common purpose. We realize that their focus may be more regimental as opposed to broad, but we are still there to work for the one purpose. We've established that; it's something that we do on an annual basis, and it's quite successful.

Mr. Joe Daniel: To change the subject a little, we have a huge number of new Canadians who have come into this country and established themselves. In my case, I'm associated with a group of Vietnamese veterans, who obviously didn't fight for a Canadian cause, but they're veterans of the Vietnamese war. Is the Legion doing any reaching out to some of those folks? We're going to have more and more new Canadians who've been through wars and who could maybe do with some help.

Mr. Brad White: Our principal aim is to look after Canadians who've served. Your question creates a bit of a dilemma with regard to new arrivals in Canada seeking assistance from the Legion.

We provide assistance to the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League, which is based out of London. As an organization, we look after all of the World War II Caribbean veterans on behalf of the Commonwealth. We actually provide them with pensions and assistance for living down in the Caribbean. We support Canadian Vietnam veterans at present. They have access to our funding for benevolence.

If other individuals become members of the organization.... Right now we don't have in our poppy trust fund—because it is a Canadian poppy trust fund—the ability to support nationals from other countries who may have served in other countries. If they have served on behalf of the Commonwealth, then we could assist them, but right now we don't have any programs that would allow that. That's definitely something that may have to be looked at in the future. We may have to look at how we transition in the future, because the military brotherhood is still the military brotherhood, one way or another. We do have allies all across the world, so that is one thing we do have to look at.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Papillon, go ahead for five minutes.

• (0920)

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Thank you for being here.

I agree with you, if Canada's military history were more well-known, more young people and more Canadians, in general, might get involved.

Speaking of that, I was wondering whether you felt some parts of Canada's military history had been somewhat forgotten. Do you think certain pieces of history should be given more attention?

Mr. Brad White: My grandfather was a veteran who fought in the Battle of Dieppe. He was a commander in the raid. At the end of the war, he was taken as a prisoner of war.

[English]

Dieppe was an interesting one. Are there other battles that need to be brought forward? I think Canadians are pretty respectful of the battles we've served in as a country and that have brought us forward as a nation. Vimy Ridge was a defining moment. I don't think Vimy Ridge will ever be forgotten. April 9 has now been legislated as being Vimy Ridge Day across Canada.

I think as we move forward we not only have to be respectful of World War I and World War II battles, but we have to start looking at

what happened to some of the people in the peacekeeping missions. We don't pay a lot of homage to peacekeeping at this stage in the game. Some of the areas they got into were combat in themselves. Of course, we were sending people in as unarmed observers who had no way to influence the outcome, and they saw a lot of different things. There have been a number of peacekeeping operations that, as we go down the road, I think we need to celebrate.

Our activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Croatia, were also key activities. As we transitioned from peacekeeping into the coalition types of operations, we went forward with our allies. There are all sorts of commemorative activities that need to be done to look at that.

We now have all those activities we've experienced in the last ten years in Afghanistan. There's a whole range of commemoration still to come. The issue is, down the road how do you do that? Do you go on pilgrimages to those countries again? Some of those governments may not be friendly towards Canadians coming back on pilgrimages in those countries. You have to be very careful where you go.

So there's a whole range of activities that are probably available to look at for the future.

I hope that answers your question.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're starting to squeeze a little bit here, so I'm going to go over to Mr. Albas for five minutes.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the presentation today.

You mentioned earlier about how to get youth involved in some of the commemorative events. The one thing that seems to be very popular in my riding at many of the events is having, as you said, the scouts and the guides, different groups, participate in some of the Remembrance Day ceremonies—for example, in the parade and laying of wreaths. I think that's very effective because it allows them to be part of the process, and that's something to be encouraged.

Just going forward a little to more of the generation Y, what programs or initiatives has the Canadian Legion undertaken to raise awareness of remembrance activities among youth and new Canadians regarding social media?

When I ran my small business, many of my employees were in that age category and used Facebook and things like that very extensively. Speaking to my colleague's comments about historic military occasions, I'd certainly like to hear how we can reach that particular audience.

Mr. Steven Clark: We have ventured into social media. We started with the Legion Canadian Youth Track and Field Championships, which the Legion organizes and conducts every year. We offered real-time results on Facebook and Twitter. So whether or not parents were at the competition in Ottawa or whether they were home in whatever province they originated from, they were able to find out what the results were as they happened. It was also an opportunity or a forum for athletes and parents alike to share their thoughts on the competition. We're looking at expanding this into other programs as well, and of course remembrance is one particular one.

We do have some sensitivities we have to be aware of, particularly when it revolves around trademark issues for the poppy. We don't want to commercialize that. We don't want to put it in a position that would lessen the significance of it, but we do want to use it as a tool to promote remembrance. So these are other issues using social media that we are exploring to draw youth more into the program.

As has been mentioned, we also promote the program through youth organizations, and that will continue to be strong as well.

• (0925)

Mr. Brad White: As a quick add-on, we've been negligent on social media. We're getting there. We're starting to increase more and more. We're looking at our own internal resources as to how we're going to do that. We are a members' dues-funded organization, so we do have to answer for how we spend our money.

As we move forward it's an important issue. We have to come into what I call the modern age and use the means that are available to us now. We're getting there.

Mr. Dan Albas: That's fine.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lizon, for a brief intervention.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Gentlemen, I would like to follow up on Mr. Albas's question.

My association is mostly with Polish veterans here in Canada, because Poland is where I come from. Most Polish veterans fought under British or Canadian command, like the 1st Armoured Division, but here in Canada you would get people who fought on different sides, not necessarily on the same side Canadians were on.

How does the Legion deal with those veterans if they want to participate in your activities? Does this create any problems or frictions?

Mr. Brad White: First, the Polish veterans branch in Thunder Bay is one of the strongest ones. We also have a very strong association with the Polish veterans here in Ottawa, and we keep close ties.

We recognize that other countries have been allies, particularly during World War II, and we recognize and assist those individuals as allies during World War II.

Sometimes old animosities are hard to erase. As an organization, as the generation progresses, those animosities are falling away. Some people will never let the animosity fall. It's just in the nature of

what they experienced, and I don't think there's anything we could ever do about it.

I've served in NATO. I've served in Germany alongside Germans. I've had German tanks assigned to my squadron. We have no problems working together. We work together in Afghanistan right now. We are a NATO country.

So I think as we've progressed as a nation, we've also progressed in our relations with former enemies. We're moving forward, but there will be individuals who will have difficulty moving forward with that. When people want to associate with us, we make sure we attempt that association to make sure we're inclusive.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Is my time up?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: I would like to continue on the involvement of young people. With the great technology that we have and all these plans for involving people on social media, etc., are we moving towards the time where actually even celebrations will be virtual, instead of gathering a great number of people? What do you think?

Mr. Steven Clark: I don't think we will ever come to that point, at least in the immediate future. When we see the number of participants that is continuing to grow, both in local Remembrance Day ceremonies and here in Ottawa, I think that counters the perception that perhaps it may become more virtual as we move towards more virtual in our own lives.

I think people need to have that contact. They need to visit actual memorials and cenotaphs to the fallen so that they can see them, touch them, and experience them in that way—a sensation that they won't get if they're doing something via electronic or social media. It is another option, another way, but I don't think it will replace the current way to commemorate.

Mr. Brad White: I will just add that when people come together as a group and celebrate Remembrance Day as a group, they feel as a group, and they get a sense from being in that group. So I think it's very important that they get that full sense of the significance of the ceremony. I'm hoping it never happens that it's only ever virtual. I'm hoping that people actually come out and gather together to celebrate together.

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

That ends round one. Thank you very much. We're going to do two more in round two, because a point of order is going to come up at the end of the session.

Mr. Genest, you have four minutes.

• (0930)

[Translation]

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Have you considered making November 11 a national statutory holiday? The work of soldiers and veterans is important. That might be the right way for the federal government to really thank them. Holidays are often designated to celebrate this or that. There are all kinds of national holidays, but I can't understand why we don't have a national statutory holiday to honour veterans.

Mr. Brad White: What do you mean by statutory?

[English]

Mr. Réjean Genest: It means no work.

Mr. Brad White: No work.

[Translation]

A national holiday?

Mr. Réjean Genest: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Brad White: Our group has talked about that a lot. We feel it is better to keep students in school. That way, they have an opportunity to attend ceremonies at school. What do you think kids today are going to do when they have a day off school? Probably sit in front of the TV and play with their little technological devices, don't you think? We think it is better for them to be in school, where they can attend a Remembrance Day ceremony.

Mr. Réjean Genest: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: The NDP still has some time left, if there's any other question.

[Translation]

Mr. Réjean Genest: Yes, I would like to talk a bit about the poppy. I really appreciate the fact that a flower, and not a gun or other similar object, was chosen to symbolize the military. Do you know the true origins of the poppy? Why was it chosen?

I was told—and whether or not this is accurate, I am not sure—that poppies grew in the battlefields and meadows of Europe, just as our fields are covered in daisies and dandelions. It seems that soldiers would bring the poppy home as a souvenir because it was so beautiful.

During a day of fighting, there would be smoke, and the next day, the sun would be shining and the meadows covered in flowers. That is the story I was told. Is it true? Is that how the tradition came to be?

[English]

Mr. Steven Clark: That is correct. In battlefields in World War I, the soil became rich with lime, poppies flourished, and it was that symbol, that flower, that a lot of the soldiers recall. Because of the commonality, the presence of the poppy during that time, it became identifiable as a symbol of remembrance, originating in France, being brought over to the United States and Canada back in 1921. Since that time, it has stood as our symbol of remembrance, and in fact it's been accepted internationally. So your thoughts are spot on; they are correct.

Mr. Brad White: It also comes from McCrae's famous poem, *In Flanders Fields*, and that is really what immortalized the poppy as a symbol of remembrance, because in Europe they're everywhere.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For our final questions we'll go to Mr. Storseth for four minutes.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much, gentlemen.

One of the things I'd like to ask you about is how we go about commemorating the Second World War, Korean War, and First World War veterans, as well as incorporating the newer, modern-day veterans into that, and somehow become more relevant to them so that we can draw more of them to the legions so that they can become a very pertinent part of the future generation moving on.

Mr. Brad White: The military, as I said, is a brotherhood. It's interesting that we all compete against each other when we're in that brotherhood. World War I veterans didn't accept World War II veterans. World War II veterans didn't accept Korean veterans. Korean veterans didn't accept the peacekeepers. And on it went. What we're trying to do is reverse that trend.

Recently, in the last couple of years, we put out some commemorative things to recognize the Korean War veterans. That was the first time, and it was very welcomed within the Korean War veteran association that the Legion was finally reaching out to Korean War veterans and recognizing them as veterans. We've initiated this program with the Welcome Home Troops. We realize that the game in Afghanistan is not over yet. It's not a benign environment. We still have years to go before all the troops are pulled home, but we wanted to do something to say that we understand what they've been through. They are welcomed into the branches, and we want them there not just to help us out, but also to commemorate what happened in their war and those who've come before them.

For us, Remembrance Day is a day where we commemorate all veterans, past, current, and future. It's a day where they all come together to remember the sacrifices that were made. That's the importance that we want to have with Remembrance Day. It is a day of remembrance of the sacrifices made on our behalf. We want to bring everybody together.

● (0935)

Mr. Brian Storseth: One of the organizations that has obviously been very closely affiliated with the Legion over the years is the ladies' auxiliary. Is there a lot of work or any thoughts going on in how we can incorporate modern-day veterans' spouses and families into these kinds of core groups, so that it's somewhat of a family environment as well for the spouses, particularly while guys are deployed abroad? In Cold Lake, we have guys in Libya right now. The spouses are always looking for those contact points.

Mr. Brad White: Yes, and they're there too. It doesn't necessarily have to be as a member of the LA. The ladies' auxiliary is extremely important to branch life. If it wasn't for a lot of the ladies' auxiliaries, the branches wouldn't be able to function, because they do raise a lot of money. They do the cooking. They do all the things in trying to raise money to support the branch.

The military psyche and mentality is that of a closed family. When we deployed we had rear parties that looked after our families, internal to the military. Every base now, whenever a unit deploys, has that internal organization called the rear party that looks after all of the needs of the family. All that the spouse of the family needs to do is contact the rear party and ask them what they need and it will be provided to them.

The military on bases tends to group together. What we're trying to do is talk to our branches that are close to make sure they have very good ties with the base organization and that they know what kind of support we can provide them through the branch, through our service officers, and through the ladies' auxiliary. As we get that information out, that's where we're trying to assist those people.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Absolutely. I'm familiar with that.

The Chair: Brian, I'm sorry, that's the four minutes. Thank you very much.

I want to thank both of you very much for joining us today. I know we're going to see you again as the season goes on. Again, thank you for all the work that you do on behalf of the veterans. We very much appreciate it.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: We'll take a brief break.

● (0935)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0940)

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer has a point of order, and I believe the Conservative side is aware of it.

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

Some of you would have received, either by e-mail or regular mail, an invitation to attend the veterans ombudsman's awards ceremony, which is taking place on October 18, at the same time as our meeting.

I've consulted with Mr. Storseth and Mr. Casey, Mr. Chair, and you may find unanimous consent or discussion to cancel the meeting for October 18 so that you and others can attend that ceremony. It's quite significant. It's really quite an honour to be there and to congratulate and celebrate those individuals across the country who do a tremendous amount of work on behalf of veterans.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Chair, I know the chair is a new chair, and he's very good with the rules and knows that there can't be a motion made on a point of order.

I think what Mr. Stoffer is suggesting is a very good idea. I think our side unanimously agrees with it.

The Chair: I appreciate the ongoing educational process, Mr. Storseth. You are correct.

Go ahead, Mr. Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey: I agree.

The Chair: Okay. As pointed out, it was brought up as a point of order. It's by consensus, and I understand that we have it. Is it agreed that we will put that aside?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We'll have the clerk go back through the witness list and make sure that we have our witnesses in place. We'll just move the order down a bit on the commemorative study. So it's agreed that there will be no meeting on October 18. We'll be gathering for that special occasion.

Thank you, Mr. Stoffer, for bringing that up.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. We're awaiting our next witnesses. I hope we didn't scare them off out there.

I'd also point out that our parliamentary secretary, as you're probably aware, is engaged in a rather important announcement today, along with the minister. That's the reason she couldn't be here, and certainly we understand and know that it's a good event.

Good morning. We're very pleased to have as representatives from the War Museum, Mr. Whitham and Ms. Mingay. We're very pleased to have you here. I know you've been here before the committee in the past, and we've appreciated that.

We're doing this within the one-hour timeframe. We will be stopping on time. The norm is to allow you about 10 minutes to do your opening comments and statements. We then go to questions. Certainly, feel free to give a full answer, but if it is running a little late, I'll just indicate that we have a timeframe.

Thank you very much, and we look forward to your opening comments.

● (0945)

Mr. James Whitham (Acting Director General and Vice-President, Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, Canadian War Museum): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for the invitation to appear before you this morning. My name is James Whitham. I'm the acting director general of the Canadian War Museum and vice-president of the corporation of CMC.

Joining me in the presentation is Yasmine Mingay, the manager of communications for the War Museum, who also deals with programs and events at the museum and with social media.

[*Translation*]

It is a pleasure to be here today to give you a brief overview of the war museum's plans for the coming years, with a specific focus on the anniversaries of two key conflicts in Canadian military history: the War of 1812 and the First World War.

[*English*]

The Canadian War Museum is Canada's national museum of military history. It acquires and maintains relevant artifacts for its unparalleled national collection and disseminates knowledge through research, exhibitions, and public programs. The museum is a venue and facilitator for informed discussions on military history. That is our mandate.

Our mission is to promote public understanding of Canada's military history in terms of its personal, national, and international dimensions. In other words, we look at how war affects Canadians as individuals, how it shapes our country, and how in times of war Canadians have affected the course of world events. We do this through exhibitions, events, programs, and partnerships. Although our mandate is not one of commemoration, many of our projects and initiatives are intertwined with the commemoration of important dates and events in Canadian military history. The bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812 and the centenary of the First World War are two such examples.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Yasmine Mingay (Manager, Communications, Canadian War Museum): The Canadian War Museum will mark the bicentennial of the War of 1812, a momentous event in Canadian history, with one of its largest and most innovative exhibitions to date.

The exhibitions will weave together multiple perspectives on the conflict to produce a new account of the war. This groundbreaking exhibition will premiere at the war museum in June 2012 and will examine the causes and conduct of the war through the eyes of each of its four central actors: Canada, the United States, Great Britain and first peoples.

[*English*]

The exhibition will offer visitors a richer and deeper understanding of a conflict that determined Canada's destiny. The exhibition will feature approximately 150 artifacts, including some of the War Museum's most important objects, such as the tunic worn by Sir Isaac Brock, the hero of Upper Canada who led the successful defence of that province during the first few months of the war. This is the actual tunic that Sir Isaac Brock wore when he was fatally shot at the Battle of Queenston Heights.

[*Translation*]

In addition to the exhibition opening at the war museum in June 2012, two exhibitions will be produced to travel to venues across Canada, bringing the war museum's exhibition to Canadians from coast to coast. We will also be publishing a book to both

support the exhibition and commemorate this major event in Canadian history.

● (0950)

[*English*]

The years 2014 to 2018 constitute the 100th anniversary of the First World War, again a formative event in Canadian and world history. The Canadian War Museum plans to mark the centenary by presenting a multi-year program of exhibitions, events, and activities in collaboration with national and international partners.

[*Translation*]

Within this multi-year program, the museum will undertake projects of lasting national and institutional value, focusing on the museum's strengths in the areas of research, exhibits, collections, publications and public programs. These projects will include not only major special exhibitions, but also targeted acquisitions, legacy-type publications and web-based curriculum-specific teaching resources.

[*English*]

Mr. James Whitham: The centenary project will seek to maximize the museum's national footprint, emphasize accessibility, and appeal to a broad range of audiences both inside and outside the national capital region. At least two travelling exhibitions on John McCrae and Sam Steele, accompanied by off-site and online activities, will be developed and presented across the country. Projects are also in development relating to courage, the Victoria Cross awarded to Canadians, as well as a First World War lecture series.

[*Translation*]

The centenary project will both create and encourage new knowledge about the First World War. The museum will conduct research and assist educators across Canada. Printed materials, collections research, object conservation and other initiatives will generate professional knowledge and public understanding across a variety of media.

[*English*]

The museum is also interested in strengthening its virtual offers and continues to explore national and multinational partnership opportunities. These include the possibility of hosting an international academic conference in 2018.

Our history is rich and our collections are extensive—two important aspects that our offerings will reflect.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that the War Museum participates in and stages hundreds of events and programs annually, all of which promote public understanding of Canadian military history. Earlier this week we hosted the launch of Women's History Month, the theme this year being women's contribution to military history. And in just a few short weeks, the War Museum's Remembrance Day program and activities will be under way.

Our focus today has been on two particular all-encompassing projects, which will span an eight-year timeframe; however, we will be pleased to answer questions you may have regarding the War Museum's programs in general.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Now we will turn to questions.

We'll begin with the NDP, with Mr. Stoffer.

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

Thank you both very much for coming.

For those of my colleagues who have never had a chance to tour the museum, I highly recommend you do. It's a four-hour outstanding opportunity to witness our history.

I thank you both very much, and the War Museum staff for what they do.

I have a couple of questions for you. In your brochure—and I don't mean this as a slight—there is no mention of the 110th anniversary next year of the ending of the Boer War, which was the first war to which Canada actually sent a regiment. More than 250 people lost their lives there, and yet we don't seem, in my own view, to commemorate that event as much as we do other events.

Also, the Asian conflicts—the Battle of Hong Kong, whose 70th anniversary is next Christmas, and our intervention in Burma—seem to be overlooked in comparison with the other events that are happening. Could you advise the committee what commemorative events are being planned for those specific ones, if any?

Then, in terms of promoting the museum to our schools and our children in our regions across the country, how can we promote what I think is one of the finest museums I've ever witnessed anywhere in the world?

Thank you so much for your work.

● (0955)

Mr. James Whitham: Thank you, sir.

With regard to other upcoming anniversaries, we have focused today mainly on the War of 1812 and on the First World War centenary. Other programs are being looked at now, to work with some of those dates. At this point we don't have anything concrete, but some of those are being worked out and discussed right now.

For example, we're trying to put together, in partnership with another group, a lecture series dealing with Korea and the different battles and the end of the Korean War, to get experts in to speak of that. Although we didn't mention it in these materials, we are continuously upgrading and expanding programs to meet some of these dates and requirements.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

Irene.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you for being here. I must say, I have also enjoyed a remarkable tour of the War Museum. Mine was eight hours. I don't know how Mr. Stoffer got through in four.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I walk very fast.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: One of the things that absolutely fascinated me was the little coat made out of blankets for the little Dutch girl. My husband is a Dutch immigrant, and my daughter

presented him with the book that describes the making of the coat and how it came about. I know that a great deal of research went into the work, in terms of the display and finding out the background, and it's incredible, absolutely a jewel.

I wonder what other research you are doing. Are there other marvellous surprises coming up in the near future?

Mr. James Whitham: With regard to the little Dutch girl's coat, that's a daily occurrence for the museum. The museum has a staff who work with donors and family members to make sure that when an artifact is donated to the museum we get as much history as possible. Although that is a wonderful story, those kinds of artifacts come in with as much history as possible.

In terms of cultural research material, we try to document every donation that comes into the museum, because all those stories are very important. We have a number of historians who work on research projects as well. But in terms of material culture, the ability to document these personal stories happens every day with every artifact we bring in.

I'll open the invitation. I guess you've been downstairs, into the vaults. If anyone would like to participate in a tour downstairs, you will see 150,000 artifacts, each with a beautiful personal story with it.

So we do this on a daily basis, to make sure that we capture the memories of the families and preserve them with the artifacts.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: That must be a tremendous challenge, if things are coming in daily.

The Chair: Peter took quite a bit of your time. I'm just trying to caution you. We're just about there.

So thank you very much. We'll go to Mr. Storseth for five.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Peter's not very good at sharing.

I have to admit I'm an absolute addict. I've gone to your museum at least a dozen times. I think it's something that every Canadian should have the opportunity to see. You do a tremendous job. I've been to the Smithsonian; I've been to memorials and museums around the world. I do believe we have the best one right here in Ottawa. I very much like what you did with the Boer War. I think it's very educational.

One of my questions is how do we do a better job as Canadians, as government, to promote the fact that the War Museum, the jewel that it is, is there?

I'll ask you that first.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: I think I'll speak to this point.

It's wonderful to hear all of your comments. It truly is, and we'll certainly share those with our colleagues. The War Museum in its current space has been there for approximately six years now, and annually we have seen interest and attendance grow. Coverage from a media perspective has grown exponentially on an annual basis, through social media channels and with experts and historians in the field. As more people come to visit, the more they learn and the more they walk away and share that. A great deal is taking place from the point of view of word of mouth.

Media relations coverage has been phenomenal and has been national. So again, that's growing.

As you may have noted, we're creating our exhibitions to also travel, and the hope and plan is to have these travel to various venues across the country in order to show Canadians who live in any of the 10 provinces, or territories, once we get our material up there, what the War Museum does on behalf of all Canadians. We are very conscious of the fact that we are a national museum physically located in one place. More and more of our content is being put up online. Much more of the material is available through our archives and our military history research centre that people from all walks of life and across the board in Canada can study from and learn from.

So it's a constant evolution. It's something that we are very much aware of, and we will be working through these projects and others that weren't mentioned here to get the work and the artifacts both physically in the regions across the country and online.

• (1000)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Excellent. One of the things that I'm already interested in is...I think we need to do a better job telling the story of some of the Victoria Cross recipients. You mentioned that, Mr. Whitham. Can you tell us what you are planning to do there and how we can make sure that kids in school hear these stories? They're great stories about Canadians.

Mr. James Whitham: We're trying to find different ways to present these heroic tales of Canadians who have been awarded Victoria Crosses. Right now we're just feeling out a couple of different proposals, so I really don't have anything concrete. But we want to tell not just the story of the Victoria Crosses within the museum but the ones that Canada has and that have been awarded throughout the wars. So we're still trying to find whether that is best as an online database, with biographies and stories and images, or as a smaller travelling venue. We're still looking at that.

One of the things we're going to try with the War of 1812 is to make a portion of it for travel, but smaller in size to allow it to go to more locations.

Mr. Brian Storseth: When you do know concretely what you're doing, can you make sure the committee gets a copy of that information?

Mr. James Whitham: Yes, sir.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Just one quick thing. We've undertaken a wonderful initiative, and I think it's the start of something we'll be working on across the country. Not only do we work with the curriculum in order to match up and work with teachers, but we're partnering with the Ottawa 67s in a few short weeks. On November 7, they're presenting a game day based on remembrance for 10,000 school kids in the region. They're working with the Ottawa school

boards in order to bring these kids out for a game, and the entire theme of everything they're doing is remembrance.

For that, we actually created a cartoon of the Valour Road story, which obviously highlights the Victoria Crosses given out to those three individuals on Valour Road. We have just created that now as a document that belongs to the museum. It's a cartoon that tells the story, and it really reaches out to kids. The series of pages we've created will also soon be available online for others to download and incorporate the stories of Victoria Crosses and other stories into their day-to-day activities in schools.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Casey.

[*Translation*]

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

I don't have any questions, but I would like to thank you for being here today and congratulate you on your terrific work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Casey.

Now we'll go to Mr. Lobb for five minutes.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Thank you very much for attending today.

You touched on attendance. I was curious about whether you could update the committee on approximately how many people would go through your doors every year.

Mr. James Whitham: We plateau at approximately 450,000 visitors yearly. We opened in 2005 and had a large attendance. Usually after the first couple of years the attendance falls off, but we've actually come to a nice level of approximately 450,000 visitors to the site a year.

Mr. Ben Lobb: That's pretty good. That's probably more people than the Atlanta Thrashers had go through their gates last year. You're right up there with some of the NHL teams.

Of the 450,000, do you guys do as best you can to track what the demographics are as far as age goes? Could you tell us what that breakdown is?

• (1005)

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: The age demographic has actually quite evened out throughout. We do monitor all of that. We monitor whether they are Canadian citizens who live in the national capital region, or people who come from the outside, or international visitors. What I can tell you is that 75% of our visitors, give or take, are Canadians from outside the national capital region.

That speaks a little bit perhaps also to your question as to how... The message is out there. People know we are here, and they want to learn. Many of them have a personal connection, as many of you around this table do.

So 75% are from outside the national capital region. We have a very large number of students that come. Many of them come in school groups because of our curriculum-based programs. If any of you do come and visit during May and June, you will have to manoeuvre your way through masses of school kids, which is wonderful. It's part of what we do, and it's part of what we are supposed to do. Again, there are age ranges.

I have one story. A gentleman came with his daughter and his father-in-law the other day. His daughter learned about the ravages of war and all of its elements. The grandfather of that child, his grandfather was in the Cameron Highlanders, so for him the experience was connected to his own personal history. The father of the daughter is actually a major who serves in the military, and he was very moved, again, by the experience. Each of them was coming from a different perspective. Each was taking away from the museum Canadian military history and was affected by it.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Your website is quite good as well. I was wondering if you could tell the committee approximately how many people a year would look at your website.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: I don't have that, unfortunately, off the top of my head. I can get back to you with that. I don't have that number.

Mr. Ben Lobb: The education link is quite good. How do you decide how that's going to evolve on the educational front?

Mr. James Whitham: The education portion, on the website or when you come for a tour, is a group effort. It's put together by historians, interpretative planners, programmers, and a wide range of people. They kind of refine the material before it goes online to make sure it hits what we want, the key messages we want. We have groups that look at it to make sure it speaks to the individuals or to a certain curricula or teaching base. It's a long process of taking the raw information and making sure that students and teachers can understand it, because what a historian will look at and read doesn't necessarily always hit what a student or teacher would really want to hit. It's a combined effort to present it.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: We work very closely with the curriculum across different provinces, as you can imagine. The War Museum is part of the Museum of Civilization Corporation, as many of you know. We have a group within that who work with schools across the country, and they push material out into the schools. We also meet with individuals across the country in order to fine-tune the material, as Jim was saying, to match it with the curriculum and the right age group. A seven-year-old will obviously take in material differently than a 15-year-old will.

We work with educators in order to provide them with the tools they need, based on our scholarships. That's the connection. But obviously, as Jim was saying, the material needs to be tailored to the age groups. We work closely with educators across the country to be able to do that.

We certainly are seeing our website and our website content growing, as are most of our websites.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Papillon, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: I visited the museum several years ago, but I think I will go back soon. I was actually speaking with some veterans in Quebec, and they asked me if I had noticed some things in particular when I was there. So I decided that I would go back to see those things specifically, military vehicles and such.

Are you doing anything special on November 11?

In addition, would it be possible to build an exhibit around the personal experiences and stories of actual veterans, something more interactive?

• (1010)

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: We would be delighted to have you back for a second visit.

You touched on two very important points. We have the good fortune of having veterans assist us in our efforts through Friends of the Canadian War Museum, an organization made up of veterans and citizens. Many of its members are veterans, and they spend hours upon hours in our permanent exhibition galleries sharing their stories, so we can encourage discussion with young students.

[English]

When you can speak to somebody and learn from their personal experience, it makes all the difference.

[Translation]

You are right, and we do offer that. I hope that you will let me know when you are coming. You could talk to those veterans and hear what they have to say.

What was the second question?

Ms. Annick Papillon: I was wondering if you were doing anything special this Remembrance Day.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: We have put together a special schedule for the first two weeks of November. On Friday, November 11, we will be offering some very rich programming in both official languages. You mentioned Valcartier. This year, we are lucky enough to be working with the NFB. Just a few days ago, we put the finishing touches on a documentary about Valcartier's Royal 22^e Régiment to mark the anniversary, and we will be showing the film to the public. It is amazing. The documentary is in French with English subtitles. That will be the first in a series of scheduled events designed to highlight the role played by veterans in recent conflicts. Showcasing our military history is important, but it is also important to highlight the efforts of our veterans in more recent conflicts.

Ms. Annick Papillon: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: You have a bit more time, if you want it.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I have a quick question.

Charley Fox lived in my riding. He was the hero of *The Last Patrol*. He was the Canadian who strafed Rommel's car, and he went back to the base and said virtually nothing about it.

I've been looking everywhere for *The Last Patrol*. It's iconic, and I can't find it anywhere. Would the War Museum have *The Last Patrol* so we could all remember Charley Fox?

Mr. James Whitham: I'll look into it and get back to you.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Over to Mr. Daniel for five minutes.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Thank you.

Thank you for coming.

The word "museum" gives a connotation of everything old. But my question is whether you are acquiring any artifacts from some of the more modern activities we're having, in Afghanistan, Bosnia, some of the peacekeeping efforts, and how much money—this is a double-barrelled question—do you have to be able to acquire these?

Mr. James Whitham: Concerning acquisition of artifacts for modern times, the museum is very proactive in working with the Department of National Defence to be able to secure key artifacts for the national collection. One that comes to mind was one of the G Wagons, the vehicle that first hit a landmine in Afghanistan. The crew inside were not killed. Their legs were broken, their ankles were crushed, and the engine was blown about 20 feet. The engine remained in Afghanistan, but with the help of the Department of National Defence, this particular artifact was preserved and brought back. It is now in the national collection and has been on display in an exhibition on Afghanistan.

So the museum remains very proactive in trying to work with all parties to make sure that modern-day artifacts are preserved. Right now the Department of National Defence has a large legacy program under way, so we work with them to see what artifacts are of national importance to the museum to ensure they're preserved. It doesn't necessarily have to be at the Canadian War Museum, but we want to make sure that those memories and those artifacts are preserved somewhere in Canada.

A lot of our artifacts come through donation and transfer as gifts, but we are fortunate to have a national collection trust fund that people, private members, are able to donate to, which allows us to purchase certain artifacts that we deem to be of great importance. The majority of our artifacts still come in through donation. We receive e-mails from individuals. I can tell you that I received an e-mail yesterday from a fellow who was in Afghanistan, who has all this material that he acquired, and he's looking for a good home for it. We are fortunate to have the ability to collect all material all the time.

Thank you.

●(1015)

Mr. Joe Daniel: I understand the budget for the Museum of Civilization is approximately \$60 million. How much of it goes to the War Museum? What's your portion of that funding?

Mr. James Whitham: Because the museum is a corporation and we have a lot of services that are shared, I'm not in a position to tell you how our portion breaks down, but if you like I can get back to you on that.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Corporate services include all the financial, contracting, marketing, public affairs, etc. I don't believe that breakdown even exists, because it's shared resources for the two. Project by project, the projects we've discussed with you here today, all of those go into a work planning mode, and funds are allocated based on that. But I don't believe that a split even that simple exists. It really is a question of project-specific and corporate services.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Just changing the subject a little bit, I have—

The Chair: Keep it brief.

Mr. Joe Daniel: I have an author in my riding called Walter Cooke, who actually wrote a book about all the VCs, with a little biography, a chapter, on each one of them. Maybe I can see if I can get a copy of it for you. That might help you with the VCs.

Mr. James Whitham: Yes, thank you.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Lizon.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: I would like to thank you for the great work you do.

I have a question. Do you have any specific suggestions for us, members of Parliament, on how we can help you in our ridings to promote the museum?

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Is that a standing offer? I'd be happy to provide you with much more material to speak to your constituents. We'd be pleased if you could present to your riding, as you see fit, all the wonderful comments that you've made here today. If I can provide you with additional material, please let me know. Invite people to come and visit our website. We'd look forward to it.

You'll each get a package when you leave that will contain quite a bit of information, along with my card, if you'd like to reach us.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: As members of Parliament we work closely with the Library of Parliament. We are getting educational kits to schools and teachers in ridings. If there is anything of that sort that you need done, I can't speak on behalf of everybody, but speaking on behalf of myself, I would be more than happy to help you promote what you do. I know you said that most of the people who come to visit the museum come from outside the capital region. Maybe there is not enough knowledge of what the museum does, what activities it conducts. If I can help you in delivering that message to my constituents, I would be more than happy to do it.

If you have any specific suggestions, though, maybe you could share them with the rest of us.

•(1020)

Mr. James Whitham: I would also like to say that if any museums in your riding need help with any preservation or any questions that they need answered, the museum is always ready to come and help out to preserve the information, to preserve the artifacts. By all means, feel free to contact us to have us help museums in your ridings as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Okay. Going along the same line, do you have any specific problems that you would like us as members of Parliament to address on your behalf?

Mr. James Whitham: I can't think of any at this time.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: That's great. Then you have no problems.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Your offer and your interests are noted. I will certainly start to work on something with regard to sending you material and seeing how we can provide you with additional information for your riding.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: What do you do to encourage schools to organize trips to the museum?

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Our client services group and the individuals working with schools across the country, curriculum-based, push out quite a bit of material. We also have group rates for students and discounts for student groups that arrive. All of this is with the idea of facilitating any travel to the museum from outside the region, as well as in the region.

We see an enormous number of groups that come from usually within a two- or three-hour driving range. As you can imagine, it's not always feasible for schools to organize other than that. We provide them with the material and offer them the discounted rates because we are Canada's national museum of military history and the need for the educational component of what we do is very important. We are very proactive within those communities, inviting school groups in.

We also work with a number of educational tour groups that exist in the country. There are a number of them that work out of the population centres—Toronto, Montreal, Calgary. They are specific private organizations that exist for the creation of educational tours. We work with them, they work with the schools in their areas, and then they bring people to the museum as well.

Mr. James Whitham: I would also add that we have two key documents. One is online, which allows teachers to go online and plan their school trips and plan what information they would like. We also have a printed document that is sent out to a lot of the schools across Canada, which highlights the school programs we have and allows them to contact us in order to set up a specific program they would like to see for their students.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That brings round one to an end. We'll go into the second round, a four-minute round.

We'll start with Mr. Genest, who I think is ready to go.

[Translation]

Mr. Réjean Genest: You talked about the War of 1812. I, personally, know nothing about it. Does it have to do with the fact that Quebec culture is completely different? Might it be called something else in our culture? Is some sort of conflict with older Canadians to blame? If so, any War of 1812-themed advertising will be tricky. You must be sure not to offend Quebeckers. There was some sort of revolt at one point. Is it the war between Canada and the United States?

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: The War of 1812 is one of the first battles in which francophones, anglophones and first peoples came together to defend what we now call Canada.

Quebec played a pivotal role. As our program shows, we will be looking at the war from the perspective of each of the four central actors. Quebec will be especially highlighted in two of those four perspectives.

The British felt that Quebec had the strongest and most dangerous fortifications when they tried to cross the border. The exhibit will show reproductions of Quebec's fortifications at the time. This may be an excellent chance for Quebeckers to learn something new about an event they may not be familiar with.

We have found that there is a genuine need to educate people around the country when it comes to this war, and that is what we plan to do.

In the portion of the exhibit dedicated to the Canadian perspective, once again, Quebec is given special attention. The battles at Châteauguay, for instance, and the history surrounding Salaberry will have a prominent role in the exhibit.

Francophones will obviously be a very significant part of this exhibit. We are hopeful that Quebeckers will be interested in learning a bit about their own specific heritage related to this war.

•(1025)

Mr. Réjean Genest: A lot of education is necessary. Personally, I know absolutely nothing about the War of 1812. I see it as an excellent opportunity to rally Quebeckers in Canada. It is, to some extent, part of our job to tell Quebeckers that they are part of Canada.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: We will send you an invitation in the hope that you will be able to attend the opening.

What we are trying to do with all these projects is to create smaller exhibits that reflect the main exhibition on display at the Canadian War Museum, and to send them all over the country.

We are hopeful that we will be able to show them in Quebec and to shine a new light on the region's history.

Mr. Réjean Genest: Is that war the reason why there are forts scattered across Canada?

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Yes.

Mr. Réjean Genest: Were they built before or after?

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Construction began at that time. Obviously, other conflicts arose afterwards, and those defence installations were later fortified. The fortifications in Quebec were extremely significant and even frightening, if you will, to the British. That is clear from all the historical records.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up.

We're going to now go to Mr. Daniel for four minutes.

Mr. Joe Daniel: I'll just be following up on some things. Are you actually working with other museums around the world for special exhibits—for example, with Britain or other countries—so that you can bring some change and excitement to what you're displaying?

Mr. James Whitham: Yes. We work with international partners and partners across Canada all the time. On the First World War, there are a number of larger committees and groups that are working together. England, Australia, New Zealand, and Belgium are all participating in programs and discussions about what they are planning to do during that period.

The museum works with partners all the time to make sure that the product is sound, to do partnerships on exhibitions, both nationally and internationally... For example, with respect to a couple of the exhibitions we mentioned, the one on John McCrae would hopefully be done in conjunction with the Guelph museum. The exhibition on Sam Steele will be done with the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. We have discussions for international exhibitions as well.

So yes, we do a fair amount of that.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: We have an exhibition currently that is with international partners. "War and Medicine" examines 150 years of the relationship between war and medicine. It comes to us from the Wellcome Foundation and the Dresden museum. That exhibition comes to us, it's adapted, and Canadian stories are added to it. It gives a wider view of a particular subject matter, but it includes Canadian stories. We do that now and will continue to do so.

● (1030)

Mr. Joe Daniel: Obviously it's a war museum, but Canada has a big role in peacekeeping, so is there anything there to do with peacekeeping missions that Canada has around the world?

Mr. James Whitham: In terms of partnerships and temporary exhibitions upcoming...?

Mr. Joe Daniel: Or permanent exhibitions.

Mr. James Whitham: We do have a large section that looks chronologically at Canada's participation after the Second World War, which includes peacekeeping through various different...right up until Afghanistan. We're now looking to expand a section on Afghanistan. We're looking at—hopefully in the next little bit—a permanent placement for Bosnia and these kinds of conflicts.

We have a proposal right now for a temporary exhibition about the subject of Bosnia that we hope to look at. We're always adding, expanding, and looking for partnerships and new topics.

Mr. Joe Daniel: I look forward to visiting the museum. Do you have anything about the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to Canadian...?

Mr. James Whitham: Yes, we do. We have Pearson's medallion on display, actually, in a certain section. When you do come to the museum, by all means give me a call, and I'll take you personally to see it.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Just before we wrap up, you're probably aware that there's going to be a bell. We're going to continue until that time, but when the bell is called, it automatically cancels the rest of the meeting.

I'll just use the chair's prerogative and say that if I get enough consensus, I'm going to suggest at the end of the meeting that I really think this is a worthwhile visit for the whole committee, particularly for anyone who hasn't been there.

If you've been there, you'll want to go back. There's no question about it. What I would suggest, if the committee agrees, is that we go there and take our two hours. That definitely is not enough. It will just whet your appetite. If you're in agreement, perhaps we could focus on those things that are the upcoming celebrations and that fit in with the commemorative study that's going on. If that's agreed, we'll find a date and work it through. Is there consensus that we do that as one of our meetings?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. We have a little time left to go to the NDP for a brief moment, and then to Ms. Block to wrap it up.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Maybe I'm just being a bit of a devil here, but I think it'd be really cool to send a box of French mint Laura Secord chocolates to the U.S. ambassador to remind him of what happened in 1812.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'm just kidding.

On a more serious note, as you know, the HMCS *Sackville* is the navy memorial. It's in Halifax. As trustees, they're constantly looking for funds to get it out of the water in order to preserve it as a national historic site. Do you do any work with them at all in terms of that work?

On another note, of course you know that Laura Secord herself was very instrumental in the war of 1812. Is there any work being done with the Laura Secord corporation in order to bring them into the fold of this as well? I know that's commercializing it, but I'm sure they would be interested in participating in some way as well.

Mr. James Whitham: With regard to HMCS *Sackville*, I did attend a meeting held by the trust last November or December dealing with the best move forward for the trust in the preservation of the *Sackville*. The museum does participate in those kinds of conversations.

In the past, it has actually helped out the *Sackville* in providing artifacts for the ship. We recognize it as being the national naval memorial to the sailors who lost their lives. We do offer assistance where possible. I think they're very lucky to have the Department of National Defence there to work with them in terms of the preservation of the boat, of the hull.

We are there to help them, and they know that. We do aid them when possible in preserving their memory.

In terms of Laura Secord, I'll turn to Yasmine.

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: We have some fundraising projects under way that are being looked at particularly with regard to the projects we presented this morning—both 1812 and the First World War—and I believe the corporation is on their short list for discussion.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: There you go.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Thank you for the opportunity to make an observation. I am not a member of the committee, but I was delighted to have the opportunity to fill in for our parliamentary secretary.

Maybe because of the richness of the displays at the museum and the length of time it takes to get through them, I continue to go back. Last fall, I was able to spend a couple of hours there. It was a coincidence that I saw the display of the teddy bear. I had been at a school during a Remembrance Day week, and I had an opportunity to read some storybooks to some younger grades. That was one of the books I read. It was an amazing thing to be able to tell these students that the story I was reading is true, and that this teddy bear is actually at the War Museum in Ottawa. They were amazed.

I want to encourage you in your efforts to continue to find ways to engage our children in remembering, whether it's through the cartoon you mentioned earlier or by linking together authors and artists who

can take a story from an artifact and put it in a way that can engage children. I want to encourage you to keep doing that.

• (1035)

Ms. Yasmine Mingay: Thank you.

Mr. James Whitham: Thank you.

The Chair: It's not like a committee to wrap up early. Is there any other comment or question?

We have a story.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Sir George Ross, one of the premiers of Ontario, came from Melrose, Ontario. George had an interesting life. He was supposed to be a bachelor, but he had a lady friend who was an amateur painter. She painted a portrait of him. After he died, she tried to sell it to the Parliament of Ontario, to Queen's Park, but because of the risqué nature of their relationship, they refused to accept the portrait. She was a determined woman, and she had certain friends who had been friends of George, and they convinced her to paint over it. She did, and made it into Laura Secord. Now, this is the homeliest woman I've ever seen, but the portrait of Laura Secord, painted over the portrait of Sir George Ross, hangs in the corridors at Queen's Park. That might be something of interest since we are talking about the War of 1812.

The Chair: Thank you, Irene.

I must say that I am delighted to know that Peter Stoffer is not the only storyteller from the NDP. I am pleased to know that.

What we will do, then, is wrap up early, with great thanks. We know we are going to see more of you, because we are going to visit. We will work that detail out at the end of this meeting.

If there is no further business arising, we will knock off, knowing there are going to be bells.

I want to say, on behalf of the committee, thank you for what you do and for being here today.

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