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Chair

Mr. Greg Kerr

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC)): Good morning, everybody. We have a busy schedule before us. We have three presentations and then a half-hour business session at the very end of our meeting.

What we're going to do is first hear from all of our presenters and then go into the question and answer session.

I want to say good morning to Greg Owen. It's nice to have him here again. Greg is with EF Educational Tours Canada. David Robinson, the student tour coordinator, is also here.

From Juno Beach Centre Association, we have Susan Mousseau with us.

From the Vimy Foundation, we again have David Houghton with us.

We're pleased to have all of you here.

What the norm is, as I think most of you are aware, is that we allow up to 10 minutes for an opening presentation, and then the committee chair will recognize the various members of the committee who want to ask questions.

This morning we'll hear each of the presentations and then we'll open it up to questions. We think that's more efficient.

Mr. Owen, your name is here first, so I gather we'll start with you, if you wouldn't mind, thank you. Please proceed.

Mr. Greg Owen (Vice-President, Public Affairs and Event Tours, EF Educational Tours Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

•(0850)

My name is Greg Owen, and I'm a vice-president of EF Educational Tours in Canada. I'm responsible for our event-based tours, which include those related to commemoration.

With me is Dave Robinson, a retired history teacher from Port Perry, Ontario. Some of you may be familiar with him. He has led thousands of students on tours since 2004 and is quite passionate and tireless in his ability to bring students abroad to learn about the history of various countries. I have some more background and materials here. We will be sharing our presentation time today.

For 45 years, it has been EF's mission to break down barriers of language, culture, and geography. We work with teachers to incorporate travel into their lessons, giving students the opportunity to learn it by living it.

We're the most experienced private education company in the world, with offices in 50 countries. Since 1965 we have had over three million students travel with us.

In Canada we have over 3,000 teachers and staff with whom we work. We have groups who travel almost every week of the year, choosing from 300 tours to various destinations around the world.

We're quite fond of saying that travel changes lives. After students experience a tour, you can see how they change and mature, coming home with a new understanding of another culture and a new perspective on Canada.

We have an extensive tour-based program that is based around Canada's history, providing students the opportunity to learn about Canada both at home and abroad. Teachers can travel with us during their school breaks, or to commemorate a particular anniversary.

Many teachers choose to travel with us to the places where our soldiers gave their lives, from the more well-known sites of Juno Beach and Passchendaele to the lesser-known ones like Bergen-op-Zoom in the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Italy, and Beaumont-Hamel. And of course, they choose to travel to Vimy as well.

In April of 2007, over 1,700 students came with EF to the 90th anniversary ceremonies at Vimy Ridge.

In May of last year, we led 2,400 students and teachers from 85 schools across Canada to participate in ceremonies commemorating the 65th anniversary of victory in Europe and the liberation of the Netherlands.

And to commemorate the 95th anniversary of Vimy Ridge, we created 10 different tours, the common factor being that all the travellers will be at Vimy for the government's ceremonies on April 9 next year.

I can tell you that we've had a great response, to the point that we expect to have 4,000 students and teachers—from every province, and including a number of army and navy cadets—making the pilgrimage to Vimy Ridge next April. They will visit other sites in Europe as well.

We also have one group from Corner Brook, which will travel all the way from Vimy to Gallipoli in Turkey, commemorating the Royal Newfoundland Regiment that fought there in 1915 alongside Australians and New Zealanders.

The students who choose to join these special tours are among the thousands of students who travel with us to these sites at other times of the year.

Dave is going to speak about some of the educational programming he designed, which the students undertake as part of these tours.

At EF, we focus on building partnerships with people who share our goals. One of our partners is the Vimy Foundation; we are their official travel partner and a sponsor of their scholarship programs. I must say it's been a great partnership for both of us. It really helps students get a deeper understanding of what took place at Vimy Ridge. We work with Canada's National History Society, based in Winnipeg. They publish *Canada's History* magazine and organize the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching History.

We work with "Me to We" as well as with Free the Children, led by amazing Canadians Craig and Marc Kielburger. We are also partnered with Evergreen, Canada's leading environmental organization for bringing communities and nature together.

In order to ensure that educational travel remains affordable, we also guarantee the lowest prices for the students—and their teachers travel for free. We provide a range of travel scholarships and financial support. We also take pride in our ability to support those who need it. For example, last year there was a group of 20 veterans who needed help getting over to VE for the liberation ceremonies, and we were able to help provide flights for them and their companions.

We're also proud of the work we do with government organizations. We've been lucky to work with the Prime Minister's Office and with Ambassador Geerts of the Netherlands. We worked with numerous members of Parliament, including Mr. Stoffer, Mr. Dykstra, former minister Blackburn, members of the Canada-Netherlands Parliamentary Friendship Association, and General Natynczyk during the tour to the Netherlands last year. Their support was great and very much appreciated. We also continue to do ongoing work with our embassies overseas and Veterans Affairs Canada.

I'm going to turn it over to Dave to talk about educational programming.

As we wrap up today, we have a short video to show you what commemoration means from the perspective of students and teachers who choose to travel.

Dave.

Mr. David Robinson (National Student Tour Coordinator, EF Educational Tours Canada): With regard to commemoration and experiential learning, I have seen first-hand the value of having students walk the walk of what they've studied in a textbook. At Juno Beach and at the trenches of Beaumont-Hamel, students will always experience that "aha" moment when they understand, the moment when they get it.

For many years, while taking my students to Europe, I've always made sure to visit many of the Canadian battlefield locations. It was not long before other schools asked if they could come with us. In 2004 I led what I thought at the time was a big group from Durham—150 students and teachers—to Juno Beach for the 60th anniversary of D-Day. That initial pilgrimage has since led to subsequent student remembrance tours: the Battle of Hong Kong, the

Battle of Ortona, the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge, and the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Holland.

Since 2004 I've led more than 11,000 students and teachers on pilgrimages of commemoration. On these pilgrimages, students are matched with a Canadian veteran and represent this veteran at commemoration ceremonies by proudly wearing that veteran's name. Or the student may choose a family's relative from any Canadian military assignment, from the Boer War to Afghanistan. These students then research these soldiers to personally identify with them. When they visit that soldier's cenotaph and come face to face, as it were, with their soldier, I can assure you that they get it.

For our upcoming tour, I have designed the "We Will Remember" program. Each school is twinned with and will visit a Commonwealth cemetery where Canadian soldiers are buried. Each school is matched with a cemetery where their local or provincial battalion has soldiers buried. Each student is matched with a soldier who died on April 9 and with a soldier who is buried at their twinned cemetery. Each student will place a candle of remembrance at this soldier's cenotaph during their school's commemoration ceremony at that cemetery.

Each school will also be participating in the We Will Remember flag project. Each school has been provided with a We Will Remember flag piece. After reciting the Canadian Legion's student pledge of remembrance, the students will sign their names on the flag in acceptance of this oath. When completed, all school pieces will be stitched together for presentation to our government on April 9.

I would now like to present a flag piece to the committee so that you may sign it and join with the students in this national flag piece. We currently have 144 schools from across Canada, from every province. If I were a political party, I'd have 144 seats. I'd like to have your flag piece join ours.

I'd also like to volunteer at this time, if you would like me to come back to Ottawa and visit your caucus, to bring a flag piece for your caucus so that all members of your own political parties can also join in and take this message back to their own communities.

Each student will also complete a school We Will Remember flag piece that will be stitched to form a school remembrance flag. The student piece will have a maple leaf at its centre with the student's name at the top and the name of their soldier on either side. Below each soldier's name, the student will provide the personal background of the soldier and a tribute.

The schools will sew the flag pieces together with a ten-inch white border around it. At a school ceremony, the students on the tour will lead their entire student body in taking the pledge of remembrance. Then every student in the school shall sign their name on their school remembrance flag.

In our We Will Remember program, we will also have our students symbolically and literally accept the challenge of John McCrae. On April 8, many of our students will light a torch of remembrance at Essex Farm and take it to Vimy Ridge. On the morning of April 9, each student will have the opportunity to carry a torch of remembrance during our silent student march into Vimy Ridge. Ninety-five years to the day, the youth of Canada will once again be united as they climb the hill of Vimy Ridge.

At a student-led ceremony at Cemetery No. 2 and during the national ceremony at the Vimy monument, our students will light a symbolic eternal flame. That evening, all the students will gather together for dinner and a birth of a nation celebration. I invite you to join the students at Vimy on April 9 to share their pride of country and history—to stand with them, to walk with them, to celebrate with them.

The year 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge and the 150th birthday of Canada. Our students will return in 2017 to bring the Vimy light of remembrance home to Canada, which will then travel across Canada visiting schools and finishing its journey on Parliament Hill on July 1.

Mr. Chairman, I can assure you that Canadian students do care and they do remember. Their passion to remember is contagious. I ask you to give pause and think: if this many youth are motivated to attend the 95th anniversary, what can we expect for the 100th?

● (0855)

Mr. Greg Owen: Thanks, Dave.

The video I have for you is about three minutes. Hopefully it will be close to the time allotted.

I just want to wrap up by sharing my personal experience. My great-grandfather was a veteran of World War I, and he emigrated to Canada from England.

I know that the personal experience of the students on these tours is second to none. We truly believe in having students become global citizens. Through these types of tours, they accomplish a number of things.

First, they remember the sacrifices of those who came before us, and they learn from our past.

Second, their textbooks really come to life. They get the understanding of how people, places, and events fit together in a way that only experiencing them first-hand can accomplish.

They also get a chance to celebrate Canada. They learn about our role in the world, and they come home with a new commitment to the future of our country and their communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Greg.

[*Video Presentation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. You were over a little bit, but I'm sure the committee members won't mind whatsoever taking that off their question time.

Thank you very much.

Now we go to Ms. Mousseau, for 10 minutes on her presentation.

● (0900)

Ms. Susan Mousseau (Director, Juno Beach Centre Association): Good morning.

My name is Susan Mousseau. I'm a senior director of the Juno Beach Centre Association. I'm also the daughter of Lise Cooper, a co-founder of the Juno Beach Centre, and the late George Cooper, a D-Day veteran. My grandfather was a World War I veteran.

For those who may not be familiar with our charitable organization, the Juno Beach Centre Association, also referred to as the JBCA, is parent to the Juno Beach Centre museum located in Courseulles-sur-mer, Normandy, France.

I would first like to thank Veterans Affairs for their Canada Remembers program, which ensures that Canadians are made aware of the sacrifices and contributions of our veterans, and for their many initiatives to encourage all Canadians to become actively involved in remembrance and commemoration.

Similarly, the objectives of the JBCA are also remembrance and commemoration. Through our outreach programs to youth, we understand the value of education as a conduit for remembrance and commemoration. I hope that by sharing our concepts and listening to those of the other presenting groups, we can all benefit.

We have put together our presentation based on four main questions and concepts. Those are: what the Juno Beach Centre does in terms of its remembrance services for veterans; what is being done with remembrance education for students; ideas or thoughts on ongoing remembrance concepts for the 21st century; and lastly, our ongoing connections with teachers who have visited the Juno Beach Centre or taken part in our educators tour.

I'll go through these one by one and then hopefully have time for any questions.

Remembrance activities for veterans are accomplished in a number of ways. We conduct large remembrance ceremonies on June 6 and November 11. The JBC staff take time to meet and chat with each and every veteran who visits the centre. We host special events for regimental or family groups or any other group that includes veterans. The centre has book-signing sessions for historical writers and conducts unveiling ceremonies. We feature special temporary or travelling exhibits dedicated to veterans. We have incorporated a passport system into our tour of the museum to feature veterans' biographies, and we maintain a collection of Canadian veterans' first-person accounts and a special book for families to write stories in.

The next concept presented is remembrance and education for students. This can be broken down into three categories: our education programs; networking programs; and fundraising activities.

As education programs, the Juno Beach Centre offers both elementary and secondary school programs. Our elementary school program is titled “The D-Day Soldier” and “A Canadian Nurse During the Battle of Normandy”. This is a storytelling session with a young Canadian guide, and includes artifacts for children aged eight to eleven to touch and interact with. Dressed as a soldier or nurse, the guide tells a first-person story of a Canadian in Normandy in 1944.

Based on the memoirs and testimonies of real Canadian soldiers and nurses, children relate to the realities of war in a much more personal way. This program is unique and now in its fifth year of operation. Complex notions—like that of the Allies crossing the Atlantic Ocean, being far away from home, experiencing fear and fatigue, and returning to Canada as a changed person—become easily understood by the young ones, thanks to this innovative program.

Our secondary school program is titled “History on Wheels”. This is an artifact-based animation for secondary school students, where they can manipulate a large selection of Second World War artifacts. As a JBC guide explains each object, the students explore a number of important themes related to the daily life of a Canadian soldier in Normandy.

The idea of enlisting voluntarily, the sense of belonging and camaraderie, friendship, morale, fear, food, hunger, hygiene, contact with French civilians, news from home—all of these are concepts the students become familiar with in order to better understand the hardships Canadian soldiers and their families faced.

In addition to the school programs, the Juno Beach Centre includes permanent exhibitions adapted to young audiences. At the centre, fictional young characters named Peter and Madeleine help youngsters better navigate the exhibits. There are also family games and quizzes available for all levels.

A final area of education programs involves our brick purchases. To commemorate the sacrifice of Canadian Second World War veterans and to recognize the support of project donors, the JBCA offers the opportunity to purchase engraved plaques, or bricks as we refer to them. These personalized bricks are mounted on kiosks in front of the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy. Two types of bricks are available, those honouring a specific veteran and more general donor bricks.

As an extension of this program, the Juno Beach Centre memorial-brick campaign and resource guide was developed in collaboration with teachers from the Halton public and Catholic school boards to honour the sacrifices of local World War II soldiers. Teachers and students commemorate the sacrifices of local soldiers by raising awareness and funds to purchase commemorative bricks for those soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice. This Halton pilot project has become the model for many similar remembrance and commemoration projects across Canada.

● (0905)

Over the years, thousands of Canadian high school students have raised money for the purchase of bricks and held their own remembrance ceremonies on site. The Juno Beach Centre creates and maintains relations with schools all across the country in order to raise awareness and remembrance.

The JBCA's professional development tour for Canadian educators recently completed its seventh annual tour to Normandy and has brought well over 150 Canadian teachers as participants.

In addition to our education programs, the Juno Beach Centre is actively engaged in networking with various boards of education, teacher associations, and educational organizations.

Fundraising is, of course, at the heart of all Canadian teachers' desire to bring their students over. We try to help these teachers find creative fundraising solutions. School exchanges between France and Canada are plenty, and the Juno Beach Centre has created local partnerships over the years as well.

In the process of brick purchases, students do research on a particular soldier, perhaps a graduate of their high school or a member of their families, and the unveiling ceremony often happens on site at the JBC. Some have travelled with a veteran, but more and more they have travelled to the centre with a specific remembrance mission in the name of one or many veterans.

When these ceremonies take place, the JBC invites local French representatives, surviving D-Day witnesses, and survivors among the French conscripted labour for the building of the Atlantic Wall, all of whom students get to meet and experience their stories first-hand on the beaches where history happened. The result is quite unique, as no other format of remembrance ceremony can be as inclusive of various aspects of Canadian Second World War history, including a better understanding of the French people whom the Canadians came to liberate.

This concludes our summary of the JBC's remembrance education for students.

Next are some ideas or thoughts on ongoing remembrance concepts. Through our Canadian guide program, the JBC is deeply committed to the future of remembrance. Our guides, today's youth, are both the recipients and transmitters of Canadian World War II history. In our education program, we have youth teaching youth about remembrance, and in the case of our regular public programs, we have our youth teaching other generations about remembrance.

Since the JBC is an authentic site experience, as time passes the physical reminders of war take on more and more importance. The development of the Juno Park area, with the restoration of the bunker and newly discovered tunnels, is incredibly important.

Public programming in our permanent and temporary exhibitions continues, as do animations by our guides for regular public displays. We continue outreach programs to local schools and are developing e-learning tools along with the live transmission of ceremonies in sync with large commemorative events in Canada.

The JBC is helping to fund the development of the Library and Archives nationally acclaimed Lest We Forget project. The project is a Second World War web resource created by Governor General's and Veterans Affairs award-winning educator Blake Seward. It will include new online tools and interactive resources to support students researching Second World War military service files.

The final concept being presented is the Juno Beach professional development educator's tour. The JBC gives a significant bursary to Canadian educators who participate in our annual professional development tour. Those participating are given university-level briefings at all historical stops. Participants spend time with French veterans and citizens to commemorate the sacrifices of our Canadian soldiers. This trip is an emotional experience for all involved, and creates lifelong advocates for the Juno Beach Centre itself. Every teacher who takes part goes home with a renewed and emotional desire to make sure remembrance in their school continues.

I'd like to share a quote from one of our tour participants.

The JBC Educator's Trip provided me with an unforgettable opportunity to learn about our great country's war history. No other life experience can compare to walking the battlefields of Normandy or standing in the hauntingly silent cemeteries amongst the soldiers. Nothing has been so meaningful and moving in my years of teaching. I returned home with new life-long friendships and with deeper understanding which has brought a whole new perspective to my teaching and working with students.

The JBC stays connected with all past tour participants through a quarterly newsletter. We are in the process of establishing Facebook and social media sites to help these teachers stay connected and engaged.

Some success stories prove that once teachers or school groups go to the centre, their passion is ignited. One school in Calgary is actually named the Juno Beach Academy, and they do their graduation ceremony on-site at the JBC. Another group is coming for the fourth time, and has purchased a total of over 80 memorial bricks so far. Students across Canada are involved in the brick campaign to recognize soldiers from their communities.

● (0910)

In conclusion, we all have an opportunity to involve the youth of Canada in active remembrance and commemoration, and we must continue this important mission. The JBCA sees the need for everyone involved to use his or her resources to actively engage youth. Facebook and Twitter are a good start, or any other available means to help Canadian youth to ask the critical questions and get them actively involved. We hope that through this committee new ideas and approaches can emerge and be shared.

Thank you for your time and attention. I hope we'll have some questions later.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mousseau.

Now we'll have Mr. Houghton for the last stand.

Mr. David Houghton (President, Vimy Foundation): Thank you.

My name is David Houghton, and I'm the president of the Vimy Foundation. Our mission is to preserve and promote Canada's First World War legacy as symbolized by the victory at Vimy Ridge in

April 1917, which is often revered and considered a milestone in our history and birth of our nation.

About five years ago, Historica-Dominion did a poll of Canadians, and it was discouraging how few had any knowledge of Vimy or any other engagement or war Canada has been involved in. The recognition level was approximately 30% nationally and as low as 6% in Quebec. Education is a provincial domain and the teaching of history, and specifically of First World War Canadian history, is quite different depending on where you are. In Europe, Germany and France share a common textbook on the 20th century. Imagine two countries that have been at war three times in less than 100 years coming together and sharing a textbook. They are not interested in "You did this and we did that". It's no longer us against Germany; it's a part of our history and we're not even teaching it to our own students.

Groups like us are filling that gap.

How do we at the Vimy Foundation encourage learning? We have three methods. There is something we call the Beaverbrook Vimy Prize, which is a scholarship. It's an academic competition and submissions are made via various forms. It used to be just an essay, but now we are accepting different formats in order to encourage students of different abilities. We accept artistic, video, and so forth, so that we get more participation.

The winners spend two weeks in an intense academic program in Europe, led by pedagogues. For example, in the last few years we've had an Oxford Ph.D. take students through Britain, Belgium, and France in the program. Every year 12 Canadians are chosen, along with two British and two French students. They get to go overseas. Typically, we get submissions from students in all the provinces, or close to it. We've recently received funding from Canada Heritage, in order to encourage submissions. Canadian Heritage can't cover the costs of the actual prize, but they are helping us with outreach and getting more participation across the country by spreading the word.

We also sponsor two weeks at Encounters With Canada, a well-established program here in Ottawa at the Terry Fox Centre off St. Laurent Boulevard. It's been in existence for a long time. The weeks that we sponsor are specific to Canadian war history. We call our program Vimy Week. That's a program that we devised for these weeks. This year we are sponsoring two one-week programs at a cost to us of over \$100,000.

The third leg of the stool is awareness. You've seen the pilgrimage manual. We also produced the Vimy pin. The idea behind that is to have all Canadians wearing a Vimy pin on the week of April 9. I don't know if it was last year or the year before that we had every member of Parliament wearing one on April 9, but it's something that has been embraced from sea to sea to sea.

Why is April 9 and Vimy Ridge important to us? Right now Veterans Affairs does yeoman work, an excellent job of commemorating Vimy with wreath-laying ceremonies. But I would like to see a component of celebration, if that doesn't sound gauche. The Texans, who lost all but two men at the Alamo, don't apologize for that battle. In fact, it led to the bumper sticker "Don't Mess with Texas". There were losses at the Battle of Trafalgar, the Battle of Waterloo. In Canada, for whatever reason, it's not in our nature to celebrate a victory. We're always about peacekeeping. At Vimy Ridge, it was almost as if we got the short straw on that day. It was part of a much larger battle called the Battle of Arras. We got Vimy. The taking of Vimy Ridge had been attempted by both of our parent nations, if you will, by Britain and France, at a cost of well over 100,000 casualties. It was widely regarded as impregnable.

● (0915)

On April 9, although our commander was General Byng—who became Baron Byng and was our Governor General after that—the battle plan itself was conceived and devised by General Arthur Currie. He used several different programs that had never been tried or implemented successfully before. He put together an attack that included a creeping barrage and the disbursement of battle plans to the men in the trenches, which had never been done before. Traditionally the battle plan was information only for the officers—and, of course, what happens is that the officers get killed in battle and then you have a bunch of soldiers who don't know what to do next. At Vimy the information was shared with everyone and that is a representation of Canada and how democratic we are. It was a very different approach to battle from that of our parent countries.

Also, the battle itself was practised for months. This had never been done before. There was a massive practice ground behind the front that allowed the various divisions to practise what it was they were expected to accomplish—their goals and so forth—and what to do in the event of a problem. Of course, the result was a great success, which I think was a surprise to everyone.

General Currie was promoted to commander of the Canadian forces and Canada has never again been led by a non-Canadian. Furthermore, the Canadian Expeditionary Force continued...

Vimy, by the way, was the very first battle in which the four Canadian divisions fought together. Previous to that our divisions were filling in various needed places in the British Expeditionary Force. At Vimy, we were together shoulder to shoulder, four divisions, 100,000-men strong.

After Vimy, Currie planned and succeeded in taking what became known as Hill 70, and then in capturing Passchendaele, and then in what is known as the Hundred Days Offensive, which very few Canadians know about.

But when all was said and done, Vimy was chosen as the site to represent our war effort. The French gave us 100 hectares of property, and that beautiful monument was produced, and now it is a pilgrimage site. It's quite an experience to go there.

Canada's efforts in the war changed the country. Not only did we sign the Treaty of Versailles, which our American allies fought greatly, as they felt it was a power play by Britain, but we also succeeded in signing because of our tremendous effort in punching

above our weight, as we like to say. And the sense of Canadian pride, if you will, manifested itself on the return of the men. Not long afterwards, we sought and received what's known as the Statute of Westminster, whereby Canada actually gained full control over its foreign affairs. So Canada became a different place as a result of Vimy.

I submit to you the consideration that Veterans Affairs look into making Vimy more of a celebratory event, while maintaining of course our respect and our remembrance and so forth for the losses that have been incurred on Remembrance Day.

Thank you.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Houghton.

I think you point out too that he was probably the first Canadian leader recognized in a war by the headquarters, if you like, of the Europeans. So it was quite an accomplishment. We agree with that.

We're now going to go to the question process and we'll start with the NDP for five minutes.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): First of all, I thank all of you very much for coming, and I thank each and every one of you for the great work you do in keeping the memory of our Canadian heroes alive for future generations.

David, I've heard about the good trips overseas with all those kids. How you manage to get all those kids together, learning and excited about this, is truly amazing. So thank you very much for that.

Susan, you've indicated there is a Juno Beach brick that one can purchase. How much are the bricks going for?

Ms. Susan Mousseau: They're \$250. There are larger ones but the typical brick is \$250. We also offer a little wooden replica as a gift. So if you donate it in someone's name you can give....

Mr. Peter Stoffer: You may or may not know, but I have had a motion in the House for quite some time because of what you had indicated, that when a student gets the opportunity to go overseas and to see a gravesite such as we saw on the screen there, it moves them, it changes them, I think forever. One of the things I have been encouraging the federal government to do is to work with the provinces, with school boards, with corporations—with anyone for that matter—to encourage every student in the country to at least have one opportunity in their school year, from grade eight to grade twelve, to go overseas. A lot of students and their families can't afford it, so it would just be to give them that opportunity to visit an overseas gravesite so they can truly imagine and be thankful for the history and the memory of those who did so much for us.

I wonder what you think about a motion of that nature? Would it have any credence? Or is there anything else we can do as parliamentarians and/or senators to assist you in getting more kids over there?

Mr. David Robinson: As you may be aware, there are only three provinces in Canada where it's mandatory to study Canadian history. I think the first thing that we have to do, and what I'd love to see, is a national hearing where we invite the ministers of education to join us in one place and talk about why not.

When I think of commemoration, I really think more about education. This is really our history. I'm really, really concerned. When I go across the country and speak to schools and to school groups—since February I've been to 80 communities in Canada and spoken in 80 different schools—I talk about how it was when I went to high school. When I was a student, education basically stopped at the Plains of Abraham. That was Canadian history back in the 1960s, because of our publishing industry, etc., at the time. Now it's much more extensive.

The next few years, from 2012 to 2017, are going to see an awful lot of things happening because there are going to be an awful lot of 100th anniversaries coming up. It's going to be the same thing that happened in the 1960s, with all the great war films of the day, *The Great Escape*, *The Longest Day*. You're going to have revisionist authors on both sides of the oceans, talking about how the United States won the war and all they did and all the Europeans did in the war.

All the great gains we've made since the 1960s in Canadian history will be lost if we don't get our collective act together. I think the first thing we need to do is to bring educators and ministers of education together and talk about all of Canada's history and specifically what's happened from the War of 1812 onward. We'll be having the 200th anniversary of that. I could talk a long time about this.

I think what a lot of people do not understand about education is the fact that my own board of education, for example, from which I just retired, takes two years to get approval for me to do these trips. If a teacher wants to take kids to Vimy Ridge in 2017, he or she has to know all the itinerary and all the costs to be able to apply by 2015. I'm already working on that.

Governments have a different timetable, which doesn't work with education. We need a longer timetable, and so we have to start planning. Europe is planning now for all of the things that are happening, and we're not.

● (0925)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I have one last question for you. One aspect of our conflicts we don't hear about very often is the Boer War. Next year is the 110th anniversary. We didn't do anything for the 100th anniversary of the ending of the Boer War. We did very little in terms of commemoration, but that was the war that actually set up the tactics for World War I, because that was the first time we sent over entire brigades—I guess that's the proper term—as units, to fight. We lost more than 250 people in the South African war, yet we don't seem to talk about it that much, or Korea. I noticed in your presentation, Korea wasn't mentioned, as active as some Korean veterans are.

I'm just wondering what your outlook is on the Boer War and the Korean conflict.

Mr. David Robinson: I've actually been asked to try to do Korea. Sadly, the problem is that in Korea they don't have the infrastructure that can support what we would have to do.

South Africa at the time didn't either, but in our soldier adoption, we allow them to take soldiers and we encourage them to make it personal for both.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to the government side with Mr. Dykstra, I understand. You have five minutes.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning, although I'm not a regular on the committee.

Obviously, this is an extremely relevant topic, and particularly so, based on a little experience I had at our Remembrance Day ceremonies on Friday. The normal procedure is for us to walk from the Legion office downtown to the cenotaph, and we walk with all of the veterans and try to stay as much in step as we possibly can with all of those who know it a lot better than I do. One of the interesting aspects that I witnessed this time around was that we normally travel to the cenotaph and all the school kids are waiting there for everyone to arrive, but this year they actually changed that process and had the grade school participants actually walk with the veterans, beside them.

To me it was an example of the fact that they are now engaged in this process. They felt part of the process; they weren't standing on the sidelines watching but were also marching with the veterans.

Part of the whole process, certainly in listening to your presentations this morning, is the experience you're building up in these young people. I think their ability to engage in this process is paramount, from a teaching perspective.

We have the 95th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the 100th anniversary of World War I. You're inspiring and educating all of these young people, and my question is how we turn the tables on them and ask them how they can help us. Instead of our speaking to them about what history is all about, how do we get them engaging the rest of Canada in this process?

I love what you said, David. We need to celebrate our victories, and I don't think there's any better way than to have young people involved in educating us as to what those celebrations should be all about.

I ask for your input on how we can turn in that direction, so that we get them engaged.

Mr. David Houghton: One of the requirements of the Beaverbrook Vimy Prize is that we'll only accept winners in grades 10 and 11. We want them to be returning students. When they return to their high school, they're required to make a presentation to the school. We ask that they make presentations on Remembrance Day as well—and a great many do.

These people come back changed, as Dave attested to. They do cooperate and they're proud to do that, so they seek out opportunities to speak at Rotary Clubs, and after school programs, or what have you. It's a small start, but it's a start.

● (0930)

Ms. Susan Mousseau: Certainly sending students to the battlefields changes them forever. It may be financially impossible to fund every student travelling overseas, but I think the Lest We Forget project has a lot of merit. I'm not sure if you're familiar with it. From from what I understand, the military records are being digitized and made available to students. So if a student wants to research a particular soldier, they can get his military records, photographs, and letters home. It's just amazing.

That has been very engaging for students, from what I understand, and it doesn't take a lot of money to fund it. I think the teachers get priority. Obviously Veterans Affairs is limited in what it can do in digitizing these things, but the schools and teachers get priority if they have a specific request in regard to a soldier.

Mr. David Robinson: A great thing about what I do is that I get to work with the best teachers and students in Canada. They're highly motivated and they're out there, and they're just looking for the opportunity.

I agree with you and think that it should start from the grassroots. I think that's we're doing and showing. We've grown from 150, and by over 15,000 from 2004. I mean, people do care and they do want to get involved.

I think we also have to provide the opportunities for engagement. I talked about education. In Alberta, for example, you only get to talk about World War I in the curriculum for two days. You can't talk about too many victories in two days. World War II is covered in only two days.

As Dave talked about, there has to be a certain standard. We have so many great things happening in Canada, but somehow we're not bringing them all together. Sometimes it takes a bit of coaching from the top to get us together where we can all speak from the same page.

I think it's all there. We have a great opportunity in the next few years to bring us all together, but we have to start getting organized.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Unless, Mr. Owen, you want to add something, we're at the five-minute mark. It does pass quickly.

Thank you very much.

Now to Mr. Casey for five minutes.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I start, I see that the agenda calls for us to go in camera towards the end of the meeting. I want to repeat my request that this be as a result of a formal motion, and I would also ask for a recorded division when we get there.

Good morning, folks, and thank you very much for coming back.

I want to start with Mr. Houghton. I was impressed by your comments with regard to the Canadian identity not being consistent in celebrating our victories and thumping our chests like the

Americans. I would have to say I share your view on that, but I'd like to explore it a little more.

In that vein, what do you see going forward in terms of the changing face of our commemoration activities?

Mr. David Houghton: I think as a nation that's changing. We've seen what happened at the Olympics and how people got wrapped up in flag waving and pride in our athletes.

Again, for the record, I want to make sure that I don't in any way dismiss or minimize what is being done on November 11. That's the cornerstone of commemoration. But I think that Vimy, being what it is, shouldn't just be a commemoration; I think it should be a celebration. Far be it for me to suggest what sort of celebration or activities would be held to recognize the day, but they should involve more of a sense of what we accomplished.

Almost 3,600 men lost their lives that day. It's the largest number of Canadian soldiers who have ever lost their lives in a single day in our history. Again, it's not to dismiss the sacrifice that was made, but at the end of the day the ridge was taken, and with the ridge being taken, the people in the town of Arras were no longer subject to German artillery fire. Arras was destroyed. They were dropping bombs on the city with impunity, and as a result of Vimy the artillery got pushed back about five miles or so.

That's a question for Veterans Affairs and how we can turn this around to be more of a celebratory, feel-good day.

● (0935)

Mr. Greg Owen: Mr. Chair, if I could just add to that a little bit, in our experience working with teachers across the country, I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you that they're very creative. One of the things we've noticed is that schools are taking part in commemoration and remembrance activities year round, not just around Veterans' Week or around Remembrance Day.

Just building on what David said about April 9, I think there's an opportunity for us to continue to raise consciousness about the other points in the year where significant Canadian achievements occurred and encourage schools, teachers, and students to participate in whatever way suits them.

We have a school here in Ottawa, John McCrae Secondary School, that's travelling to Vimy. It has already travelled to Ortona and to the Netherlands last year. They were involved in six different activities in the three weeks leading up to Remembrance Day. So I think there's a lot of opportunity to encourage teachers and students to make it more of a year-round activity, as opposed to just one week of the year.

Mr. Sean Casey: Either that school has very affluent parents or they've done a ton of fundraising.

Mr. Greg Owen: That's a great point, and the costs of travelling overseas have come up today a couple of times. I'd like to take the opportunity to identify that for you.

The cost for a student to travel overseas next year for eight days in Europe—flights, meals, busing, from when they leave their airport to when they get home—is about \$1,900, which is a lot of money, but with planning, it's certainly quite achievable. Then you add departure fees and taxes on top of that, which takes it up to about \$2,500. We do our best to keep those prices down and to make sure that students can have the opportunity to be there.

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Mousseau, is that close?

Ms. Susan Mousseau: Yes, it's perfect.

Mr. Sean Casey: I'm interested that you started your presentation by saying that you're a charitable organization, but when you talk about ongoing remembrance ideas, you talk about some projects that you're funding, like the Lest We Forget project and the development of Juno Park.

How is your organization funded, and where do the funds come from for these initiatives that you see going forward?

Ms. Susan Mousseau: We were beneficiaries of Walmart's fundraising activities. They took us on board five years ago. We don't know if we're going to be signed on again for another five years. They do five-year increments. Their fundraising activities in the last four weeks leading up to Remembrance Day raised over \$800,000 for the Juno Beach Centre Association. In addition to that, we do receive \$500,000 a year in funding from Veterans Affairs, and the rest of it comes from private donations and receipts from the centre itself.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's the time.

Now we're over to Mr. Lobb for five minutes.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): My first question is to Mr. Owen or Mr. Robinson. In your presentation, you touched upon the possibility of doing tours for the War of 1812. What other tours do you do in Canada, looking at different...

Mr. Greg Owen: We have a very active program that brings students to Ottawa as part of their national history programs. Typically we will take students to Montreal and Quebec City as well. We have the opportunity for students to travel to the maritime provinces and learn about history from the maritime perspective. Those travel opportunities are primarily in eastern Canada, but we do have teachers from western Canada in particular who choose to travel within their own provinces or neighbouring provinces.

Mr. Ben Lobb: In addition to students, I think the baby boomer generation has taken a second look and is also becoming increasingly interested in the different battles and learning about all of the various components of them. Obviously your business is focused primarily on students. For the boomers out there who are interested in doing a tour, what's the best way for them to do that, or can they participate in your tour?

• (0940)

Mr. Greg Owen: They certainly can. We do have an opportunity, and many parents take the opportunity to travel with their student as part of the tours their school might be taking, either as a chaperone or as someone who becomes a traveller on the trip.

We also provide the opportunity around specific events, for example, around the Vimy program. We work to develop tours that would be unique to adults so they could participate at the same time as students. There's certainly the opportunity for people who have graduated from school to make those pilgrimages. I know for example that the Vimy Foundation and, I believe, the Juno Beach Centre as well also host groups at other times of the year that are organized by different individuals. For example, I think the Young Presidents' Organization had a group at Vimy earlier this year.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Okay.

Mr. Houghton, obviously next year's the 95th anniversary of Vimy Ridge, and five years from then it's the 100th. It's an opportunity not only to remember those who fought for the country and made the ultimate sacrifice, but it's also probably your best chance to educate the Canadian public as to why we need to remember these people and remember the dates.

What can you tell this committee about what you're doing over the next five years to put your stamp on the 100th anniversary?

Mr. David Houghton: Thanks.

You're right, the ball is rolling, and I hope we can keep up with it. We've been pushing this thing for the last five years. Now it's starting to roll, and that's good news. This is not about empire-building on our behalf. If we got everybody in the country to know about this, we'd shut our doors. It's like finding the cure for whatever it is your charitable cause is for, if you know what I mean.

We are carrying on with our pin campaign, and we'd probably reflect that to the greatest degree, because it's something that people can do without having to travel. It's something that adults can do very simply as a sign of respect and pride—and as I say, it's ubiquitous, from sea to sea.

There are other opportunities, as Dave mentioned, for adults to travel. We are spending a great deal of money right now on revamping our website. One of the things we plan on doing is facilitating...because we're not in the travel business. Our students who win the Beaverbrook prize go over, but we leave the student travel business to the pros for large groups and so forth.

That said, often adults don't know where to start. We're going to build in a section on our website so that if it's your wish to go to Vimy, we'll suggest some sites you should take in—Juno Beach, Passchendaele, and so forth—and give you the travel times and so on and so forth. We'll try to simplify planning for people who are keen.

Just briefly, I want to say that I was over there this year in June. One of the participants on this trip, among a group of adults in this fundraising endeavour, asked our executive director if she could find this woman's great-grandfather's grave. Our executive director, who lives in Douai, is expert at this. She found it on her iPhone within moments and drove to the grave. There are dozens of gravesites all maintained by the Commonwealth graves commission. She took a photograph of the grave and e-mailed it home to the individual.

This woman said that within half an hour of having made the request, which was just good luck, she saw her great-grandfather's grave. It was the first time anyone in her family had seen it. Then she asked her executive director if she could show her where the grave was so that she could make a visit. Without her knowledge, the executive director arranged for the entire group to go. We hired a piper, and when the woman saw the piper waiting in the field, she turned to us and said, "He can't start playing, because I'm going to start to cry."

This was her great-grandfather, a man she'd obviously never met because he died there. We held off on the piper.

She brought out a newspaper article about her great-grandfather who left behind a widow with three children. The children lived in abject poverty as a result of his death in France. That's not atypical. That is what happened to many, many Canadian families as a result of the loss of the breadwinner. At any rate, she had this newspaper story about him, and about his wife leaving England to move to Canada.

The piper started to play, and one of the participants, who was a new friend to me, said, "We're at this boy's funeral 94 years too late." When you look across the sea of graves, you realize that very few of these graves have been seen by the family members. These boys died overseas; they were buried there. The family never got to see them.

So that was a very powerful moment.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

Ms. Mathysen.

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

Thank you very much for your presentations.

As a former teacher, I'm quite interested in the piece around the students.

Mr. Houghton, you were talking about the Beaverbrook Vimy Prize and the variety of media used by the students to create projects, including videos, essays, etc. Could you describe some of what you've seen? I'm very interested in knowing some specifics about the kinds of products our students are producing.

Mr. David Houghton: I am too, because I haven't seen any yet. In other words, this is the first year we've taken anything other than through the formalized application process. We have on our board pedagogues who are experts at this sort of thing, and they've told us that we're discouraging many bright students. It is an academic challenge, a scholarship-type of thing. They pointed out that there are many clever students, but they're clever in different ways, so why are we requiring them to do another essay and so forth?

Our object, by the way... And I'm not interested in sending 1,000 kids over to France, as we could never afford that. We leave that to EF, and others like them. But our object is to try to get 1,000 kids or 10,000 kids to apply for the scholarship, because in doing so, they learn something about what we want them to do. In effect, we've gained what we want by the student having applied.

The idea of changing the application process is just to solicit applications from students who would otherwise never make the effort to do so, because it's laborious. It's learning.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: You said these students followed up with presentations to the Rotary Club and to other students.

Is there any way that we, as parliamentarians, as the Parliament of Canada, could encourage a wider viewing of these remarkable works? It would seem to me that, in celebrating what the students are doing, we are providing the ultimate commemoration, and also an encouragement that would go beyond anything we could conceive of.

Mr. David Houghton: That's probably something these two gentlemen could discuss.

We only have so many students going over, but perhaps that's something that could become part of the program that you have, Dave. Or maybe it is already. I don't know.

Mr. David Robinson: That's a somewhat easy one, and I would love to see more of it. I'd like to see greater cooperation between us and the elected representatives. We'd gladly provide the contacts with the schools that we have going so that you could contact them and share information.

In answer to your question, the reason the school boards approve these trips is that they're cross-curricular. They really go to different areas. When the teachers and I speak, we talk about how while you're away you're still responsible for your work, but that you should approach your teachers. For English class, you can do a journal. For your media class, you can do a film. So we see a great deal of incredible work. In math class, people would think, "Geez, how can you talk about what happened in World War I and math?" Well, that's easy, as you talk about the mathematics of artillery attacks.

I mean, there are so many incredible things that these kids are doing in videos. Go onto our YouTube site and see some of the things the kids have done. They're absolutely amazing. I would love to be able to see the MPs share the success of the schools and what they're doing.

We can provide that cross-reference for you. That's an easy one.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: This is a continuation of the question by Mr. Stoffer in regard to the Korean War veterans. The reality is that Canadians have been involved in a number of areas of the world, doing remarkable things in terms of peacekeeping and protecting civilians. Now you've said that the infrastructure is not there in Korea for the veterans.

I wonder if any thought has been given to looking at the contributions of what we call modern-day veterans. In so many ways, they feel excluded. They feel forgotten. It's a reality that we owe them a great deal, and yet they're not remembered as they should be.

• (0950)

Mr. David Robinson: I don't know how good a job I did when I spoke.

On all the tours I do, every student is matched with two soldiers, depending on what the tour is about. One thing we say explicitly to the families, the teachers, and the students is that if they are related to any soldier who took part in any military action our country has been involved in, they should represent those soldier to make it most meaningful and personal, because those are the soldiers whose pictures they're going to be wearing on their shirt at the ceremony. The soldiers don't have to have been at Vimy or World War I or Juno Beach. If you know somebody who was in the Boer War, the Korean War, or on peacekeeping in the Middle East, or in the current operations in Afghanistan, wear those names. We do try to make it relevant and most meaningful.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So you're finding that they are making the connection between modern veterans and those we think of traditionally?

Mr. David Robinson: I had a veteran in Sudbury break down and cry when he said, "Can my son represent me?" I said, "Absolutely", and he said, "Thank you", and I said, "No, I thank you".

Mr. Greg Owen: We also have teachers who choose to bring modern-day veterans into their classroom to speak about their experiences. We've had the opportunity to have Afghanistan veterans participate in some of the activities students are taking part in. It continues to be an opportunity for us to recognize their contributions. Clearly, it's much more difficult for people to visit the sites where they've given their lives and served our country. But there's certainly an opportunity to ask those veterans to help share those experiences directly with the students as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Daniel.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you, folks, for attending.

My question is more about the long-term planning, as one always has to plan a fair bit now. It's great news that you're taking students over for these tours with veterans. Sadly the veterans are reducing in numbers at an alarming rate. So as we move into the future, five and more years on, we may not have many veterans to take on these trips. What's your plan on how to engage the younger people in this in the future, and how would you engage more of the newer veterans in this process so that they keep the motivation going for the younger folks to learn and understand these events?

It's open to anyone.

Ms. Susan Mousseau: I'm passionate about the Lest We Forget project, as it gives students the opportunity to do detailed research on the lives of soldiers. Of course, engaging our current Afghanistan veterans in the schools, in ceremonies, and in trips is important as well.

Mr. Greg Owen: I think you'll see, and we've seen, the current Afghanistan veterans, after they've had a chance to come home, begin to represent those members of the Canadian Forces who came before them. The younger veterans I've spoken to talk about wanting to participate in things such as the Nijmegen march in Holland and participate in some of the pilgrimages that were made by previous veterans from previous wars. I think you will continue to see that.

My experience is that they have a great sense of honour and passion for this country and a real respect for the members of the Canadian Forces who served before them. I believe they think it's their duty to help carry that torch forward. I think you will see those veterans participate on behalf of those who came before them.

Mr. David Robinson: I encourage as many of you as possible to come with us. What you'll see at Vimy and in Italy is quite remarkable because it grows every year.

One of our largest areas of growth is with our cadets. Going to Vimy we have the sea cadets of Winnipeg—which brings me great delight—and army cadets. We feature them in our ceremonies. We have our students side by side with our cadets in full uniform at our ceremonies. That ongoing relationship is going to continue through the future.

In addition, as I mentioned briefly, we're setting the stage for the 100th anniversary. We're bringing the flame home and that flame is going to travel across Canada. That will carry the message even more.

• (0955)

Mr. David Houghton: One of the programs mentioned is Lest We Forget. The kids haven't forgotten; they just haven't learned it to start with. They can't forget something they don't know about. We're doing a poor job of teaching the kids our history. I think we do a very poor job of conveying, in the case of World War I, the reality of what Canadians had to deal with.

It's a little-known fact that the enrolment rate of non-British subjects, if you will, is almost identical between French Canadians and non-French Canadians who are not British. So there shouldn't be any finger-pointing about enrolment rates. In other words, if you weren't British or if you weren't born in Britain or if you weren't the child of people born in Britain, your enrolment rate was much less than anyone else's, and it didn't matter what your mother tongue was. That's one of those things I love to jump on when I see that finger-pointing, because it's not right.

In fact, the head of recruiting, the head of the militia was Sam Hughes. It's well documented. You can look at Tim Cook's book, *The Madman and the Butcher*. Minister Hughes was by today's standards a rabid bigot. I think it's a miracle that anyone in the province of Quebec who was French speaking ever joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force because this man made it next to impossible for those people to want to participate in this.

The end result of the war, of course, with our signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the Statute of Westminster, almost hearkens back to what Robert Bourassa sought when he was a member of the Laurier cabinet. He gave up in disgust because the cabinet was too concerned about being British rather than Canadian. The end result of the First World War was that of Canadians thinking of themselves as Canadians first. We need to help the kids to understand that, right across the country.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll now go to Mr. Lizon for the last five minutes.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Good morning. Thank you very much for being here.

The first question I have is for Mr. Owen and Mr. Robinson. As you mentioned in your presentation, you are the largest private educational institution in the world. On the other hand, you organize these program trips that are, in many cases, heavily subsidized. How do you do that?

Mr. Greg Owen: Our programs are not subsidized. We receive no funding from any level of government, and they're paid for by the individuals who choose to travel with us.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: My question is, if there are students or veterans who participate, is their cost covered by someone?

Mr. David Robinson: No.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: That is no?

Mr. Greg Owen: That's no. Every student who goes on our tour pays their own way, 100%. There are no subsidies from anybody.

Mr. David Robinson: They may go to a Legion and maybe a Legion might give them some money, but no, there's no government funding. I think that's what makes it really important, and proves the fact that they do care, and they do remember, because it's the families and they are individually—

• (1000)

Mr. Greg Owen: They're making a choice that this is something that they want to invest in from a personal education perspective.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: In case you have students who cannot afford it, you would get students who cannot afford the trip—

Mr. Greg Owen: Yes.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Is there help or money coming from foundations, from Legions, or from private institutions?

Mr. Greg Owen: That occurs in a number of ways. You do get students who choose to raise funds on their own to cover the costs. I can give you the example of a young man from Durham who last year decided he wanted to come to the victory in Europe tour. He made a decision to go door-to-door to his neighbours, and pledged to do a walkathon in the memory of veterans and to raise money to be able to do that. He covered the cost of his tour through his own initiative.

You do find individual schools participating with local organizations to raise money. Then we, as an organization, do provide support to larger schools and to other groups in the form of scholarships as well.

There is a whole host of ways that students can have get assistance to help cover their costs.

Mr. David Robinson: That's one of the reasons why it takes two years, because the school boards have that same concern and want to provide assistance: they don't want to be seeing this as an elitist thing. So by giving the students two years, it makes the payments smaller and affordable, and also gives a chance for students to have bake sales, bottle sales, walkathons, skateathons, and so forth.

For any student who wants to go and makes that choice, the family does it. I can give you some incredible stories of inner-city schools in London, Winnipeg, and Sudbury, where families talked about how they could barely afford a loaf of bread but that their grandfather fought in the war, and that the student has to go.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: That's incredible. And, of course, Mr. Robinson, I share your views on history teaching in this country. I hope we can get the provinces together somehow so that they can agree on a common program. If Germany and France can share the same books, maybe we can do it in our great country here too.

I have a question that may go to all of you. Generally speaking, war efforts are understood in many countries as the defence of their own territories. In the case of both wars, Canadians were sent to Europe and to other places in the world. So do you get questions like the following? What were our soldiers doing there and dying for if they were not defending their own territory? What is your approach to that? How do you answer that?

Ms. Susan Mousseau: Maybe because the Second World War is a little closer to home than the First World War, I know that at the Juno Beach Centre we get that question all the time from the Dutch and the French to the effect, why did you come here? Canada was not under any threat. Why did you send young men to liberate us? They don't understand it.

Mr. David Houghton: I've had a French national say the same thing to me, and then he paused and he said this twice. I mean his family had been overrun twice and he couldn't understand why the Canucks had come over twice. It's what we do; it's our responsibility.

The Chair: We're just about out of time. I don't know whether Mr. Owen or Mr. Robinson want to comment on the same item or not.

Mr. David Robinson: Because EF is an international company, the tour guides come from all countries. I've had to explain to these tour guides from Germany why we're doing it. Once they understand we're talking about commemoration versus celebration and they think about our Canadian identity, then they understand why we do what we do.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to go into an abbreviated second round and are going to start with Mr. Genest from the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): I noticed that you spoke a lot about commemoration at Vimy and various locations. I also noticed that Korean War veterans were almost completely excluded. There is no memorial there. I even noticed that they tend to be stuck in a corner in the legions or other places—I've experienced it.

What do you want to do? The veterans of the Korean War are the last veterans we have left. Do you or does the government have a program to erect a memorial in Korea to show exactly what sacrifices these veterans made when they entered the Korean War? Because we have the impression that these veterans are aliens because they are completely ignored. Do you have plans to improve the situation? They are our veterans. It's all well and good to commemorate the veterans who are no longer with us, but I also think it's important to honour the veterans who are still around.

[English]

Ms. Susan Mousseau: We have the same problem. Prior to 2003, there was no memorial in France; there was nothing to commemorate.

How the Juno Beach Centre was conceived was conceived is the following. I was on a tour to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-day, and we had three bus loads of veterans who went to Courseulles-sur-Mer, Beny-sur-Mer, and Bernières-sur-Mer—which is specifically where my father landed—and there was nothing there. The Winnipeg Rifles maybe had a small monument, but there was no focal point.

This group of veterans came home from that 50th anniversary and said that they had to do something. Garth Webb was the spearhead of this whole program. He began fundraising but hit roadblock after roadblock. He went to Canadian companies such as the Royal Bank and Molson's, the typical big Canadian companies, looking for funding. It was only with Walmart, which was looking for a Canadian cause.... It was the right time at the right place, and they took us on board and helped us fundraise. They never really gave us any money.

I think to answer your question, it would take the same kind of impassioned veterans group for Korea to do the same thing.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mousseau. We're over the time and we'll try to move along quickly.

While we're waiting, the flag was brought in to be signed. We can pass it around. They even provided a pen. So if the committee is okay with that, while we finish the questioning, we'll pass the flag around.

We will go to Mr. Anders for a couple of minutes.

You're going to take it instead? Sorry, then, Ms. Adams.

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): You've done an extraordinary job with youth in commemorating our veterans' sacrifice. As a group, how many students, how many youth, would you say each year gain an experience through your programs?

Mr. David Houghton: Why don't I start because I'm sure that I'm the smallest? We're probably dealing with 300 or 400, but we're trying to ramp that up to 1,000-plus.

Ms. Eve Adams: That's still remarkable.

Mr. David Houghton: Thank you.

Ms. Eve Adams: How many years has that been going on now?

Mr. David Houghton: For five years.

Ms. Eve Adams: My goodness.

Ms. Mousseau.

Ms. Susan Mousseau: I can tell you that about 56,000 visitors a year attend the Juno Beach Centre. The largest group among those people is Canadian school groups. I can't tell you the specific number, but I would say it's probably 30%.

Ms. Eve Adams: Again, that's very remarkable.

Ms. Susan Mousseau: It's remarkable.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Owen and Mr. Robinson.

Mr. Greg Owen: What I can say is that we've looked at our numbers, and over the last three years up to and including this April, we will have had over 11,000 students visit Juno Beach. There have been over 9,000 to Vimy Ridge, and certainly in the 3,000 to 5,000 range have been to Beaumont-Hamel, which tends to be a lesser known site. But if you're from Newfoundland, it's probably the most important part of your history that you would learn about, and it is quite a place for all Canadians to visit in addition to visiting Juno Beach and Vimy.

Mr. David Robinson: For me, personally, we have over 500 to the Battle of Hong Kong, and close to 3,000 to Italy, for Ortona. Altogether, by the time this tour is over, we will have had over 15,000 students since 2004.

Ms. Eve Adams: That's truly extraordinary. Clearly, commemoration is something that's very significant to our youth and to families. Wouldn't you agree?

Do you find from the considerable uptake that there's much more demand than you are actually able to provide?

Mr. David Robinson: One of the things I talk about that we as a country don't understand sometimes or celebrate is how much Canadians truly love their history and their country. I don't think a lot of different levels everywhere understand how important Canada's history is to Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're pretty close to the end of the time. I don't know if Mr. Anders still wanted to ask a question.

Are you all fine?

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Lobb is next.

The Chair: Okay, very briefly, if you would.

Mr. Ben Lobb: This question is for Mr. Owen and Mr. Robinson. I don't mean to make light of this, but I just want you to tell this committee what you have seen.

Mr. Robinson, obviously, you've been in education your entire life. The youngest generation coming through has played video games—*Call of Duty*, etc.—and can't take its eyes off its iPhones for five seconds. They're on all of these things. So then you take them for a tour.

Tell me, do they put their iPhones away for a few minutes? Tell me how it all comes together. And then also tell me what your relationship is with past students and how their lives have been changed by going there.

Mr. David Robinson: I have some really quick stories.

At the 60th anniversary at Juno Beach, there was a young girl on my trip, spoiled rotten but a good kid. After all the ceremonies the only people allowed on the beach are the Queen—our Queen—the veterans, and my students. We're on the beach. Our young lady has her “aha” moment. She found a veteran sitting on the sand, went up to him, and asked if she could help him, if he needed anything. He said he was fine, but he never made it past that point.

She said: "Are you sure? Do you want some water?" She walked away and he said: "Miss, there is something you can do for me. Would you get me some stones? I promised my grandchildren I'd bring them back some stones from Juno Beach".

Off she wandered and then brought back some stones. He was standing up now and she held out her hand with these little stones, and he held up his arms, which had two hooks. He said, "Would you put them in my pocket for me? This is where I lost my hands".

This girl will graduate from the University of Alberta this year on her full scholarship in an MBA program. When she came back she became our citizen of the year at my school.

On VE day, we had a first nation student at Juno Beach wading out into the water past his knees, because this is where both his grandparents on his father's and mother's side died. They never made it ashore.

We were in Italy with a school from Ottawa. The kids had to carry the city of Ottawa quarterback football star away from the gravesite of the soldier whom he had adopted. He had come face to face.

I get emails all the time from parents asking what we've done to their child. They've come back changed. They say, "Please come with us and see for yourself". It's absolutely amazing what happens to these kids.

•(1010)

The Chair: We're going to get a chance to thank you briefly and then we have to suspend and go into committee business.

Thank you very much for all of that.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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