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Chair

Mr. David Sweet

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Bonjour à tous.

Welcome to the twentieth meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. We have four witnesses today. For the first hour, we have our colleague Mr. Gary Schellenberger. For the second hour, we have two representatives of the Canadian War Museum, as well as the president of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping.

Before we begin, I would like to commend our clerk and our research staff, because we just finished off this report two days ago. I am aware that they had to stay late and burn the midnight oil to make sure this was done. I want to extend my appreciation to my colleagues.

Of course, Jean-Rodrigue is not here because he's still being a new father at this time and is making sure that baby and wife are in good shape, but Mr. Cox, Georges, and Julie-Anne, our emerging new clerk, I want to thank you very much for your good work. You have the appreciation of the entire committee.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Chairman, if I could just take the liberty, with our analyst's wife having a child, could we agree to send them flowers congratulating them on their little one?

The Chair: Yes. That's a suggestion. If everybody would like to throw in a couple of dollars, we'll get that done.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Not for G8 spending, though—

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: No, Mr. Oliphant. It would not be. We're talking about flowers for our researcher.

An hon. member: So nice—

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): A nice sunny day—

The Chair: If there's no other business, we'll go right to our witnesses.

Now we have MP Gary Schellenberger.

Please begin. I think you know how the committee works. You'll have an opportunity for opening remarks and then, of course, we'll have the usual questions.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Yes, Mr. Chair.

I thank you very much for allowing me to be here. I'm unaccustomed to being on this end of the table, as I usually sit at the other end, but today I welcome this opportunity to speak to you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I'm here today to speak in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-473, which focuses on the protection of military medals, orders, and decorations awarded to Canadians who have selflessly put themselves in harm's way in the defence of Canada. I hope you will support this bill and pass it quickly through this committee.

As you know, generations of Canadian veterans, through their courage, determination, and sacrifice, have helped to protect the Canadian values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law, both at home and abroad. This meeting today to discuss Bill C-473 allows us to reflect upon the importance of Canada's military heritage and the role our government and federal institutions play in commemorating and maintaining it.

On any given day, approximately 8,000 Canadian Forces personnel are preparing for, engaging in, or returning from overseas missions. They follow in the footsteps of Canadians who for more than 200 years have answered the call and have sacrificed all they knew—all the comforts, love, and safety of home—in order to defend the freedom of others.

The efforts and sacrifices of Canada's armed forces throughout history—and even as we sit in this room today—must not be forgotten. They must be honoured as an integral part of Canada's heritage.

Bill C-473 recognizes their importance and the importance of the honours and awards given to them in recognition of their sacrifices. This government recognizes the need to protect our military heritage.

Certain medals and other honours are already protected through legislation. Twenty-five years ago, the Mulroney government responded to the need to protect Canada's heritage by introducing the Cultural Property Export and Import Act. This act strikes a balance between the need to protect the nation's heritage and the property rights of private owners. That same approach is what I have aimed for with Bill C-473.

The Cultural Property Export and Import Act includes, among other elements, a system of cultural property export control that requires export permits for a range of cultural property, including medals. This existing act is an important tool in helping to keep objects of outstanding significance and national importance in Canada.

Let me explain how this works in relation to historic medals in order to set Bill C-473 in the broader context of heritage protection. Regulations under the Cultural Property Export and Import Act specify categories of objects that require a permit to leave Canada for any reason—temporarily or permanently. Military medals, orders, and decorations are of course included, but, like other protected objects, they must be at least 50 years old. Export permits are refused for objects that are deemed to be of outstanding significance and national importance.

That refusal may be appealed to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board. On appeal, the board may create a delay period of up to six months to allow Canadian cultural institutions the opportunity to purchase the object in question so that it may remain in Canada. During the delay period, a program of grants is available from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assist institutions in purchasing these national treasures.

Bill C-473 would provide a similar opportunity by requiring owners to offer the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation and other cultural institutions the right of first refusal before transferring certain military medals, orders, and decorations to non-residents. Therefore, we have to achieve the goal of balancing the rights of private property owners with maintaining and commemorating an important part of Canadian history.

• (1110)

Creating stricter regulations is one tool to stop owners who want to sell military medals outside of the country, but I believe it is also important to encourage Canadians to donate their medals to museums, where they can be preserved for future generations, rather than selling them to collectors. Under the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, a system of special tax incentives exists to provide further encouragement for owners to donate outstanding historical medals to Canadian institutions. This will be expanded to include all military medals, awards, insignia, and honours.

When I originally tabled Bill C-473, I indicated that my objective was to keep important military medals, orders, and decorations in Canada. That is also our government's long-held objective.

Bill C-473 would also balance the rights of individual owners of these military honours with the desire to protect them for the public. That is also the long-held public policy of the government, as evidenced in the Cultural Property Export and Import Act.

Historic medals, decorations, or other honours have been well served by the existing act. Recent examples demonstrate this.

Through the export controls, grant system, and tax provisions of the act, the Victoria Cross of John MacGregor was acquired by the Canadian War Museum for the benefit of all Canadians.

It is through this effective legislation that the Government of Canada acted to ensure that Fred Topham's Victoria Cross was not lost to Canada.

The act also enabled the government to take measures to ensure that the medals of Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Merritt and Sergeant William Merrifield were retained in a public institution in Canada.

It is time for our modern military medals to receive the same protection accorded to our historic medals and that is what Bill C-473 seeks to achieve. Bill C-473 recognizes the important role played by federal museums as custodians of our military heritage.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum, together with other museums across the country, including the Canadian Forces museums, take on the task of preserving our military heritage. It is important that as parliamentarians we act to ensure the successes of these vital and important cultural remembrance centres.

In my riding of Perth—Wellington, as well as in many of your own respective ridings, local historians and small museums are playing an enormous part in maintaining the proud record of Canadian military achievements. There have been efforts made by people like Dave Thomson of St. George, Ontario, and Philip Fowler and David Gazelle, who, on behalf of a group of Stratford citizens, have purchased several medals won by residents of Perth County and returned these to the Stratford Perth Museum with the help of its director, Linda Carter.

Over the past two years, the following medals have been saved and donated to this museum, where they will be forever protected: Sergeant Lorne Wesley Brothers, World War I British War Medal, a man I knew many years ago; Private George Grimditch, World War I Service Medal and Victory Medal; Lieutenant William Warren Davidson, World War I British War Medal and Victory Medal; Private Douglas Thomas Hamilton, World War I Silver Cross; and Private George Buckingham, World War I Service Medal, another man I knew in my earlier days, a very elderly man. I never realized until I read this about his medals that he was in the First World War. He was in private business in later years. And there was Private Alexander Connolly, whose World War I British War Medal and Victory Medal were also protected.

Canada's military history collections are part of the heritage of all Canadians. In some respects, they matter most to those who have grown up in the peaceful aftermath of war and to those who have adopted Canada as a home free from the tragedies of other lands. The story of our military past is understood and made meaningful to Canadians, many of whom have no direct experience of war or the part played by conflict in our history.

•(1115)

Museums, of course, are much more than collections of objects. With artifacts as material evidence, they illuminate and document our history. Military museums are unique in their commemorative role and they're uniquely placed as repositories of important objects, such as military medals, orders, and decorations that tell the story of the sacrifices of our brave Canadians in uniform.

This government has recognized the importance of preserving our military heritage, both through legislation and through the establishment of museums. Bill C-473 speaks of the importance of our military heritage and fills an important gap by focusing on Canada's modern military honours.

Bill C-473 would ensure that federal museums would be given the opportunity to acquire and protect modern military medals, orders, and decorations, which are no less deserving than those given 50 or 100 years ago to brave Canadians. For the spirit of the country and the courage of its people, I am pleased to be here to discuss Bill C-473. I urge all members to quickly pass this bill through committee.

I will be happy to answer any questions in the remaining time allotted.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger. I can imagine that it means a lot more to you because you know some of those individuals who have actually served and whose medals have been retained and protected for the good of our country.

I'll move first to the Liberal Party.

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant, for seven minutes.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger, for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

You probably read or heard the speech I made in the House of Commons, so I won't repeat it, but in that, I did thank you for doing this piece of work and for what I think is quite a good balancing act between the rights of the individual and the rights of the community around these medals.

I've said that the medals tell two stories. They tell the story of an individual's particular actions of heroism and activity in defence of our country, but they also tell the story of our country. They are quasi-public material and quasi-private property. They are both, and I think the bill seems, at least to me, to represent a good balancing of private and public property rights. I thank you for wrestling with that.

I want to ask you a couple of questions about your work. You may not know the answer to this question, but do you have any idea of the number of medals we are talking about? Have you been in touch with any of the museums or organizations about the military having a number of medals in circulation, as it were, that may be of interest?

I believe this is only for medals that are less than 50 years old and that any medal over 50 years old is already protected under a heritage act, so these are new medals from the last 50 years that we're

talking about. How many are there? How many do the museums actually think they may or may not want? Is there any idea of what is happening in terms of the sale of these medals? Is there a market? Or is that not a concern?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Just speaking to that, I have no idea how many medals are out there. What I would like to see with this bill is for us to just give the same respect to our modern medals that we do to the medals that are 50 and 100 years old.

For the veteran who has these medals, they are priceless to them. They're usually not for sale. It's usually after the fact. It's like I said with George Buckingham, whose name I mentioned. When I knew him, he was a bachelor. His parents had passed on. We painted his house. He used to feed the squirrels. That's all I knew about him. I didn't know that he had medals and I didn't know of his past.

I don't know how many would be wanted by the museums. But my whole thing is my father... I noticed that on the order of business, the orders of the day, you have my name as "Gary Ralph Schellenberger". Well, my dad is Ralph Schellenberger, and he is a veteran. He has some medals, not great medals; he doesn't have a Silver Cross or anything. But you know, there are a lot of people like my dad. He was a farm boy and was signed up and went off to war. He didn't do anything other than be part of a great army that won the war.

Even I don't know what all his medals mean. I know I will receive those medals and I know what I'm going to do with those medals. I am going to donate them to the local museum so that my father is remembered forever and ever. They will be there; they might just go into a repository someplace. Will they be out for people's view every day? Not necessarily. But usually what museums do is archive those things. They will get the particulars of how and why this person did what he did. This was a young man who went to war because there was a need and he did receive medals.

One of the medals he has is an overseas medal. He didn't receive it until about 35 years ago, because he didn't think he was ever overseas. Well, during the Second World War he was sent to Newfoundland, and at that particular time Newfoundland was not part of Canada, so he received a medal for going overseas. Is that important? I think it is, because during the time he went, either one or two trips before, a ferry sunk going to Newfoundland. He was on one either the day before or the day after, so yes, it was dangerous.

With that, I don't know how many numbers... It's not the veteran that I'm worried about. It's a niece, nephew, or a cousin somewhere down the line who might receive them and not realize what they are.

•(1120)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

Go ahead, Bonnie.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Schellenberger, I too want to commend you for this initiative.

I noticed in the bill that the offence would be punishable by a summary conviction or five times the value of the medal. How would that be enforced?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I don't have a clue.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Okay.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I've had some help. Again, I don't draft bills. I had some help from Heritage. I'm not sure whether that same amount is in the previous bill for medals that are 50 years or older.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: I have just one more question.

Sometimes these things show up anonymously on eBay. How could we possibly monitor and control that?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: That's what it's about. If someone were to phone up and had some medals and didn't know what they were, or if they had some medals and did know—in this day and age you can get on a website and do some checking—they could check with Heritage Canada or the War Museum.

About five or six years ago, there was a Second World War veteran who lived in my riding in Stratford in a seniors' home. He had a tremendous collection of aircraft that were built to scale. He had built them. He had about 65 of these, including a Lancaster, and his room was full. He had no one to pass them on to. It took us over a year to find an air museum—I think it was in Manitoba—we could send these models to. I wished then that I had some space to put them up, but they are now there.

Will the odd one slip through? Maybe. But people will be able to phone up and find out what the medals are and if they have historical importance.

● (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger.

We're about two minutes over.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Okay. Sorry.

The Chair: Our policy at this committee has always been to allow the witness to answer as long as they like, but we time the members, and we were about nine minutes on that one.

We'll go to the Bloc Québécois and Monsieur André for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): I will share my time with Mr. Vincent.

Mr. Schellenberger, thank you for coming and presenting your bill to us. We support it. I think our military past is an integral part of our history and should be preserved. That is what you are trying to do with your bill.

I pointed out, as you no doubt noticed, a loophole in the bill, in clause 2. It talks about cultural property that can be transferred to near relatives. It defines "near relatives" as follows:

"near relative", in respect of the owner of an insignia, means the father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, child, grandchild, brother or sister of the owner.

The definition does not include spouses, and that concerns me. That is a shortcoming. When we do the clause-by-clause study of the bill, I am going to introduce an amendment to include spouses in the definition. I believe they should indeed be included.

I would like to hear your comments on that.

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have no problem with that. I have talked to the ministry people about that. I welcome some minor changes to the bill. If a spouse has to be defined, I don't see it changing the bill at all, so I would welcome that change.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André: From what I understand, it was not intentional, just an oversight.

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I think there is an assumption that the spouse is next of kin. If we were in a divorce court, I'm quite sure it wouldn't have to be defined much more than that. If you feel it should be in there, I think there's some room for that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Vincent.

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Thank you.

Good morning, Mr. Schellenberger. I have two questions for you.

In your remarks, you said that individuals who had received medals were not necessarily given recognition and that their medals ended up in the back room of a museum. But if those individuals gave those medals to a museum, if they were put on display, if the public could see them and understand what these individuals had done to deserve them and see photos of the people in question, do you not think that would be a good incentive? If the medals are kept in some storage area, no one will know who the individuals are who had earned them. Perhaps the fact that they could be a part of the museum, where the medals they had earned in combat, as well as their name and photo, were on display, would encourage them to sell or give their medals to a museum.

Furthermore, I want to know how you plan to make people aware of this bill and the fact that these medals should be kept in museums. Of course, you can go through the Royal Canadian Legion to get the word out to people that, beginning today, there is a bill and they must sell or transfer their medals to the War Museum or other appropriate organization, but you already know that many veterans are not part of the legion, nor do they want to be. Will anything be done? Placing an ad in the newspaper will not be enough. You really have to get the word out there to make people aware of the bill. Has anyone thought about how to reach the people in question, in order to obtain their medals?

● (1130)

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: You have a couple of different questions there.

As for getting the word out, again, as I said, I am an associate Legion member. There is the *Legion Magazine*. The army and navy people have a magazine. These types of magazines do go to the people who hold those medals; they usually subscribe to them. There could be an advertisement in them. How we get the word out, I think, is to let all of our museums know and to do a publication when this bill is passed.

You said that you didn't want it tucked in the back room of a museum. Well, museums have a tendency not to have everything on display all the time. They sometimes move displays. Wouldn't it be great if, around November 1 every year, the museums might have a real Remembrance Day for a couple of weeks in their museums? They could bring out these medals for that week or two weeks in the year. I don't know, as I'm not a museum coordinator, but I think some of those things can happen.

As for some of the very important medals.... I would say that all medals are important, but some of the special medals that have come out would probably end up in the War Museum or somewhere like that and would be on permanent display.

But here's the big thing. I'll use a little "for instance" that happened just recently, and it's not about medals, but about a hockey jersey that Paul Henderson wore in 1972. I watched that game and saw him score that goal. Inevitably, the jersey ended up in the United States. Right now, the person who purchased that jersey from a Canadian is going to make a lot of money, because we do want that jersey back here in Canada. It's not up to the museums, necessarily, to do that, but probably someone will buy it for the hockey museum or that type of thing.

So on this, all I'm trying to do here is to give the same respect, the same honour, to our modern medals that we do for the medals that are already there through the act that is already there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger and Monsieur Vincent.

Now we'll go to Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Schellenberger, this is a committee that works very well together, so I think it will be recognized that when you're talking about more important medals, they were on a degree of the dimension of sacrifice.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: That's correct.

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer.

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

Gary, thank you very much for bringing this issue forward. I thank you and the people around you for the work you've done on this project.

As you're aware, I've had a bill in the House of Commons for several years now, Bill C-208, which goes further than your particular legislation. I just want to start off by saying that you're right: all medals are important. And the reason the government gives people medals, especially our heroes of the country, is because of duty, valour, honour, sacrifice, and service.

But most importantly, the men and women of the service, and those of the police forces, wear their medals. We have 118,000

people who no longer have the chance to wear their medals—or they never got a chance to wear them, as in the case of our Afghan heroes.

When the government gives these medals to these men and women, these heroes, they're not giving them currency. That's not a hundred dollars they have hanging from their chests. So the problem I have with your bill—and I say this with great respect—is that you have put fair market value in your legislation. You've even put sellers in there. This is the problem I have.

Ever since I was a little kid, I've always opposed the selling of medals of any kind, under any circumstances. As you're aware, the Order of Canada, which is one of Canada's highest honours, is not allowed to be sold; it is not allowed to be put on the mercantile system.

I know that I'm probably in a minority here in thinking this way, but I don't believe that any medals, under any circumstance, should be sold. As you know, current personnel who are serving now and who receive medals cannot sell them while they are serving. They can only sell them after they leave the service. You're probably aware of that.

So you're right. In many cases, they're handed off to the children who don't know about them, and they sell them at flea markets, garage sales, or on eBay. You and I have travelled enough and we've seen these. I have worked very closely with Mr. Thompson on this. I don't know what the budget of the War Museum is, but I know the War Museum's budgets aren't unlimited, and I know the government has to make choices. The minute we put a value on medals, I think we diminish the actual meaning of what that medal is. That's my personal opinion.

My first question for you is this: do you think medals should have a fair market value?

I have a second question for you. In Bill C-208, which is, in many ways, reflective of what you're trying to do, would you be at all conducive to a discussion later on between your office and my office of possibly working the two bills together to achieve what you're trying to achieve, which is the cultural significance of the medals and also the point of trying to avoid these falling into the mercantile system?

I have no problem with people giving medals to collectors, museums, churches, or schools. We have two schools in Nova Scotia that have hallways full of medals and shadow boxes and they're beautiful. It's not just museums that can do this.

So my second question leads to this: would you be willing to look at Bill C-208 to see where there are some similarities that we can work together on? Again, I know that I'm probably speaking as a minority, but I just don't believe that medals should have a cash value to them. I just have a problem with that.

Thank you. Maybe you can help me with my problem.

• (1135)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I know you're probably more well versed on this than I am, but my whole thing is that there are medals out there in the field that have value, and those collectors are collecting them. When there's a medal of significance out there that we feel is part of our Canadian heritage and should be here in Canada, and we have to pay exorbitant fees to someone else, it probably was of very little value to the family person who might have moved that medal onto the market. But down the way, we've had to pay, on a couple of Silver Crosses, exorbitant amounts to get them back.

I know from talking to Mr. Thompson on this that he has worked feverishly to bring some of these medals back, to get them back into Canada and off eBay and those types of things. I would hope that through the legislation we have already, the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, there is an incentive there, a tax incentive and various other things, such that these medals would be donated.

Regarding the gentleman who just passed away in the last year or so in Stratford, again, I never realized his position during the Second World War. After he passed away, his family made a personal donation of all his medals to the Stratford Perth Museum.

You're right on when you say that the Museum of Civilization and the War Museum do not have unlimited funds to go out and pay exorbitant prices for these medals. On this whole thing, if we can stop it from happening, my whole intent would be that people would realize the significance and the importance of what those medals really mean and they would donate them to the museums.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger.

Now we'll go to Mr. McColeman for seven minutes.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Thank you, Gary, for being here, and for this tremendous effort you're bringing forward. I think it's pretty clear there's consensus that this is something we all want to see happen.

Before I get into the questioning, I want to get down to the value of these medals and the fact that they're on the open market now. I don't know how you'd ever change that.

In my view, you might even create a more difficult situation in a black market where these things could be worth three, four, or five times what their—I hate to say it—market value is bringing. I catch what Mr. Stoffer is saying in terms of the sentiment, but the reality is that we have to do what we can do to make sure we protect these.

In that regard, I'm very familiar with a person you've mentioned in your comments, Mr. Dave Thomson from St. George, Ontario, which is in my riding. He searches eBay and other areas to do what he calls "repatriating" the medals to the families of the soldiers they belong to. He does a lot of research in trying to find the families once he has secured the medals. I know you're familiar with him. He actually solicits private donations in order to be able to bid on these, because he doesn't have the financial resources to do it himself.

This is how it's happening today. I'm not so certain that it always has to be governments that fund the repatriation of these medals. I'm sure there are other organizations and individuals. I actually help him

find the extra \$50 or \$100 or whatever he needs to make the next bid to ensure he gets that medal, because I know what he's going to do with it when he gets it. He's going to do the right thing, which is to seek out the family. If he can't, he donates it.

In my community, we have what's called the Canadian Military Heritage Museum in Brantford, Ontario, which is a private collection, believe it or not, of war memorabilia. The museum is thought to be ranked number two in the country now in terms of honouring our military and the objects around it; it's second to our military museum here in Ottawa. I extend an invitation for all of you to come and visit this wonderful place of honour for our military.

So these are the kinds of things that are happening and I'm wondering... That was kind of a preamble to my question, which is about two things. Can you foresee the fact that government doesn't have to fork over the complete cost of this, that this could be a partnership of community organizations, private individuals, and government, perhaps when necessary, to recover these?

Secondly, there are site-specific...both geographically in the case of Stratford and Perth and their museum—they want to keep it in the area of where the individual resided—and there are other places where other museums... In your concept around this, is there a specific location you think they'd like to go...? There are two questions there.

• (1140)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I don't have any really specific place that they should go to, other than the very significant medals, those very special medals, which should be in the War Museum here in Ottawa. It's a tremendous museum, and they do a tremendous job in presenting those types of things along with the archival information that goes with it.

Again, you're right that there are these special museums. Every Legion, every army and navy, is a museum of its own. Some people collect badges. They have various other medal collections. What worries me down the road is what's going to happen to some of these collections. Most of those collections are artifacts that are over 50 years old, but every day we have more veterans out in Afghanistan and doing various other things. We have modern-day military people who will be receiving medals.

All I want is to have their medals covered so that they don't migrate to eBay. If the odd one sneaks through, what can we do about that? The goal is to get the bulk of them into some museum or someplace where they can be archived and preserved for the heritage of this country.

• (1145)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Do I have some time left, Chair?

The Chair: You have one more minute.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Thank you.

As a point of interest, recently Mr. Thomson recovered a medal from eBay that was determined to be from a British home child. The individual had been a British home child and, as you know, our government passed a motion that 2010 be the Year of the British Home Child. He brought the medal to my office and showed it to me. It has not been possible to find any remaining family members to give this back to. So collaboratively we decided that I'm going to have it put into a shadow box with the story—he has the story of the soldier—and I'll take it across Canada this year in honour of the British home children, many of whom served in our military.

Many of these medals may still be out there, just as this one telling this soldier's story. You're absolutely on the right track here in terms of honouring them. Many of them, in the case of home children, had come through much struggle in their lives and then served this country so well.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: When I look around the room here, I can see that I'm probably one of the oldest people here. I remember that we had a chap who worked for us, and he was a home child. I never knew it until he had worked for us for four years. Then I got the history the odd time, day by day. He was never in the military. There were so many. We called them home boys, because most of them who came were boys. They were a very integral part of our heritage here in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger and Mr. McColeman.

We now need to go to a pretty tight three-minute round.

We'll go to Madam Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Schellenberger. It's a great initiative.

Peter Stoffer seems to think that he's alone at this table, but I would suggest that he's probably not alone at this table. I share the same thoughts. The idea is quite repellent that someone would sell a medal.

Once your bill is passed and it is advertised fairly extensively that there are alternative locations where you can take medals, whether you take them to your local Legion hall or to a school, then family members would not sell them. They would know that there are organizations that would accept them and keep them in the kind of context in which they should be.

I really am very supportive of the bill.

I think it would be very difficult to run around and charge people. I hope that shame would be enough to make them realize that this is a valuable item they have and that it needs to be put in a special place. As to where that special place is, that's another issue, but a medal shouldn't be something that's traded for monetary value.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Speaking to that, when I look back on the one gentleman I mentioned here, George Buckingham, that particular gentleman was an only child. When I knew him, he was an elderly man of probably 70 or 75. I don't know how his medals got to wherever they were, but they were just repatriated.

We were in the decorating business. Lots of times we'd be in homes and would have to move stuff to cover it up to paint the walls. I was in a place—the family had come from Britain or Scotland years and years before—and there was a box of pocket watches, and

beside that was a box of medals. Where those medals were from, I don't really know.

It's those types of things. All of a sudden, someone comes in, there's no one left, and what do you do? Do you go to a trader? People look at the monetary value.

We will try, hopefully, with some advertisement, to do that. Yes, the Legions and the army and the navy people are great at giving people that knowledge not to do the wrong thing with those medals.

• (1150)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much, and congratulations.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Sgro.

Go ahead, Mr. Kerr, for three minutes.

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

Gary, welcome.

I'm going to be very brief, because Mr. Lobb is anxious to ask a question. But I do want to say that I think you've struck a terrific balance between the reality that there are families who say that what they do with these is nobody's business but theirs and the absolute imperative that we make sure our heritage is protected. You've probably put a focus on this that's going to be very helpful going down the road, so congratulations.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Schellenberger, as you would like me to call you—

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Yes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ben Lobb: —I grew up in the auction business and worked in it for over 20 years. You can imagine the different items that came through our auction business. There were medals and uniforms and everything.

I can appreciate what you've put in your bill. You mentioned in your speech that quite often there is no family and an executor or a trustee is left with the estate. His or her job is to finish the estate and pay up any outstanding debts or liabilities that may be on the estate, and of course this would be part of it. Certainly executors or trustees have to do their job and represent the estate, so I appreciate what you've put in there as well.

I agree with what you're saying. With museums, there is no cookie cutter for where they should all go, because they each have a special place. I know that in the Clinton Legion there is a replica of the Victoria Cross for one of the Schoenhals from Clinton. That medal is in safekeeping at the Huron County Museum in Goderich. We're quite happy to have that. As they come through the ranks at school, children of all ages get to see that medal, and I think they're better for seeing it and knowing the history that is with that medal.

Thank you for your hard work.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you.

I would like to speak to that point. We talked earlier about how to get the word out to people. In the case of the auction business, if the auctioneer knows these medals are protected, he could advise the executor on how a medal should be treated.

I'm quite sure that if we all work together, with a little tweaking—if that's what it takes—we could make this a very good bill.

I thank you very much for the great questions today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger.

[Translation]

You have three minutes, Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: The issue of selling the medals for money does indeed pose a problem, but, from what I understand, these medals are already being sold and traded. How do we go against existing legislation that allows them to be sold? That is not an easy question to answer. I just wanted to tell you that I share some concerns. How do we create a system that values the awarding of a medal, while allowing the person to sell it on the market? How do we balance those two realities? It is not easy, in my opinion.

In addition, I do not really know how we put a price on a medal. I would think the more distinguished it is, the more it would cost. I would also think the older it is, the more it would cost. There must be some way of marketing these things that I am not familiar with. I would like you to comment on that.

The bill says that museums can buy the medals. I would think that when the bill comes into force, there may be people interested in selling their medals to a museum. But can all the museums afford to buy them?

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: You're right there. I don't think museums can afford to buy them or to buy all of them. This bill isn't out there to buy every medal that has been presented, but again, significant medals... As for when you talk about price or where the price might be, well, for a service medal, everyone who served got a service medal, but not everyone got a Silver Cross. There were very few Silver Crosses.

So I'm sure a Silver Cross would garner a higher price than a service medal. At the same time, the service medal that belonged to the person who got the Silver Cross would probably be... I'm only thinking. This is where they might get some value.

My thing is that museums can't afford to buy them. This is not a bill to scoop up every medal that has ever been made. That is not what the previous bill, the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, did. The museums would look at that particular medal. It would go to a review board. The review board would say whether or not they were interested in it and if it could go out of the country. It's that way.

Again, my bill is not to change everything; it's to give recognition and the same respect to our modern medals that we do to our medals that are 50 and 100 years old.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger and Monsieur André.

In your research in drafting this bill, were there any examples of nations that honoured a soldier with a medal and that medal was still the property of that government? For example, for us being a federation under a monarchy, the medal would be given at the behest of the Queen, but the crown would require it back on the demise of the individual, as it was a sign of merit from the crown. In your research, are there any nations that do that?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I did not research that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Schellenberger.

Thanks, colleagues, for your questions.

We'll suspend for a moment and have our other witnesses come forward.

Of course, you can take a moment to greet Mr. Schellenberger as well.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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The Chair: All right, colleagues, we're back in session now.

Before us we have Mr. Mark O'Neill, director general, and Mr. Jim Whitham, acting manager of collections for the Canadian War Museum.

Welcome, gentlemen.

We also have with us an old friend from the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping, Mr. Ronald Griffis, who's the national president.

Welcome, Mr. Griffis.

Do all three of you gentlemen have opening remarks?

• (1200)

Mr. Mark O'Neill (Director General, Canadian War Museum): I think Mr. Griffis and I both do, but Mr. Whitham does not, so there are just two of us.

The Chair: All right, then, Mr. O'Neill, since you gave me the answer to that question, how about you go first and then we'll have Mr. Griffis? Then we'll go to our rounds of questions.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the committee for this opportunity to comment on Bill C-473. We're pleased to do so on behalf of the Canadian War Museum and are greatly honoured to be here before the committee today.

We certainly appreciate the bill's underlying spirit as outlined by Mr. Schellenberger. We share the conviction that Canada must preserve and promote its military history, which of course includes the service and sacrifice of our veterans. This is why one of the key messages of the Canadian War Museum is "I must remember".

For the record, I must say that the Canadian War Museum, an affiliate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, an independent agency of the crown, can neither endorse or oppose legislation before Parliament, as you know. I am pleased, however, to share some facts and observations that may assist you in your deliberations and the important work you do.

[Translation]

In my remarks, I will briefly speak to the significance and extent of our current collection of medals and insignia. I will give an overview of our current acquisition process, and I will discuss some of the ways in which the bill could impact the museum. Then I will be happy to answer any questions.

As you know, the Canadian War Museum was given a mandate, as determined by Parliament, to collect, preserve, interpret and display military artifacts of national significance. The museum is charged with educating Canadians about their military heritage and encouraging them to reflect on what veterans endured for their sake.

Military medals and insignia are part of that heritage. They are powerful symbols of the service, dedication and courage of the men and women who have worn the Canadian uniform. They have an important place in the national museum commemorating our military history.

[English]

At present, the War Museum has about 4,500 items in its collection of medals. The collection is restricted to decorations awarded to Canadians or foreign nationals while in the service of Canada. Some are displayed in our permanent exhibition galleries, which explore Canada's military history from earliest times to the present day. Others are held in safekeeping among our national treasures. All assist in the preservation and the telling of our national story.

The vast majority of these artifacts were donated to the War Museum by service members or their families. For example, just in the past five years since the new museum opened in 2005, we have acquired about 190 medal sets, 164 of which were donated by their owners. Among the most recent donations were two Victoria Crosses, one from the First World War and the other from the Second World War. The financial compensation available to donors is a tax benefit equal to the medal's assessed value.

[Translation]

As mentioned, the museum has seldom purchased medals or insignia. We have done so only when the artifact had outstanding significance and the funds were available. The museum recently purchased a Victoria Cross. It was one of three such medals awarded during the First World War to residents living on the same street in Winnipeg, which was renamed Valour Road in their honour. The medal is of course incredibly valuable to the museum and the country, and was purchased at an auction.

Regardless of whether it is through donation or purchase, the museum will not add a medal to its collection unless it is in keeping with the museum's mandate and satisfies a number of criteria. For example, the museum must determine whether the medal is authentic and whether the person making the offer is legitimate.

Before purchasing an artifact, the museum must of course determine whether the object is of outstanding significance to Canada's military heritage or whether it fills a significant void in the museum's current collection.

● (1205)

[English]

That's the background, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn briefly to the bill itself and highlight some criteria or elements of the bill that may have an impact on the War Museum's current acquisition process.

As I mentioned, we don't currently purchase medals as a matter of course, and therefore we don't maintain a significant budget for that purpose. So if Bill C-473 is passed as is, the museum will require additional funding to allow the purchase of medals at assessed values.

Another issue I would like to bring to your attention is the 120-day window for the museum to accept or decline an invitation to purchase a medal at fair market value. First, artifact appraisals conducted by a national museum must be quite thorough, as I'm sure you can imagine, and the appraisal can be a time-consuming process. We would not want to make those determinations with undue haste. And second, if the medal is deemed to be of significant value, it could take time to secure the necessary funds.

[Translation]

In light of these realities, we believe that Parliament should consider an amendment to paragraph 3(1)(b) of the bill that would instead indicate that a government institution has 120 days to respond to a written offer before the owner can transfer the insignia to a non-resident. That would give the museum more time to assess the medal and, if required, obtain the necessary funds.

Finally, the museum has always had the authority necessary to make its own decisions about whether artifacts should be added to the national collection. The museum has always based those decisions on the facts of the case in question, free from any influence or external pressure.

[English]

As stated in section 27 of the Museums Act, "No directive shall be given to a museum...with respect to...the acquisition, disposal, conservation or use of any museum material relevant to its activities".

We would welcome an addition to Bill C-473 that would explicitly safeguard the integrity and independence of the museum's decision-making process. That could be ensured by expressly stating that the museum's decision to accept or decline an offer is final and not subject to further review.

Those are my opening remarks, Mr. Chair. Thank you for this opportunity. I would be pleased to answer any questions that members may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. O'Neill.

Now we'll go on to Mr. Griffiths for his opening remarks.

Mr. Ronald Griffiths (National President, Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping): Thank you, sir.

Honourable members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping, CAVUNP, Canada's pre-eminent peacekeeping veterans association, and the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association, CPVA, to this committee to make comments and suggestions pertaining to Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance for future generations.

My name is Ron Griffiths. I'm the national president of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping. I have been given authority by the president of the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association, Mr. Ray Kokkonen, to speak on their behalf.

It should also be noted that I am a member in good standing with that particular organization, and that as recently as this Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, I was at a convention in Winnipeg and in the company of the presidents of several veterans associations. As I understood the situation, they were not aware of Bill C-473.

Our two associations, CAVUNP and CPVA, work hand in hand on most, if not all, veterans' issues. To prepare for this matter, I sought information and suggestions from our colleagues.

All of my colleagues were not aware of Bill C-473 and were surprised at my request. The comments I have received are mainly their personal opinions on what should happen with respect to their medals and awards. I respectfully suggest that Bill C-473 has not received wide circulation.

In general, our associations support the bill. We are aware of things that have occurred in the past that have required the federal government to act very quickly to prevent military orders, decorations, and medals of cultural significance from leaving the country or being sold on such venues as eBay.

This particular bill would cause sellers or persons wishing to dispose of such items of cultural significance to follow the letter of the law and permit the various authorities to act as required. It has been suggested by my colleagues that this type of legislation is not necessarily required in most cases, as it seems that what it would take is a simple act of will on the part of the government. For instance, when something of considerable significance to the country comes on the open market, it may simply be a matter of the government telling the bureaucrats to go and get it.

The act provides a balance that may be used in circumstances requiring some official undertakings. It may also be used to provide a cooling-off period to permit authorities to research an issue to determine what, if any, cultural significance a particular item may have.

Time restrictions have prevented me from contacting my friend and colleague, retired Colonel Donald Ethell. Recently, on April 8, 2010, Colonel Ethell was appointed as the Lieutenant Governor of

the Province Alberta. I wanted to contact him to ascertain his view on this subject.

Colonel Ethell is a member of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping and, as you are perhaps aware, is Canada's most decorated peacekeeping veteran. Prior to his appointment, Colonel Ethell was our association's liaison officer with Veterans Affairs Canada.

From my personal knowledge of my friend, I am quite certain he would have an opinion with respect to this bill. While I do not speak for Colonel Ethell, knowing what I know of my friend and colleague, I respectfully suggest that he would support this bill.

As I have mentioned, in short, our associations support this legislation and trust it will be passed into law.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this honourable committee to make comments.

In the service of peace, thank you.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Griffiths. Because you mentioned Colonel Ethell, I just want to let you know that this committee did very promptly send a letter of congratulations to him when he was appointed the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. I trust he has received that.

Now we'll go on to Mr. Oliphant for seven minutes of questions.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thanks to both of you for being here.

I have a couple of questions for Mr. O'Neill.

How much did the museum pay for the Victoria Cross that was purchased at auction?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: The answer is that \$240,000 was the auction price. That does not include the administrative fees, but \$240,000 was what we call the "hammer price". You're speaking about the Robert Shankland medal that we purchased last year, I think.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Okay. That helps, because I'm trying to get some magnitudes here. That medal would have already been protected because it's over 50 years old.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: That's correct.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: It's pretty hard to go into the future to see what the market is for other medals, I guess. It's a little bit hard.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Yes.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'm trying to get a kind of magnitude on this. I hadn't really thought about it, but this bill could require a royal recommendation because it could involve the spending of public funds.

Would it be your understanding that this bill would require a royal recommendation?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I can't comment directly on that, sir. I would simply reiterate that because we don't know what the impact of the bill might be on the collections, practices, or requirements of the museum, we certainly don't have funds set aside for those purchases at this time.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: So that could take a diversion of funds.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: It could theoretically, yes.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mind you, that does, then, balance with section 27 of the Museums Act, which I think would supersede this act anyway, so you could still decide not to buy any of these medals if you wanted to. We'll have to talk more here about whether we need to make it explicit in the bill about what supersedes what, but I think that was an important caution.

This is why we have committee meetings. I am learning. Contrary to what they think, my mind changes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Oliphant: —on things. Even the Bloc members smile at that.

The bill purports to be “an Act to protect”, and it's understood by some people as an act to protect insignia medals, but it's also being understood as an act to facilitate a market for them. And I'm now wondering whether this is an act principally to create a market or it is an act principally to protect.

I'm getting more confused on that. Because there is a market out there, but this actually could facilitate more of a market. And if you don't have the funds to purchase them, it actually may not protect our medals.

• (1215)

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I can respond by saying there does not currently appear to be a significant market for most of the medals that would be within the scope of this bill. That is not to be taken as a value judgment on the worth of these medals to the national military heritage, but there does not currently appear to be a market. It's very difficult to predict.

I would come back to my point that the overwhelming majority of medals that the War Museum acquires are in fact by way of donation.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Following on the chair's earlier question, do you know about other jurisdictions in other countries? There must be other war museums and other countries dealing with this kind of issue. In your international contacts with other collections, do you know about property rights and medals?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Not to any great degree. We certainly haven't studied it to provide any testimony here today.

When this question was posed earlier at the committee, my colleague Jim and I were discussing it. To our knowledge, United States Congressional Medals of Honor, for example, are not permitted to be sold. We are aware of that, but I really can't provide you with a great deal of testimony on that, sir.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I think we might want to make a note to the researcher that we may need some more work on that as a committee.

I'll pass this on to Bonnie.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. O'Neill, is there a logical home for these medals and artifacts that don't meet your criteria or are they just otherwise sold on the open market? Should we house them in Legion halls or schools? What would you recommend?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you for the question, Ms. Crombie.

In fact, the War Museum does work with a wide variety of other institutions across the country in preserving and presenting military heritage. There are a number of military medals and insignia that are not in the national military history museum, and they are quite properly preserved and presented in museums and institutions across the country.

There is a variety of ways in which these medals can be preserved. Certainly, one of them is the Canadian War Museum, and we're happy to see the museum mentioned explicitly as a possible repository.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: As well, Mr. Griffiths, do you think there's a need for this legislation, given that you've already mentioned that bureaucrats comb the websites and are obviously already purchasing medals that go up for sale?

Mr. Ronald Griffiths: Yes, I do believe there is a need for it, to the extent that it should require more than one or two things to protect medals of cultural significance. There are always things that can be protected that are going to slip under the radar, or action could be taken to prevent it.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. O'Neill, I wonder if you might estimate what the additional economic and financial impact of this legislation might be on an annual basis.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I really can't. We've not made that determination.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: So how many medals, for instance, would come up on the open market annually?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: We believe there are several million medal sets that will probably be available on the market over the next decade or so. Many of these are service medals. There are quite a number of medals. We're unable to determine what market may exist for them or what additional resources a collecting institution might require.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: I hope you can assist me in gathering my grandfather's medals. I've never been able to get them. He served in the Polish division of the French army in the Second World War, so maybe I'll come to see you later.

I have a final question. I wonder if you might extend the legislation to capture other objects of heroic or historical significance, objects other than war medals. Maybe they are of artistic value, of sports value, or have other cultural significance.

• (1220)

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I can comment specifically about military medals and insignia and say that we certainly are interested in collecting those and safeguarding them for Canadians, for future generations. Other forms of decorations I'd be a little bit concerned about commenting on, because it seems to be beyond my purview.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. O'Neill.

Now we'll go on to Monsieur Vincent.

[Translation]

You have seven minutes.

Mr. Robert Vincent: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I commend you, Mr. O'Neill, for speaking in French. I smiled earlier, not at what you were saying, but because I saw my colleague, Mr. Stoffer, asking Mr. Schellenberger for a pin. So watch it, Mr. Griffis, because if you have any pins, he will definitely ask you for one.

I think the bill was prepared in good faith. But even if this bill is passed, you will not be required to buy all the medals, since you are independent in any purchases you make. You said earlier that you decide which medals you are going to purchase. Something would need to be added to the bill in order to compel you to purchase certain medals, in particular.

You mentioned the Victoria Cross worth \$240,000. Do you have some expertise in such medals? Do you know how many were awarded in Canada and if there are other medals with an equivalent value? How many could there be?

You mentioned three Victoria Cross medals, but how many could there be in the entire country, how many were awarded? If there are 100 of them, their total value is \$24 million.

Would it be possible to get an expert opinion so we would know that medal A is worth this much and medal B is worth that much? How many are there in Canada? Could you provide the committee with that information?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I will check with my colleague, Mr. Whitham. We know where most of the medals are located throughout the country, including the Victoria Cross medals. We work with the institutions and families in possession of these medals.

Furthermore, we have internal experts, researchers, acquisition committees, people who determine the value of all the museum's artifacts using established criteria that reflects our mandate. They determine, for example, whether the objects we receive will foster a better understanding of our military history, whether the object is quite unique and will enhance people's knowledge of our military history.

We have a committee, criteria and policies in place to determine the value of every object, donation and purchase.

Mr. Robert Vincent: I will share my time with my colleague.

We very much look forward to receiving the information on the value and names of the medals.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you, Mr. Vincent.

Mr. Guy André: I have two questions, one of which was asked earlier, but I wonder whether you might know the answer.

Do you know of other countries that have put a similar mechanism in place to sell medals to museums? That is my first question. Are there policies that exist? If so, what are they? Should we use them as a model?

My second question is this: Should this kind of bill give us some cause for concern? We are not challenging it, but I am asking the question.

Take the art market, for example, paintings, specifically. There is always a formal market and a black market or smuggler's market. With all the mechanisms we have today for selling something, a

Victoria Cross could be put up for sale for \$250,000. Could some people not use that as a way to make auction prices go up, for instance, if you have the museum offering \$240,000 when an individual is offering \$250,000? Is that a concern? What can be done to stop that practice? Perhaps we could use what other countries are doing as a model.

• (1225)

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you for your question, Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: Thank you for answering me in French.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, I have to say that we do not know the exact systems being used in other countries or other museums around the world. I am not familiar with those. That is not something we studied in preparation for our appearance here today.

As for whether there would be a black market, it is hard to say, because it is really a matter of policy. In my opinion, it does not seem to be a very important or fundamental consideration for a museum. I believe there is currently a system that protects the purchase of medals and military artifacts. That is the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage and the people working in the area of cultural property. I do not think that is something that will become a problem for museums that collect artifacts such as medals.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. O'Neill and Monsieur André.

Mr. Griffis.

Mr. Ronald Griffis: May I make a comment on styling the act by looking at other countries?

We have styled our new Veterans Charter on the British, the Australians, and to some extent the Americans, and we now know that the new Veterans Charter has failed the severely injured veteran. It has failed families and it has failed the severely injured veteran, as we heard yesterday in the subcommittee in the Senate.

So I would say no. As Canadians, we should make our own way.

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

Now we'll go on to Mr. Stoffer for five minutes.

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

Again, gentlemen, thank you all very much for coming.

Mark, my first question is for you and Jim. Have you ever bought an Order of Canada?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Have we?

Mr. Jim Whitham (Acting Manager, Collections, Canadian War Museum): No.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: The answer is no, because you can't.

A voice: That's right.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: You can't buy an Order of Canada, because it's illegal.

In my response to Mr. McColeman's question... In fairness, he probably hasn't had a chance to read my bill, Bill C-208, which would make illegal the selling of medals of armed forces and police personnel that are worn on the left side, like what Mr. Griffis is wearing, and which basically would take away their so-called fair market value.

The reason I say this is that I'm quite offended when I see medals at garage sales, at flea markets, or on eBay, the reason being that somebody else is going to financially profit from the valour of people like Ron Griffis, Don Ethell, Cliff Chadderton, Tommy Prince, or whomever. They got those medals for valour and for honour and service. They didn't get cash. The government didn't stand up and a general didn't hand out a \$100 bill to everyone on parade.

So I don't know why society thinks it's okay for future generations to make money from these medals. They're not currency. They represent much more than cash, and I firmly don't believe that everything in our society has to be turned into fair market values, tax incentives, or cash. I find it quite offensive.

I know that Mr. Schellenberger is here, and I can assure him that if all the major veterans groups are supportive of this bill, I certainly won't do anything to stop its progression. I just want to put on the record that I find it objectionable that these medals can be sold, turned into cash, or have a financial incentive on them.

I don't mind people collecting medals. I don't mind people receiving medals. But I know of many cases where medals have been stolen out of homes. Mr. Schellenberger talked about decorating things; they go and steal the medals and they sell them on eBay, because they look at money. It's only money to them. The medals have much more significance than cash. That's my problem with the incentive of the bill...

My question, first of all, is to Ron. Has there been a thorough discussion among you and veterans groups regarding putting value on these medals? Because Mr. O'Neill and his group are going to determine, through a chart process or some circumstance, which medal is significant and which is not.

Mr. O'Neill, with great fairness, I think 50 years from now, if you passed away tomorrow, the War Museum is not going to look at your medals as significant to Canada. But they're damn well significant to you and your family, and to your friends and associates. Because he doesn't have a Victoria Cross, a Silver Cross, or an MM or wasn't a famous Canadian like a General Hillier or a Tommy Prince or something... So this is my problem.

When they all stand on parade and get their medals, they're all equal. They're all proud. I spoke to Smokey Smith on many occasions. He said that he wasn't just proud of his Victoria Cross; he was proud of all his medals. But the only one that gets people excited is the Victoria Cross he wore. All his medals were significant to him and his family.

I'd just like your opinion on that and, Ron, your opinion as well. Have you spoken to groups like the Legion, or the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans, and will you in the future talk to cross-veterans groups on the importance of Mr. Schellenberger's bill? It is important, there's no question about it, but I just wish we could

take away the financial incentive on that. I know there are property rights and everything else, but not everything has to be turned into cash. That's sort of my little commentary for you.

Thank you.

• (1230)

Mr. Ronald Griffis: Over the weekend, as I have previously mentioned, I was in company with approximately 1,200 to 1,500 other veterans. When I received notification with respect to attending here, I discussed it with the president of ANAVETS, the president of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada, and other legionnaires, and it was a surprise to them.

So we have not discussed it. As a matter of fact, with respect to the value, it's probably a non-issue. It's a family issue.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Mr. Chair, I could just respond quickly to Mr. Stoffer.

One thing is important to mention, as I think you know. You've been to events at the War Museum several times. One of the messages in the War Museum, or one of the key ideas, is about ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Of the 4,500 medal sets we have, the bulk of them would in fact belong to people who are relatively unknown. They're not Victoria Crosses nor are they medals that would have a substantive market value, but they're critically important to the War Museum and the national heritage of the country, because they tell very important stories about Canadians and their contributions and their sacrifices.

I wonder, Mr. Chair, if time permits, if I could just ask my colleague, Jim, to mention one specific medal set that sort of illustrates this, if we may.

The Chair: Your time is up, but we have a policy at this committee that however long the witnesses need to answer, they can take to answer. We time only the members, so please go ahead, Mr. Whitham.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Take another 25 minutes. By the way, the War Museum does a great job.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you, sir.

Go ahead, Jim.

Mr. Jim Whitham: Just as an example, the museum spends a lot of time when offers of donation come in to get the story of all the individuals who are connected to anything from just regular service medals to higher awards, to Military Crosses or Victoria Crosses. Getting the provenance of the piece is very important, regardless of what the medal is, and all of this is maintained by the museum and entered into the database.

We accept all Canadian medals when offered and take the time to make sure we get all the information we require to maintain the stories of the individuals, because, as you've said, a lot of those medals are not the more highly valued ones, the greater awards. They are from ordinary people.

For example, the museum just recently acquired two common service medal sets from two brothers from Alberta. The two brothers joined up. There were four brothers in total. Two ended up in the same regiment and, on the exact same day, both brothers were killed. So this was a very important and interesting story to maintain and to tell.

We actually acquired those and are doing the research on them, but at the end of the day, those are just two common service medals awarded to two brothers who died. We spend just as much time researching the smaller awards, the lower awards, as we do the Victoria Crosses.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you for that. It's almost like our own Canadian *Saving Private Ryan* story with the brothers. Did you say that all four enlisted?

Mr. Jim Whitham: Yes, all four enlisted.

The Chair: And two were killed in the same regiment.

Mr. Jim Whitham: They were, on exactly the same day.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kerr, go ahead for seven minutes.

Mr. Greg Kerr: You'd like to have your own time on this, Mr. Chair, wouldn't you? But you don't get ours.

Thank you very much, gentlemen. It's good to see all of you again. There are just a few things I want to raise, but first I want to thank Mr. Whitham again for our own family's personal experience. For anybody who has a chance to get an intimate tour of what goes on there and how it works, I can say that it's incredible.

There are a couple of things. Ron, I'd just like a comment first on the general thing. I should point out, by the way, that Ron lives in the wonderful constituency of West Nova—

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Oh, here...[Inaudible—Editor]

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Greg Kerr: —and he is not known as a shy individual. But you should remember that Ron has been part of the review committee and so on that looks at the charter, and he has some very strong views on what we should move on, as you heard hinted at today.

I'd really like to stress the fact that this is the first meeting we've had on what I think is a wonderful initiative by our colleague. To your point, Ron, I want to stress that we're going back at this in September, and we're going to take your advice very strongly.

We encourage all those who have an interest out there and who have not been heard to take the opportunity. We hope you'll pass the word along that we'd very much like to hear from them. You may want to react to that quickly.

Mr. Ronald Griffiths: Without question, I will. As I said, I've been away from home now for seven or eight days, and as soon as I get back over the weekend, as you know, with e-mail, within a matter of minutes, information like this will be right across the country, and there will be reaction to it.

Mr. Greg Kerr: I appreciate that. As I say, I emphasize that when we're back in September, this process will continue. We're not trying to rush anybody on anything.

Mr. O'Neill commented on the impact on the museum. I know that it's not the intent of the sponsor of the bill to change what is the legal system of the land. I agree with you that perhaps that wording should be looked at carefully, because this would in no way supersede the authority or the independence that the museum system has.

I think we might want to seek advice through the committee process, and perhaps Gary may want to follow through as well, on how we can make sure it dovetails so that we're not interfering, including in budget matters. I don't think that was the intent at all. There is also the time factor. I think that's an important point we probably would never have thought about.

There is something I'm wondering about, though, as a concept. Peter won't be surprised that we philosophically disagree. That's why we have different parties. But we're in the real world, and the fact is that there is a value in medals, whether it's distasteful or not. They are being sold, and families sometimes like to have the right to do what they want.

I know that you can't get into details of the bill, but do you sense that it's a right kind of initiative to put out there, that it gives people a chance to reflect on the importance of medals and memorabilia and perhaps helps the educational process? Could you give just us some general comments, please?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Certainly what I can generally say to you, Mr. Kerr, is that I think the War Museum, as a collecting institution focused on our national military history, welcomes any sort of discussion that focuses the attention of Canadians on our national military heritage. There's no question about that.

I really hope I'm not sounding aloof in some of my responses to you. You can appreciate it's difficult for me to comment on the policy dimensions of the bill you're studying. As we've stated clearly, I would certainly say that we know the spirit, the intent, of this bill is certainly a positive one. I would say that any discussion that engages Canadians in a dialogue of the importance of preserving any aspect of their national heritage is indeed a welcome discussion in any museum in Canada.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Thank you.

Are there any other comments on that?

Mr. Ronald Griffiths: I echo that. I think it's great to get the information out and it's great with respect to our schools and history. I accept that without question and I echo his comments.

• (1240)

Mr. Greg Kerr: Thank you very much.

Do I have time left?

The Chair: You do, Mr. Kerr. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Greg Kerr: I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Mr. Mayes, then, for the rest of the time.

Mr. Colin Mayes: That was just one of the questions, actually, that I think covered it.

I was looking through the book. Thank you very much for the information on the museum. There was a line item for a collection acquisition, so I just thought about the question about a royal writ for this bill. It didn't make a lot of sense because there are funds allotted every year in your budget to accommodate that. Is that a correct assumption?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Yes, Mr. Mayes.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, of which the War Museum is an affiliate, has only recently established what we call a national collection fund, and I think that's what you're referring to. It may not be that explicit in the document that you have with you, but the fund is, I believe, about three to four fiscal years old now, and we are building it. I believe that right now it sits at about \$1.5 million.

Those funds are to service the collecting needs of the Museum of Civilization as well as the War Museum, the War Museum being one museum discipline, really. The Museum of Civilization probably has about seven or eight disciplines in everything from anthropology to cultural studies, etc.

So it's a pot of money, most of it raised through fundraising activities, that is intended for both museums to use.

Mr. Colin Mayes: Is there a committee or board that reviews the merit of any acquisitions? Because you have to set priorities. Could you foresee that maybe there would be a problem if the museum had a stronger desire to collect more of these medals?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Both museums in the corporation have their own acquisition committees, so there is indeed an established policy and practice. Collections managers work with historians or curators in terms of the kinds of acquisitions they would like to have. I don't foresee anything in the bill, as I understand it, that would change this particular practice at all.

Mr. Colin Mayes: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayes.

Mr. McColeman, you have 28 seconds.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Thank you.

I have just a quick question. Thanks for passing it on to me.

As I had mentioned to the proponent of the bill, there are other ways to acquire these. I know that it's distasteful for Mr. Stoffer, but it is a fact that they are being sold, and other individuals and organizations can provide the resources and the money to do that.

I'd like your comments on that. Is there a model here that can be broadened, other than the government having to pay out the money?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Which is the Victoria Cross, Jim, where the school raised money across the country and there was a great deal of community interest?

Mr. Jim Whitham: It was Shankland.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: We're just commenting about the Robert Shankland medal, Shankland being one of the three from Valour Road in Winnipeg. There was a very interesting movement of groups and individuals across the country that came together to raise money to help purchase a medal. There was a school group in Winnipeg that was quite active and there were even other groups across the country.

So certainly you do see it. This is simply a statement of fact. You do see communities, groups, and individuals coming forward to say, "We want to participate personally in helping to preserve this". It does happen. There doesn't appear to be any particular model. Some donors are very happy to receive a tax certificate, tax relief, while others are interested in a mix of sale and donation.

There are many different ways in which it's done. Certainly, the museum has been involved in quite a number of those, along the lines I just described.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. O'Neill.

I have an announcement at the end of the meeting that may elicit comments from members, so please try to keep it tight right now to a three-minute round.

We'll go to Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thanks again.

Mr. O'Neill, I have a couple of quick questions.

When the museum issues tax receipts for donations, do you have a chart based on value that you use to give the tax receipt?

Mr. Jim Whitham: The museum experts are allowed to appraise an item of \$1,000 or less. If it seems to be above \$1,000, we must have an outside appraiser review it.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Could we get for the committee some kind of outline for a year of that? Donations are not free to the public, because if we give a tax receipt, there is a loss of general revenue. There is a cost to taking a donation. I think it would be helpful for us to see what that market is. The appraisers are giving a market value, I guess, but there isn't a true market, so it's hard to know.

I think that would be a helpful written submission. I don't know whether that would come from you or from the heritage department.

• (1245)

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I would imagine, Mr. Oliphant, it would come from both parties. To be a little more precise, the museum is able to use a charitable tax regime to issue tax receipts.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: That's right.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: The other process, though, is that if objects are certified as cultural property, a tax certificate is issued by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: So there are two possibilities. You get a better tax break if it's actually deemed heritage than you do if it's a charitable donation.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Yes. There are two different processes and different criteria are involved.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: This is sort of a value judgment, but do you think this bill is a disincentive for people to donate to museums...if they think they can get paid?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Again, it's difficult for me to comment on that for a number of reasons. One is that we simply can't predict what a market might look like. There doesn't appear to be a disincentive now. There are already incentives for people to either donate or sell objects that many donors and collectors and people active in the field are well aware of.

I think there will still be a sizable number of Canadians and others who will wish to make donations to museums, because they understand the importance of these objects.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Do you turn down donations?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: We don't.

Museums are very careful to make potential donors aware that there can't be strings attached to a donation. In other words, they can't say, "We will give you this object but you must do the following with it and you must exhibit it in a certain way".

Generally speaking, we don't turn down a donation as long as we can determine a fit to our military heritage mandate. We don't ever turn down any Canadian medals, frankly.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. O'Neill and Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Storseth.

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming here today. All of you do excellent work.

In regard to Mr. Stoffer's comments, I don't think any of us really have any problem with the principle of what he's saying, but in reality, medals are being sold today, are they not?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Yes.

Mr. Brian Storseth: If the Government of Canada decided to put legislation in place that said it would be illegal to sell medals, any kind of Canadian war medal, do you believe they would stop being sold?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I don't know. I really can't comment on that. There's always a market for these kinds of medals.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Griffis.

Mr. Ronald Griffis: No, it would not stop them from being sold.

Mr. Brian Storseth: In talking to the sponsor of the bill and in listening to him, it is my understanding that medals 50 years and older have some protections that medals younger than 50 years don't have. Is that correct?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Brian Storseth: In doing my research for this, I came across some of the Victoria Cross recipients, such as Captain John Foote, Sergeant Aubrey Cosens, and Private Ernest Smith, and some of their tremendous stories and the bravery they displayed on behalf of our country and the principles we espouse. As you said, we have legislation to protect those medals.

In your opinion, do people such as Private Robert Costall, Francisco Gomez, and you, Mr. Griffis, who have displayed gallantry in action in Afghanistan or Cyprus or in other parts of the world, not deserve to have their medals receive the same protection as medals 50 years and older?

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I'm careful to comment on that, Mr. Storseth...

I guess I'll answer the question by saying to you that if those medals were made available to the Canadian War Museum, we would be greatly pleased to have them. They would be acquired into the national collection of the country.

We have exhibits now in the museum, as you may be aware, that focus on much more recent military operations. For example—this is perhaps not as recent—we've recently modified an exhibit on Cyprus.

So we would gladly collect those medals. They would be preserved and presented in the museum in very creative ways.

● (1250)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Griffis.

Mr. Ronald Griffis: I think there's an historic value to them and then there's a personal value to them, and I think that has to be weighed very carefully.

Let me give you the example of the gentleman I was speaking to before, Colonel Ethell. He's Canada's most decorated peacekeeping veteran. What will happen with those medals, at the end of the day? Once again, it's a personal thing.

Interestingly enough, one of Colonel Ethell's sons—I believe it's his oldest son—lives in California. Once again, if they're left...if you get my drift, they're out of the country. Yet they are of significance in that he's Canada's most decorated peacekeeping veteran.

Mr. Brian Storseth: I actually had the pleasure of doing an event with Colonel Ethell, the new Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, this weekend at our military base there.

The Chair: That will have to be it.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Those medals are of significant importance to our country—

The Chair: You're way over, Mr. Storseth. Thank you.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Chair, it's—

The Chair: I'm sorry about that, Mr. Storseth.

[Translation]

Mr. Vincent, you have three minutes.

Mr. Robert Vincent: This is for Mr. Griffis.

You said that medals have a historical and personal value. Some of those medals are passed down to grandchildren. The medals are from conflicts that happened 50 years ago or even the First World War, which took place nearly 100 years ago. The medals have been passed down from generation to generation. A number of them have disappeared from the radar.

You mentioned a tax benefit. You can give someone a tax credit for a Victoria Cross medal that sells for \$240,000, but if the great-grandson does not pay taxes, it has absolutely no effect. If he can get \$150,000 for it on the parallel market, we will never see that medal again: it will fall off the radar.

So there is no incentive for the owners of these medals to protect them and give them to a museum. An equivalent measure is necessary in order to get these medals in the hands of the museums. I do not think a tax credit is a way to do that. I see that as a real problem. I am not sure how we can fix that or what steps should be taken. That is my first question.

My second question is this. You talked about artifacts. That includes not only medals, but also badges and other things. I would like to have that list. It would help me demonstrate and promote this measure to people in my riding, to the Canadian legion or the owners of the artifacts, to try to recover them somehow to give them to a museum.

It would be helpful to be able to tell people which objects are worth the most. Sometimes people keep these things stored in their basement or elsewhere, thinking they are not worth anything. But those objects could be worth something to a museum. It would be helpful to be able to tell people that all those objects have a probative value to a museum, and it would be appreciated if they would give them to the museum. Every member could get the word out in their riding.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: Thank you for that suggestion, Mr. Vincent. I just want to point out that most of the medals have been given to a museum. That has been our experience with the people in the country who have medals: most of the medals are always given to a museum.

Every Canadian understands the significance of the objects they possess. They know there are museums to protect our culture and collective history.

Mr. Robert Vincent: When the medal makes it way down to the fourth generation, it is a lot less meaningful. They know the medal belonged to their great-grandfather, but they do not know why he was given the medal. So it can end up in a flea market or elsewhere. People figure it must be worth something, and if they can get \$5 for it, they are happy.

That is what I mean. We need to identify the value of these objects.

Mr. Mark O'Neill: I understand.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Vincent.

Thank you very much, Mr. O'Neill and Mr. Whitham, for your great work at the War Museum. I think you've heard commendation from many of my colleagues here for the great work you do.

Of course, Mr. Griffis, we appreciate your service, as we've said on occasions before, but we also appreciate your service to veterans as well. I want to thank you very much.

You can be excused now. We're just going to go into some brief business. I'm certain that I'll have to call people back to get that done.

Mr. Vincent.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: We received the report. Would it be possible to get more copies?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: Very good, thank you.

[English]

The Chair: All right.

Most of the members are still here at the table, so let me just mention that Madam Sgro spoke to me before she left. There was some concern around the title of the report. That's why I said I'll probably make this comment and you'll want to comment.

First, I think you should understand that because of the haste in which we did the report and the fact that we really had to burn the midnight oil to do it—and I got it this morning, just before I needed to get it to the House—that is why we didn't have a lot of dialogue. And there were no comments as far as the title when we did the routine motions. I wanted to let you know that there was some concern and there were some issues.

If anybody wants to comment, go ahead.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: As mentioned, on behalf of Madam Sgro, I'll say that when we saw the title we were surprised. We just think it trivializes the report a little bit. It's a bit of a lightweight title. I think the title is a bit better in French than in English. I think "A Timely Tune-Up" doesn't honour the weighty evidence we heard from the witnesses. They were looking for more than a tune-up.

I think "A Review of the Living Charter" would have been better. We just wanted to record that we were a little disappointed in that title.

The Chair: It has been tabled in the House, so I believe the report in its entirety is set in stone now. You couldn't change it. But please do let everybody know that if they have that perception of the title, certainly the content of it is not lightweight at all.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I understand what Ms. Sgro has been saying, but at the same time, I thought it was a good title, to be honest with you. A tune-up means it's ongoing. It's a living document.

I certainly appreciate Mr. Oliphant's stance on the fact that this is a serious study on a very serious issue, and an issue that won't go away, by the way. It will continue. We will be having more of these discussions. As long as we're members of Parliament, as long as this committee is alive, this charter and the care of veterans and their families will always continue.

I think it's not too bad.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Monsieur André.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: I do not necessarily have a problem with the title of the charter. I think the next time, we could perhaps discuss it before it is tabled in the House. That is all.

As for the rest, the title is not a problem. With respect to the procedure, perhaps we could discuss it the next time. That is all.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes. Again, the haste of the need to get it in, in case we rose, was the key thing in that, but I'll take your comments. I'll make sure to caution the committee if nobody brings it up next time.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Just as a side note, Mr. Chairman, I just very quickly spoke to Greg, the parliamentary secretary. Is it all possible if we could arrange a day in the future...? Mr. Whitham indicated that there's a behind the scenes tour of the War Museum, which many people don't get to see. I think that would be very exciting, not only on this bill and to ascertain how it all works, but to see it as a committee together in the future.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Could I just comment?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Greg Kerr: By all means, this is really worthwhile. Of course, I was there because of the PC, but their process is something that every MP should see and certainly every member of the committee.

The Chair: I'll direct the clerk that at an appropriate time we'll use a meeting to have a tour.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: It would be great.

The Chair: Mr. Lobb, then Mr. Vincent.

Mr. Ben Lobb: It's on a slightly different topic. I was just wondering if I'd bring it up now or right at the end of the meeting. I guess we're pretty well there now.

The Chair: We're at the end.

Mr. Ben Lobb: A Legion in my riding is having its 80th anniversary this Saturday. I'd be honoured if all members

would be willing to sign right where their names are here, and I'd be happy to present that to them as a little celebration on their 80th anniversary.

● (1300)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Let's do it.

Mr. Ben Lobb: At the end of the meeting, that would be great.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Go for it...they're going...

The Chair: Point of order. Hang on, Mr. Vincent.

Attend une minute, Mr. Vincent, we have a point of order. Sorry.

Ms. Crombie.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: I think maybe we could all benefit from delivering copies to our Legion halls. Why don't we each take our copies and pass them around? I'd like the same thing. I'm a legionnaire in my Legion, too.

The Chair: As long as everybody has time, I don't see any problem.

Go ahead, Monsieur Vincent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent: I was a bit disappointed this week, after hearing the response of Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn to a question about pensions from one of my colleagues in the House of Commons. The minister said that he had already surveyed people in the field, himself. It seems that the final report has already been prepared and that he has already made his decision based on a survey he did in a barrack. It is too bad that that was his answer, given the work we have been doing this whole time, and that he came to a completely different conclusion, based on a survey that has nothing to do with the report.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vincent.

Finally, before we go, just so everybody can see it, I have \$95 in my hand. We'll be looking after making sure that a nice batch of flowers for congratulations go to the researcher.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Send him a wading pool.

The Chair: It will be a small one.

The meeting is adjourned.

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