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Chair

Mr. Royal Galipeau

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC)): It's a pleasure for me to bring this meeting number 42 to order.

We have a very distinguished guest here today from True Patriot Love—what a name. Bronwen Evans will speak with us. She's the president.

Before I introduce her, I'd like to talk about next week. Next week on my calendar is Holy Week, and Good Friday is a statutory holiday. Because of that, in the House, we will have the schedule on Holy Thursday that we normally have on Friday. Members of the committee have asked me whether this means we have a committee meeting anyway.

This is what I propose we do, and the reason is quite simple. There's a witness we've been trying to get, SISIP, Service Income Security Insurance Plan, and next Thursday is the only time they can come. If we had our meeting at 8:45 a.m., provided the chair shows up on time, we could have a one-hour meeting until 9:45 a.m., and those of us who have House duty would still be ready to be in the House on time, but I'll only follow your directions; I'm just your servant.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): I'm content with that, Chair.

The Chair: Since it's Holy Thursday, I'll bring a bowl.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: That's for Pierre to use.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Who is going to wash my feet? That's what I want to know.

An hon. member: Oh Francis, you're the guy.

The Chair: Frank, as you know, I'll wash your feet before I wash his.

I'd like to particularly welcome my mentor and predecessor, Greg Kerr. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): It's a pleasure to be back.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Lizon had a question.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Lizon.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Chair, as you know, the tradition is to wash the feet of 12 people. Therefore, we can bring more, if that's what the chair is planning to do on Holy Thursday. We can make up for the missing three people.

The Chair: I'll bring more water.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Things have changed over the last few months here.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: We're a lot more friendly, Greg.

Mr. Greg Kerr: I see that.

[Translation]

The Chair: That said, I'd just like to provide the context for the appearance of our next witness during today's meeting. Today, we will temporarily put our study on the continuum of transition services on hold, in order to hear from Bronwen Evans, President of the True Patriot Love Foundation.

[English]

Ms. Evans, the floor is yours.

Ms. Bronwen Evans (President, True Patriot Love Foundation): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you for inviting me to present today.

I'm going to focus my remarks primarily around veterans who have been ill and injured, opportunities for employment programs that exist currently within government, and then some programs that we fund external to government.

I'll start off by giving a bit of a background on True Patriot Love. Some of you may know who we are as an organization, but I'll give a quick background on that. Then I will move on to talk about some work that we did in leadership at the Veterans Transition Advisory Council, which was a council that Minister Blaney, when he was the minister of veterans affairs, asked us to assemble. Through that I will talk about some survey work that we did of employers around their attitudes toward hiring veterans and then speak specifically to what we perceive to be some of the challenges regarding employment and where we think things should go.

True Patriot Love is an organization that started in 2009. There was a small group of us. Originally it was going to be a fundraising dinner that we did to raise money for the Military Families Fund. We raised about \$2 million in one night and recognized that not only was there a need, but there was a huge opportunity and a willingness to give from corporate Canada.

We've been around for about six years and we've raised about \$20 million, which we disburse to community-based charities across Canada that support military families. We don't run programs per se, but we raise money which we disburse, similar to how the United Way functions.

Our main areas of support are mental health and rehabilitation. We fund many counselling programs not just for injured soldiers, but also for their families. When a soldier suffers an operational stress injury, the whole family suffers. We also fund counselling programs in addition to that, where we look at children and young adults who are struggling at school or in new communities. Because they move frequently, they are often in need of support.

We also fund physical health and rehabilitation; so think adaptive ski programs and some very adaptive sport programs. We fund home and vehicle modifications for injured soldiers. The government does do some of that, but to give you an example of the kind of things we do, if a soldier lost a limb in Afghanistan and they come back, the government will pay to retrofit the soldier's existing vehicle. If that vehicle is too small to put a wheelchair and a ramp in it, we will pay for a new vehicle for the individual and the government will then retrofit it.

The other area that we fund is general family support. We do quite a bit in the area of supporting children in the military with special needs. This need has grown to about \$750,000 a year. What happens is when children have special needs, like autism, and they move from one base to another, they go to the bottom of the public waiting list because it's all overseen by the provinces. Oftentimes they won't make it to the top of the waiting list before they need to move again. We were finding that families were taking out second mortgages on their home to pay for important therapy. That's a huge area of funding that we focus on. We also pay to send children to camp. Where there's been a recent injury, death, or deployment, we give military children the opportunity to go and spend time with other military children who may be going through some of the same things.

That's a general background on True Patriot Love.

A couple of years ago, Minister Blaney, when he was the minister for veterans affairs, asked True Patriot Love to put together what was called the Veterans Transition Advisory Council. I did send this document in advance and I want to make sure everybody has a copy of it. The purpose of the Veterans Transition Advisory Council was to look at systemic barriers that were preventing veterans from making a transition to meaningful employment. The reason I say meaningful is that we discovered quite early on that the issue isn't unemployment; it's more underemployment.

• (0855)

We assembled, with the support of Veterans Affairs and eventually with support from the Department of National Defence, a number of companies to help us look at the barriers. We also included other representation from charities across Canada that were in this space. Veterans Affairs and the Department of National Defence also have seats on this advisory council.

What I thought might be of particular interest to this group was a survey that we did of human resource departments across the country. It's the first-ever survey that has been done in Canada of this sort where we were looking at the attitudes of people doing the hiring in companies towards hiring veterans. There's been a lot of work done on this in other countries, like the U.S., but nothing had been done in Canada.

We did a quantitative survey of 850 corporate HR departments in Canada. What we found was interesting. We found that 45% of Canadian employers think that promoting the hiring of veterans reflects well on their company. We'd like it to be higher than 45%, but there's at least still 45% who believe that. However, 73% of Canadian employers admit that their organization does not have a specific veteran hiring initiative. When we prodded even further, we found only 4% of those who didn't have one have any intention of ever putting one in place.

We also found that only 13% of HR departments have been trained on how to read a military resumé. One thing we found especially interesting was that 46% believe having a university degree is more important than years of military experience. When you prodded that question and asked, what could a veteran do in order to help himself or herself get a job in the civilian world, education ranked the highest. The feeling with that was if you looked at their years of service, it wouldn't qualify essentially as the kind of training or internship that they were hoping to see and that they would need in order to bring veterans into their companies.

We have that going on and we're in a situation where employers, while their intentions might be good, don't really know how to go about hiring veterans.

We get calls as an organization quite frequently where somebody or a company will say to us, "We want to hire veterans. Where are they? How do we go about finding them?"

There is a program named MET, the military employment transition program, which is run by Canada Company in partnership with the Department of National Defence. That's very hands-on in terms of matching up employers with veterans. However, it's only able to handle so much volume, and on top of that, they don't deal with the ill and injured population at all.

The report that you have is our interim report, which ended up being presented to Minister Fantino. When we presented it to the minister and asked for further direction, he asked us to look specifically at the ill and injured veteran population to see what could be done in that area, because that was an area where when it came to employment the feeling was there was the most concern and the least amount of supports available to them.

We, the Veterans Transition Advisory Council, spent some time looking at that issue in particular. We did a survey of the programs that are already out there through government, through both Veterans Affairs and the Department of National Defence. We certainly found that pretty much every employer indicator showed that medically released veterans are worse off than veterans who aren't medically released.

• (0900)

Clients who have been medically released experience 15.1% unemployment compared to 7.6% unemployment for the total veteran population. Also, their income and their skill relevance tend to be lower. In one sample size that Veterans Affairs looked at, they saw a 29% decline in income and a 63% decline in earnings in a three-year post-release period for ill and injured veterans. Data show that only 8% of the medically released are unable to work, which means that the remaining 92% present a significant opportunity for employers, because these 92% have served and obviously have a tremendous skill set.

One of the issues that you are probably aware of as a committee—although I find that when I am speaking to our donors, corporate employers, they find it surprising—is that only veterans who are clients of Veterans Affairs are eligible for VAC services, which isn't the majority of veterans. You are able to access the support in VAC, whether it's support for employment or other types of support related to illness, only if you are a client. Only 30% of medically released veterans are clients of VAC, so 70% of medically released members of the armed forces aren't clients of VAC and are out there on their own.

There is a program called CanVet, which is the official service provider for Veterans Affairs to provide vocational rehabilitation for veterans. While this is a good program in terms of helping veterans prepare resumés and think about where they are going with their career, the one thing that we think is lacking is that the people who work at vocational rehab and who are providing the advice to veterans aren't going out and connecting with the employer population. It's one of those things where you go into a classroom setting, work on your resumé, and get advice on how to do job interviews, but CanVet isn't making any outreach to employers to prepare them for the fact that there may be some veterans coming their way who are interested in jobs.

Really, the only alternative within Veterans—

• (0905)

The Chair: I apologize for disturbing you, Ms. Evans, and I apologize for not telling you at the start that what we expected was a 10-minute presentation, and you are now at 13 minutes. I would just like to know how much longer you need. I think there will be some leeway from the committee.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Okay, sorry about that.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: I'm happy for her to speak. This is interesting stuff.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Chair, now that we've interrupted, can I raise a point of order?

When something is handed to the clerk and it's not bilingual, you can't hand it out, but can an MP ask for it just the same? Is that a prerogative I have, to say that I don't want it handed it out, but I'd like to see the material?

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): No problem.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Okay, can I see the material that was....

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Pagé): I don't have a copy with me.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Sorry, I didn't realize it wouldn't be....

It's a big cost for us to do translation.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes, I know. That's completely understandable.

That's why I am asking. Your answer is what I thought. As an MP, I can ask to have a look at the unilingual document, if that's what I choose?

The Chair: Ms. Evans, I want to assure you that the burden of translating the document does not belong to you. It belongs to us.

I apologize for the disturbance. According to the Official Languages Act, you can't distribute it, but individual MPs can go and ask for it.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: May I have a copy, please?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: You may have a copy.

Sorry, maybe what I'll just do then is....

The Chair: Go ahead. We're leaving after 10 o'clock. We're going to be called for votes. There will be bells for votes at 10, and I think we have half an hour to get upstairs, and there are 24 steps to get upstairs.

Take your time.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: All right.

I was talking about the CanVet program. Really, the deficiency we see there is that there's no outreach made by CanVet staff to potential employers.

By comparison, there is a program outside of government that I want to draw your attention to. It's run by an organization called Prospect, which is located in Edmonton. They are a national organization. They originally came about after the Second World War when there was a need to reintegrate veterans into the regular workforce. Following the Second World War when that need decreased, they took on the mandate as an organization to help groups of people who were under-represented in the workplace, such as, immigrants, women, and people with disabilities, to get employment.

Given their original mandate, they have started to take an interest again in the veteran population. They did a pilot that's been going on now for about a year and a half or two years with the joint personnel support unit out of the Edmonton base. I don't know if everybody knows what the joint personnel support unit does, but essentially they have what's called a return-to-work program. If you're a serving member and for whatever reason are unable to perform your regular duties, you go to the JPSU, and they work with you on either bringing you back inside the military, back to the job you had, or another job within the military, or they help you transition out.

What ended up happening with the JPSU in Edmonton was they contracted with Prospect and started up what was called the forces at work program. Originally this program, for about the first year and a half, was funded by the Military Families Fund. You probably all know what that is. It's a quasi-charity that exists within the Department of National Defence.

Coming out of that, the results they achieved were astounding. From the first pilot they had 121 referrals—these are ill and injured veterans—of which 88% were accepted into the program. There was a placement rate of 85% of those veterans: 70% were placed into paying jobs within three months; 88% were placed within less than six months. Of all those who were placed, 96% said they met or exceeded their career goals. Also, there's been a 95% retention rate in terms of keeping them in their jobs.

Now, what's different about Prospect as, say, compared to CanVet, is that their approach engages the employer from the get-go. Prospect has a database of 700 employers in the area that they work with on a regular basis for placement. They also work with 31 industry associations across Alberta.

Partly what makes this program so successful is the post-placement follow-up they do. Not only do they engage the employer and prepare the employer for the employees they are about to receive, but they also do a considerable amount of work with both the employer and the individual who's been placed following the placement. For example, I've heard stories like these from Prospect many times. There might be somebody who is dealing with some mental health issues and is driving into the office and thinking, "I don't know if I can handle this today. I'm not feeling well today. This isn't a good day for me." Well, the person can pick up the phone and call somebody at Prospect who will talk them through what they are feeling, help them with their coping strategies, and get them into the office.

It's turned out to be quite a good program, but unfortunately, the Military Families Fund doesn't have money for this program anymore. When their funding ended with the Military Families Fund, we were approached by the chief of military personnel. He approached me and said, "Would you consider looking at this program for funding? We've been quite impressed with the work that they've done."

● (0910)

We've looked at it. As an organization, we have agreed to provide them with \$250,000 this year so that they can continue their Edmonton project.

Our goal though is to provide them with seed funding over the next three years so that they can bring their program national and so that soldiers who are ill and injured across the country can benefit from this and move into meaningful employment.

One of the important reasons for bringing them national is not only does it benefit more veterans, but also, as we understand it, once they establish a national presence, they may be eligible for government funding. They may be eligible to become an official service provider for either Veterans Affairs or the Department of National Defence.

It's our hope that we get to that point. In terms of all the different programs we have seen out there, we do believe that this one is the most promising for dealing with this vulnerable population.

I'm happy to take your questions.

● (0915)

The Chair: The first person who will be happy to ask questions is Mr. Stoffer.

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

I don't have any questions, Ms. Evans. I just want to personally thank you and your organization for the tremendous work you've done since 2009. I've been to many of your dinners across the country, and they're an incredible amount of fun.

Great money is raised for the wonderful projects that you do. I'm sure on behalf of all veterans and their families, thank you for the great work that you do.

I have one small question about RCMP veterans. Do you ever outreach to them in your charitable work to assist them in transition to employment as well?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We haven't done that. Early on as an organization we wondered whether we should be looking at police or firemen. We decided that we wanted to keep our focus quite narrow because there was nothing much really being done in this space.

Having said that, we do recognize, especially when it comes, say, to post-traumatic stress disorder, that it isn't something that's unique to the military. It's the kind of thing I think we would be open to talking about if there was something that was felt we could be doing in the space with the RCMP specifically.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): I understand that you're set up similar to the United Way, so maybe this doesn't apply. I'm from the riding of Sault Ste. Marie and I don't know how many military charitable support organizations there are in the Sault that actually True Patriot Love might be funding. There may be none.

That being said, I would like to understand the criteria for individuals in terms of determining their eligibility for funding. Do you establish a set criteria for the organizations that they have to follow, or does each organization independently have their own set of criteria to determine whether or not they're going to fund an individual?

I just want to wrap my head around that.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We don't fund individuals. If somebody were to come to us and saying that they need funding because their child has special needs, we aren't set up to do that kind of evaluation. In that case we would provide the money to the Military Families Fund, which has staff who have certain criteria for determining eligibility. They also have a good sense of the need across the country in that particular area, so they can figure out a fair way of distributing the money such that they don't give it all to one person with nothing left for anybody else.

As to our process for funding the various charities, we have a couple of specific funds. One is called the Bell True Patriot Love fund. It's a partnership that we have with Bell Canada whereby every year we provide a quarter of a million dollars to community-based mental health programs that support veterans and their families. These can be anywhere in the country. We put out a call for applications. We go through all the military family resources centres. We put it online. We have done advertising in some of the military magazines. Any organization, provided they have charitable status, can apply for funding for that.

I would say that about half of it ends up in programs through the military family resource centres. There are other programs completely outside of this that receive funding too. We're always looking for more of these to come in, because we think it's an important area to fund. So there's that.

We also have a program with Scotiabank. It's a similar type of program. The focus there is specifically upon ill and injured veterans—less on the family piece and more on the veteran. We fund some of the adaptive ski programs through that program. We also do some of the mental health programs through it.

There is an Outward Bound program for veterans. There is the Veterans Transition Network, which is a program run out of UBC around the country now. There's the Prince's Operation Entrepreneur. We have set applications for those. Then generally speaking, we also run a general application process at some point during the year, when anybody can submit. The criteria are online, and there is a form to fill out. Usually it involves some telephone conversations too, just to get a better sense.

We try to work hard, because many of these are small organizations and don't have a lot of resources to put together applications. We're quite happy to work with the organizations on their applications too, to help make them successful.

● (0920)

Mr. Bryan Hayes: As MPs, I think we would be a very good source to help promote some of this. If I knew that you had an application process that was pending... We have advertising resources.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: That's a good point.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: My goodness, I'd love to be advertising those services.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: I will make sure.... I guess it would be through householders and—

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Absolutely, and websites, 100%.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We would greatly appreciate that.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: I'm sure all MPs would be all over this.

That's good for me, Mr. Chair. I'm happy with that.

The Chair: Mr. Valeriote.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Thank you, Ms. Evans, for appearing. I have a bunch of questions so I'm going to ask you to keep your answers as short as possible.

You said that 70% do not qualify for VAC because they aren't in the system for VAC programs, and 30% are in the VAC programs. Is

that because these people who were medically released applied and were turned down for some reason, or did they just not bother to apply?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: I don't know, but if I had to guess, I would think that many just haven't bothered to apply. I honestly don't know the answer to that.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Is there a way for you to find out, and if you could, could you let us know?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Certainly, I could ask.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: You could let the clerk of the committee know.

There was an organization that appeared before us a few weeks ago called Monster.com. You're probably familiar with their skills translation program. They presented it, and a number of us were quite impressed with the opportunity we could avail ourselves of to better coordinate, identify skills, and line them up.

Are you familiar with that?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: I am.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Do you think it would be a good application of Monster.com to bring it into VAC and have VAC use that resource to better link veterans with jobs?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: The work we did with the Veterans Transition Advisory Council looked at all the various opportunities out there, including Monster. There's also a program called Google VetNet, which runs in the U.S. too. It's the same sort of idea as the Monster program, but it's different in the sense that they offer webinars and you can sign up for training, which I don't think you can really do with Monster.

There are various programs like these out there. We ended up with the MET program run by Canada Company, which was already up and going in Canada. It's the program that has been endorsed by the Department of National Defence.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Is it as good as Monster or the other programs?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: It's just different. Monster can handle volume in a way that MET could not. It's very much "here are your skills", or your job, what you are qualified to do.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Sure.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: It matches you up, then, with potential jobs in that area.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: I'm sorry. I understand that you want to explain it all to me, but I only have a bit of time.

Do you think it's advisable for us to look beyond the MET program and perhaps consider the Google program or the Monster program?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: I think there is probably still quite a bit of work that can be done with MET. Because there has already been a big investment in it by government and the corporate sector, I would recommend focusing on it and taking it to where it can be taken and then see whether it still makes sense to bring Monster in.

• (0925)

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Okay.

You mentioned a program in Alberta offered by Prospect, I think you said.

It seems to me that government should be looking at best practices, and it appears from your statements that this is what they're doing. They're going to keep their eye on it. But I have the impression that there are programs scattered across the country, some really good ones and some that people in Ontario and Nova Scotia have never heard of and aren't aware of. There ought to be somebody coordinating and bringing all of these under one roof and applying them across the country and helping fund them.

I have two questions. One is, do you think there is a role for government to play to better coordinate all of this and keep their eye on it, assembling all the information they possibly can? They may be doing that through the Veterans Transition Advisory Council; I don't know.

The second question is this. You told me that you raised \$20 million over the last, was it five or four years?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: It's five years.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: That's \$4 million a year.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: The government has had money to spend on veterans programs, and they have done so. They met their statutory obligations. But they had another billion dollars over the last 10 years available that they didn't have to spend because they met their statutory obligations.

I'm sitting here thinking how your organization could be better deployed if you had some support, or if the government itself engaged in doing the things that you're doing.

Do you think there would be value in the government's better supporting organizations like yours and others that are trying to do the work you are doing?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Going back to your first question, which was on whether it should all be unified, one of the recommendations we came up with in our Veterans Transition Advisory Council report was on the need to have essentially one website where veterans could go to see everything they could access, whether through a government program or otherwise. There's nothing like that existing right now.

Quite frankly, websites are expensive to build. They need to be maintained and updated. Somebody has to verify that all the information on it is accurate. You want to make sure you're not sending veterans to people who are going to take advantage of them. There's a lot that needs to happen there. Somebody needs to own that, and I don't know who that is. I don't know if it's government or

another organization, but that does need to happen. There's no question about that.

The challenge is that you run into the kinds of issues we have with Prospect. This is a true story, and we all sort of laugh, but the government has a contract with CanVet and one of the reasons it can't contract with Prospect is that doing so may violate its contract with CanVet. The contract with CanVet is all about people who are unemployed and bringing them to a point where they can write their resumés, but CanVet will lose potential clients if Prospect gets them jobs, so that violates the contract, because it may mean fewer people can go to the CanVet program.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Valeriote. That was your last question.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: She didn't get a chance to answer the second part of that.

The Chair: You get 30 seconds.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: It was on the funding.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We work in cooperation with government. We find that's the best way to do it.

In terms of whether government should be doing more, I guess government can always be doing more, but I do think there's a role for the private sector in this, and there are some things the private sector can just do better.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lizon.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Thank you for coming this morning and thank you for the great work you're doing for the people who serve our country.

Before I ask you a question, I think I should clarify something regarding Mr. Valeriote's comment about money being left over, \$1 billion or whatever that wasn't used. In the budgetary process, the money has to be allocated for services. Those services that are demand-driven and statutory services have to be provided. Therefore, either you have money left over or you're short. In the case where you have money left over, it has to go back to the treasury. In the case where you're short, you have to ask for more money and you have to get more money because statutory services have to be provided. Therefore, there was no money that wasn't used because government decided to save it; it was just part of the budgetary process that exists. I think we should clarify this; otherwise, it will leave the wrong impression that we're cheating veterans.

The question I have is to follow up on Mr. Valeriote's question on Monster and the application process.

A lot of large corporations and companies use computer systems to scan resumés. Therefore, unless the resumé is written in a certain format, it will never get to a live person. This creates a situation where you almost have to learn a new language in order to be successful. You may have the required skills, but if they're not presented in a certain format, the resumé will go into the garbage after the first scan.

Are you working, maybe in collaboration with some other organizations or by yourself, to address the problem and to help veterans make sure their resumé are in the right format?

• (0930)

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes, we don't deliver the programs ourselves, but we had a couple of recommendations related to that. One of them focuses on the education of HR departments on how to read resumé from military people, because they can't. They don't know how to translate. The other side of that is probably more work can be done with the veterans themselves, so they know how to present their skill sets in the corporate world. I think it's double-sided.

One of the pieces that we would really like to see happen—and again it's a question of who takes this on—is a mentorship program whereby veterans who have successfully made the transition to meaningful employment work with veterans who are in the process of making that transition to help them with the process. It's not always the words on the CV. It's just that corporate culture is different from military culture and that can be one of the things that you need to adjust to as well.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: How do you think the veterans hiring act will help the transition process for veterans?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: The legislation that makes it a priority.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Do you mean the priority within government? Yes.

I don't know what the HR plans are. My concern with that would be, would you run into the same problem you'd run into in the private sector. Are the people who are looking at those resumé in government able to understand them and know the skills relevant to the position they're hiring for? I don't know if specific training happens with the HR people within government and the managers who are doing the hiring, but I would think you would need to have that to be successful.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: From your experience with the private sector, with the corporations to date, what would you think are the main gaps that need to be filled to allow the process to run better? Is there a way to improve it? How? Is there a problem with employers accessing the information about the pool of veterans who are looking for work? Are there gaps on both sides, the veterans cannot get to the proper employers and the other way around?

• (0935)

Ms. Bronwen Evans: One of the things we talk about in our report—and again, I'm not sure who would take this on; it's fairly expensive to do—is some good marketing and advertising around this. The United States have done some of it whereby they show a veteran saying what they did in the military and here's what they're doing today, and you see what the position was in the military and you see what the veteran's title is now and say “wow”. From the veterans' standpoint they say that's them, they should do that, and they wouldn't have thought of that. Also from the employer's standpoint, it starts to make it a little more real and understandable.

I think marketing is a really big piece of this. We need to be telling employers that by hiring veterans there's an opportunity to improve their bottom lines. They might not realize the pool of talent there. I also think the marketing has to happen for the veterans too, to

encourage them to think outside the box a bit. Just because this is what they did in the military, there are some soft skills they might not realize are relevant to potential jobs outside the military.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: From my experience—

The Chair: Mr. Lizon, that's it.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: That's it? Oh, time flies—

The Chair: —when you're having fun. That's it for you.

Before I recognize Mr. Rafferty, I'd ask the committee to stay in their seats after the presentation. We have distributed a copy of a budget to each of you, and so after this presentation I'll ask for a motion to have this budget approved.

Mr. Rafferty, it's your turn.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you, Ms. Evans, for being here. It's certainly appreciated.

I only have one question for you, and it's in relation to Mr. Lizon's question. It's about hiring of veterans in the private sector, particularly medically released veterans.

Do you think there's a role for government in the hiring of medically released veterans in the private sector, somehow, as you think about it?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We've done quite a bit of work. There are lots of different things out there. Take a program like Prospect's, for example. This one has proven to be the most successful. It's scalable. The cost per person for placing an individual is probably about \$1,500, which is not bad. I think it's a program that government should be looking quite seriously at making national. I don't necessarily see government delivering it, but rather, contracting with this organization that has a great track record in doing this. I think that's the role for government.

Government does do some placements in the private sector, through the joint personnel support units and their return-to-work programs. Many of them are unpaid because the individual is still employed by the Canadian Armed Forces. We've had a couple come to work in our office in internship positions. I think there are good intentions, but in my experience the people who are working in those programs aren't necessarily HR people. In my experience they didn't do a good job of preparing me for the individuals who were coming to work with us. Because as an organization we're sympathetic to the ill and the injured, we figured it out, but my feeling was that had it been a bank or somewhere else, say, they would have just said, “You know what? This isn't working for me. I don't really know what this is about.”

I think it's more about the government getting behind the right program, which is delivered by a third party.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you.

That's all, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Hawn has generously offered his first minute to Mr. Lizon so he can finish.

• (0940)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Don't forget. That's one minute.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: It's just a quick question that I have. Several organizations were formed to help veterans, Soldier On, Red Fridays, Wounded Warriors, etc. Do you have any platform of collaboration? Do you work together on projects or not? How does it work? It looks as if some of the work is fragmented and some services may be overlapping.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We work very closely with all of those organizations. I think we're all pretty careful.

To people on the outside it probably seems more disjointed than it does to us who are in this sector. Canada Company, for example, is probably the organization I deal with the most. I frequently send an email to it to say somebody has approached me, that a veteran is either looking for a job or there's a company wanting to hire, and I do the hand-off that way.

We're pretty coordinated in a lot of respects. We each have our own mandate. We do see each other quite frequently, meet quite frequently, and collaborate on issues.

Soldier On wasn't, but most of the rest were involved in the Veterans Transition Advisory Council. I do think we're quite coordinated, although I could understand how people externally might.... I mean, it's just not that transparent to people.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thanks so much for what TPL does, and your role in it.

This is a question you probably can't answer, but you talked about Prospect and taking it nationally and so on, which I think certainly has merit. Do you have any idea what Prospect spends every year and then obviously what it would be to take it national?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes, I do, and I could get you the exact numbers. I don't have them with me. We are paying the full cost for the program this year, which is \$250,000 for Edmonton.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: That's the full cost of their operation for this year.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes. When they go national there obviously are going to be opportunities to scale it and to create some efficiencies in terms of number of staff. You can imagine how that would work. When we started working together and said that we were willing to work with them to get the seed funding to take this national, we said that it's important to us that this be affordable over the long term. We said that we really wanted to see the placements happen at the \$2,000 per person and under range, and they're coming in at about \$1,800 now.

They made a huge investment in the first year. I think just between staff and one-time costs their first year was about \$450,000, and this year it's \$250,000. The idea is to make it about \$1,800 a person.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Do you have any feeling for how many Prospects it would take across the country?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes, we think we could do it by region. There's the one out west now. Our next one I think would be Ontario/Quebec. We would do one in Atlantic Canada, and possibly one more. It would be three to four sites.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Do you think the Edmonton site could cover all of the west?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes, I'm trying to remember if they had a site planned for Vancouver or not. It may be able to.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'm just trying to get a feel for what we're talking about in gross terms.

We're talking about overlapping services and so on. Is that necessarily bad? If there are various people providing various services, and some of them overlap, it seems to me it may be a little confusing, but at least to me there would be less chance of somebody falling through the hole because somebody's going to get covered by something, somewhere.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: The other thing I would say, too, is that especially when you're dealing with ill and injured veterans, the same thing doesn't work for every person. When we think about the different charities that we fund in the mental health space, last year we funded Paws Fur Thought, which is an organization that provides service dogs for veterans who are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. That's going to work for some veterans, and it works very well for them. It doesn't work well for everybody, so we'll find an Outward Bound program that works really well for people. There's a program of art therapy that we're not funding, but that's being funded out west.

I think it's important to recognize that—you're right—it perhaps may seem like there's some overlap with some of these, but when you're often dealing with mental health issues, you can't just provide a cookie-cutter solution and assume it's going to work for everybody.

● (0945)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Probably the last thing I'd want is for government to run it all. I think that would be awful, frankly. I think you probably agree.

Your counterpart organizations in countries like the U.S. and the U.K., where there are similar organizations doing similar things, are you in contact with them on best practices and things?

Ms. Bronwen Evans: We are. Actually, we are hosting our fourth international symposium this fall. We're doing it in San Francisco. This will be the fourth year that we're doing it. Every year we bring together organizations like True Patriot Love, governments, academia, the medical community, and the corporate sector, and we focus on a specific topic. The first year we did it at the Canadian embassy in D.C., and the focus was on PTSD. The second one we did at Canada House in the U.K., and we focused specifically on veteran transition. We just did one last year in Ottawa at the War Museum, and the focus there was the modern military family. The one we're doing in San Francisco, the focus of that is going to be on veteran identity, and how the media perceives veterans and how that in turn impacts the way they feel about themselves, but also the potential for employment and kind of dealing with some of the stereotypes that are out there.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Is there follow-up between meetings, and so on? Obviously, there are some great things said and done and talked about at those meetings.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes. We issued a report from our last one recently. I think most importantly what comes out of that is less about all sitting down together and saying that we need to solve a problem together. It's more about the network that you create and the interaction that you have with organizations that you would never have met before. I know that within our own Department of National Defence, I've heard so many times that, as a result of our symposium, they're now talking to people in Australia about what they're dealing with or how they're addressing a specific issue. It's more those kinds of relationships that come out of it.

The Chair: Mr. Lemieux, you have three minutes.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: That's all I need, Chair.

Thank you very much. I was reflecting on some of your comments about post-service employment. I'm wondering if there's any work that's been done on identifying, for example, a target population among those who leave the military.

Here's what I'm thinking. I myself was in the military and I know many military members who might have been in for 25 years, for example. They leave with a 50% pension and their thinking is not that they want to find a job that pays exactly what they were earning or more than in the military. They're thinking that they might want less stressful employment, something that's a little less demanding. They'll take less salary because it's supplemented by their 50% pension. If that's not taken into consideration, it can skew the numbers on a broader study that would say, "Oh, he or she has found employment, but look, the salary is less than what they were earning in the military." It's by choice.

I would say the same, in general, regarding people who leave on a voluntary release later in their career. Let's just say someone voluntarily releases at five years. After five years of service they're much younger and yes, they might face very different challenges than someone who voluntarily releases at 20 years whose thinking is, "Well, I've been in the military for so long and I'm freely choosing to leave the military."

I'm wondering if those kinds of considerations were made, as far as you know, in terms of some of the statistics you've provided.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: They were. I would say less so with respect to the ill and injured. When we did the work at the Veterans Transition Advisory Council, we recognized that that could be the case in many situations. If you look at somebody who's releasing, who has been in the military for quite a while, you see that their post-military career income drops. You think, oh no, but quickly realize, well—

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: It's supplemented by the pension, for example.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes, so that's fine, and it's probably a bit of a personal choice.

I think the area where we were most concerned was with the younger veterans who were releasing, where you couldn't make that same argument necessarily. That was more where we were focusing our concern rather than on the....

• (0950)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Right. I think that is the case with ill and injured veterans as well. Although it would be interesting to know

the window. For example, through SISIP and through Veterans Affairs, there is medical rehabilitation that goes on, and then there's vocational training. It is quite possible, for example, for an injured veteran to leave the forces and undertake three years of vocational training. During that time, they're getting the earnings loss benefit, but from an employment perspective, they are not employed in a job earning a salary. They're moving in that direction. It would be interesting to know what the window was in terms of employment when the numbers were put together, perhaps through a study, whether it was within a year of having left the forces, within five years of having left the forces, particularly for ill and injured veterans.

The Chair: You have to leave her some time to answer.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Of course, Chair. I just had to explain the question.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: I agree with you. This is very anecdotal because we've had veteran interns come and work at True Patriot Love. We try to do that on a regular basis, and we tend to focus on the ill and injured population because we know it's most challenging for them to find employment.

With one person in particular, I was interviewing him, and his dream job was to go into security, and I wondered how I was going to fit him into a job with True Patriot Love. He looked at me at one point and he said, "I just want to work. I just want somewhere to go every day. Just give me whatever and I will come and do it." We hired him. We brought him in and he stayed with us until he found a security job. We couldn't pay him because he was still getting an income from the Canadian Armed Forces at that point, but there was a sense of wanting to contribute and being unable to sit around at home doing nothing. That's the part that's—

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: —critical.

Ms. Bronwen Evans: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation today and for your interaction with members of the committee. It was enlightening. I'll bet you that the evidence that you presented will be reflected in the work that we're going to do.

Next Tuesday, we're going to have Major-General Rohmer. Next Thursday, of course, we've already spoken about SISIP; they will be with us.

Meanwhile, earlier today we distributed a request for a project budget. This is basically to reimburse witnesses whom we've had coming to this committee for this study. They've come from across the country. You've seen the various amounts. The total is \$10,850.

Could I have a motion?

Mr. Lizon is moving the motion.

I see there is opposition from Mr. Lemieux.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: You've got to be careful, Chair.

The Chair: Should I call a vote?

Everyone is in favour, even Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Even me.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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