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# Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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Chair: Mr. Bryan May





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• (1610)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

First of all, welcome back to Mr. Ruff, who is joining us here today for this meeting.

Welcome also to our newest permanent member, MP Zuberi. Welcome, sir. We're glad to have you on board.

This is meeting number 31 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Today's meeting is taking place, as usual, in the hybrid format.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on October 27, 2020, the committee is resuming its study on service dogs for veterans.

Welcome to all of the witnesses who have taken time to join us today.

I'll introduce all of the witnesses, starting with Sergeant William Webb, who is appearing as an individual. From Meliora Service Dogs, we have Marc Lapointe, certified trainer, and Carl Fleury. From the Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services, we have Joanne Moss, chief executive officer.

Each witness will receive five minutes for opening remarks, and after that we'll proceed to rounds of questions.

I will give you a one-minute signal when your five minutes are about up, and you will see me make this gesture throughout. I apologize in advance, but my role is often to interrupt and keep the time. I apologize in advance if I have to cut anybody off, but with opening remarks, I tend to give folks an opportunity to wrap up their thoughts.

Starting us off this afternoon is Sergeant Webb.

The next five minutes are all yours, sir.

**Mr. William Webb (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt. I apologize; I'm doing it already.

Mr. Desilets, you have your hand up.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** I apologize for interrupting Mr. Webb. However, I have a technical question,

Mr. Chair. Since the meeting started 45 minutes late, what time do you expect it to end?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We do have runway. I will survey the group while we get started here to see if we can all stay for the full two hours and I will come back to you, Mr. Desilets.

Mr. Webb, the floor is now yours for five minutes.

**Mr. William Webb:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize to the Bloc member. I'm going to be reading extremely fast, so the translators are probably going to have a hard time keeping up.

**The Chair:** Mr. Webb, before you do that, it is a challenge, so please don't worry too much about the time. Just take your time with your notes.

Thank you.

**Mr. William Webb:** I'm not a service dog trainer or a board member of a service dog organization, nor am I affiliated with any service dog companies' operations. I am an end-user.

Upon my release from the CAF in 2016, I relocated to British Columbia. This is where my difficulties began with other service dog providers, local businesses, government agencies, and local, civic and provincial governments. This is when the roadblocks to having a service dog began daily.

At that time in B.C., the government was lobbied by a single service dog provider, ADI/IGDF, and the new service dog act was implemented exactly at the same time that the Alberta act was implemented. Alberta and B.C. have nearly identical acts. All of these organizations were part of the CGSB process and did not disclose this to the B.C. government or the CGSB.

I was being excluded entry to public buildings and most services because my service dog was not from ADI or IGDF. All your witnesses have gone on to praise how good the B.C. test is. I would like to point out that my service dog was required to pass this test when it was a puppy to see if it would actually be entered into the program. The test in B.C. to certify your service dog costs \$200. However, the B.C. test is an obedience test. It does not assess my service dog's ability to do what it was trained for. Those veterans or the public who get a service dog from ADI/IGDF preferred member providers are not required to pay this fee.

The former speaker of the house of the B.C. legislature and current MLA Linda Reid is the president of BC and Alberta Guide Dogs, an ADI/IGDF member organization, and MLA Scott Hamilton was on the board of directors of PADS, the Pacific Assistance Dogs Society. Both were involved with the committee making sweeping changes to the act in B.C. Subsequently, these two providers were the only approved providers in B.C. under the act. There are currently three. The director of corporate policy for B.C., Toby Louie, wrote the act and wrote policy for PADS as well.

As you can see, there is a huge conflict of interest, as no one involved with these service dog providers recused themselves from any debates or work on this act. This is a perfect example of how these service dog providers insert themselves into government policy.

The current Minister of Public Safety in B.C., MLA Mike Farnworth, has stated that the service dog act in B.C. is voluntary. However, if someone wishes to be afforded all the benefits of the act, they need to have a service dog ID card for B.C. On the back of this card, it states, "is in possession of a certified guide dog or service dog and is granted access rights to public places and tenancy rights". The Canadian charter already affords us these rights. The Province also states that it does not certify service dogs; however, on the front of the ID card, it says, "certified by the Province of British Columbia".

This past Christmas my service dog became ill and suddenly died. Currently I am second-guessing whether to get another service dog—second-guessing because of the predatory behaviour of service dog providers and the restrictions in B.C. Many service dog providers in this country are predatory to some degree and are only looking to advance their agendas. If the veteran is the purpose for these psychiatric dogs, it is the veterans who are consistently stuck in the middle of the fight between providers. Ten years ago, there were only about eight service dog providers in Canada. There are now about 132, so you tell me it's not about the money.

One of the biggest difficulties facing veterans is the misuse, misinformation, and downright dishonesty in the terminology used by this unregulated industry in Canada. Phil Ralph of Wounded Warriors Canada stated in his testimony that their standard falls in line with ADI, which is accredited. Ms. Forbes also stated that national service dogs were accredited by Imagine Canada. I would like to point out that Imagine Canada only accredits charitable organizations' operations; they do not accredit production, standards, or training of service dogs. Sheila O'Brien was asked about ADI accreditation and stated that ADI is reviewed peer to peer, not by an independent third body. There are no internationally accredited providers anywhere.

• (1615)

This is misleading not only to the public but also to governments, and when MPs, MLAs or MPPs use this language, it only reinforces the misinformation.

Service dog providers in Canada have inserted themselves into all levels of government to press their agendas, and some MPs—even on this committee—through advocacy, whether directly or indirectly, are not doing the veteran a service. On the contrary, it's a disservice.

Our member of Parliament for South Surrey—White Rock, MP Findlay, is the treasurer and a direct board member of BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, which is an ADI member, pressing to make their standard—which isn't published or available to the public—the law of the land.

Phil Ralph also referred to the ADI standard. Nowhere in the act is there a standard for B.C. In fact, the only standard available on the ADI site is a code of conduct for member organizations. The ADI/IGDF standard is proprietary, and they do not release this to the public or to anyone. It's for their members only.

The director general of policy and research at VAC, Ms. Garrett-Baird, stated that the CGSB study failed because members could not come to consensus. I would have to disagree with this assessment completely. The fact that the CGSB was shut down for a time and investigated because of this process is alarming. The service dog industry cannot be relied upon to make a national standard. There is too much animosity among providers for them to play nice in the sandbox, and there is too much money to be lost with these personalities.

Currently the Human Research Standards Organization, which is accredited by the SCC, the Standards Council of Canada, is working on the development of a national standard. VAC was invited to participate in the study but stated that they were not able to participate. This leads me to believe that the department plans to do something different. VAC needs to stay out of this independent process completely and allow it to proceed unimpeded.

MP Wagantall asked a question last week: Where did Wounded Warriors get the professional ability to determine whether or not they comply with standards, and how is Wounded Warriors qualified to do that? This question was not answered by Mr. Cousineau, so I'm going to answer it now: Wounded Warriors Canada is not qualified to determine compliance of standards. Wounded Warriors Canada is not a service dog provider. It has no trainers or master dog trainers. It only provides funding to third party providers, and it is not in a position to oversee or front a standards process.

I would like to thank the member for North Island—Powell River for mentioning my difficulties of being homeless with my service dog. On January 1, 2016, the B.C. legislature put into force the B.C. Guide Dog and Service Dog Act. This act does not recognize any service dog teams or providers who were not trained or who were not affiliated with the ADI or IGDF, and it is in complete violation of the veterans charter of rights, the Canadian Human Rights Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This act prevents me from obtaining housing in B.C. and continues to be a huge barrier for veterans who need housing, as well as a barrier to accessing public spaces. I am not allowed access to any provincial offices, to travel on board passenger decks of BC Ferries with my service dog or to take public transit. This is one of the main driving forces that forced me, in May 2018, onto the streets. It was because I don't fit the criteria for the B.C. Guide Dog and Service Dog Act.

Mr. Cousineau stated that the B.C. act has been upheld by the Canadian Human Rights Commission when in fact it has failed several times, with human rights complaints against BC Ferries, residential tenancy, denial of access at Costco, and also my own denial of public access. However, because the B.C. commission makes everyone sign NDAs, none of these cases can be discussed.

The B.C. act states that the B.C. Human Rights Code will prevail over the service dog act, and it has on several occasions. That clause allows the act to get around any human rights violations, so the act is in complete misrepresentation of what it is meant to be providing.

Anyone.... I'm just about done.

• (1620)

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

**Mr. William Webb:** In B.C. anyone can have a service dog, because the B.C. certification is only an obedience test, and a note from your family doctor or nurse practitioner is the only thing that's required.

Few people are aware that the psychiatric service dog program was first initiated in the late 1990s, or just after 9/11, by the Honourable Elijah Harper. It was not the national service dogs, as stated by Ms. O'Brien. It was Elijah who was instrumental as a senior member and elder of the Red Sucker Lake Band in Manitoba. It was Elijah's foresight and vision. He saw the coming storm and the suffering of veterans coming back from their first rotations, so why this committee has not invited the two largest service dog providers in Canada is baffling to me.

There is currently an unofficial national standard published in Canada. This standard was written by the former director of standards for the Standards Council of Canada, Michel Bourassa. I can talk about that in questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. William Webb:** In closing, I ask that the committee take all of the information from service dog providers with a grain of salt. Do not rely on the infighting within this multi-million-dollar unreg-

ulated industry. Yes, veterans get dogs for free, but somebody has to be paid to rear, feed, kennel and train these dogs.

There are two camps in the service dog world in Canada: the ADI/IGDF and the MSAR standard.

Thank you. That's all I have to say.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Webb.

Up next, from Meliora Service Dogs, we have—I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly—Mr. Lapointe and Carl Fleury.

I believe, Mr. Lapointe, you're going to make the remarks.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe (Certified Trainer, Meliora Service Dogs):** Yes, I am.

Can everyone hear me well?

**The Chair:** We can. The next five minutes are yours, sir.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Okay.

Bill Webb, thank you so much for what you just said. I was in the same battle for 10 years. We need to talk, buddy, okay? We need to talk about that.

My name is Marc Lapointe. I am a Canadian Armed Forces veteran with 25 years of service and experience as both a non-commissioned and commissioned officer with the infantry, the Airborne Regiment and special forces. While serving Canada on multiple overseas deployments, I, like many other brothers and sisters in arms, suffered cumulative post-traumatic stress disorder. That led me to medically retiring from the forces in 2014.

Here with me today is Carl and his service dog India. Carl is from the board of directors of the Meliora Service Dogs organization and is here to assist me with answering any questions you may have from the perspective of a member. Not only is Carl a fellow veteran; he and India are also graduates of the program curriculum. He has begun the process to be a service dog trainer and mentor in our peer support network.

Since 2013 I have dedicated myself, personally and financially, to helping others regain hope and healing through training medical service dogs and their partners. I personally have fostered and trained more than 75 dogs and 150 medical service dog teams. I was a director for two service dog training organizations in three different countries. In 2016 I was awarded the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation while working with veterans and their medical service dogs. In 2017 I was approached to assist with a psychological service dog medical study completed by the University of Saskatchewan and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. I am one of the consultants for the university. Since the co-founding of Meliora in 2020, more than 25 veterans and retired first responders have completed the Meliora program. Some have been able to return to work, school and other self-fulfilling activities.

On the first question, about the efficacy and use of psychiatric service dogs by Canadian Armed Forces veterans, I have first-hand experience of knowing how a medical service dog helps to relieve the symptoms of PTSD. With my own personal service dog, called Bosley, and as the director of standards and training at Meliora, I meet almost every day with disabled people whose lives have been improved and sometimes saved by the partnership of medical service dogs.

Medical service dogs are meant to complement traditional medical and psychological care for a disabled person. They're not an answer to all. Not only are the dogs known to have naturally calming effects on PTSD sufferers; each medical service dog is also specifically trained for their partner's needs. Many of Meliora's trained medical service dogs have been trained to interrupt unhealthy and unwanted behaviour symptoms in their partners. They wake up their teammate from night terrors, provide comforting pressure—weight—on their partner during a crisis, assist during recovery from fear paralysis or a dissociative state, and prevent or interrupt emotional overload.

Our medical service dogs are also trained to assist their partners with other medical conditions, such as to detect and assist members in the event of a seizure, an allergic reaction, high or low blood pressure and diabetic emergencies. As our members age, the dogs are trained to retrieve objects because of mobility issues, help with balance, and carry items or medical necessities. Members with hearing impairments have medical service dogs to alert them to alarms, doorbells and people needing their attention.

Throughout my time in training medical service dogs for veterans and first responders, I've both felt and seen the incredible improvements in PTSD symptoms gained only through the medical service dog partnership. All of our medical service dog teams benefit from increased physical activity, better emotional connection to others, improved sleep, happier family relationships, reduced anxiety, a significant decrease in depression and suicidal thoughts, and a reduction in medication.

The ultimate success of a psychological medical service dog partnership is measured when that person no longer needs a service dog to navigate during their daily living activities. That's our goal. In fact, most graduates of our training program will only have one service dog, because they've already regained their independence when their dog naturally retires.

• (1625)

To answer question (b), the resources required by the Department of Veterans Affairs to implement access to psychiatric service dogs are the recognition of psychiatric medical service dogs within VAC and across Canada; a national registry of responsible and ethical medical service dog program providers that identifies certified dogs, users, handlers, trainers and training organizations; a common standard for training and certification of medical service dog teams across Canada; a national registry of responsible and ethical dog breeders who have been proven to breed healthy dogs with a calm temperament and appropriately long working lives; funding for the breeding, training and care of psychiatric medical service dogs for injured veterans; and training for VAC case managers about psychiatric and mobility medical service dogs for veterans, and the application process, because the case managers don't have any clue about what's going on.

Meliora is a national medical service dog training organization with members in practically every province. All of our members have stories of confrontation after our members and their fully certified medical service dogs were prevented from entering public places and buildings because their dogs were not recognized as a service animal. Provincially, Alberta, British Columbia and Nova Scotia require specific testing before they will recognize our members' medical service dogs, which, in truth and reality, is a Canine Good Citizen test. Quebec hardly ever recognizes any medical service dog unless they are used for the visually impaired.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lapointe. It would be great if you could wrap up.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Oh, my God. I have a lot to do. Well, okay, I'll wrap up.

In my role as the director of certification and standards at Meliora, I have made it my duty to train the best medical service dog teams in Canada. I have set our qualification benchmark to meet and exceed the requirement of any province. Psychiatric medical service dogs must be able to perform to the highest of standards because of the nature of the injuries of their user/handler.

I believe Meliora's science-based and compassionate medical service dog team training in real-world environments is the gold standard for psychiatric medical service dog training in Canada.

I have provided the committee with the documents—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. There isn't any French interpretation at the moment.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clerk, can you confirm the translation is working?

I'm going to speak for a little bit, Luc. Can you hear me being translated in French? No?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** There still isn't any interpretation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm not hearing the translation in English either, Mr. Clerk.

I can hear the English interpreter now.

Luc, as I'm talking here, is this being translated for you in French?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Yes, I can hear you very well now.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, good.

Sorry about that. It wouldn't be a Zoom meeting during a pandemic if we didn't have some technical problems.

I will give it back to you for final thoughts, please, Mr. Lapointe.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** It's two sentences. I'll just repeat what Mr. Desilets missed to make sure he gets this.

I believe Meliora's science-based and compassionate medical service dog team training in a real-world environment is the gold standard for psychiatric medical service dog training in Canada. I have provided the committee with the documents Meliora uses to train and evaluate their teams so that you can review them at your convenience.

I must emphasize the point that any standards that would be set should make compassion and empathy toward the disabled person the first priority, not money.

Thank you so much.

I would like to say hi to Mrs. Wagantall and Ms. Moss.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

Now we go to our final witness for today.

Joining us from The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services is Ms. Joanne Moss, chief executive officer. Please go ahead.

• (1635)

**Ms. Joanne Moss (Chief Executive Officer, The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services):** Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to meet with all of you here this afternoon.

The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services, or CFAS for short, is an impartial national registered charity that

promotes Canada's burgeoning animal-assisted services sector. We are dedicated to consumers, end-users, the welfare of the animals, and collaboration with animal-assisted services, practitioners and service providers to promote quality and service excellence. We build bridges between communities, disciplines and sectors to benefit people, pets, and partners.

The easiest way to describe what the foundation does is to say that it aims to fill gaps and connect the dots within Canada's highly fragmented, unregulated, multi-million-dollar sector. The service dog industry is one segment within the sector.

While we appreciate the cited contributions concerning Assistance Dogs International, or ADI, please understand that ADI is not the service dog industry but rather one business model within the industry. For this reason, ADI's private standards and peer review accreditation program are applicable only to their respective member organizations for brand recognition and performance. However, this is characteristic not just of ADI but of all service dog organizations. This is one reason that private company standards could not and cannot be adopted as national standards of Canada, or NSCs.

The withdrawal of the Canadian General Standards Board's service dogs standards project had a lot to do with breaking new ground in uncharted territories within a self-regulated landscape. Suffice it to say that all new and established industries experience growing pains, and Canada's service dog industry is no exception. The reason is that national standards of Canada use international standard development best practices to safeguard the interests of Canadians. The Standards Council of Canada is a member of the International Organization for Standardization, ISO, and it is affiliated with 165 countries worldwide. It's important to note that an NSC is not a policy, a guideline, a procedure, or an accreditation or certification program. The user of the NSC can adapt its procedures to align with the population served—in this case, veterans.

For Canada's service dog industry to survive and even thrive, isn't it time to put aside brand and market share stumbling blocks to focus on what matters most—honouring and supporting Canada's veterans and their families? This initiative is about challenging the status quo—not consumers, end-users, practitioners or service providers—to enhance current practices to ensure quality, public safety and animal welfare. Diversity is the fuel that informs and ignites the development of highly effective national standards of Canada. Therefore, differences can be the catalyst for new innovations.

What happens next? The foundation is partnering with the Human Research Standards Organization, a Standards Council of Canada-accredited standards development organization, to develop four cutting-edge national standards of Canada. These NSCs are now proceeding to development.

With this in mind, I would ask all of you to please consider the following key points to formulate your conclusions and decisions.

NSCs are expressed through requirements based on current normative references, such as regulations, policies, and guidelines; informative references, such as publications, articles, journals; and seed documents, such as private company standards. NSCs emphasize the need to respect the interests of consumers as well as their human rights and dignity. NSCs must ensure that interests are balanced to prevent conflicts of interest.

The Standards Council of Canada's governing legislation, the Standards Council of Canada Act, outlines its mandate to promote efficient and effective voluntary standardization in Canada when standardization is not expressly provided in law.

The Competition Act contains criminal and civil provisions to prevent anti-competitive behaviour and practices that impede competition, drive up pricing and limit supply.

• (1640)

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms proclaims that when a law conflicts with human rights, the charter prevails, as does human rights legislation.

We are at a crossroads. The broad road leads to endless debates, adversity, and division. However, the narrow road leads to hope, harmony, consensus decision-making and a promising future.

We may not have it all together, but together we have it all, so let's make our veterans and their families as proud of us as we are of them.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Moss. That's a great way to end your comments today. It's a fantastic sentiment.

As an update, unless there are any objections from any of the committee members, we will extend today so that we get the full time, but we do have a hard stop at 6:00 p.m.

Starting us off in round one in the six-minute round, we have MP Wagantall. Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Thank you all for being here. I appreciate nothing more than hearing directly from our veterans about their experiences, because that ultimately tells the story of what we need to deal with.

I want to be as clear and concise as I can so that you can be clear and concise and we can get lots of questions answered.

First of all, Ms. Moss, basically what I'm hearing today is that there is a conflict of interest here, a huge conflict of interest that has been taking place that has created roadblocks towards developing the CGSB NSC for service dogs, but this, I would assume, would be a common challenge when developing any NSCs when bringing together a marketplace of competitors. Would that be correct, just very briefly?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes, most definitely. In any marketplace, this is pretty normal behaviour, and some of the larger organizations can sometimes have a louder voice, if you will. Yes, it is very characteristic, for sure.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Okay, then we need to keep our ultimate goal in sight here and do everything we can to mitigate that problem as much as possible.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I understand that you were asked to set up a group to develop a service dog standard. Who asked you to do that?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Are you referring to the CGSB situation?

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Right.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Okay. Actually I'll try to make that as brief as I can.

We held two national military service dog summits because of all the requests we were getting from veterans and their families to help them, and after the end of the second conference, the group decided that they wanted to vote to see if I could go forward as a representative to ask the CGSB if it would be possible to do an assessment as—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** That came from a group of concerned users?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes. It came from veterans and from other people who attended the conferences as well, but it was actually the veterans who wanted to—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Who sponsored the conference?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Our foundation did, in both cases.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Okay, that clarifies it for me. Thank you.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** They had the floor, and I was asked to go forward and present that request and work it into a proposal to CGSB. CGSB took it a step further, and instead of looking at the feasibility study, they decided to go directly to developing a standard.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** From what I'm hearing, this CGSB board jumped ahead. They had a committee of over 35 organizations involved—providers, Wounded Warriors Canada, Transport Canada, breeders, users—so there was a huge breadth of organizations involved. I know that there was some concern, because usually in that circumstance there shouldn't be an overlap, because it creates a conflict of interest among all of those organizations. Only three associated organizations should have been allowed. Are you aware that there was significantly more overlap than that?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes, there was.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** What would you like to do? Would you like to be part of developing the standard?

• (1645)

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** We are actually the organization that is partnering with the HRSO to develop the standard. These standards are being initiated now by the foundation in order to move forward, and they're not just specifically for service dogs; they're for all types of animal-assisted services.



**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Our focus here, obviously, is the service dogs. I'm trying to understand how we keep things from getting messed up. If you're involved in that process, then accrediting it in an accrediting organization should not be reflected in your organization after that point.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** There are a couple of things. The standards themselves would be the generalization of anybody working with an animal, any type of animal, in animal-assisted services. Standards focus on the requirements involved, regardless. There might be some variations related to the different types of animals, but for the most part the focus is on the basic requirements—the non-negotiables, if you will—for working and volunteering in this sector. They don't get into the procedures.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** That's helpful. Thank you.

I just have so many questions. Do you yourself have personal training to be a service dog trainer or handler?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** We don't do service dog training. We're the only impartial organization. We don't train the animals. The sole reason for our organization's existence is to bring order.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** What international accreditation process have you gone through, and are you accredited with the ability to accredit service dog organizations for mental health curriculums?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** With respect to accreditation, you can't accredit anybody until there's an actual national standard in Canada. That's the first point.

Second, our organization is working with an accreditation body that will—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Which body is that?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** That's HRSO, the Human Research Standards Organization. They're accredited by the Standards Council of Canada. Service dog organizations, or SDOs, are the only ones able to actually write the standards, because they're part of the criteria that I mentioned, the international process that must be followed. We're going to be working with them to develop these standards.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I see, okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that's time.

Up next is MP Lalonde for six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm very pleased to be here with you.

[*English*]

I want to say to our veterans that we're always very happy to welcome you. Your sharing of information and your years of service are very valuable. I was going to pass a question to Ms. Moss, but I think most of it has been addressed by my colleague, so I'll transfer that question to Mr. Lapointe.

I know that you are currently working with Meliora Service Dogs, but you also work with Audeamus, and I apologize for my pronunciation.

During your testimony, you alluded to the fact that there are many groups and not-for-profits in the field right now, and various approaches and interests. Maybe I can ask you this question: How would you recommend that VAC assess an organization for credibility if it develops standards for accreditation?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** That is a really difficult answer to give, because you need to know who you're talking to most of the time. There have been big names announced here today who shouldn't be on this committee because of what they did to other veterans. You need to know who you're talking to, so do a background check to make sure that this person's program—this provider—is legit and doing the right things. I would say start with that.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Mr. Lapointe, which name would you recommend? Would you be comfortable sharing those thoughts with us?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** What do you mean by a name?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I mean an organization that you feel could possibly be part of the group. You're saying that there are some names that shouldn't be, and you're sort of alluding—

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** It's like Ms. Moss mentioned: There's corruption everywhere, right? It's even in our branch here when we're talking today. I'm not going to recommend an organization per se. What I'm saying is to do your homework—as a person, as a veteran, as an MLA, as a government person. Do your study. Where does this guy come from? Where did he get his experience? Who did he train? What's his success rate? If it's 100%, he's lying, right? I am talking about things like that. I've got hundreds of questions. If you want, I can send them to you. They're about how to ask questions of an organization.

• (1650)

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you very much. As we develop those recommendations, we may take you up on that.

What risks are there for veterans seeking service dogs without a national policy for accreditation?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** First off, way before getting there, is this person healthy enough to take care of a live animal? That's right from the start. We need to implement an interview process, a home visit, and make sure that the environment is also safe for that service dog. Is that person ready right now to get a service dog? He or she might not be ready for years. It's not just a fixing a problem thing. A dog is a lot of responsibility, and not every veteran can afford one or take care of one.

It's not an answer to the injury. It's helpful. It's a tool to help you get better in order to get to the next level, which is regaining dignity and confidence and socializing, etc.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** My pleasure.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mrs. Lalonde, you still have some time left.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Maybe I can put the same question to Ms. Moss or to Sergeant Webb. How would you recommend that VAC assess an organization for credibility if it has developed standards for accreditation?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** First of all, before you can look at accreditation, there needs to be a standard to accredit to, as I mentioned. That means a standard that develops the requirements. The procedure to achieve those requirements is a totally different document.

**Mr. William Webb:** Veterans Affairs Canada needs to stay out of the service dog world, period. It's not the job of Veterans Affairs to get involved with the service dog world. It will work itself out, I believe, through this independent process and a national standards process. Accreditation is a whole different ball game with regard to standards.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Would you give it to a third party? Could you continue elaborating for me?

**Mr. William Webb:** Once a national standard comes out, an accreditation process can begin. I would leave it up to the individuals to do their research and then make an informed decision. There's so much information right now, and so much misinformation on the web right now, that it's impossible to make an informed decision.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's our time. Next we have MP Desilets for six minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your loyal service, Mr. Webb, Mr. Fleury and Mr. Lapointe.

My first question is for you, Mr. Lapointe.

You're probably aware that the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs covers almost all the dog-related costs. I'm talking about training fees, incidentals and other after-the-fact fees.

In your opinion, should the same thing happen here?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Before I answer your question, I also want to tell you that the United States has an insurance company for service dogs called Trupanion. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs, through Trupanion, covers medical insurance for veterans' service dogs. Veterans Affairs Canada could do something of this nature to help our community.

Sorry, I'm drawing a blank. Can you repeat the question?

• (1655)

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Do you think that we should follow Australia's example?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Absolutely.

I'm a veteran, as you know. I've been doing this work for the other veterans for over 10 years. I give 100%. I think that I've given

120% to my country and that, as a result, I deserve a service dog to make my life easier and to brighten up my daily life.

A service dog costs next to nothing, at most \$1,200 per year. That isn't much. Over a period of eight to ten years of service, it would cost maybe \$10,000. That's a base price. There isn't any profit in that. This includes all expenses: food, insurance, veterinarian, and so on. Even the training is included in the cost.

I do everything for free for everyone. Everything comes out of my pocket. I'm looking forward to getting help. I'm quite serious about that.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** What do you think is preventing Veterans Affairs Canada from covering these costs? What's the hold up?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** It's politics. We listen to a person who knows someone else in the government, because we think that the person must be credible. So we listen to this person, who isn't credible at all, and who is even making things worse for veterans instead of better.

In reality, 80% of the members of our organizations, perhaps even more, aren't doing this work for the right reasons. These members aren't doing this to help our fellow soldiers and get them out of the trenches, so to speak. I get my fellow soldiers out of the trenches. Others leave them there and only want their money's worth. These members tell the soldiers that, if they want a dog, they must pay a certain amount, that Assistance Dogs International is there, and so on. I'm sorry, but it doesn't work. There are hold-ups everywhere and this must stop.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** In your opinion, is there any evidence that assistance dogs are really helpful?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Absolutely, Mr. Desilets. The studies conducted by the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina provided evidence. If we do things right, within a year and a half, we can reduce the use of medication by 50% to 75% in assistance recipients. The person used to be holed up in the basement. With this assistance, the person will probably return to school or take courses to become a trainer in our organization in order to help the next veteran.

In other words, our organization helps veterans get back on their feet.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** You mentioned two university studies. However, is there any evidence in the literature or elsewhere that the \$12,000 investment would save us, say, \$32,500?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** We showed this to the RCMP. We sent the RCMP a file explaining how many billions of dollars we could save in drug costs as a result of service dogs.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Could the committee access this evidence?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Dr. Colleen Dell from the University of Saskatchewan has this information on hand.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Perfect, thank you. My assistant took down the information.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Perfect.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** I have a hard time understanding. The United States is often used as a model. Do you think that they're experiencing similar challenges with service dogs?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** They've experienced challenges before, but it's much more liberal. The Americans with Disabilities Act encompasses different service animals. As you've heard, there are things as outlandish as the use of a parrot, for example. They're much more liberal in that sense.

In Canada, we need an occupational standard to ensure the safety of the public, the safety of the service dog and veteran team, and the safety of the dog itself. Some people enjoy hitting a dog with an umbrella simply because the dog is next to them. Things of that nature must stop. There must be a standard so that people are informed and educated about proper behaviour.

Some people think that Veterans Affairs Canada should be left out of this. That's a valid opinion. However, the department must also be informed and aware of the situation so that it can help veterans.

I agree that we need the support of an independent body that has nothing to do with service dogs and that will take an unbiased look at the situation on behalf of all veterans in Canada.

• (1700)

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay.

I think that my time is up. Please let me know, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** If not, I'm ready to answer more questions.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Everyone's being very good with their timing today.

Up next we have MP Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Chair, and I want to thank all of the folks who are here to testify today. I really appreciate it. For those of you who have served, thank you so much for your service. It means a lot to every Canadian.

Bill, I'm going to come to you first, of course.

The more that you teach me and the longer we do this study, the more I can see that we need national standards so that the end-user benefits. Without these standards, there are so many broken pieces that create this fragmented framework that leaves veterans behind.

Could you tell us, Bill, how having a service dog changed your life?

**Mr. William Webb:** I was one of probably the few veterans who believed what people told you about service dogs. I actually did my research. I phoned almost a dozen providers, and only one provider asked me these questions: Am I safe, and do I have a medical team I'm working with?

That was the team I initially went with. I was on numerous anti-psychotic medications. Within the first year, like Marc said, I was down to one or maybe two. Two years later I was medication-free. I'm not on the marijuana maintenance program funded by Veterans Affairs. I used my dog until my dog passed away at Christmastime. I'm in the process of working to get another one.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** You talked in your testimony about the challenges you experienced. Most specifically, and one that we worked together on, was your experience with the service dog and how that really impacted your ability to have shelter, to have a home. I think that's really important, because you're not the only veteran I've heard from who's had a similar experience.

Could tell the committee a bit about that so that we have that testimony?

**Mr. William Webb:** I can give you a specific instance that happened in the last week. Exactly one week ago, two service dog team members who were in Whistler Blackcomb were attempting to gain services and were being denied service. The RCMP had to be called to get involved with the directors at Whistler Blackcomb, because the service dog act in B.C. says that if you don't have an ID card for B.C., you can't go anywhere with your service dog. The RCMP, because they have a fiduciary duty to uphold the Canadian charter, explained the situation to them. The way that B.C., Alberta and Nova Scotia are getting around that misinformation with regard to the act is the clause that they put in section 1.1 of the service dog act that says the Human Rights Code supersedes this act, but it doesn't stop the industries. Even though they have all of this misinformation, they can't just stop somebody from gaining access.

I'm sorry to say that my own sister took her pet and did the test in B.C. in 22 minutes. She has a dog that is not trained, and now she has a service dog certified by the Province of B.C. and can go anywhere with a pet. It's a very small dog, so I'm having issues with my own family with regard to how the act is written and implemented in B.C. Anybody can get a service dog in B.C., anybody. If you have a well-behaved dog, you can pass the test. My dog has a standard, not a test.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** That's a pretty significant difference.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Could I add a small thing on that, please?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Yes, please do.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** I travel across Canada in my van. I'm in my van right now. What Bill mentioned is true. In Alberta and B.C., when I was there last winter, I was checked with my service dog, and because I'm from Ontario, they said I couldn't come. That's ridiculous. I'm travelling. We need to fix that problem.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I agree, and that's what I was going to ask Bill to talk about as well, because that is the reality right now. When you move from one part of Canada to another, the standards are different.

Here you are as a veteran. You have your dog with you to provide the standard of care that you require to live the life you want to. You testified earlier about being able to go off antipsychotic drugs. I think that is amazing.

I wonder if you could talk about what changes you see when you move from province to province. You talked about moving to British Columbia. What was one of the biggest changes that you noted?

• (1705)

**Mr. William Webb:** Denial of public access is the biggest one across the board, whether it be government, civic or provincial buildings.

I appreciate the separation between federal and provincial jurisdictions, but we have federal members of Parliament sitting on organizations that are pushing those organizations' agenda to write policy that also now affects the Competition Act, because if you're a service dog provider and you don't belong to ADI in B.C., you can't practise your position. You're put at a disadvantage.

Because this is all human rights law, there's no money in it, so lawyers aren't going to get involved. In the end, that leaves the veteran being abused by the system consistently.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** In your opinion, what needs to happen at VAC in order for veterans across Canada to safely and securely obtain a service dog?

**Mr. William Webb:** I definitely need VAC to stay out of the development of the standards process. Veterans Affairs should support it wholeheartedly but take an independent, outside approach, because service dog organizations have made huge inroads to push their agenda within the department itself. It's rampant. I run into it all the time. That's why Veterans Affairs needs to stay out of it and stay completely impartial in the process of a standard.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm afraid that's time.

Up next for five minutes, we have MP Ruff, please.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

First off, I give my personal thanks to you, Bill and Marc. My assumption is that Carl is a former member of the Canadian Forces too, just based on his stellar haircut.

I spent 25 years in the infantry myself and only retired two years ago. I know where you're coming from. I want to thank you for your service.

I'm fortunate. I'm not dealing with some of the challenges many others have, but a lot of my friends and former colleagues do suffer

and are dependent upon their service dogs to support them. As you stated, for some of them.... What standard to they meet? There is no standard here.

I was fortunate to be part of this committee when I first got elected. I haven't been on it in the last almost eight months. I'm glad to be back. I'm a little shocked to see some of the challenges we're facing here.

I want to go back to you, Sergeant Webb, on some of your comments. I totally agree. I think we need to keep the politicians and even the government out of the business of deciding standards. That isn't for elected officials.

What organization...? Do you guys have a suggestion? How do we select that process to set these standards? I want you to elaborate a bit more on that, Sergeant Webb.

**Mr. William Webb:** The process has already started with the HRSO, which the Canadian Association for Animal-Assisted Support Services is involved in. There's an independent body.

I want to say that Joanne Moss's organization, which is completely independent, gets attacked by industry all the time for the work they're trying to do in staying impartial. The independent study is happening right now to try to put together a national standard. That just needs to be allowed to happen.

I challenge all of you to go on and google three service dog organizations' websites. Look for a copy of their standard. It will not be there. The only published standard available is through Courageous Companions. It's the only one that has its standard up on its website. Nobody else does. They talk about standards, but they won't make them public. The only publicly available standard right now is from one organization. It's not a national standard, but it's published. It's there so people can see it.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Yes, I totally agree with that. I'm a big believer in the transparency side of it.

The question I'm going to ask of all three witnesses, really quickly here, is this: How do we move forward? Again, I've heard from friends of mine, former colleagues, who are frustrated with this lack of a decision or the slow pace in moving forward on this issue. To me, this isn't rocket science. This is something we should be able to solve quite quickly. It's not going to be perfect and we're still going to have challenges, but we need to get these national standards established.

In your view, how long should we take to steer whatever independent organization forward and get a standard established, so that this is common and we're not running into these mobility and service challenges across the country?

I can start with you, Marc.

• (1710)

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** That's a tough question to answer. Obviously I'm going to preach for my choir, because my standards are really high. I go with safety. Safety is across the board, as well as professionalism, etiquette and things like that. We're not just strolling with a service dog. This service dog needs to be invisible to the public and not become an obstruction.

It's hard for me to tell you who to go see to get some advice. I would be honest and say Ms. Moss. Go and see her. She's impartial. She's been doing this for 20 years. I guess that's the solution right now. She's been implicated in so much stuff. She's aware of standards.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** It's not so much about who, but how long?

To me, some of these standards do exist. How long before we get this established?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** It's not rocket science, as you said, sir. It's not difficult. We just sit down and say that these are the procedures. Are they safe? Yes, they are. Then we have to train people to make sure that these standards [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and answered at the end of the day. It's not just saying, "You're my buddy; you're good." No, it doesn't work like that.

**Mr. William Webb:** That's a long-winded officer's answer, Marc.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** It happens.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that's time, guys.

I see, Mrs. Moss, you have your hand up. Is this in relation to this question?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes, it is.

**The Chair:** We'll have to come back to you.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Up next we have MP Fillmore for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** I'll start by saying thanks to the witnesses and to those who have served in the CAF, and to Mrs. Moss for your service as well with dogs.

I want to start by chatting with you, Mr. Webb. I don't know if you prefer Bill, Sergeant Webb or Mr. Webb. If you give an indication, I'll follow that.

You mentioned a few things, and I know it's all clear in your head, but if you could help it get clear in our heads, that would be wonderful.

You mentioned that there are predatory trainers out there. You said that we've gone from eight dog training providers to 132, and that gives us some indication that there is some interest in the dollars. You also said that the training that your dog received is not accepted by the B.C. government for transit operators and that kind of thing. What I'm trying to understand—and forgive me—is whether the problem is that the training your dog received wasn't good enough or that provincial governments and other organizations don't accept it because it doesn't have the right stamp on it.

**Mr. William Webb:** Exactly. It doesn't have the right stamp.

The service dog act in B.C. does not measure outcomes of training or standards of training. They only have what they call the "public access test". They don't assess or look at the organization that I got my dog from and the standard that my dog was trained to. It's all about industry infiltrating government policy by being in the right place at the right time, by having members of Parliament sit on boards as active treasurers or chairs to push that organization's agenda. That's what's happened in B.C., Alberta and Nova Scotia.

I'm not afraid as an end-user—I'm not a trainer but an end-user—to call a spade a spade. When it comes to pushing their agenda, the industry is extremely predatory, and they'll do whatever it takes to push their agenda. One provider specifically, and that's ADI/IGDF, will push hard for their brand. They're affiliated with Wounded Warriors and they have inroads with Veterans Affairs and provincial government staffers. They're everywhere, and it's wrong. It needs to stop, and not just with them. All providers need to just step out.

Veterans Affairs can support that by suggesting to all the providers to send in all their documentation to the human resources standards organizations—their standards, documents, training manuals, all of that—and let them put something comprehensive together under one roof. If they have all the information from all the providers, the process would probably go pretty quickly.

• (1715)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** You feel that the Canada General Standards Board's attempt failed because there were some predatory training organizations.

**Mr. William Webb:** Yes. At the same time as B.C. was doing work on their act, there were members sitting on the CGSB who did not disclose to CGSB that B.C. was working on developing an act, and vice versa. They did not tell the B.C. government that they were working with CGSB to develop a national standard. There's a huge conflict there with being transparent in the process. If you look at the members that were a part of those organizations, both CGSB and the provincial government, you see 95% of them were all aligned with one organization, whether directly or indirectly. Where's the fairness in that? There isn't, because the end-user suffers.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** I see that.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** May I add something really important, sir?

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Please.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** In the same idea, if you google the Alberta governmental service dog organization, you see there is one person in Alberta who is connected to a friend who assesses all the dogs of Alberta. There's just one person who decides who gets a service dog card or not. That's not okay either.

**Mr. William Webb:** There's no oversight in Alberta or B.C. over the act and how it's implemented, including the production of IDs and the assessments. There's no oversight at all.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Thank you both.

**The Chair:** Up next, for two and a half minutes, we have MP Desilets, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have another brief question for Mr. Lapointe.

We won't let you go.

I want to remind you that I have only two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Okay.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Veterans Affairs Canada funds Wounded Warriors Canada. Since Veterans Affairs Canada doesn't have any standards for training and certification, it seems to rely on Wounded Warriors Canada to do the work.

Do you feel that the department has, in some way, given the task of setting standards to Wounded Warriors Canada because it isn't able to do so on its own?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Are you talking about Wounded Warriors Canada?

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Yes.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** I personally know the two people running this organization, Scott Maxwell and Phil Ralph. I would tell you to pay close attention. They really like to pretend that they know what they're doing, in order to become more popular with the veterans. However, they don't have any experience. I'm just talking about service dogs. At this time, Wounded Warriors Canada's dogs come from four organizations. We must pay close attention to these organizations because they're very questionable. They work with sub-organizations in order to collect slightly damaged rescue dogs and give them to veterans. The veterans end up with a dog that has issues, in addition to their own issues. This happens very often. I'm not kidding. I've even seen an organization take a very good service dog away from a veteran and sell it to a civilian. I was there and I witnessed it. I'm telling you, there's a lot going on in this area. It's unbelievable.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** How do you explain that Veterans Affairs Canada is funding this organization? Is the department aware of this?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** No, I don't think that the department is aware of this. That's politics. You make agreements with people whom you know, and you botch things up. That's how it works. There aren't any reference checks. There isn't any follow up with veterans to see whether their dog is ultimately helping them or whether they would recommend the organization to someone. There isn't any survey to determine what the veterans think. I don't know how many veterans in Canada currently have or have had a service dog. Perhaps a survey should be conducted to find out whether they would recommend that veterans have a service dog and which organization they would recommend and why.

• (1720)

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** In your opinion, do the standards—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that's your time, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Okay.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have MP Blaney up next, for two and a half minutes, please.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Moss, if I could come directly to you, based on the testimony we heard prior to this and to what you said, it sounds like market share and turf issues may have created roadblocks to developing—and I'm going to get this acronym right—CGSB NSCs for service dogs.

Wouldn't this be a common challenge when developing national service standards for Canada when bringing together marketplace competitors? In the process that you're working through, how are you addressing that?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** I'm going to take a little step back in time to answer your question, if I may.

This organization exists because of advocacy work in the disability community more than 20 years ago. Because this sector is so fragmented—and it was even more so then—we needed to come up with an impartial organization that would advocate with and for Canadians with disabilities and other stakeholders to make sure that the gaps would be filled and the dots would be connected. Doing that requires bringing all these different stakeholders together, including the service providers, discipline sectors, and so on. It's a huge mandate.

Yes, there's going to be adversity, but we actually work through that. We've done a fair amount of work in terms of consensus-based decision-making and appreciative inquiry to work with all the different interest groups. There is always going to be that adversity, but we also emphasize that this is not an adversarial process.

In other words, our standards, our national standards of Canada, have been published by the Standards Council of Canada. They're on their website. They are ready to proceed to development. I'm actually working on the first technical committee. We've had a phenomenal response from across Canada for people interested in participating on the technical committee.

That's how the process starts. It starts with a technical committee that will vote and will work very diligently on a draft standard. Later on, it will go to public consultation. We'll get feedback, and it will come back to the technical committee. We'll make revisions as necessary. We'll clean up the draft standards, and then it will go to the Standards Council of Canada for their review. If all is good, the Standards Council will publish that national standard.

We are ready to go. We're out of the gate and proceeding to development. The reason we are doing it is that this is exactly the nature of our mandate. We are here to make sure that people don't fall through the cracks, and neither do the animals, and also to make sure that we are able to bring justice into this environment for the sake of the end-users and their animals.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Moss. I'm afraid that's time.

Up next we have MP Davidson for five minutes.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I think I'm taking that.

Scot, are you good to go, or did you want me to do it? I don't want to take you—

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Cathay, I think you're taking the spot. Thanks.

**The Chair:** MP Wagantall, go ahead.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I'm sorry. We're missing our fearless leader today, so we're kind of jumping around here. Thank you.

I want to bring up an individual I just met in my province who is a veteran and has a responsibility within government. He got a service dog from this organization that has not been mentioned much today, but he didn't realize what he had. He was told he had a service dog, but once he met with a good friend of mine who's involved in the research in Saskatchewan, he realized that he had an obedience dog, which is not a service dog.

Marc, hi. It's good to see you.

I'm going to ask both Marc and Ms. Moss, very briefly, to each talk about the dynamics of what we need to do here when I hear about concerns such as that and the importance of realizing, even for our veterans, the difference between an obedience dog and a service dog and what that is.

Then, of course, Dr. Dell and Dr. Chalmers have done extensive research at our university in regard to the importance of having to have the individual working with the dog from as early on as possible, because veterans understand teams.

Another critical component is that they have to have continued follow-up. This individual was given this dog and they said farewell. He has asked them to come back, and two years later there's still no response.

I'd like your perspective, because these are the key values and key things that we need when we're talking about standards.

Marc, do you want to go first, and then Ms. Moss?

• (1725)

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Absolutely.

The key foundation of our program is peer support; it's not the service dog. The peer support in itself is between veterans. It's a community. We're all helping ourselves. We're coaching ourselves. We're there for each other in bad times.

Also, you're absolutely right. We need to get that dog together with the veteran as soon as possible and train them as a team to develop this super bond that cannot be attained if I just train a full ser-

vice dog and give it to someone. When I do that, I still have to train that person and show them.

I'll give you an example in my answer.

We're dancing together and we know the moves, but now I'm changing partners. The other partner doesn't know the moves yet, right? The service dog is going to a new dancing partner. The support needs to be there to frame that up in making sure that this person knows all the moves.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** That's very good.

Ms. Moss, would you comment?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** I'll speak to the standards component.

I'm actually involved with the SUAP project as well. I'm very familiar with Colleen and the rest of the team, just FYI.

Because I'm preparing for the information session for the technical committee members, organizations have been encouraged to submit their publicly available documents. We're not receiving any documents that aren't published because we don't want to get into copyright issues. We're definitely looking at all kinds of requirements, guidelines and standards. It's essentially a major inventory of the current practices.

This process of standards development is also informed through existing policy and regulations, etc., and any kind of documentation looking at what the landscape looks like at this point in time. Then that's where we start with the first standard. As a committee, we will look at the vocabulary being used throughout this sector, including service dog vocabulary, as well as the definitions and a code of ethics, nationally. We will start drilling down from there.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Perfect. Thank you.

Very briefly, what are your views on multiple organizations having a recognized governmental program to provide service dogs to injured individuals?

It's interesting. I'm in a small business world. There are a variety of individuals or organizations that want to provide service dogs, but if those standards are there, we don't have to pick which ones would be the providers: They have to meet the standards. Is that correct?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Yes, but we need someone to make sure they do that.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Exactly. Yes, I understand that.

Ms. Moss, would you comment?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes, you're right, Marc.

What happens there is that once a national standard is published, we start to look at the conformity assessment options for those who wish to use the standard. At that point, again the stakeholders will be brought together, and they will decide. Some folks may want to still stick with their current situation; others may want to look at third party or second party accreditation of their program, and so forth. That will depend on a lot of variables once the standard is actually published.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm afraid that's time, Cathay.

Up next we have MP Casey for five minutes.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm actually going to pick up where Mrs. Wagantall left off with you, Ms. Moss, please.

Were you or was your organization involved in any way in the CGSB process—which was aborted—in connection with trying to develop a standard for service dogs for veterans?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Yes. I'll keep it as short as I can.

As I mentioned—

**Mr. Sean Casey:** No, you have five minutes. You can use it all. I'm quite interested in this. You go right ahead.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** I'm going to backtrack a little bit again.

Our organization was receiving a horrendous number of calls from veterans and their families concerning the situation. At that time, back in 2012, a lot of people were committing suicide or attempting it.

That's when our organization developed the Major-General Lew MacKenzie Fund, and donations started coming in for that. We used up the fund and have been trying to replenish it ever since.

We very happily held two national military service dog summits and brought together a lot of stakeholders. The Canadian General Standards Board was one of the organizations that wanted to present at those events to talk about standards, and they did.

As I mentioned earlier, after the second event took place, at the very end one of the veterans stood up and asked me ask if it was okay if all of them voted on whether or not our organization could represent everyone. She said we were the only impartial organization that exists in this sector. She said that they'd like me to see if they can have a new proposal to CGSB to see if it's feasible to develop this standard. It was a unanimous decision, so I wrote the new work item proposal and submitted it to the Canadian General Standards Board.

The process did start out fully with the intention of doing the study itself prior to developing the standard. Internal conversations between Veterans Affairs, the CGSB and others we weren't aware of were happening behind the scenes, and a decision was made that they were going to proceed with the development of the standard.

Back in 2019-2020, since the previous process had failed, we went to ground zero and conducted a year-long service dog feasibility study. We actually did an industry and marketplace study. That is available on our website and in my briefing as well.

• (1730)

**Mr. Sean Casey:** The first process failed, and you have now embarked on a process that holds some promise. What is the status of your discussions with Veterans Affairs Canada or with the Government of Canada with respect to giving them an update, or any involvement that government might have? I mean, I would hope they're interested in your work.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Veterans Affairs has been involved, as I said, with organizations like ADI and Wounded Warriors. That's certainly their prerogative. We certainly have done our best to keep them informed. The staff keeps changing, though, so that's very difficult.

However, they are aware of the national standard that we are about to develop, and they have reneged. They have said, no, they're not able to participate. For an organization that is so interested in developing national standards, I found it quite curious that, as Bill was saying, they would not want to at least support it if not necessarily get involved in it. It is a very specialized area. We understand that the government doesn't necessarily want to participate, but the government, the public sector, is very much a stakeholder in this work.

I am pretty sure that we can do this together, because we're going to have zero tolerance for adversarial behaviour. That's absolutely not acceptable. We will get nowhere fast again. There will be zero tolerance for that kind of behaviour. At this point in time, we will move forward regardless of which organizations want to participate or not. It's time. We will work together with stakeholders who wish to proceed and help our veterans and their families.

The other things that people need are support, information and resources—incredible support, resources and information. The standards are one of many tools in a tool kit, if you will. They are part of the bigger picture. They will not fix everything, but what they will do is provide an opportunity down the road so that if any level of government wants to reference standards in their legislation, they won't reference a brand; they will now reference a national standard of Canada that was developed in a fair and transparent process through basically regulated requirements. The Standards Council of Canada Act also guards this work and its integrity.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid not, Mr. Casey.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Thank you very much, Ms. Moss.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Up next is MP Doherty, for five minutes.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Give me the word, Todd.



**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I believe we were giving this time to Cathay.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Committee colleagues, you're going to get really tired of listening to me, aren't you? I am just so passionate about this issue. What we're hearing through this whole process, quite honestly, has been very educational. I am very grateful for that.

I want to take a moment to talk to Carl, who's sitting here and obviously has a role to play.

Carl, I want you to talk a little bit about your organization and what you guys are doing. Out of what you're hearing today, clearly we as members of the committee need to understand what it is we've actually been tasked with here. I feel that's getting a lot clearer today.

First of all, what do the names Audeamus and Meliora mean? I'm showing my ignorance here.

• (1735)

**Mr. Carl Fleury (Meliora Service Dogs):** I will speak in French, because it is my first language.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Sure.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Carl Fleury:** Meliora's symbol is the dandelion. This is recognized as the symbol of military children. This flower, with its little seeds that fly away, is the symbol of our organization.

I personally use a service dog. We've been talking about standards for the past while. I agree that we really need to set a standard across the country.

It should also be noted that anyone can order on Amazon, in just five minutes, a service dog identification card that will be valid here in Canada. This situation is an issue right now. It's absurd. Anyone can get a service dog identification card without taking a course. The card costs \$35 and is delivered free of charge to your home.

Once we've established a national occupational standard, we must set a national standard for service dog identification cards. This could be a dog passport, or a recognized card routinely issued with the dog. We need something similar to a Canadian passport, but for service dogs. As a result, there would be no way to access counterfeit cards. It's necessary to eliminate all these types of cards that anyone can order. If someone goes to a public place with their dog and shows this type of card to the person in charge and the person accepts it, given the lack of a set standard, and then something goes wrong, we'll end up paying the price.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** What I love to see is the charitable side of this, and you guys do all of this work. A number of different organizations do this, and there's no huge cost for the dog.

I have an autistic grandson. The family would have loved to have a proper service dog, but they would have had to pay thousands of dollars. Fortunately, I have a son who I think was born to be a trainer, so the dog does what the family needs him to do.

How do you make sure that dogs are not being sold as something they are not without these standards? How much corruption has been going on when a \$30,000 dog really isn't capable of doing what people have been told it will do?

Do you find that this is happening?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Carl Fleury:** I dealt with a breeder through the service dog route, so his puppies were fit to become service dogs. It's still an animal, and sometimes the dog can't be trained properly. In my case, things went very well and my service dog and I were a perfect match.

I would have a hard time—

[*English*]

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** I would like to answer that.

When you go to Alberta and B.C., they ask you to prove that the service dog reacts to your disability. For example, I'm having a seizure. I need to pretend to have a seizure for my dog to interrupt me and show that I've trained my dog as a service dog. That is ridiculous. You cannot fake—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** You can't fake a seizure.

• (1740)

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** You cannot fake stuff like that, but you can train that into a dog, right?

How do we know if that's a real service dog? You'll see. A dog never lies. You will see it. It's professionally trained. It's there for the member. It's not obstructive, right? It's doing its job. It has tasks. I would say in my book that it's at least a minimum of three tasks: nightmare interruption, grounding, and exiting a building, because you're in a panic or whatever.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Sorry, MP Wagantall, but that's time.

Next we have MP Samson for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you for your service, all of you, and for the excellent presentations you made today.

It's only been four meetings, but it seems as though we've had info from all different angles, and sometimes I have questions.

On July 20, 1969, we went to the moon, and in 2021, we still can't establish standards. That's unbelievable. We've got to get through this, and we've got to get through this as quickly as we can to support our veterans in their communities. It's got to be a top priority as we move forward.

Mr. Webb, I really enjoyed your presentation. It was very factual, clear and concise, but I'd like you to expand.

Throughout the last two or three years, really, it's been evident that the service provider seems to have been the cause of the.... The Canadian General Standards Board was the problem. You seem to make that clear.

Mr. Webb, if you were the decision-maker today, what would you do? How are we going to get through this? Tomorrow or next month, how are we going to have standards? You talked about getting Veterans Affairs out of there. Could you tell me in one minute how you would do this? How would you establish standards?

**Mr. William Webb:** I would ask all the producers to provide all of their documents, their standards, their training methodology—all of that information. All of that could be deposited into one central location. The standard could then be pulled out of all that information. The reluctance of industry to share that information among each other is such a problem, because everybody believes that their way is the right way, and in fact it's not.

There should be one.... I could go on about everybody having to have a standardized service dog vest so that everybody's vest would look the same across the board if we had a national standard. I could get into all of that.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Thank you. I like that. Share, and if you don't share, too bad; we move on. We've just got to cut the mustard, if you'll allow me. I know Scott would appreciate that.

When you talk about access, it kills me. I know that Nova Scotia has done some really good work about access with your service dog. Your being denied is just a sad story. That's such an important part. I'll give you 30 seconds on that one.

**Mr. William Webb:** You can call me on Monday morning. I will be heading home Sunday from Manitoba with my new service dog, and I guarantee you that when I get on BC Ferries on Monday, I will be denied access to the passenger decks because my service dog is from Courageous Companions and not Assistance Dogs International.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** That's terrible.

**Mr. William Webb:** It's going to happen.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Thank you.

Monsieur Lapointe, you made the reference—and I think we've heard it right through the four meetings—that service dogs are crucial for people with PTSD and veterans with PTSD. It works. I've spoken to a number of veterans and I've seen with my own two eyes veterans with their service dogs and how it really helps them. I think we know that. Now we just have to get to the task.

Monsieur Lapointe, you brought up a couple of points. I think maybe you want to expand on them, but I really enjoyed hearing you talk about that funding insurance that the Americans are paying

for, and also that veterans survey. Those two sound good. Do you want to expand on those very quickly?

● (1745)

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** Basically, veterans have a certain financial burden at some point, and adding the service dog adds to the costs. If by *malchance* your dog gets injured or needs surgery and things like that, it's overwhelming, not only with our traumatic condition, our PTSD, but it's “Oh fuck, my dog is going to the hospital.” I'm talking like a real person on the street here.

It would be helpful if Trupanion could be paid by Veterans Affairs Canada for those services and those surgeries. Those are thousands of dollars, right? That would be helpful.

[Translation]

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I find this idea compelling. It would involve providing insurance, as is done for a number of other things.

[English]

I was going to fire at Carl, because I really liked the passport. I hope we're—

**The Chair:** Darrell, I'm afraid that's time. I'm sorry, guys.

Up next we have MP Desilets, please, for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Should we be setting standards? Should we just establish criteria and let the provinces make their own decisions in this area? It isn't clear to me yet.

In your opinion, Mr. Fleury, would it make sense to conduct a national survey of veterans who own assistance dogs to determine their level of satisfaction and whether the people whom they're dealing with provide good after-sales service, for example?

**Mr. Carl Fleury:** That's a very good question.

I think that this would make sense. At Meliora, we do our best to provide outstanding service. We're veterans and first responders who help others. This would be a good thing.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Mr. Lapointe, if I were to ask you the same question, how would you respond? Should we make that recommendation in our report?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** I think that it would be good to do this with the help of Ms. Moss from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. Research on service dogs and veterans has already been under way for four years.

That said, we must be careful when it comes to people's perceptions. Conducting a survey can be a good thing. However, people who are negative and who always see life in bleak terms may not respond positively to the survey questions.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** They won't respond positively.

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** It's a matter of taking some and leaving some. Certain people will say that it's necessary and that it has changed their life. It's like with anything else. Some are happy, some aren't.

Even so, I think that we need to get input from our veteran members. If they're given the chance to provide input on what the organization should be and on what has helped them, they'll feel more involved.

In addition, you would have access to fair information from an ethical standpoint. Since the information would come from veterans, there wouldn't be any bias. The council formed would be able to decide, based on the veterans' recommendations, whether it's necessary to monitor a particular organization more closely.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** This would help ensure that the recommendations are a little clearer.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm afraid that's time.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** No problem, Mr. Chair. You have my utmost respect.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Blaney, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to come to you again, Bill, and then follow up with Ms. Moss.

If I understand correctly, all standards in the service dog industry, whether in Canada or globally, are applicable only to the organizations that develop them and their members' organizations. I want to make sure that I have that right.

As the other part of that question, why is it so important to have a third party organization actually review the work that is being done?

Hopefully that makes sense, Bill.

• (1750)

**Mr. William Webb:** Yes, they're for that organization's input only. ADI has their standard, and it's for their members and it's not public. There's only one standard right now that is open for other industry users to use within the service dog world, and that's the Meghan search and rescue standard for service dogs. It's on the

website. It's available for people and the industry to use if they choose. Other than that, there are really none.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

Ms. Moss, would you comment?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Is it the same question?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** It's the same question, and the other part is about the third party organization.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** The idea of a national standard of Canada again is that it remain impartial so that the process is fair when the standard is being developed and is not leaning toward one particular brand, as I mentioned earlier. It's not just the brands. Perhaps you can appreciate that in the service dog world or in any of this work, there are a multitude of different stakeholders from sectors, communities, disciplines, etc.

It's important that all of those people at the table be on the TC, the technical committee, because right now I have to make sure that the TC is going to be balanced. I have representation for about five different categories as well as five different regions across the country. There are rules to establish a national standard of Canada that we are obviously following very closely.

That said, the current situation in this environment in the service dog industry is very fragmented, and there's no rhyme or reason. Anybody can hang a shingle on their door. That's why once a standard is actually developed and published by the Standards Council of Canada, there will be an impartial standard that everybody helped to produce, that all of the various stakeholders had an opportunity to produce. Those who don't want to participate don't have to, but where it gets interesting is that if the government says, "My goodness, this is an amazing job. We like what we see here. We're going to reference those standards in our legislation", then it becomes law. If it becomes law, that actually puts pressure on all of the industries involved to look at what kind of certification is going to happen to comply with the standard, because then it's no longer a choice; it's mandatory.

I've been researching this for over 20 years, and one of the nice things about NSCs is that not only can they be referenced in legislation, but when it comes to the conformity assessment piece, there's also a huge opportunity for third party accreditation bodies that already exist within Canada's national standards system, so we could turn to those organizations. Again, organizations may decide that they don't necessarily want to go through one particular accreditation body; there may be three or four, depending on the organization and the cost of accreditation.

There will be a lot of variables at that point in time, but there's definitely an opportunity for the national standards of Canada to also inform public policy, and through the process, the more public sector representation we get, the better. That way, we can look at our shared objectives—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** —so that the standards will also achieve those shared objectives.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Up next is MP Ruff. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Thanks, Chair.

How much time am I going to have?

**The Chair:** You have five minutes.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Thanks.

I'm going to start off with just a comment. I'm assuming with regard to veterans that we're talking about more than those serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, but the RCMP and our police services as well. They matter.

I'm going to quote an organization that's in my backyard. I don't think they have any skin in the game, so I think this will be unbiased, but I'm trying to make a point here.

They say, "Service dogs are not just companions providing confidence and reassurance that the handler is not alone, but integral for the entire healing process, helping with emotional self-regulation and mobility while performing various essential tasks and supporting activities of daily living based upon the individual's requirements. A service dog can promote healthy connections with individuals prone to self-isolation and withdrawal, thus offering hope and promoting recovery in the form of post-traumatic growth."

I'm hoping there's nothing there than anybody would disagree with.

I really want to go back, though, to my previous question and give Ms. Moss a chance to answer it, because it's about time. Playing devil's advocate a little bit here, I think MP Samson made the comment that we got to the moon 50 or 60 years ago, yet here we are failing to establish standards.

I want to go back, Ms. Moss, again to understand why standards failed to be set a few years ago. Why can't we just adopt another country's standards? Because you're involved in this, you said you've already been a year getting the technical standards and groups set up, so how much more time do we need?

Dogs mean different things to different veterans. Safety is of vital importance, but ultimately it's the mobility aspect, or accessibility from my point of view. I don't care what the dog does as long as it's safe and it does that for that veteran. When Sergeant Webb gets on the ferry next week, he should be able to take his darn dog and take care of himself.

Can you comment on that, Ms. Moss?

• (1755)

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** I'll do my best.

We haven't actually been working on our national.... Our notices of intent were announced in March, actually, so there were a variety of reasons.

Because we work with such a diverse group of stakeholders, we also look at readiness for moving forward. There's also the matter of finances. This work costs money to do, so we had to make sure that we had resources and that we were able to look at sustaining

those resources, as well as working with an accredited SDO that met our needs as an organization, given our mandate.

All those things had to be taken into consideration. We announced our notices of intent and they were published on the Standards Council's website in March, and now we're proceeding to set up the technical committee. That is actually very quick. It's only been a couple of months, so we're actually breaking some new ground pretty quickly.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** How much more time do you need, keeping this simplified? If you have less money, it means you have to do it faster if you want to get the end goal.

As my other question, why can't we just adopt the standards of another country that has already been down this path?

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** Nobody has been down this path. That's the interesting part. Most people assume that the infrastructure already exists elsewhere, but it does not. That's why we're doing it.

One thing with the national standards of Canada and internationally is that you do not write a standard if it already exists. The reason for doing this is that it's non-existent. That's why Veterans Affairs spent \$300,000 in an attempt to develop standards.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** If I have any time left, Chair, I'll go back to the statement that I made earlier and go back to Mr. Lapointe or Mr. Webb. Is there any disagreement there with anything that I've just stated, or even Ms. Moss?

**Mr. William Webb:** I don't disagree with Ms. Moss at all. If it takes a year, it takes a year. If it takes two, it takes two. It needs to be done right. As an end-user and somebody who's not involved with the operation of a service dog organization, if it takes more than two years, I'm totally satisfied with that, because it will benefit.... I know there is no standard anywhere, internationally, when it comes to service dogs.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** One thing I can say about the timelines, Mr. Ruff, is that once our group has its first meeting of the technical committee.... We actually haven't even formed the first technical committee. They are the group that then decides how quickly the standard will be developed. It's based on people's availability and commitments and so forth. If the committee wants to meet every week for two hours, then it will go faster. If we break down into working groups during that process, it will probably go more quickly, etc. It really depends on the availability of the technical committee members.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have enough time for a very short question from MP Lalonde. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** It may not be a question. I know that some of you have already been asked several questions. I'd like to hear your closing remarks instead.

[*English*]

I'll leave it very open. Very quickly, what final thoughts would you like to share with the committee on this very important study?

[*Translation*]

I first want to hear from Ms. Moss, and then from Mr. Lapointe, Mr. Fleury and Mr. Webb.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'd like very brief responses, please.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** I'm not sure. I didn't hear the question, because my sound cut out.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** This is the final day of our study. I'm looking for final thoughts for all of us.

**Ms. Joanne Moss:** My final thoughts would simply be, as mentioned in my opening remarks, that we put aside our differences, regardless of what those differences look like. Right now we want to make sure that our veterans and their families are well served. I think that's something we can all agree on, and therefore we need to build from there.

• (1800)

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapointe and Mr. Fleury, what would you like to say to wrap up?

**Mr. Marc Lapointe:** As I said earlier, an organization will be needed to oversee all the standards. Someone on the ground will be needed to make sure that the organizations are doing the job properly, that the dogs are of good quality and that they all, or almost all, meet the standards. Standards policing services will be needed at the provincial level, in some manner, to ensure that the standards are being met, that the veterans are safe with their dogs, and that the dogs aren't a danger to the public. That's the key.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Webb, what are your final thoughts?

**Mr. William Webb:** I want to see the independent process of that impartial third party take on the standard. To use a quote from John F. Kennedy, hopefully they can speak softly and carry a big stick to keep the industry in line and out of meddling in the process. There are ways they could participate, and independence is the way to go.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I will have to jump in here. I appreciate everybody going a little longer today so we could get in the full meeting. I think it was absolutely worth it, and I want to thank all the witnesses who have taken the time to appear, not just today but throughout this study.

To members of the committee, this is our last scheduled meeting before the summer adjournment. I'd like to take a moment to thank you all for the great work we undertook as a committee. I look forward to continuing it when we come back from adjournment.

Do I have consent to adjourn today's meeting?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, everybody. Have a fantastic summer. Well done. I will be tabling our last report tomorrow.

The meeting is adjourned.





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