



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Finance

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 022

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Chair: Karina Gould



Standing Committee on Finance

Thursday, February 5, 2026

• (0820)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.)): Good morning. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 22 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, December 10, 2025, and the motion adopted on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, the committee shall resume consideration of Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

I would like to welcome Minister McKnight, Minister of Veterans Affairs. She is joined by Christine McDowell, acting deputy minister, and Steven Harris, senior assistant deputy minister. As well, Jonathan Adams, director general of finance, and Nathan Svenson, senior director, disability and health care policy, are joining us by video conference today. Virtual witnesses have conducted a mandatory witness onboarding test.

Minister, you have five minutes for opening remarks. Please go ahead.

Thank you.

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, colleagues. Thank you for the invitation to come and speak to you this morning about budget 2025.

[*English*]

Madam Chair and members, through the budget implementation act, Bill C-15, our government is delivering on our commitments to Canadians, spending less on government operations so that we can invest more in Canadians, including veterans. Canada owes a debt of gratitude to those who have served and who do serve our country in uniform. The Government of Canada remains steadfast in its responsibility to deliver the care, benefits and recognition that our veterans and their families deserve.

As demonstrated in budget 2025, we are taking concrete steps to ensure that veterans receive the benefits in a timely manner. We are investing \$184.9 million over four years, beginning in 2026-27, and \$40.1 million ongoing, to stabilize the disability benefit service delivery system. This investment includes \$24 million over two years to modernize IT infrastructure and operational processes to manage increasing demand. For the first time, this commitment is

backed by permanent funding for the years ahead and reaffirms our commitment to Canada's veterans.

Additionally, the budget aligns the reimbursement rate under the cannabis for medical purposes benefit with current market prices. To be clear, we are protecting access to medically authorized cannabis for those who are eligible to claim it. The adjustment in budget 2025 does not impact veterans' authorizations for reimbursement, eligibility for the benefit or the daily gram limits. On a cash basis, this adjustment will provide \$129 million in savings annually.

Additionally, and in line with public sector accounting practices, future savings must be recognized immediately with changes to benefits that impact long-term liabilities owed by the federal government. As such, budget 2025 accounts for \$4.23 billion in savings, the long-term impact of the reimbursement rate change. With this adjustment to the reimbursement rate for the cannabis for medical purposes benefit from \$8.50 per gram to \$6 per gram, the actual impact to Veterans Affairs Canada's annual budget remains less than 2% on a cash basis. Veterans can and should be assured that no reductions to any other benefit will be included in these savings.

I would also like to address the proposed amendments to the Pension Act, the veterans well-being regulations, the Department of Veterans Affairs Act and the veterans health care regulations that are included in Bill C-15.

The proposed amendments to the Pension Act will clarify that "province" does not include Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut for an annual adjustment method for disability pensions and related benefits. The BIA is also clarifying the rules to make it clear for veterans how annual adjustments are calculated for the former earnings loss benefit and to confirm that these calculations have been applied consistently. Furthermore, it clarifies how the maximum monthly charge for accommodation and meals is calculated in the long-term care program.

Taken together, these updates make the calculation methods easier to understand and remove any confusion about how they should be interpreted. Overall, they provide veterans more clarity and transparency. These updates do not change how benefits have been calculated in the past. They will not have a retroactive impact on reimbursements that have already been disbursed. To be very clear, veterans will not be asked to or required to repay payments received for these benefits.

Definitions are being clarified in the legislation to reflect long-standing practices at Veterans Affairs Canada. These clarifications will not result in retroactive overpayments. Canadian Armed Forces members, CAF veterans and their survivors will continue to receive the same benefits they currently receive. The same formulas that have been used will continue to be used when calculating these benefits. Under the Pension Act, CAF veteran pension increases will continue to be calculated as they have been, using the higher of the consumer price index and the wage rate increase. This is exactly as it was prior to the introduction of the budget implementation act.

● (0825)

Colleagues, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, for those opening remarks.

We will now begin with Mr. Tolmie for six minutes.

Welcome to the finance committee.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, for having me here today.

Thank you, Minister, for joining us today.

There are a couple of questions that I'd like to go over with you today.

In 2021, your government privatized veteran rehabilitation services through a \$572-million contract with PCVRS, approximately \$104 million per year. The Union of Veterans' Affairs Employees calculated that this contract costs 25% more than public service delivery. Now you're implementing a 7% budget reduction. Let me understand this. You've increased costs by 25% through privatization, and veterans are reporting worse service. Your response is to cut the budget by 7%.

Our Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs will soon be conducting an in-depth study of this contract. Can you explain to this finance committee why taxpayers should pay an extra 25% for something that is performing worse than what came before?

Hon. Jill McKnight: Thank you, Mr. Tolmie, for your question and also for your service to Canada.

I'd like to be clear: We are not cutting the benefits and services that are provided to veterans. We are making an adjustment to the rate of reimbursement for cannabis for medical purposes. The contract with PCVRS that you mentioned has connected veterans with a broader network of health professionals across the country.

Fraser Tolmie: Minister, when I sit in this chair and look at veterans and hear that costs are being cut and that veterans are not being provided the service, there are questions. Right now, the math is not lining up here, so let's do some math together.

With 94% of your budget going to veterans benefits, that leaves 6% for operations, approximately \$468 million. The Prime Minister wants 7% cuts across government, which would be \$546 million from your total budget. You claim that no services will be cut, yet achieving a 7% savings would require eliminating your entire operational budget, and then some. Can you reconcile these numbers for me?

Hon. Jill McKnight: This budget actually demonstrates an investment in veterans. We are investing \$184.9 million over four years, and \$40.1 million ongoing in long-term funding that both stabilizes and modernizes the disability benefit service. We are not cutting. We are investing in veterans' services delivery.

Fraser Tolmie: Minister, when I invest money, I put money into something. When I hear that you're cutting, that is not an investment; that is a reduction. Can we try that answer again?

● (0830)

Hon. Jill McKnight: We are not cutting benefits and services to veterans. We are making an adjustment to the rate of reimbursement for cannabis for medical purposes to align with market rates. Veterans continue to receive the same access to benefits and services that they have received and will continue to receive.

Fraser Tolmie: Let's look at the 7% that you want to cut across the board, which includes Veterans Affairs. Can you explain that to me?

Hon. Jill McKnight: As I said, we are making an adjustment to the rate of reimbursement. We are not making a cut. We are making an investment in the benefits and service delivery to veterans of \$184.9 million with \$40 million ongoing.

Fraser Tolmie: Okay. If you're going to invest, there always has to be a better rate of return. We're not hearing that from veterans about the service they're being provided. How is this reinvestment by cutting the budget going to explain how veterans who are waiting for just normal service, who are being denied claims, are going to get better service? How does this translate into better service with the cuts that you're bringing forward?

Hon. Jill McKnight: As I have said, we are not making cuts. We are making an investment, and with that investment, we will continue to modernize and stabilize service delivery to ensure that veterans receive timely, responsible and accessible support.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Tolmie.

We will now continue with Mr. Fragiskatos for six minutes, please.

Peter Fragiskatos (London Centre, Lib.): Minister, thank you very much for being here. Thank you for the work that you're doing.

I'm going to start with a very general question. I ask this because I think that when constituents and Canadians writ large hear "Veterans Affairs", they think they know—and I'll extend that out to members of Parliament also—what Veterans Affairs does, but I think it's good to put on the record a crystal clear understanding of what your work looks like, and specifically what the department is tasked with carrying out.

What is the mandate of Veterans Affairs Canada?

Hon. Jill McKnight: Veterans Affairs Canada is here to serve those who have served our country. We are committed and we are focused on ensuring that veterans have access to all benefits and services for which they are eligible.

When a veteran serves, we know that so too does their family, and our acknowledgement recognizes that by supporting veterans we are also, at times, supporting their families to ensure that we recognize their long-term commitment to serving Canada.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you.

Can you speak specifically about the transition out of the military and what the process is like, but also specifically how investments of the type that you're overseeing assist in this?

Hon. Jill McKnight: Certainly. Thank you.

Service and after service are not separate phases; they are part of one continuum. The two roles that I hold—and I think this is perhaps what you're referencing—in the capacity as Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence connect the decisions that we make while someone is serving into how it can shape their transition, well-being and opportunities once they have re-entered civilian life.

As I said, when a Canadian chooses to serve, there is an implicit commitment in return. Women and men of the CAF serve with the expectation that their country will take care of them, not only during their service, but long after they take off their uniform. Our responsibility doesn't end at release.

My role is to ensure a smooth, seamless transition from service to civilian life. This means strengthening supports for veterans, aligning the programs of National Defence with Veterans Affairs Canada, and ultimately addressing any gaps in that transition. That can include employment, education, health and family supports.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

You touched on it before I could, but you are obviously the Associate Minister of Defence as well. Canada is now moving toward living up to its NATO commitments. We're seeing massive investments—finally—in defence. This budget speaks to that. Could you go into those details in your capacity as associate minister, and why we're doing this?

• (0835)

Hon. Jill McKnight: Certainly. This budget delivers generational investments in Canada's defence. We're investing billions in our capabilities, our infrastructure and our people to ensure that the

CAF can protect Canada and Canadians in a more complex and dangerous world. The investments that we're making are strengthening both our security and our economy.

We're committing \$1.4 billion over the next 20 years to CAF housing projects nationwide. We're modernizing across all domains with planned investments in aircraft, submarines and light utility vehicles, ensuring that CAF has the equipment it needs, both at home and alongside our allies abroad. We will meet NATO's 2% defence spending target this fiscal year, and we are accelerating investments to put Canada on a path to meeting NATO's 5% defence investment pledge by 2035.

This is a clear commitment to CAF and to Canadians. We are rearming, rebuilding and reinvesting in the Canadian Armed Forces while delivering economic benefits for Canadians today and long into the future.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you for that.

I think it's a very important part of the budget, to say the least. The fact that you're able to highlight it here for us today is obviously crucial.

I want to look at one specific thing that you mentioned, which is housing for those in the Canadian Armed Forces. Why that kind of investment? It's obviously important, but what is the rationale? What will this funding do?

Hon. Jill McKnight: As we know, housing is one key component of quality of life for those who are serving and for their family members. The \$1.4 billion over the next 20 years for CAF housing is going to allow for new builds and construction, which is already under way from Halifax to Cold Lake, improving affordability and quality of life for serving members. We're also using innovative solutions to address urgent needs.

I recently had the opportunity to be in Comox to announce DND's acquisition of 63 units of housing that will have members moving in later this spring. This reflects a practical, solutions-focused approach that is supporting our people.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I think I have 15 seconds. I'll take the opportunity to say that these generational investments in defence that we are seeing certainly serve the country well. There are all sorts of economic benefits that come out of that and tens of thousands of jobs that will be sustained and created.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

We will continue now with Mr. Garon for six minutes.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for joining us today, Minister.

With all due respect, you're not the minister of national defence; you're the Minister of Veterans Affairs. According to the very definition given by the Minister of Finance of what an investment is, a definition nobody agrees with, but we'll use it anyway, almost 100% of your budget is for ongoing expenses, not investments. Since nineteen-twentieths of your budget is spent on benefits, that means one twentieth of your budget goes to providing services.

You say you can reduce daily expenses by 15% over three years while maintaining direct services to veterans. Can you confirm you're able to do that?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: We are protecting benefits and services. We are not making cuts. This budget shows a readjustment.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Okay, so you're protecting services. That's excellent. I'm glad to hear you say you're going to protect services. That's comforting news for our veterans, since, according to the ombud's report, many veterans have to wait 18 months to get service from your department.

Is that what you want to protect?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: The investment that we are making is about stabilizing and modernizing our service delivery so that we can continue to serve veterans.

I appreciate the feedback from the veteran ombud. We have an ongoing dialogue as she continues to highlight opportunities for refinement, improvement and growth. We will continue to serve veterans.

• (0840)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

I understand you have a binder and that the department wrote a few things for you, but we're concerned and our concerns are legitimate. It's our role to bring these concerns to your attention. We also have concerns about French-language services.

You know, there are two official languages in the federal government: English and English to French translation. It shows in the services offered to veterans, who have trouble getting services in French in Quebec.

Is it this poor quality of services in French that you want to protect, by reducing expenses by 15%?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Again, I will emphasize that we are not cutting services for veterans. Veterans are entitled to receive services in the official language of their choice. I know my department has made a great deal of progress on this.

I would turn to my officials to share more specific details on this.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: I understand you think people complain for nothing, but veterans are calling our offices to tell us.

Moreover, departments will be cutting staff. Have you already told Minister Lightbound and the Minister of Finance how many public servants your department will let go?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: As I said, this budget does not have cuts. It has—

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Maybe my question wasn't clear. I'll rephrase it.

Can you guarantee that over the next three years, not a single public servant—not one—will be laid off in your department?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: What I can commit to is that in budget 2025, we are making an investment of \$184.9 million, with ongoing funding of \$40 million a year, to ensure that we can stabilize and modernize the service delivery for veterans.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Chair, it's as if we were talking to the Minister of Finance. We have a parliamentary privilege, which is to get answers. My question is crystal clear, as my uncle Gilles would say, but I can't get an answer.

Did Minister Lightbound and the Minister of Finance give you a staff reduction target number? Do you have that number somewhere in your office? Did they send it to you?

I don't want to hear about your investments. We're talking about a number of employees: Did they share a staff reduction target number with you, yes or no? Have you received a document or a request on the matter?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Right now we have received funding, through budget 2025, to stabilize and modernize the benefits and services we deliver to veterans.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Do you know what's going on in your department, Minister?

My 14 month-old child would have understood the question. I'm asking you—

Carlos Leitão (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Leitão.

Carlos Leitão: The question has been asked more than once, and I think the minister has answered it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leitão, but that's not a point of order.

Mr. Garon, you may continue.

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Chair, Mr. Leitão can share his opinion when it's his turn to speak. I hope you don't take that intervention out of my speaking time.

My question was clear. The Prime Minister said public servants represented an ongoing expense and that he would cut back on day-to-day spending. We're in Parliament. We want to know where these cuts are going to be made. We're concerned about that. This is a concern for our veterans who are having trouble getting French-language services. That's a concern for veterans who are waiting 18 months to get service.

I realize the minister has made an effort and that she cares about veterans, but here's what I want to know: Did Minister Lightbound or Minister Champagne send her a staff reduction target number, yes or no? Does she have that?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: We have been tasked with implementing the budget investment to stabilize and modernize our service delivery.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

We will continue with Mr. Kelly for five minutes.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you.

Minister, your department was successfully sued for \$817 million, I think it was, for underpayment in compensation to veterans. In your opening statement, you said that the provisions in Bill C-15 do not retroactively cut benefits, and you said that it's the same formula as in the past. You've lost in court—you've been sued in court—over the formula that's been used in the past. The ombud was very clear in her letter to you that the provisions in the BIA are meant solely to correct an error and to deny compensation for the overcharge.

You said that the formula will remain as in the past. Is it the position of your government not to make veterans whole who were undercompensated under the formula used in the past, which incorrectly denied them the formula that they should have been entitled to according to the provisions of the Interpretation Act?

• (0845)

Hon. Jill McKnight: The budget implementation act amendments clarify how veterans' benefits have been calculated and how they will continue to be calculated. Veterans will continue to have the same access to supports and benefits today that they did yesterday. We will continue to deliver enhanced services for the long term.

Pat Kelly: The point is that you were not compensating them fairly before today. You had not correctly applied the formula in law for compensation for veterans in the past. This act is going to give you legal cover for failing to compensate veterans in the past. Is that—

Hon. Jill McKnight: These amendments are clarifying what has been done in the past and what will continue to be used in the future.

Pat Kelly: So, it's too bad for the veterans in the past who were not fully compensated, and too bad for future veterans who will be compensated without the full benefit of the understanding of what is meant in law when you say that provinces are to include territories.

Hon. Jill McKnight: These amendments are addressing any ambiguity that may be out there between—

Pat Kelly: That's right. They're addressing the ambiguity to the detriment of veterans' benefits, so what do you say to veterans who say you are denying what they originally should have received, which is the formula that included the territories?

Hon. Jill McKnight: As I mentioned, these are clarifying how things have been done and will continue to be done.

For more specifics about that, I would turn to the officials.

Pat Kelly: No, we can hear from them some other time, and we'll hear from the ombud later.

It's you, Minister, who are responsible for this department. What would you say to veterans who have sued your department for your department's failure to pay them over a period that spanned governments? This is a long-term failing of the department. What would you say to those veterans seeking the compensation they were entitled to under the law that you're now changing?

Hon. Jill McKnight: Again, these amendments are aligning with how benefits have been delivered.

Pat Kelly: That's no comfort to veterans.

I'm going to move on. I have a minute left.

Mr. Fragiskatos brought in the fact that you are the associate on defence and housing. We have a few moments left, but boy, when I was on the defence committee, we had some staggering reports on the squalid conditions of housing. With \$1.4 billion, yes, you may be able to construct some housing units, but given the horrific state of housing, the seven-year backlog as it was, what do you say to CAF members who are getting rent increases from your department?

Hon. Jill McKnight: When it comes to CAF housing, we are looking at innovative solutions through private sector partnerships to give our forces safe and affordable places to call home. This is one way we are accelerating processes to make more housing available for CAF members, and we are continuing to make investments in housing.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

We will continue with Mr. Greaves now, for five minutes.

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, colleagues. It's a pleasure to join you today.

Good morning, Minister. Thank you for being here.

As you know, my region of southern Vancouver Island includes the headquarters of Maritime Forces Pacific, and greater Victoria has long been the proud home of Canada's Pacific fleet. I represent communities and constituents who have a long tradition of service with the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as many veterans.

I'd like to start with a question about the CAF more broadly, and then, if I may and if time allows, we'll come back to veterans specifically.

This committee already this morning has heard some discussion of the commitments made by the government to reinvest in Canada's national security and defence, including a range of measures addressing long-standing, in some cases, challenges related to the Canadian Armed Forces.

That certainly includes housing, and I've been very pleased to see the announcements made by the Department of National Defence to invest in housing at both CFB Esquimalt and CFB Comox, which are both on Vancouver Island. These are meaningful investments. They make a significant contribution to both the uniformed and civilian populations in my region.

I'd like to invite you to highlight some of the investments that the Department of National Defence, in your capacity as associate minister, is making across Canada, though, of course, anything you'd care to offer about Vancouver Island would be welcome. We've seen and heard already commitments related to defending Canada's national defence, protecting our sovereignty and also meeting our NATO commitments.

It is unfortunate that the Minister of National Defence himself wasn't invited to speak or contribute to this study, but I wonder if you could share or highlight which investments you feel are most significant and how those investments will serve Canadians and Canada in this difficult time.

• (0850)

Hon. Jill McKnight: Thank you very much.

You acknowledged that you represent a riding that has a number of serving CAF members, both in Victoria and in the Esquimalt area.

This government has delivered the largest pay increase for CAF members in a generation. Recognizing the increased demands on CAF members, we acted to ensure that the compensation reflected both the significance of their duties and the realities of modern life. Members began seeing an adjustment to their pay in mid-November 2025. I had the opportunity to be with some of our serving members on the day it arrived in their pockets, and it had a positive impact on those individuals.

The pay increases vary by category, from 20% for those at a starting level to 8% increases for senior officials. These increases are not temporary bonuses. They are built into the base compensation, which is strengthening long-term financial security for the CAF and their family members.

Alongside those pay raises, we're also implementing new military pay benefits tied to years of service, and we're expanding al-

lowances for training roles, environmental duties and domestic operations. All of these compensation measures demonstrate that Canada values the service of our military members and that we are investing in them.

You mentioned some more specific things that might relate to British Columbia, so maybe I can highlight a few of those, if I may.

As I also referenced, we are making investments in the hardware and the infrastructure to support the Canadian Armed Forces. One example is the two joint support ships we are procuring, which have military capabilities that will allow the navy to operate in threat environments. This particular investment in the two ships, the JSSs, will mean 1,000 jobs at the Vancouver shipyards in British Columbia, and it will contribute to 3,900 jobs across the marine industry.

We also talked about housing. In the Victoria region, there were housing accommodations acquired earlier this year, making housing more affordable for members and allowing more housing into the system, so that we can ensure that we are addressing that for those who are serving for us.

Will Greaves: Thank you for those answers, Minister.

Certainly, those investments the government is making in the Canadian Armed Forces personnel, in particular the increases in pay for CAF members, make a significant investment in our communities. It's certainly helping to support our local economies, given some of the challenging external factors we are dealing with.

You and I have spoken about—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greaves. Your time is up.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garon, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I'm going to make amends. I take that back. I don't think my 14-month-old son would have understood the question. I don't think he would have cut 15% of his budget either, but that's another story.

Quebec organizations receive a marginal share of Veterans Affairs Canada funding, despite the large veteran population in Quebec. We have the second-largest veteran population in Canada. Let's take the example of Le Sentier, an organization in my riding, in Mirabel. It provides tangible assistance to a number of veterans, but it has to fight to get adequate funding.

Why do your managers refer veterans to these organizations without giving those organizations the financial means they need to carry out their mission?

• (0855)

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Thank you for the question.

Veterans Affairs Canada invests in a number of veterans' organizations across the country, including those in Quebec. For the specifics of how that is allocated, I would turn to the officials to speak to that.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: We'll have a chance to talk to the officials about that later. We rarely get a chance to have you here, Minister.

Do you think Quebec organizations are getting their share?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: I know that we are committed to making investments across the country. I recently had the opportunity, while in Quebec City, to meet with one of the organizations partnering on an entrepreneurship program.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: At some point, did you take a personal interest in Quebec's share? We have the second-largest veteran population.

Since you've been minister, have you sat down to look at how the funds are distributed among the provinces? Did you personally wonder whether Quebec was receiving its share and whether the organizations were adequately funded?

Have you taken the time to look at that a little?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: I've spent a lot of time committed to ensuring that veterans are being supported through the programs and services that Veterans Affairs offers, and ensuring that they are able to have access to benefits and services that meet their needs.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: My time is up.

Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor for five minutes.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister and witnesses.

First of all, allow me to recognize our veterans. I have the utmost respect for the men and women who have served our country, and I especially want to acknowledge the veterans in my riding of Richmond—Arthabaska.

Minister, as members of Parliament, we are the eyes, voice and ears of our constituents. There's a veteran in my riding who served his country for more than 20 years. Every year, he did his taxes,

submitted all his documents, but there were some miscalculations. Now, he's being asked to give money back. He's being pressured.

It is said the financial pressure caused by these recoveries can lead to homelessness, increased stress and serious mental health consequences among veterans who are already suffering from post-traumatic stress, including suicidal ideation.

What do you have to say to these veterans, victims of the department's mistakes?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: As with many Canadians, there can be adjustments in the life circumstances of individuals and, as such, it may be necessary to review the benefits and services as their individual circumstances change.

I cannot speak to your specific constituent's circumstances, but I'm happy to have the officials explain more about how that process works.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: With all due respect, I have other questions for you.

Madam Chair, Minister, playing politics means making choices. I see that veterans' services are being cut by \$4.2 billion. Meanwhile, the cost of the Cúram computer platform has gone from \$1.7 billion to \$6.6 billion. The difference is about the same as the cuts made to veterans' services. If we managed things properly and didn't lose \$4.2 billion in IT, we'd be able to keep that money for our veterans. That's a little aside I wanted to make.

Regarding the women veterans council that has been set up. Minister, are you aware that members of the women veterans council have resigned?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Yes.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Do you know how many resigned?

• (0900)

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Yes.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: How many resigned?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Six members have departed the committee. Five of them chose to resign, and one was completing a term.

I thank all the members of the women veterans council for their service.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Do you know why they resigned?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: The members are part of a volunteer advisory group. I respect the decision of any member who chooses to move on to other opportunities.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: What is the purpose of the council?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: It is an advisory committee for the minister that shares lived experiences that help shape important conversations.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you very much.

Did you know board members claimed it was mainly used for photo ops and that they didn't have access to the minister?

Did you meet with the council?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: I have met with members of the women veterans council. I continue to meet with them as we go forward in our work together.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: What do you think about their comments that the council was only used for photo ops?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: The members of the women veterans council have brought incredible lived experiences that have helped shape important conversations. I remain grateful for their efforts.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you very much.

Why, then, did the minutes of board meetings have to be approved by your office, and why were they subject to modifications before being published if you're saying you took them into account?

[English]

Hon. Jill McKnight: To clarify, the minutes do not get approved by cabinet.

The work of the women veterans council is incredibly important in sharing those experiences—

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Minister, Veterans Affairs employees have released emails indicating that council meeting minutes had to be approved by the minister's office and could be altered before they were released. There are emails to that effect.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre. Your time is up.

[English]

We will continue now with Mr. MacDonald for five minutes, please.

Kent MacDonald (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

Minister McKnight, Veterans Affairs Canada maintains a significant departmental presence on Prince Edward Island, and Islanders are very proud to serve our veterans. Some of the services being carried out in Charlottetown support disability benefits processing and case management, which are direct services for veterans and their families. They are essential to those who have served our country and to the skilled public service workforce in Atlantic Canada.

In budget 2025, as you've already outlined several times, the government proposed an investment of \$184.9 million over four years, and \$40.1 million ongoing after that, for Veterans Affairs Canada to strengthen processing capacity, modernize operational procedures and upgrade IT systems to deliver benefits reliably and accurately. Can you outline in more detail how these investments will impact our veterans in Canada?

Hon. Jill McKnight: Certainly, and thank you very much for the question.

You made reference to the connection to Prince Edward Island, and Charlottetown specifically. I want to acknowledge the incredible individuals from your riding and from surrounding ridings who work with VAC.

Thank you very much for mentioning the investments we've talked about a couple of times: both the investment over the next four years and the ongoing funding, which is \$40.1 million. The stable support strengthens VAC's ability to serve veterans effectively as needs continue to evolve. This funding is going to stabilize and modernize the disability benefits and service delivery. These investments are going to ensure that VAC can meet increases in demand while modernizing how disability benefits are delivered, making systems more responsive, consistent and sustainable over the longer term.

Specifically within the \$184.9 million is \$24 million that is dedicated to modernizing IT infrastructure and operational processes. This allows VAC to manage current and future demand more effectively to ensure that veterans receive timely, accessible and reliable support. These investments allow us to continue simplifying processes, reducing paperwork and eliminating unnecessary barriers so that veterans can spend less time navigating systems and more time focusing on their health, their families and their next steps.

My message to veterans is this: When you serve, you can count on us to have a system that is dependable and built to support you throughout your life.

● (0905)

Kent MacDonald: As a follow-up question, Minister, do you anticipate that these investments will impact the federal public service presence in Prince Edward Island and across Atlantic Canada? The public servants there play a vital role in delivering these essential services to veterans.

Hon. Jill McKnight: The investments being made in service modernization and delivery through this budget support the work of the public servants who work with our veterans every day. We rely on a highly dedicated workforce, including those in Prince Edward Island and across Canada, to deliver essential services to veterans and their families. I want to acknowledge and commend them for the excellent work they do.

To veterans, our priority is service quality, not service disruption. These investments are focused on stabilizing and modernizing service delivery so that they can get the benefits they are eligible for. This goes back to the \$24 million in tools, systems and resources that are going to ensure that human decision-makers are supported in their roles.

By modernizing the systems and improving efficiency, we're making sure that the VAC team is well positioned to deliver services in P.E.I. and across the region for years to come. Strong public service capacity and modern tools together ensure that veterans and their families receive high-quality support and that the dedicated public servants delivering those services have what they need to succeed.

Kent MacDonald: Minister, you visited P.E.I. shortly after you were appointed Minister of Veterans Affairs. Now I'm going to call on your memory. We toured a wellness centre in Stratford, P.E.I. It's a walk-in mental health services centre, the Trilogy Wellness Centre. We met with a retired member of the CAF—

The Chair: I apologize, Mr. MacDonald, but your time is up. I'm sorry. It sounded like it was going to be a good story.

Now I continue with you, Mr. Tolmie, for five minutes, please.

Fraser Tolmie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I've heard—I don't know how many times today—"stabilizing and modernizing". That's the slogan you've been using. Are you telling me that, presently, things are unstable and antiquated?

Hon. Jill McKnight: No. What I'm saying is that we are investing in making the system enhanced and better, so that we can ensure that veterans have timely access to supports and services.

Fraser Tolmie: Okay. I ask because many of the veterans I'm speaking to don't get timely service. They get denied, delayed and then, the term is, they die, because they've been dealing with VAC for so long. Prior to this meeting, I had a conversation...and I'm a vet who's been denied services, so I understand.

When I hear my colleagues from across the aisle talk about the transition and how nice it is for veterans.... A lot of veterans, when they walk out of the military, don't know what they're going into. They don't get service. They get a half-day, a cup of coffee, a cucumber sandwich, and they are told to go to a website and figure it out on their own. That's what happens, so let's put aside any pretense that everything's great, and let's look at the problems that we're dealing with for veterans. Veterans are being ignored. When

they hear that cuts are coming, and they're not even getting the basic services that they require, what kinds of emails do you think I'm getting?

I'm absolutely furious right now, because I feel like I've been reading a glossy book or a brochure that's telling us how wonderful things are, but we're not recognizing the problem that this machine is broken, Minister, and you're not telling me how you're going to fix it. I've sat in a meeting with you before, and I've told you that you're my fifth minister. You're the ninth minister in this department over the 10 years that this government has been in power. I want to know what's going to happen. How are you going to fix it? Don't tell me you're going to stabilize and modernize. Tell me what you're going to do with these investments and with the reduction in the budget that you're putting toward Veterans Affairs.

● (0910)

Hon. Jill McKnight: Again, Mr. Tolmie, I hear what you're saying. Again, I would like to clarify that this is not a reduction. This is an investment so that we can enhance, improve and stabilize the service delivery system. A key component of this is the acknowledgement of the ongoing funding of \$40 million. This is about ensuring that veterans have access to the services and benefits they're eligible for. I—

Fraser Tolmie: I'm sorry. With all due respect, Minister, I don't believe you. I don't think the veterans who are going to be watching this believe you. I really pray to God that you're going to make some changes here.

I'm going to ask you another question. How many decades will it take for the \$129 million per year to account for all of the savings that you're promising?

Hon. Jill McKnight: Is that the \$129 million as it relates to the adjustment to the cannabis for medical purposes?

Fraser Tolmie: Yes. How many decades?

Hon. Jill McKnight: It is an accrued accounting that takes place, and that is what brings us to the total of \$4.23 billion.

Fraser Tolmie: Minister, one challenge that I think we have is that we're not speaking the same language. I'm just going to ask you a simple question. The military has a special language, and it's called the phonetic alphabet. Do you know the phonetic alphabet?

Hon. Jill McKnight: I am familiar with many elements of it. I would not be able to give you every item right now.

Fraser Tolmie: All right. There are a few we could be using that we won't be using, to keep this meeting above parliamentarian—

The Chair: Do you have one final comment? You have four seconds left.

Fraser Tolmie: I have no more.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tolmie.

Mr. Leitão, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão: Good afternoon, Minister, deputy minister and gentlemen.

[*English*]

Welcome to the committee.

Perhaps, to make sure we're all on the same page.... Earlier, my colleague Monsieur Lefebvre alluded to \$4.2 billion in cuts. It's not a cut. In fact, it's a saving over the long term. It is an accounting process over time. The adjustment to the cannabis price leads to that, so we're not removing \$4 billion from the department's funding.

Minister, on a couple of occasions, in your dialogue with my colleagues from the opposition, you wanted to ask your officials to clarify some issues, and my colleagues very abruptly moved on and prevented you from doing that. One issue I am interested in hearing about from the officials is this.

[*Translation*]

I'm interested in French-language services, since our colleagues said they were deficient. Could the officials clarify the situation?

[*English*]

Christine McDowell (Acting Deputy Minister, Department of Veterans Affairs): Thank you so much for the question.

Veterans Affairs remains committed to making sure that all of our veterans have access to services in the language of their choice at whatever point of access they enter our system, whether that's by phone, in person or, certainly, through our web publications.

We monitor our claim intake and our response to make sure the applications we receive in French, as well as those we receive in English, are dealt with on a parity basis so that we're providing equal service in terms of response. Our staff are trained to offer that service in both French and English. We have a number of bilingual staff and, in francophone regions, we certainly have the capability to deliver service in French right across the country.

● (0915)

Carlos Leitão: Okay, thank you very much.

There was also some discussion on the issue of the pension adjustments and the amendments brought about by this bill. Maybe you could explain to us why it is important that the definition of "province" excludes the territories.

Hon. Jill McKnight: Would you like a reply from the officials?

Carlos Leitão: Yes.

Christine McDowell: I'll get my colleague Nathan Svenson, who is online, to jump in here with a response.

Carlos Leitão: Thank you.

Nathan Svenson (Senior Director, Disability and Health Care Policy, Department of Veterans Affairs): Thank you for the question.

To be clear, there is no disparity in benefit entitlement between those who reside in the territories and those who reside in the provinces.

When the program was designed, the term "province" was used in the calculation in the legislation, and that's the application that the department has been using to calculate the benefits since the formula was put in place. That was the original intent. The VAC has been calculating all of these benefits that are noted in the budget implementation act as originally intended, and the objective of the amendments is simply to make the legislation clear.

Thank you.

Carlos Leitão: If we could continue on that topic, there was the issue in the courts and the court decision that appears to go against that practice. Can you give us an update on where we are on that?

Nathan Svenson: I want to correct the assertion made earlier that the government lost in court. The government settled a lawsuit, and settling a court action is a way to avoid the burden on both parties in a lengthy and expensive trial. Settling a court action does not establish that there was any kind of error or failure; it simply resolves the current claim.

The fact remains that VAC has been calculating these benefits as originally intended, and the amendments to the legislation at this time avoid any perceived ambiguity that may continue.

Thank you.

Carlos Leitão: Thank you for that clarification. That indeed makes matters a lot clearer.

As I also understood from previous discussions, no repayments are required.

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

[*Translation*]

To conclude this hour, I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Garon for two and a half minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, the Parliamentary Budget Officer just released a memo saying that if the government meets the NATO defence spending target of 5% of GDP by 2035-36, including your budgets, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio will have increased by 6.3% and Canada's deficit will have increased by \$60 billion. You won't find that in your notes; it's just been published. Your government is committed to doing that.

First of all, do you think it's realistic to increase the federal debt-to-GDP ratio by 6% or 7% over the next few years?

Then, if your government has committed to meeting those targets and spending like that, why are you cutting your budgets by 15%? How do you reconcile those two decisions? Do you think that's consistent?

Do you think it's easy to understand for members of the public and veterans, as well as new Canadian Forces members? Do you think your government is consistent in its message today?

[*English*]

Hon. Jill McKnight: Our government has made the commitment to reach the NATO 2% this fiscal year, and the 5% by 2035. Veterans Affairs Canada is a significant contributor to the NATO calculation, and that is why we are investing in Veterans Affairs.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: The Parliamentary Budget Officer just said that if the government meets the 5% target by 2035-36—and you just said it would reach it—the federal debt-to-GDP ratio would increase by 6.3%, and the deficit would increase by \$60 billion, just with defence spending. And yet, you're saying you're going to rationalize and cut your budgets. You can't even tell us whether you're going to reduce the number of public servants. You can't answer that.

How do you reconcile those two things?

Considering the price tag, are you sure veterans will get their share of that money?

• (0920)

[*English*]

Hon. Jill McKnight: The Canadian government and I are committed to ensuring that veterans receive the benefits and services for which they are eligible for the service that they have given to Canada. I am committed to ensuring that we continue to support veterans with things such as the ongoing funding, which is a commitment to veterans.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[*English*]

That concludes this hour. I would like to thank Minister McKnight and the officials from Veterans Affairs.

We will now briefly suspend while we switch over to the next hour.

Thank you very much.

• (0920)

(Pause)

• (0925)

The Chair: Colleagues, welcome back for the second hour of this meeting.

I am delighted to welcome retired Colonel Nishika Jardine, the veterans ombud, as well as Duane Schippers, the deputy veterans ombud.

Ms. Jardine, you will have five minutes for opening remarks.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Nishika Jardine (Veterans Ombud, Office of the Veterans Ombudsman): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee members.

Thank you for inviting me to share my views on the veterans-related provisions of Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025. I'm pleased to be joined by deputy veterans ombud and legal counsel, Mr. Duane Schippers.

[*English*]

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman was established in 2007 to investigate complaints and challenge policies and decisions of Veterans Affairs Canada, or VAC, where we find individual or systemic unfairness. I am the fourth veterans ombud, appointed in 2020, and reappointed in 2025. I am also a veteran with almost 37 years of regular force service, including a deployment to Afghanistan.

I know budget 2025 will benefit the veteran community with the targeted investments in Veterans Affairs Canada to stabilize disability benefit processing and to modernize operations and IT systems. The demand for disability benefits continues to be acute, and I am heartened by this continued focus by government on reducing the time veterans have to wait to receive these benefits.

I was, however, disappointed that our 2021 recommendation about mental health treatment benefits for families is still not reflected in the government's budget plan. I must, however, credit Veterans Affairs for doing their best within the legislative guidelines to provide some mental health supports to family members, provided they can link it to the well-being of the veteran, but it is not enough. I will continue to press for government to extend this much-needed benefit to our veteran families.

This said, I will focus the balance of my remarks on clauses 373 to 375 of Bill C-15.

You may be aware that I have written publicly to the Minister of Veterans Affairs to ask government to remove the unfair retroactive provision that affects long-term care subsidization for some of Canada's elderly and most disabled veterans.

First of all, rest assured that I am not disputing the clarification that government is seeking to make, but rather pointing out that making it retroactive for more than 30 years is not only unprecedented but patently unfair.

At the heart of this matter is the interpretation of the word “province” in section 33.1 of the veterans health care regulations, which provides extensive and precise instructions on how to calculate the maximum monthly charge for accommodations and meals that eligible veterans going into long-term care are to pay themselves. The regulations state that the calculations must take into account “the lowest monthly user charge for accommodation and meals permitted by a province”.

In the Interpretation Act, Parliament long ago provided unequivocal guidance to legislative drafters that the word “province” is meant to include the territories if not otherwise defined. Therefore, the word “province” in the regulations must be interpreted to include the territories, but VAC made a mistake in the accommodations and meals calculations. It only considered provincial rates, but there is a territorial rate that is lower. As a result, veterans who were and are subsidized by VAC for long-term care have paid more for their accommodations and meals than they should have. Veterans have identified this error themselves and have launched a class action lawsuit to seek reimbursement.

The minister has told me this provision is meant to clarify the calculation method, which is fair going forward. However, if these sections are permitted to stand and Bill C-15 is passed, government will have effectively legitimized its past overcharges to veterans and, as it happens, will deny justice for some of our elderly and most disabled veterans.

As I have said many times before, Veterans Affairs is charged with delivering benefits and programs to a unique community of Canadians who value trust and truth as the high watermark of service. Veterans do not perceive VAC as just another government department. After we have served Canada by putting mission before self, we expect Veterans Affairs will behave with the utmost integrity and commitment to our well-being.

Frankly, it is hard not to see clauses 373 to 375 of Bill C-15 as a means to purposefully obviate an error made by the department since 1993 and to deny compensation to affected veterans. VAC already faces growing reputational backlash over the manner in which it communicates with Canada's veterans, their families and survivors.

● (0930)

On behalf of the entire veteran community, and in particular our elderly and most disabled veterans, I ask government to do the right thing and remove these offensive sections, acknowledge the error, and in some way make whole those veterans who were affected. This would be a step in the right direction toward regaining the trust of the veteran community.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madame Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jardine.

We will begin now with Mr. Tolmie for six minutes, please.

Fraser Tolmie: Thank you to the ombud and the deputy for joining us today. I do appreciate your presentation.

This is a challenging time for those who are dealing with this clause. I would like for you to take some time, because you were only given five minutes, to expand a little bit more on what this will do to those.... If the government passes this bill, how will they be affected?

Nishika Jardine: Madam Chair, veterans trust Veterans Affairs Canada to deliver the benefits and services that Parliament has put in place for them.

Most veterans are well served by the department. I've been all across this country and they say to me, “I'm good.” Very quietly, they come up to me afterwards and say, “I'm good. I couldn't be more satisfied with what I receive from Veterans Affairs Canada.” They're happy.

However, there is a group of veterans who have been affected by these decisions in the past and who are deeply concerned about this particular decision, which would essentially go against the rule of law and wipe out the mistake that the department has made.

I can tell you that there are veterans who so deeply distrust the department and are so angry about this. It makes me sad because I know the good that the department is doing. These are good people. I believe them, and I have faith in this department to deliver, but these kinds of things just destroy that trust. For military and RCMP, trust is what we base our service on. If I can't trust my buddy to do his part of the mission, then we can't complete the mission. What the government asks us to do is, quite frankly, nasty business. Trust is everything.

This is a small thing. Just say that we made a mistake, correct the mistake, make it clear going forward, absolutely, but don't wipe out 30 years of having made that mistake and just pretend it never happened.

● (0935)

Fraser Tolmie: I appreciate your perspective, and I appreciate your passion in this role. I know that you're very balanced in your compliments and the challenges that you're facing. I just want to point out that I appreciate that.

This was brought up by the vets themselves. Did they bring this to your attention, or was this something that you happened to come by through your research and through your daily role as the ombud?

Nishika Jardine: I have travelled all across this country. We've been to every single military base in Canada. We have met veterans in that area and spoken with commanders. Veterans say these things to me in the margins of my town halls. They bring it to my attention.

Fraser Tolmie: We talked about how, if the Liberal government were to do this, it would be unprecedented. The respect that vets have would be lost because it's about integrity and “your word is your bond” in the military. We've talked about that.

I have so many questions. I'm struggling to figure out which one I want to go with first. I'm dealing with the emotional.... The loss that would happen if.... This is sanctuary trauma for veterans. I checked online last night to see what the temperature was in the Northwest Territories. It was -21°C and -26°C with the wind chill. I think about vets who live up there and can't afford the cost of living. It's more expensive up there to deal with.

What do you think is the way forward for VAC and for this government in order to correct this?

Nishika Jardine: I believe that just removing the retroactivity provision would go a long way toward helping veterans see that they can trust the department to own up to a mistake.

Fraser Tolmie: I'm struggling with the answers that I received from the minister earlier. Did the answer that she provided line up with...? Is it satisfactory for your recommendation and does it answer your letter?

Nishika Jardine: I have not received a response from the minister to my letter, but I can say to you—

The Chair: Ms. Jardine, we'll have to end this round here.

Thank you, Mr. Tolmie.

We will continue with Mr. Leitão for six minutes, please.

Carlos Leitão: Thank you.

[Translation]

Good afternoon, madam, sir. Thank you for your service and for continuing to serve here today in bringing forward the concerns and needs of Canadian veterans. Thank you for doing it the way you do.

I'm going to continue along the same lines. You just mentioned to our colleague that you hadn't received a response to your letter from the minister. Is that correct?

Nishika Jardine: Yes.

● (0940)

Carlos Leitão: Okay.

You also mentioned that the vast majority of veterans were well served by the department, but that a small group that didn't feel well served contacted you. This group mainly highlights the issue at hand here, which is the provision's retroactivity.

If I understand correctly, changing the definition of “province” and removing territories from the equation will lead to an increase in fees for veterans.

Does this apply to all veterans, or is this cost increase only significant for veterans living in the territories in question?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: First of all, it's not a small group. I want to make that clear. I did not say “small”. It is not a small group. There is a majority who are well served, and there is a cohort that is not. I want to make that really clear. The number of complaints to my office over the five years that I've been here has gone up significantly.

My understanding of the accommodations and meals calculation is that it's very complex. The bottom line is that the department must consider and look at all of the costs for accommodations and

meals for long-term care, and the legislation says “province”. The Interpretation Act says that the word “province”, if not otherwise defined in that act, must include the territories. It so happens that the rate for accommodations and meals for at least the past 20 years or so has been lower in one of the territories, which means that the veterans who are eligible for long-term care paid for by the department—it's not every veteran and there are criteria—have paid more for accommodations and meals than they should have.

This is going over 30 years. We've not done the investigation into the numbers. The department can give you that answer. Over 30 years, there are, I'm sure, thousands of elderly and the most disabled veterans who have paid more for their accommodations and meals than they should have, according to the law. VAC made a mistake in that calculation.

Carlos Leitão: Thank you.

What I was trying to understand is whether they have paid more regardless of where they actually—

Nishika Jardine: Absolutely, it's regardless of where they live.

Carlos Leitão: Okay. That's what I was trying to get at. Thank you.

What bothers you and many veterans is the fact that clauses 373 to 375 contain a retroactive provision. As the department corrects the situation going forward, what is most unfair, in your view and in the view of the veterans affected, is the fact that whatever was done over the past 30 years doesn't count. Is that the main point of dispute?

Nishika Jardine: The point of my appearance here today is to say to you that redefining this mistake over 30 years and making this clarification, as the government has put it, is fine. However, to go back 30 years and say, “No, we always meant it to be this. Even though it wasn't written in the law, this is what was meant,” is patently unfair and wrong, in my view.

Carlos Leitão: Understood. Thank you.

I also have issues with retroactivity. In fiscal issues, it's not common. I think there are ways of settling that. I will continue to follow that up, you can be sure of that.

I have another question, if I may.

● (0945)

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Carlos Leitão: Oh. Well, thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Ste-Marie, you have the floor for six minutes.

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Good morning, Madam Chair.

Good morning to all my colleagues as well.

It's a pleasure to be here with you, ombud and deputy ombud. Thank you very much for joining us today.

In the past, both the Office of the Auditor General and you observed that the wait time was much longer for French-language services than for English-language services. Can you give us an update on that? Is the situation still the same, or has the issue been resolved?

Nishika Jardine: We prepared a report in 2018 and then another in 2022 on wait times for all veterans, including anglophones, francophones, women and men, as well as military and RCMP personnel.

[English]

In 2022, we found that there was still a disparity in the length of time it took for francophones and anglophones to be served by the department and to receive a decision on their disability claim. We have not done a follow-up since then. Our report is on our website. It shows very clearly our findings in 2022.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

If you get a chance, when you update that report, I would appreciate it if you could check whether francophones are experiencing longer wait times.

Still on the subject of wait times, on October 21, Deputy Minister Steven Harris told the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs that his level of satisfaction with service delivery was 7.5 out of 10. However, on the website, there is a note that says: "Thank you for your patience. We understand how important your concerns are. We are currently receiving more applications than usual, which could delay our response."

Can you confirm that if things were going well, there wouldn't be that note?

Nishika Jardine: Are you referring to the memo published by my office?

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Yes.

[English]

Nishika Jardine: We put that up there to advise veterans and their families who came to us that we also have a backlog. As I mentioned earlier, the number of complaints to my office has increased. I have a micro office of 15 people to respond to complaints. Our backlog was increasing. We wanted to let people know that it may take us longer to get to their complaint.

I'm sorry if I didn't quite catch your question.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: No, you answered my question. It really speaks to the delays that veterans are facing. To get services, they have to turn to your very small team. I understand.

We heard Veterans Affairs Canada is cutting 15% of its budgets. Do you think that will solve the issue?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: I can only speak to my office. As I said, we're a small office. We also need to do our part to reduce our operational costs. We are doing our best to meet that request.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Logically, and based on your experience and that of your office, if Veterans Affairs Canada cuts resources, it could lead to an increase in complaints filed with your office, no?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: I wouldn't make that correlation. Certainly, we will wait to see what happens in the future. I would only ever base an assessment on the facts before me. At the moment, I attribute the increase in complaints to the fact that people now know that our office exists.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Yes, indeed. Well, the next time you appear before a committee, this one or another one, we can verify whether the 15% cut led to an increase in the number of complaints. I predict it will. I'm channelling JoJo Savard this morning.

If there's an increase in the number of complaints, considering you have a very small team, the notice on your website leads me to believe you wouldn't have the necessary resources to deal with that increase, especially since you're also being asked to make cuts. Is that correct?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: We do not expect to make any changes in the number of people who are working on the complaints. As I say to veterans, I do not answer the phone; it's my very highly trained staff. We will not reduce any of our staff who work on the front line, on the operations side. We will make adjustments in the administrative aspect of our office.

● (0950)

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

Obviously, this is all quite alarming. When your office is experiencing increased delays, how do you characterize the tangible impact on veterans in distress or emergency situations?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: When we do our intake, when someone comes to our office, if we perceive there's an acute need, whether financial or something else, and if we believe there's an emergency or a crisis for those veterans, we push their file to the top. We address it immediately. We triage, so to speak.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: In this context of cuts and overloading, do you think you can fulfill your role, which is to be an independent check on Veterans Affairs Canada?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: Yes.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: That's fine—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC)): Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie. That's time.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, you're very strict on time. I'll remember that.

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): It's always good to see you, my friend.

Next, we have Mr. Lefebvre for five minutes.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for being here today. At the outset, I want to thank you as well for your service to our country. As I said in the previous hour, I have the utmost respect for the women and men who serve our country. Thank you very much.

You wrote a letter to the minister in December. It's now February 5. To provide some context for those that follow our proceedings, I'd like to clarify that the topic of your letter was the veterans community's concerns about some of the unfair retroactive measures proposed in Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, which seek to exclude territories from accommodation and meal expenses charged to veterans receiving long-term care.

The minister was here in the previous hour. Did you cross paths with her when she left, between the two sessions of the meeting?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: Yes.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Did she talk to you?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: Yes.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Did she respond to your letter? Did she give you any information?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: She has not responded to my letter. We exchanged pleasantries on her way out the door.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Okay. Was the discussion positive in terms of your requests?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: I have not yet had an opportunity to discuss my letter with the minister. It was only mentioned at a meeting that she acknowledges having received it.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Then she gave you no information, nor any sign of a positive response to your letter.

[English]

Nishika Jardine: She has not responded to me in writing. That's all I can say.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: That says a lot about the respect given to veterans.

You said in your opening statement that veterans were furious, and that they don't trust Veterans Affairs. I'm sad to hear that. In my opening remarks, I expressed all the respect I have for the men and women who have fought to defend our country's rights and freedoms. To thank them, the department treats them this way. It's unacceptable.

Respect is a recurring theme in my life, and the same goes for our witnesses. I always tell people that, in life, there is a mirror effect. If we respect people, they'll respect us. Right now, the minister and the Liberal government have no respect for the men and women who fought for our country. I find that unacceptable. Like my colleague, I'm shocked to hear that.

Earlier, you said that you toured military bases. How do current serving members feel about the respect this Liberal government has for their service?

Nishika Jardine: Thank you for the question.

[English]

I would just like to say that the people at VAC who deliver, the people who are on the phones and who are doing the work, are good people, and they respect our veterans. I would never agree that the people at Veterans Affairs don't respect our veterans. They absolutely do. I am convinced in my heart, as a veteran myself, that they have nothing but the best interest of our veterans at heart.

Do they sometimes make mistakes? Yes, and here is one of those. The fact is that veterans see the bigger picture. While they know that the person on the other end of the phone may have their best interest at heart, these kinds of actions, this retroactivity, to refuse to acknowledge that we made a mistake, are what infuriates them, because this is not the way that we act in the military.

The second half of your question.... I'm sorry; I've lost it.

● (0955)

[Translation]

What was it?

[English]

Was it about what people say?

Eric Lefebvre: Yes.

[Translation]

Nishika Jardine: You asked what they say when I meet with them.

[English]

For serving members today, some of them are aware that down the road, when they get out, there are benefits for veterans. They are very well aware of the disability claim, because it goes around the barrack rooms: “Have you put in your claim yet?” They know that.

Do they actively think about what will happen to them when they release? I did not consider the fact that I was releasing until the night before. That is when it struck me. I believe that the majority of our serving members and the RCMP are so focused on their jobs, on doing the mission for Canada and on their service that they're not thinking about that. They just trust that it'll be there when they get there.

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): Thank you, Ms. Jardine.

Next, we have Mr. Fragiskatos for five minutes, please.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madame Jardine, thank you very much for being here today.

In the comments that you gave to us at the outset of your testimony, you talked about budget 2025 and how you see some promise there. Could you elaborate on that?

Nishika Jardine: The investments being made that the minister spoke about and that we are aware of... What I understand is that these are going to go into the adjudication process—getting the disability claims through and getting those wait times down. The service standard that Veterans Affairs publishes is that 80% of the decisions on disability claims will be made within 16 weeks. They have not reached that yet. I hope that this investment, which I'm encouraged by, will work toward achieving those claims decisions within their service standard.

Let's be clear: The disability claim is the gateway to treatment benefits for our veterans. They can't move forward.... They have to pay out of pocket, or they may have a health care plan, but they aren't getting the treatment benefits for their service-related disabilities until that claim is approved—if it's approved. Anything that helps to reduce that wait time, I absolutely applaud.

Peter Fragiskatos: You had a spotlight report that came out in 2025. What progress has been made? We can, of course, talk about the challenges, and that is absolutely fair, but I want to look at some of the progress that has been made that you highlighted in that report as well.

Nishika Jardine: I don't have it top of mind. We publish the spotlight report every year, certainly in the time that I've been in the office. We've tracked every single recommendation made by our office since 2007, the ones that are still valid.

It takes time, I acknowledge, for the department to implement the recommendations that we've made. The one recommendation that I continue to press on is for mental health supports for family members. This one, I can assure you, would address an acute and unseen need of the family members of our military and RCMP veterans who need that extra support because they were part of our military or RCMP family.

Peter Fragiskatos: I believe the report does highlight, though, some advances that have been made in the area of gender equality. Is that correct?

Nishika Jardine: I believe it's the adjudication of sexual dysfunction, where we pointed out an unfairness in the way certain conditions were not being as well acknowledged by the department. We understand that those changes have in fact been made. Our recommendations have been implemented.

On peer support for survivors of military sexual trauma, we understand that those are under way. I have not done an update. I haven't looked at an update on where those are recently, so I can't tell you more than that.

• (1000)

Peter Fragiskatos: With my final question, Ms. Jardine, I want to ask you to build on a point that you just put on the record when my colleague Mr. Lefebvre engaged with you. Your point was about veterans—and you even related it to your own experience—not thinking about the various services. The expectation is there, but the focus is on serving and doing what's expected of them in the moment, naturally. Is there something to be said about the government having to put more into making those members of the Canadian Armed Forces aware of the services? Do we need to promote that message more? Even if the government put greater resources to that end, is it still not going to make an impact because the soldiers are thinking about what's expected of them, as you said, in that moment?

Are there things you can recommend to this committee that should be done to increase awareness of the services so the transition is as smooth as possible?

Nishika Jardine: The transition group in the Canadian Forces has gone a long way in making that transition...helping members, as they release, understand what benefits and services are available to them on the day after they take off their uniform. This is a huge improvement from years ago.

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): Thank you, Ms. Jardine. That's time.

Next, we have Monsieur Ste-Marie for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Jardine, on the same topic, I'm going to pick up where I left off. Are you concerned that the lack of resources, with the cuts coming in your office, will weaken the real protection of veterans' rights, despite their official recognition?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: I think you asked me if the reductions to my office are going to have an impact on veterans.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: I would like to know whether that will have an impact on the real protection of their rights.

[English]

Nishika Jardine: As I said before, we are protecting our front line, the part of our office that responds directly to individual complaints. We're protecting them, and we're protecting the analysts who do the work for our systemic reviews. At this point in time, any changes we make to the office will be in the area of administrative support.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Here's a more philosophical question: How can we ask veterans to be more patient without investing more in the institutions that are supposed to protect them?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: Are you asking how we protect veterans' benefits?

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: No.

How can we ask them to be more patient when the government is not investing more in the institutions that are supposed to protect them?

[English]

Nishika Jardine: We do our best. I'm not sure how to answer your question directly. I can say that I'm heartened, as I said before, by the investment that the government is making at Veterans Affairs, because that is where reducing the wait time crucially needs to happen. You're talking about patients, veterans waiting for their disability claims to be approved so they can move forward with their benefits. I am heartened by this investment, because I'm hopeful that it will continue to bring down that wait time.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Colonel Jardine, deputy ombud, thank you very much. Since our vice-chair is very strict on time, I'll stop here.

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

Next, we have Mr. Kelly for five minutes.

Pat Kelly: Let me begin by thanking you for your service to Canada and your ongoing service to veterans. We all appreciate that very much.

In your service to veterans, you wrote quite an astonishing letter. I don't recall an ombud, an officer of Parliament or anybody in this type of watchdog capacity or independent capacity from government explicitly advising a minister to delete sections from a bill before Parliament.

Let's just be as clear as we can be. We heard your opening statement. We're going to review this bill clause by clause. Is it your recommendation to this committee that we delete clauses 373 to 375?

• (1005)

Nishika Jardine: I would ask you to remove the offensive part, which is the retroactivity.

Pat Kelly: That's right—which is in those three clauses.

Nishika Jardine: It is in those clauses, yes.

Pat Kelly: Okay. Thank you.

We will undertake a clause-by-clause review. From Mr. Leitão's remarks, I understand that there is perhaps agreement on all sides that retroactive application that will have the effect of suppressing benefits is not proper governance and is not the way that the government should approach this.

I believe you may have been in the gallery when the minister appeared. In response to my questions, she repeatedly refused to acknowledge the effect this would have on veterans. She insisted that these sections clarify benefits without affecting them. Can you comment on those responses that the minister had at this committee?

Nishika Jardine: I won't comment on what the minister said, but I can tell you my interpretation, which is what I see. It's the government's role to do this legislative work, to clarify something going forward—absolutely. However, to retroactively say that the rule of law was not the rule of law, to me, is wrong.

Pat Kelly: The provisions in the BIA are an offence to the rule of law. Is that what I just heard you say?

Nishika Jardine: I think that when you make a mistake, you should acknowledge the mistake.

Pat Kelly: I think the only mistake they're acknowledging is that they would like to not have to pay what the law and the court have required them to pay.

Nishika Jardine: I think my colleague wishes to jump in.

Duane Schippers (Deputy Veterans Ombud, Office of the Veterans Ombudsman): I will jump in just very briefly.

Retroactivity is perfectly acceptable. We see it in the tax stuff all the time: The government puts out that it's going to change the tax code in this budget, and when the budget implementation act comes along, it's retroactive to the date of the announcement.

This isn't that kind of situation. Going back 30 years is problematic. It's not fair. It takes away.... I know there's a concern. All the lawyers will profit from a class action, but that's not what we should be concerned about.

Pat Kelly: Thank you for that extra bit of colour on this. It would be the equivalent, I guess, of going backwards and creating a new tax on somebody and charging it to them retroactively.

Can you update the committee? We haven't heard much about the litigation. A court has already pronounced on this. Can you discuss the implications?

Nishika Jardine: I cannot. I'm not overly familiar with the class action lawsuit. It's not my part ship, as we say in the navy.

I believe the class action has been suspended; it's pending. That's all I know.

Pat Kelly: All right.

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): You're pretty much out of time. Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

Next, we have Mr. Greaves for five minutes.

Will Greaves: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. Thank you for being here, witnesses, and thank you for your service.

My first question is for you, Ms. Jardine. Thank you for everything that you've shared so far. Your testimony today feels very much in the spirit of your predecessors, who've also, on occasion, had to stand up to government and advocate quite forcefully against different policy changes that are seen as adversely affecting the interests of Canada's veterans.

Contrary to what one of my colleagues has said, some of us are old enough to recall that the government of former prime minister Harper was characterized by criticisms of that government's handling of the veterans file and pointed criticisms by your predecessors of his treatment of Canada's veterans.

In that vein, we heard earlier this morning from the Minister of Veterans Affairs about the changing funding context around the Canadian Armed Forces and the current government's historic reinvestment in the armed forces, after reaching what were truly lows of less than 1% of GDP at the time the government was formed in 2015.

I'm wondering if you could speak to how the government's investments in the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada will be enhancing or increasing the services available to the veterans you represent.

• (1010)

Nishika Jardine: I can't speak to anything to do with the Department of National Defence.

I think the investment that is being announced in this budget, if I understand correctly, is going toward making the adjudication of disability claims faster for veterans. That is something I can only applaud, because the claim is the gateway to other benefits that veterans require.

Will Greaves: Thank you for that.

At the same time that the context around funding for Canada's veterans and the armed forces is changing, I feel there have been changes in the nature of the veterans population as well that may not be well understood by the public at large.

I wonder if you could just zoom out a little and provide us with a bit of a sketch of the composition of the veterans population in Canada currently and how that might differ from the past.

Nishika Jardine: We all grew up—certainly I did—looking at veterans on Remembrance Day as being older gentlemen who served in World War II, or maybe even World War I or Korea. My sense is that Canadians see that demographic as veterans.

However, today, veterans reflect the entire scope of Canadian society. A person who serves in the Canadian Forces and is discharged after completing basic training is a veteran. They could be as young as 20, across every demographic of Canada. I put veteran plates on my cars, because mine is not a classic veteran face. I want people to know that I, also, am a veteran, and I am part of the full scope of the Canadian demographics.

Will Greaves: With that in mind, could you maybe expand on how the changing composition of the people who make up Canada's veterans population affects the nature of the services they require or rely upon from Veterans Affairs Canada, or perhaps the kinds of complaints that your office receives?

Nishika Jardine: Benefits and services for veterans are laid out by Parliament in legislation. Government has set out what those benefits are. Veterans Affairs Canada, in my view, from what I understand, is charged only with delivering those benefits that Parliament has put in place. Whether it meets the needs of veterans or not is something that Parliament may want to look at.

As I said before, there is a majority of veterans who come up to me and say they're happy with what they receive from Veterans Affairs Canada. There is a cohort who struggle. I'll leave it there.

Will Greaves: How am I doing for time, Mr. Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): You have about 40 seconds.

Will Greaves: Is there any characteristic or feature that distinguishes that population of veterans you've referred to, those who struggle to access the services they're entitled to and come to your office with complaints, from the majority, who you've said are satisfied with the services they receive?

Nishika Jardine: Veterans who've seen combat, who've been deployed and whose mental health has been affected by their service are the ones I'm deeply concerned about. They will leave the Canadian Forces and then come to Veterans Affairs Canada.

Let's be clear: Veterans Affairs Canada is charged with safeguarding public funds. This is taxpayers' money. I would certainly disagree with its just being handed out. There have to be processes.

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): Thank you, Ms. Jardine.

Colleagues, we have enough time for just one quick round. We'll go with two minutes to the Conservatives, two minutes to the Liberals and one minute for the Bloc. We'll do two minutes for each party, besides the Bloc.

You have two minutes, Mr. Tolmie.

Fraser Tolmie: Thank you, Chair.

How long ago did you send your letter?

Nishika Jardine: My letter was dated December 12, 2025.

• (1015)

Fraser Tolmie: You said the minister acknowledged your letter. When did you receive that acknowledgement?

Nishika Jardine: She and I met a few weeks ago, and she acknowledged that she had received it.

Fraser Tolmie: You have not received a response to your letter as of yet.

Nishika Jardine: That is correct.

Fraser Tolmie: Do you think the minister has had more than enough time to respond to your letter?

Nishika Jardine: I am happy to receive a response from the minister when she's ready to provide it.

Fraser Tolmie: What if that happens after a decision is made and this clause has not been adjusted?

Nishika Jardine: I will respond to that in the moment.

Fraser Tolmie: Okay.

I know I don't have much time. You were cut off when I asked if you had received a response to your letter. You said, "I can say to you", and then you were cut off. What were you going to tell me?

Nishika Jardine: I honestly don't remember. I'm sorry.

Fraser Tolmie: See, there's a culture of honour, saying "I don't remember" or "I made a mistake."

Veterans live in a culture of honour, and when they come into the civilian world, they expect the same. Unfortunately, this issue is skirting around that. I appreciate your perspective on saying, "We've made a mistake. Let's fix it. Let's get on with it."

Thank you very much for your testimony.

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): Thank you, Mr. Tolmie.

Next, we have Mr. MacDonald.

You have two minutes.

Kent MacDonald: Thank you.

Thank you, both, for your service to our country.

You talked in your comments about the adjudication process at VAC and how those timelines may be improved by our government's investment in budget 2025. Can you elaborate a little further on that? Where in particular is the backlog?

Nishika Jardine: In 2022, we did an update to our assessment. We did a review in 2018 of the wait times for these disability claims. We noted an improvement over those four years in 2022. I can only hope that continuing investment will continue to improve the department's ability to meet its service standard.

Kent MacDonald: I was going to ask the minister.... I had an opportunity last summer, shortly after getting elected, to visit a mental health walk-in clinic in Stratford, P.E.I. We heard from a retired RCMP officer and a retired CAF member, who both spoke about post-traumatic stress syndrome and how this clinic was allowing them to function in life with simple things, like grocery shopping, that had become very troublesome for them.

Can you comment on whether we have enough of these walk-in clinics for our veterans today?

Nishika Jardine: Thank you for the question.

I'm not qualified to answer. I don't know. I do know there is a cohort of veterans who struggle to meet the administrative processes demanded by VAC for them to access the benefits and services they may be entitled to.

The Vice-Chair (Jasraj Hallan): We'll wrap up.

Thank you, colleagues. That's the end of this panel.

Thank you to both our witnesses, Ms. Jardine and Mr. Schippers.

Ms. Jardine, thank you for your service.

If it's the will of the committee, we'll adjourn.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>