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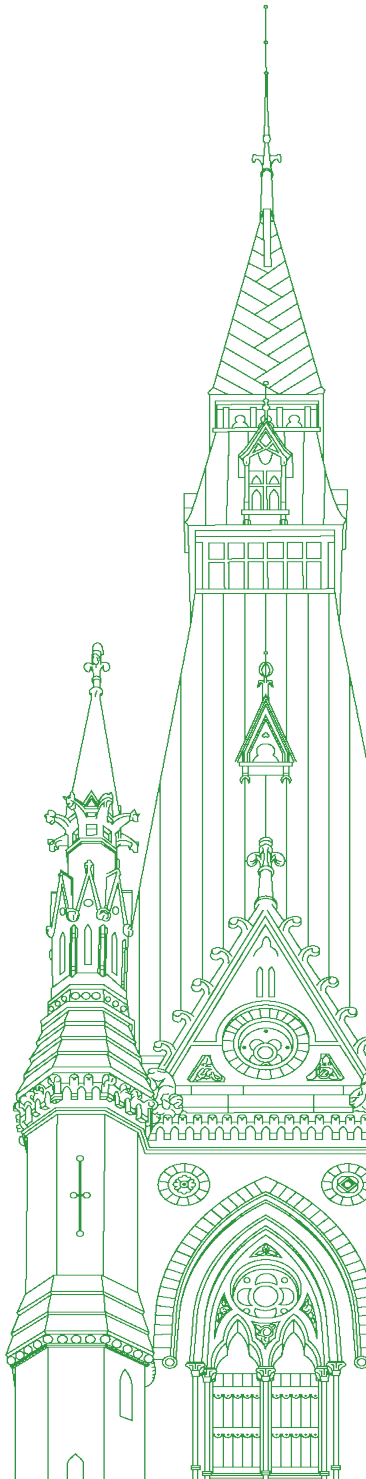
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Chair: Marie-France Lalonde

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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● (1540)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 44 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on May 25, 2026, the committee is meeting as part of its study on the civilian recognition of military skills.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of witnesses and members.

For those participating by video conference—and I believe all three of the witnesses on our first panel are by video conference—please make sure to click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French.

I will inform our guests that Madame DeBellefeuille from the Bloc Québécois will be addressing them in French. Also, on the Liberal side, there will be other members who.... I'll just generalize by saying that there will be several members of our committee who will be addressing you in French, including me, so please make sure you have the translation.

[*Translation*]

I always mention that, Mrs. DeBellefeuille. I apologize to my colleagues on the right side of the room.

[*English*]

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

We have, as an individual, Dr. John Whelan, a clinical psychologist and veteran.

Dr. Whelan, thank you very much for your service.

We have, from the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, Ms. Michelle Bussey, chief executive officer. We also have, from the Veterans Legal Assistance Foundation, a former member of Parliament, Mr. Peter Stoffer, chairperson.

I have to say, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your contribution to this committee. I understand you're the one who tabled the motion to create our committee, sir, so thanks for your hard work on this file.

We will start by giving each of you five minutes to deliver your opening remarks. After that, the rest of the hour will be a series of questions from the members of the committee.

I would like to invite Dr. Whelan.

The floor is yours for five minutes.

Dr. John Whelan (Clinical Psychologist, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me. I'm Dr. John Whelan, a clinical psychologist, Canadian Armed Forces veteran, and adjunct faculty member at Mount Saint Vincent University.

For 30 years, I've treated military members, veterans and their families. I serve on a national veteran volunteerism action plan steering committee, and the present study mirrors some of our questions: Which skills and abilities, which veterans, which settings and towards whose goals?

Veterans are a highly heterogeneous population: an electronics tech seeking trade recognition, a young mother leaving before completing occupational training, a reservist physician, a senior leader wanting less responsibility, etc. They all face different needs. Health, family circumstances and reasons for leaving matter.

Military service cannot tell us what veterans can do, what support they need or what they want. For technical occupations, the task is to assess competence against civilian standards through relevant certification authorities and employers. Veterans deserve recognition of prior learning, clear explanations of gaps and accessible pathways to meet outstanding requirements.

Broader capacities require attention to context—capacities such as leadership, co-operation and decision-making developed through military roles and relationships. Their effectiveness elsewhere cannot be inferred from rank or years of service. Military life provides recognized authority, shared procedures, mission and belonging. On departure, experience remains, but the relationships and structures supporting it change or disappear. A veteran may be technically capable while needing to establish credibility, to negotiate responsibilities and to trust in new communities. Civilian settings often require open communication, collaboration and respectful disagreement. Military organizations also require those capacities, but their expression may need adjustment when expectations change.

My work with the volunteerism initiative centres these questions. We are working to avoid reinforcing an image of veterans as uniformly resilient, self-sacrificing leaders waiting for another mission. Some want to lead. Others want to learn, contribute quietly or recover from years of demanding responsibilities. All deserve to be considered as individuals.

Employment and volunteer initiatives can help meet workforce and community needs while offering meaningful opportunities, but success must be judged from the veteran's perspective. Providing purpose is only part of the task. Belonging means relationships where one is known, respected and able to participate without continually proving value through service.

A veteran can be busy, useful and praised while still feeling isolated and disconnected. A placement alone cannot establish belonging, nor should veterans have to accept excessive demands to remain welcome. Preparation for civilian life must address relationships and culture alongside qualifications. In my work on military professional development, I emphasize reflective capacity, recognizing habitual responses, understanding new context and choosing how to respond.

Can I recognize expertise without military credentials? Can I disagree while maintaining a relationship? Which habits remain useful, and which need adjustment? Where military belonging has encouraged dismissive views of civilians, those assumptions also deserve re-examination.

Receiving organizations have responsibilities such as fair assessment, clear expectations and appropriate onboarding opportunities for reciprocal relationships. Veterans need room to set boundaries, seek support and change roles without being judged as failing to live up to their service.

I ask the committee to consider the Government of Canada's role in ensuring that the CAF, working with Veterans Affairs Canada, provides structured preparation before release across all release pathways, including members without substantive contact with the CAF TG. Preparation should address identity, relationships and participation in civilian settings alongside employment, volunteerism and clinical care where needed. Its reach and outcomes should be evaluated independently.

My commitment is to veterans succeeding in civilian lives they value. They must recognize all that they carry from service to help them utilize abilities and new meaningful connections. They require the freedom to decide how much responsibility and service they wish to carry forward.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now invite Ms. Bussey, chief executive officer of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, to speak for five minutes.

Michelle Bussey (Chief Executive Officer, Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency): Good afternoon.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to appear today.

My name is Michelle Bussey. I'm the chief executive officer of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency. I also serve as the chair of the Canadian council of directors of apprenticeship, the forum through which provinces and territories work together on apprenticeship and skilled trades issues.

Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge the tragedy at CFB Wainwright. My deepest condolences go to the families, friends and colleagues of the Canadian Armed Forces members who lost their lives. My thoughts are also with those who were injured, their loved ones and everyone in the Canadian Armed Forces community affected by this tragedy. At times like this, we are reminded of the service and sacrifice of those who serve our country. Their service strengthens our community and protects the values Canadians hold dear. They bring leadership, discipline, technical expertise and a commitment to teamwork and excellence. Those are the qualities every employer is looking for.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to your study on the civilian recognition of military trades.

It's true that employers are looking now more than ever.... Canada is in a unique moment. Employers are looking for skilled workers across the country. Major projects are moving forward. Communities are growing. Opportunities in the skilled trades continue to expand. Veterans have an important role to play in meeting that demand. Our job is to make sure that unnecessary barriers do not stand in their way. That is why the work around military skills recognition is so important.

For many years, the Canadian council of directors of apprenticeship, Employment and Social Development Canada and the Department of National Defence have worked together to compare military training and experience with civilian Red Seal standards. The goal has been straightforward. When military training and civilian trade requirements align, that experience should be recognized. The result is a process that helps qualified military tradespeople move more quickly into civilian certification pathways. It recognizes what they already know, respects the skills and experience they have earned through service, and helps them continue to contribute to Canada's economy and communities.

Provinces and territories have played an important role in that work. Industry has played an important role as well. The strength of this initiative comes from collaboration. It is governments, industry and military partners working together to solve a practical problem.

In Nova Scotia, we are proud of the work happening to support veterans and military families. We have worked to map military occupations to Nova Scotia-designated trades so that people can receive recognition of their experience and the skills they have gained through service. We also partner with Helmets to Hardhats Canada to help veterans, reservists and family members connect with opportunities in the skilled trades and construction. Together, this work is helping create clearer pathways from military service to civilian careers.

We are also proud to be the home of one of Canada's largest defence communities. Every day, we see the talent, leadership and experience that veterans bring to our workforce. Helping them transition into rewarding civilian careers is good not just for veterans but for employers, communities and the Canadian economy. Most importantly, it reflects the simple principle that people who have served our country should be able to use their skills to build successful careers after service.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to your questions.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would now like to invite Mr. Peter Stoffer, chairperson from the Veterans Legal Assistance Foundation and a former member of Parliament.

Sir, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Peter Stoffer (Chairperson, Veterans Legal Assistance Foundation): Hi. First of all, I want to thank all my colleagues around the table. Thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in a very important discussion.

My name is Peter Stoffer. I chair the Veterans Legal Assistance Foundation, but I also have the honour and privilege of being in about 11 different veteran organizations as well.

What I find is that from the transition period of leaving the military into civilian life, a lot of veterans, military personnel and RCMP feel naked without that uniform for the first while. They really are a bit lost. Even though they may have had a good transition, they still feel part of that “get up and go” and want to do something for their country. I find that in many cases, a lot of these veterans, unfortunately, are injured. They have either post-traumatic stress disorder or operational stress injuries. They're finding it challenging to go back into the workplace.

I believe that one of the things that can be done prior to their leaving the military is to ensure that if a veteran is leaving on a 3B medical release, everything is done to basically instill in them that they have worth. They have value. They and their family can still be contributing members to our society. We need to assist them in finding gainful employment that not only puts food on the table but also is worthy of their service to Canada.

There are two organizations right now that I want to send a special hello and thank you to—Helmets to Hardhats and Commissionaires Nova Scotia and Canada. These two organizations truly understand what it's like to work with veterans and, just as importantly, their families, in order to transition veterans into gainful employment in that regard. Many veterans have very good skills, but if you were a stoker on a ship for many years, you may physically not be able to handle any kind of physical work outside of the military. You may have to transition into something else. This is where I believe DVA and DND can work with that veteran or that individual and their family to find something for them when they leave the service. I believe that would go a long way toward giving them back their dignity.

The other concern, too, that many folks need to be worried about is what I call “poaching”. A lot of companies out there are looking at well-trained military personnel and encouraging them, with various incentives, to leave the military early and join their particular company. In Nova Scotia, as you know, we have an awful lot of defence companies. I see the poaching that's going on. The Government of Canada and the taxpayers of Canada spend an awful lot of money training these wonderful individuals.

I encourage all of them: If you can, stay within the military for at least your 25-year service in order to get your pension in that regard and then move on to civilian life. If you have to leave earlier, then I believe transition and employment opportunities through DND and DVA in order to help you and your family would be the way to go.

At the same time, we have to be very careful about poaching and having people leave too early. Even though our defence companies are desperate for well-qualified people, our military also requires those individuals. It's a bit of a catch-22 in many ways. I would just encourage the committee, if they have a chance, to look at that and see what can be done in order to mitigate the early leaving of people who really would have a wonderful career in the service and then would join a company for various incentives in that regard.

Most importantly, I'd like to advise the committee, or at least ask the committee, to ensure that prospective employers understand what a veteran has gone through, especially those who are 3B released through post-traumatic stress disorder or through operational stress injuries. These prospective employers need to fully grasp and understand what the veteran and their family are going through and give them the best possible dignified landing they could have in order for them to be able to justify their new employment. I've seen many veterans who've left the military, gotten a job and within six months to a year have left that job. They simply couldn't handle it, or else the employer couldn't handle them. That's not good for anybody.

● (1555)

As a society, we need to do a lot better at ensuring that military members and RCMP officers who leave the service, whether it's of their own free will or through medical concerns, are treated well and offered the opportunity and dignity of a decent job in the future.

Thank you so much. I truly appreciate your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate your thoughts on trying to keep our military members for as long as possible.

On that note, we will start our first round of questions. Each of our members will have six minutes to ask questions of any of you.

We'll go to Mr. Diotte for six minutes.

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Thanks, Madam Chair.

I'm going to ask a very broad question of each one of you, starting with Dr. Whelan.

In your experience, what is the biggest barrier preventing military training qualifications and experience from being properly recognized in the civilian workforce?

Dr. John Whelan: Thank you for the question.

That's a little outside of my experience, in terms of technical skills. I could speak to training that is not, sometimes, on a par with the standards of civilian regulatory bodies. Most of my attention is on the other dimensions that create difficulties when engaging with civilian workplaces.

Kerry Diotte: Ms. Bussey.

Michelle Bussey: I would say the same. It depends on the person, first of all. Each veteran is completely different.

What we are hearing is that some veterans need help understanding the civilian certification requirements of the Red Seal program in particular, connecting with employers—which you've already talked about—navigating requirements to make that transition and getting the supports needed.

It's all of that. It boils down to a fully collaborative effort among multiple parties working together.

Kerry Diotte: Thank you.

Mr. Stoffer.

● (1600)

Peter Stoffer: One thing I would like to see is a Red Seal program within the Government of Canada. If you're a stoker, a carpenter, a plumber or an electrician on board a ship or plane—or whatever it is that you do—those qualifications should equate to the Red Seal program, right across the country. No matter where you live within the military or whatever skills you have, if they're up to the Red Seal standard, you should be able to get a job anywhere in the country in that regard.

We could trim a lot of red tape by ensuring that any skilled trade within the Government of Canada—be it Public Services, Transport Canada, DND, the RCMP or wherever—equates to a Red Seal program in civilian life. If you did that, I believe you could streamline the process a lot more easily.

Thank you.

Kerry Diotte: Thank you.

I'd like to get a bit more specific on the question.

Again, to all three of you, is the main problem government regulation, provincial accreditation bodies, educational institutions, employers or the communication among all of these?

Dr. Whelan.

Dr. John Whelan: Chair, I defer to Ms. Bussey on this question. It's not in my direct experience.

Kerry Diotte: Ms. Bussey.

Michelle Bussey: Thank you.

The Canadian council of directors of apprenticeship is a national body that helps oversee and guide the Red Seal program. All of that is happening right now. Canada has a beautiful model, in that all jurisdictions have some autonomy. However, in terms of the Red Seal, it is that national standard we all go to.

It's about seeing what we can do together to wrap our arms around the veterans as they're coming out and transitioning to the civilian workforce. It's about making sure we have intentional programs, like we do in Nova Scotia with Helmets to Hardhats, helping individual military veterans make that transition—almost walking them through that journey and making sure they are supported.

We have models in Canada that work really well. We just need to tap into those and learn from them.

Kerry Diotte: Mr. Stoffer.

Peter Stoffer: If I may use your first name properly, Kerry, I believe the reality of this is communication. All three branches you mentioned need to do a much better job at communicating with one another, as well as with the Department of Veterans Affairs and DND.

Kerry Diotte: This is an open question for anyone who might have an answer. Is there any province that is ahead of the game? I know that we have somebody from Nova Scotia. Are there any other provinces that have best practices?

Peter Stoffer: Yes, I would say that Nova Scotia has done a very good job so far. We're not perfect by any means, but since all three of us are from Nova Scotia, let's give a plug for good old Bluenosers.

The reality is that we do a good job, but it's not perfect. We make mistakes as well. There are many things we can do to improve. I think it's because we have such a large veteran population in our province or in fact, for that matter, in Atlantic Canada. Employers are attuned to that. I think we definitely have a good start in this regard.

Of course, I mentioned Helmets to Hardhats and the Commissionaires. They are two wonderful organizations that truly understand, exactly, the discussions you're having. Definitely, if you haven't had a chance to invite them and pick their brains, they have some great advice on how to move forward.

Thank you.

Kerry Diotte: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will invite Mr. Clark for six minutes.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm also from Nova Scotia. It feels like a home crowd, so that's good.

I'll just say at the top, Mr. Stoffer, that it's great to see you. I represent, as you know, much of the riding that you represented. It's rare that a week goes by when a veteran doesn't come through my office and tell me about the great work you did to help them over the years. I just want to let you know that your reputation is without equal in the province, I think. Thank you for all your work and for that of the other witnesses, as well.

At the risk of buttering up my witness, Mr. Stoffer, I wonder if I could start with you. You touched on a really important topic in your opening statement, which is around the interplay between DND and Veterans Affairs on this. We've heard this with other topics we've studied over the last year and a half.

From your perspective, what does that transition period look like from DND to Veterans Affairs so that when the veteran becomes a veteran, they are as primed for success as they possibly can be? We're dealing with two big organizations, which is always difficult. What, in your mind, needs to be done to make sure that transition is as seamless as it should be?

● (1605)

Peter Stoffer: Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Thank you for your great representation of our riding. You're doing a great job.

I will say that, 20 years ago, the transition period was really bad. It wasn't very good at all. It has improved over 20 years. There's no question about that, but I still believe there's a severe lack of communication between DND and DVA. It's almost like somebody wants to throw the football and not be responsible for trying to catch it later on. It's sort of like, this person was under DND and now they're under DVA, and now we have nothing to do with them anymore.

That needs to change. It's not perfect yet. It still needs to be done. The transition period should be seamless. It should be very clear. The individual who is leaving should be introduced to a case manager at DVA, who says, “My name is Peter. Here's my number. I'm the person who's going to walk you through the myriad of programs you're entitled to have or not have in the future. I'm the person you talk to.”

Right now, they call 1-866-522-2122. They could be talking to anybody a lot of time. Now with the PCVRS, you may be talking to somebody over there. A lot of veterans are very confused.

If you're looking to get gainful employment and if you're looking to get one person to walk you through the system, that's what should be happening. You shouldn't be talking to a whole range of folks. It should be very clear that this is the person you need to speak to. They're the one who will assist you and help you in transitioning into civilian life and then working towards employment down the road. That's really what we would like.

The whole veterans charter, when it came in 2006, was designed to ensure that people in their thirties and forties didn't just get a pension cheque and do nothing with the rest of their lives. The whole thing was designed so that they could have gainful employment, have the dignity of work and be able to look after their families in a safe and comfortable manner. That's really all they're trying to do.

I would encourage DND and DVA to work even more closely together and tighten up any gaps that are there so that the veterans and their families feel that their services were merited and warranted dignity and that they are able to move on with their lives.

Braedon Clark: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

You also touched on the concept of poaching, as you described it in your opening comment, which is a very interesting topic.

As you know, I represent Burnside Industrial Park, which has a lot of defence-related industries. I've certainly come across many people who are in their mid-forties or younger and who served for a number of years and then moved over to the private sector.

Obviously, as you said, that's a bit of a chicken-and-egg, double-edged sword, because we want people to have good employment after their service is done, but we also want to make sure that the service is at least as attractive as that other option. In your mind, how do we strike that balance to make sure that folks are maximizing their service, but also that it's something that, of course, they want to do and is the preferred option as opposed to something else?

Peter Stoffer: What I would make sure of is that regardless of the rank of that individual and where they are within the service, they're treated with great respect, and anything that happens to them is dealt with immediately in that regard. There's no bureaucracy they have to go through. Also, make sure that their work is valued. They are an important part not just of the military but of the future of Canada as well.

Make sure there's good encouragement in that regard: making sure of their salaries, their benefits and their time off, and that their family life is treated properly. Make sure there are not too many moves across the country. As you know, years ago, veterans sometimes had to move 10 or 12 different times in their careers, and that was upsetting to the family. It's about ensuring that they have a good-quality family life, and that if they get the 25 years, they not only get a pretty decent pension, but their work is valued and they're needed for the services of Canada. I hate to see really good people with 10 and 11 years in the service leave to go to the private sector. I mean, it's good for the private sector—good on them—but it's hurting the Canadian military as well.

As I said in the opening statement, Braedon, as you know, we spend an awful lot of tax dollars training these fine individuals to become the people they are, and to lose them because of a better offer somewhere else.... You can't hold them back, but encouraging them by giving them incentives to stay I think would be very helpful in that regard.

● (1610)

Braedon Clark: Thank you, sir. I appreciate your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Stoffer, it's good to see you again. I had the privilege of serving in the House with you in 2006. You're just as passionate about advocating for veterans now as you were then. I remember your forceful speeches and how you stood up for veterans in the House of Commons. I see that you continue to champion their cause with the same passion in retirement. The only thing missing is the moustache. You had quite a moustache when you were in the House of Commons. I also remember how impatient you were with the slow pace of change.

Earlier, you told us that National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada seem to be working in silos. I looked into the studies. In 2015, the committee studied the continuum of transition services. In 2017, True Patriot Love released a report with recommendations. In 2023, we studied a national strategy for veterans employment. In 2024, the committee produced a report entitled “Reforming Transition from Military to Civilian Life”.

There have been plenty of reports and recommendations, yet here we are in 2026, and I get the impression that little has changed for veterans who want to transition to civilian life.

As my colleague said, your organization has a good reputation. Was it consulted on efforts to improve the online job bank for veterans and reservists? There was a report, and I'm sure DND and ESDC have been working on improving the job bank since 2024.

Are you seeing efforts to improve things, or are the same recommendations being made over and over again to fix the same problems?

Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

[*English*]

No, we were not consulted on that issue in that regard.

I will say that in the beginning, in 2006, when we started the veterans affairs committee, the transition period from military to civilian wasn't very good at all. It has improved, but as you correctly said, there are still silos within there. There shouldn't be silos. The transition should be very smooth.

Psychiatrists, psychologists, medical doctors and everyone should be with the veteran in the event that they're medically released. In terms of a person under a normal release with an honourable discharge, everything that should be there for that veteran to transition into a workforce of some kind, no matter where in the country, should be seamless. It should be done very quickly.

I believe if you did a one-stop-shop approach, you would not only alleviate a lot of the concerns a veteran and their family may have, but you would also, in the end, save an awful lot of money. That veteran should be talking to one person and one person only in order to transition through and into the workforce.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much.

Ms. Bussey, as you told us earlier, you're an expert and part of a Canadian network.

Three initiatives have been introduced: the online job bank for veterans and reservists, the my skills & education translator tool, and the military occupational structure identification code equivalency tool.

Would you say these initiatives have been successful? Have they achieved their intended objectives? Based on what we heard from Mr. Stoffer, it doesn't sound like they have.

What is your opinion on that?

[*English*]

Michelle Bussey: Thank you for the question.

I don't have the details of all jurisdictions. I know in Nova Scotia we do see veterans coming through, and reservists as well. It's not at a huge rate, but we do see them come through.

I know that we're working hard to make sure that we are working very closely with the military here in Nova Scotia to see what we can do to increase those numbers by supporting them, as Peter mentioned, through what we can do to get them trained and rated and get them those certifications while they're still in the military service. We're exploring what those options could look like.

Again, I can't really speak about across Canada. In Nova Scotia we do have some, but not a huge amount.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Are your agency's services also accessible to francophones who served in the military in Nova Scotia and who are transitioning to civilian life, whether they decide to stay in Nova Scotia or return to their home province?

[*English*]

Michelle Bussey: Yes, of course. We do offer our services in French. We have some French training consultants. For exams or anything like that, if they need the logbooks or the exams for writing the Red Seal, all of that can be in French. We do have services available to them, yes.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. Tolmie, go ahead for five minutes.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today.

Dr. Whelan, welcome back. I remember you from 2021.

Mr. Stoffer, welcome back. It's a shame you didn't come and join us. We would have taken each other to the parliamentary bar, and the first round would have been on you, being a good Nova Scotian.

I would like to focus on key performance indicators. I have a couple of reports here of studies that Canada has done on veterans affairs going back to 1917 with the special committee on returned soldiers. We have a report from 1917. We also have a report from 1998 called “A Strategic Plan for Quality of Life Improvements in the Canadian Forces”. Then I have an excerpt from a VAC review in 2002 that says they couldn't even tell whether the CTS and ETB programs that they had put in place were working.

We've been studying this since 1917. In 1998, this committee's predecessor recommended helping employers understand the skills of people leaving the forces and getting military training recognized for civilian credentials.

Mr. Stoffer, you were vice-chair for three reports from 2012 and 2015 that said much the same thing. In 2012, the committee heard DND aim for at least 20 accreditations per year. In 1998, the government reported back to the committee on every recommendation every year. In 2001, it told Parliament 44 of 99 people in its transition program were hired.

What's changed since you sat on this committee, and what hasn't?

Peter Stoffer: Thank you, sir, very much for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

Next time, sure, if I'm invited back, I'll pop up and we'll say hello to each other.

There is no question. There are many reports, not just from the veterans affairs committee but also from the defence committee and others, that are sitting on the shelf and getting dusty, unfortunately. What you're studying now and what's being discussed is not new.

There are problems I see within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and you folks are probably aware of them. There are well-meaning people within that department, and I believe that 99% of them want to do well by the veterans. They're suffering from burnout and an overload of work, and they're under tremendous stress. I deal with veterans, and they talk to me with language that wouldn't be appropriate for any bureaucrat. I tell them that they can talk to me that way, but they certainly can never talk to a member of Parliament or to anybody in a government department like that. You simply can't do that.

One of the things happening is that within the department, there's an awful lot of burnout and a lot of stress. I don't think there are enough people in that department to meet the workload. It's always wonderful around Veterans' Week when we're all wearing the poppy and veterans are top of mind, but what happens on November 12? The wreaths are laid, the poppies are put away and veterans are not thought of. Other issues move to the forefront of the government's attention and, for that matter, the opposition's attention. Veterans really don't get thought of much after Remembrance Day, other than on certain days throughout the year, to be very frank with you. They're generally not a political priority in most cases.

I've tried for years and years to get that level of political activity raised for veterans so that there's more awareness. As you know, sir—and I had the opportunity for 18.5 years—you folks get to sit there because of the red poppy you're wearing and the veterans who allowed us to have our democracy. We need to think of them not just on Remembrance Day but every day.

● (1620)

Fraser Tolmie: Thank you.

Dr. Whelan, how do you think veterans feel after watching committees where reports and recommendations come forward and nothing seems to get done for them? How do they feel?

Dr. John Whelan: Thank you for the question.

They feel mostly forgotten. They have real concerns about trying to fit into civilian culture, and that does not help them, practically, to try to re-engage with their families and communities.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now for five minutes, we go to Mrs. Hirtle.

Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, witnesses. It's lovely to see Nova Scotia representing this afternoon.

Prior to taking on this role, I spent 10 years at the CBDC in Colchester County helping people start and run successful small businesses. I was very familiar with the Blue Seal, which is for Red Seal individuals to learn business skills to be able to more effectively run their businesses. When I heard about this study, I said, "Oh, I have to have the apprenticeship agency here."

Ms. Bussey, what barriers do veterans face when entering apprenticeship programs? How can the provincial apprenticeship authorities, employers, unions and federal government work together to establish clearer and more consistent pathways from the military service skills to civilian trades?

Michelle Bussey: Thank you for the question.

Right now, in Canada, the work has been done to map 11 Canadian Forces trades to 13 Red Seal trades. A lot of that work has been done. I think it was Peter who mentioned that we need to do a better job of communicating that and making sure that everybody is aware of it. That is one thing that I'm going to take away from this that we could do a better job of.

We are already working very closely with our education partners, like the Nova Scotia Community College. As I mentioned earlier, we're also working with the military to see what we can do while people are still in service to help them get that training. We're also partnering with Helmets to Hardhats and other organizations to see how we can help support them.

The barriers that are there are really dependent on the person, as I mentioned before, but we need to make sure that we are getting the right information to them and that we're helping support them through that transition. There are a lot of employers in Nova Scotia that are very willing and ready to take on veterans. It's about making sure that we have a matching opportunity, which is where Helmets to Hardhats comes in.

Alana Hirtle: That's excellent. Thank you.

How would the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, or maybe the Canadian council of directors of apprenticeship, provide guidance or insight for work between the federal government and the other provincial regulators to develop standardized military-to-trade competency maps?

Michelle Bussey: Again, for 11 of the Canadian Forces trades, that already exists for 13 of the Red Seal trades. That mapping has been done. All the jurisdictions agreed to those back in 2009.

As far as I'm aware, there has been no other work done, because there haven't been any of those direct matches between what the Canadian Armed Forces does and what Red Seals would do. If there was more work that needed to be done, then it would be a conversation around what those new trades looked like and how they might map to a Red Seal.

It's absolutely worth having conversations about whether there are other military trades that we can look at.

● (1625)

Alana Hirtle: That's excellent. Thank you.

In your opinion and experience, what policies or investments would most effectively help veterans access apprenticeships, overcome gaps in civilian certification requirements and complete their training successfully?

Michelle Bussey: This applies to not just the military but anyone in the Red Seal trades.

There is retention, and I think the federal government has a lot of plans in place right now to help with that, as do all the jurisdictions. We need to make sure that we better understand what those barriers are specifically and how we can work with the community.

In this case, with the military veterans, how do we best navigate that with them and make sure we find the solutions to the barriers? It could be something as simple, again, as communication. It could be refresher courses. There could be a short, little opportunity to bridge that gap. Maybe there were some things they didn't learn in the military, or it was a different kind of language, terminology or something that we need to give them a refresher on to do the Red Seal.

Alana Hirtle: That's great. Thank you.

I have 30 seconds.

Dr. Whelan, I have a quick question for you.

How can employers and credential recognition bodies better recognize veterans' skills and experience while accommodating any service-related mental health challenges?

Dr. John Whelan: Thank you for the question. I'll give you a quick answer.

One of the things we're working on with the volunteerism initiative is educating civilian employers or, in this case, volunteer agencies about what they really need to have in place if they're going to be onboarding veteran volunteers. That requires a whole structure and an environment where it's safe, it's predictable and veterans will stay—because many show up and then leave. It's the same thing with paid work.

Alana Hirtle: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Bussey, in your opinion, does the fact that education and training fall under provincial jurisdiction pose an obstacle to the implementation of solutions or recommendations, which are moving at a snail's pace rather than at warp speed?

[*English*]

Michelle Bussey: The short answer is no. The Canadian council of directors of apprenticeship is a collaboration between all of the jurisdictions and the federal government. Following all of the announcements in the spring with team Canada strong, there's a lot of work being done together right now to figure out how to make everything as seamless and as smooth as possible.

Having the provincial and territorial jurisdiction on education is important because there are differences between the jurisdictions. That needs to still be there, but having working tables where we all come together to talk about the differences and how we can work more quickly together to serve and meet the needs of Canada and the skilled trades is really important.

I think it's more a case of, “Let's be at the table together and figure out how to make things go as quickly as possible.”

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: I don't know the situation in Nova Scotia. In Quebec, we have the Commission de la construction du Québec. Access to the construction trades is highly regulated, heavily unionized and strictly governed by agreements.

Do you have similar institutions in Nova Scotia? Is the system as well regulated as in Quebec, for example?

[*English*]

Michelle Bussey: No. From my understanding, Quebec has a very unique set-up compared to the rest of the country.

We have unionized training for the construction trades. The majority of our apprenticeship training and skilled trades training would still be done through our public colleges, but the unions are fantastic partners. They have really stepped up to help, because the demand is outpacing what we can typically do through the public colleges in Nova Scotia.

Our unionized training partners have been incredible. They've come to the table and really helped fill those gaps. They're doing everything from pre-apprenticeship to pre-employment training. They're doing what we call enhanced direct entry, and they're also now working with us on technical training, such as apprenticeship blocks.

● (1630)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Mr. Gill for five minutes.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to start by saying thank you to all of our witnesses who are here today to make sure that we can work toward the improvements we need for military personnel transitioning into civilian life.

Dr. Whelan, I would like to start with you, sir. You touched base on some challenges veterans might face when they have the experience of going into the civilian workforce, but I want to touch specifically on the psychological side of this transition. Could you expand on that?

We know it's very difficult for veterans to transition into civilian life after years or even decades of service, especially when it comes to finding meaningful employment. Can you please touch on that?

Dr. John Whelan: One of the issues I see very commonly in my work and in my research is a real attention to “purpose only”, which means being task-oriented but with a real inability to transfer their identity from a military identity that's been enforced over years and decades into a culture that veterans are not accustomed to because of the types of training in the military.

I would agree with what's been said previously. Veterans need a joint initiative by the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada to reintroduce veterans to civilian society. We can't assume that they're going to walk into a situation and be able to form new relationships, negotiate conflicts or find belonging. That's the biggest issue I see, and it's also reflected in the research.

Sukhman Gill: Earlier when you were doing your testimony, I wrote down some things here. One of the things that stuck out to me the most was that you said the reason for leaving matters and that the supports disappear after that. We need to make sure we take into account the veteran's perspective.

These things really tie down to the fact that when somebody's leaving, there are impacts on their confidence, their sense of purpose and basically the transition to feel like they're normal again. Could you leverage on that a little bit and give me your insight on those things and those accounts?

Dr. John Whelan: This would be particularly relevant to the medically released folks, and there are quite a number. Worth really becomes diminished and lost in mental health or psychiatric diagnosis. Their sense of community engagement and their sense of capacity really takes a second seat to ongoing treatments.

On other kinds of releases, there are people who release voluntarily because they're frustrated. They were frustrated with the system, and there's no place to speak about those issues. We expect them to continue to sacrifice and serve when they're exhausted and when they really need a place to be able to stop, unload and really recentre themselves again. As is often said, the lingering effects of release items stay with people for years and decades. That's been my experience.

Sukhman Gill: That makes a lot of sense to my understanding of your research here.

That leads me to ask you this. Where are we falling short here? Where do we see the supports not tying up to making sure we can support the ones who need longevity support, people who have psychological barriers they need to break through? Where are we lacking here?

Dr. John Whelan: I don't dispute that, as has been said, there are a lot of committed, hard-working people. A big part of the issue is the separation between the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada.

When we think about transition, it is not, “You've left, so we're finished with you.” Release begins when people first begin to think about it, when they're first notified of a medical condition. It begins long before people leave uniform, and it continues long after they leave. They may become a client of Veterans Affairs Canada, but there has to be some initiative that follows them from the point of considering releasing within the military and continues over time, and is evaluated independently. I think we need that data.

● (1635)

Sukhman Gill: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Chair.

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

Now we will complete our round two.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Chatel, you have the floor for five minutes.

Sophie Chatel (Pontiac—Kitigan Zibi, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today for this important study.

I agree with you, Mr. Stoffer. Veterans and Canadian Armed Forces members are the people who work to ensure that we can all sit here today and live in a democracy and a sovereign country. We must indeed think of them as they make the transition to civilian life.

The profile of veterans has changed significantly in two key ways. The first is age. The average age is 34. We must also consider the fact that they need a rewarding career. They want to continue serving their country and we need them.

Second, they're working on dual-use technologies. They're now increasingly involved in drones, cybersecurity, aerospace, maintenance and shipbuilding, among other areas. I'm thinking of icebreaker maintenance, for example.

Canada also needs young workers in this age group. I looked at the statistics. They show that, over the next 10 years, we'll need 593,000 workers in Red Seal trades. Our schools can't train them, but some people have received training in these trades. The recognition of these diplomas isn't just a service provided to veterans. It's a service provided to Canada.

Ms. Bussey, I was really happy to hear you say earlier that we need to take care of the training program and the recognition of diplomas while these people are serving in the military. Could you tell us more about this key issue?

[*English*]

Michelle Bussey: I can give you an example of what we're trying to do here in Nova Scotia.

We're trying to see what it would take to actually work with the military community here so that as the young people are starting their military service, they're also working towards their apprenticeship and are tied directly into apprenticeship right from that moment. When they're in the military, they can start getting their Red Seal and can still serve in the military with a Red Seal. Then when they come out, they're ready to go with the Red Seal, as well as with all of the years of service and experience that they have.

Those are things that we are trying to explore here in Nova Scotia to see what we might be able to do to make that transition even easier.

Sophie Chatel: I think you are an example in Nova Scotia. We need to do the same thing all across Canada. We have to start early so that when they become veterans, they have their Red Seal certification and have started an apprenticeship with a civilian industry and are ready to go.

In the public service transition to becoming a pensioner, people receive five years in advance training to get ready to be a retiree. We give veterans six months. I think we have to start to think about a much earlier transition, one that will start while they are doing their service.

I'd like to understand. I saw the other witnesses shaking their heads, so please intervene, Dr. Whelan, and then Mr. Stoffer.

Dr. John Whelan: Could you repeat the question, please?

[*Translation*]

Sophie Chatel: Six months isn't enough time to prepare for a transition. We should start earlier, shouldn't we?

[*English*]

Dr. John Whelan: Yes, we should, absolutely.

As I said earlier, transition really begins while people are still serving. As soon as they become aware that they may be leaving, whether by their own choice or for medical or administrative reasons, the transition process and some of these issues should start.

● (1640)

Sophie Chatel: Go ahead, Mr. Stoffer, for 20 seconds.

Peter Stoffer: Yes, there is no question that it needs to start an awful lot earlier, but the key is not to have a whole bunch of people interfering in the veteran's transition. They need to narrow it down to one or maybe two people that the person feels comfortable with, fully understand what their opportunities are and be able to talk to that one individual in those terms. That means you need highly trained people and transition specialists within DND and DVA in order to meet that need.

I will just say briefly to members of Parliament that one day you're going to transition back to being a regular Joe or Jane, so you have to ask yourself how difficult that is. All you need to do is talk to former members of Parliament who were either defeated or left on their own to know how difficult it was to transition back to their regular lives. If you think of it that way, that's exactly what our veterans are going through when they leave the military. There's no difference. They need assistance and they need guidance. They need help in order to move forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

This will complete our first hour with our panel. I want to say thank you very much to Dr. Whelan, Ms. Bussey and Mr. Stoffer for your time. Certainly, Dr. Whelan, thank you for your service to our country and your continuation of service.

To all of you, we will be suspending to welcome our next panel.

[*Translation*]

● (1640)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1645)

The Chair: Good afternoon again. I call this meeting back to order.

I would like to make a few remarks for the benefit of the new witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I call you by name.

For the interpretation, the people in the room can use the headset and select the appropriate channel.

We're honoured to welcome representatives from the City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force. We're joined by Andrée Paige, co-chair, and Priya Bhaloo, pillar lead for career transition.

[*English*]

From Helmets to Hardhats, we have Mr. Darryl Cathcart, national director of training and development, and Mr. Dave Giannou, director for the Atlantic region.

We will start by giving each of the organizations five minutes to deliver opening remarks. After this, the rest of the hour, as you might have seen, will be a series of questions with the members of the committee.

Madame Paige, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Andrée Paige (Co-Chair, City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting the City of Ottawa's veterans task force to contribute to this study.

I am the co-chair of the task force alongside co-founder Matt Luloff, and joining me today is Priya Bhaloo, our pillar lead for career transition. We are a volunteer-based municipal initiative. We connect people, organizations and resources supporting veterans and their families at the community level, but we advocate for veterans at every level.

Why have a municipal task force? While national policies, programs and funding are important, their value is ultimately measured by what happens in communities.

[*Translation*]

Veterans seek access to health care, housing and employment and they strive to develop a sense of belonging and inclusion within their communities. The gaps between different systems can become particularly apparent at the community level.

Today, I would like to discuss the difference between preparing a person to leave the Canadian Armed Forces and supporting them through their transition to civilian life.

[*English*]

First, I want to acknowledge the important work of the Canadian Armed Forces transition group and Veterans Affairs Canada. Through planning, through MTEP—military transition engagement and partnerships—through the national resource directory and through career services, Canada has developed valuable supports. The national veterans employment strategy also recognizes the importance of military skills and employer partnerships. We should build on these investments.

Here's something to reflect on. Release is an administrative event, but transition is a human experience. The two do not necessarily happen on the same timeline.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

A member of the Canadian Armed Forces can attend information sessions, develop a transition plan and receive advice on benefits, services and employment opportunities. On paper, this person may be well prepared. However, what happens once they leave the forces? Responsibilities change, points of contact change and procedures change.

[*English*]

What veterans tell us is that the civilian world operates very differently, and navigating unfamiliar systems can become overwhelming: Go find your next opportunity. Go find an employer who recognizes your experience. Go find someone who can translate your military qualifications into civilian credentials.

For some, transitioning to civilian life can feel like literally falling off a cliff. It's not because resources don't exist but because knowing something exists is not the same as successfully connecting to it. Military personnel do not leave their skills behind when they leave the military. They bring leadership, technical expertise, operational experience and years of professional development. Some need additional education and credentials, but others are already job-ready. Those capabilities are not always understood or recognized in civilian employment. The question is not what else we need to create, but rather how we make what already exists work better.

CAF and Veterans Affairs Canada already provide guidance and connections to services, but how well do those connections hold as veterans move between systems, employers and communities? It comes down to needing more and better coordinated pathways to remove barriers, gaps and overlaps.

[*Translation*]

We can better support veterans, connect them with the right resources and strengthen the coordination between the provinces and communities.

[*English*]

Our responsibility is to ensure that the systems, programs and services in communities across Canada are ready to recognize them.

Priya will be sharing three practical recommendations to help make that happen.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, for five minutes, we have Helmets to Hardhats....

I apologize. There was some time on the clock, and I believe that you were going to speak on the three aspects that you wanted to share.

I will give Ms. Bhaloo the floor. We have about one minute.

Priya Bhaloo (Pillar Lead, Career Transition, City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the committee for having us here today. I'm going to go through the three recommendations very quickly. We can go over them again later.

Number one is education and training funds. Currently when veterans leave, they have access to funds that vary depending on how much service they've actually given. It can range anywhere from $50,000 up to $100,000. Only $6,000 of that is available for short-term training. Our recommendation is to change the way that funding is used and even make it available if a veteran wanted to start their own business or if they wanted to pursue different types of training or different assessments.

The second recommendation is continuity of security clearance. With the escalation of security and defence in the private sector right now, security clearance is a huge hurdle for veterans who are trying to find work. Those of you who may be familiar with this know that PSPC currently has a massive backlog of people waiting for security clearances. In order to work at DND, for example, you need to get a visitor clearance request. There are currently over 1,000 applications waiting. In the past, that process used to take a week. It currently takes an average of two to three months. We need ways for us to speed that up.

Last is an incentive for employers in either the form of a tax credit or a wage subsidy. If we can motivate employers to hire veterans and familiarize them on what that process looks like and what the various skill sets are, there is a huge value added for the actual community and it opens up a lot of doors for the veterans as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, for five minutes, we have Mr. Cathcart.

Darryl Cathcart (National Director, Training and Development, Helmets to Hardhats): Chair and honourable members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the standing committee today.

I represent Helmets to Hardhats, which was founded in 2012 through the visionary leadership of Mr. Joseph Maloney. It is now led by Mr. James Hogarth. We connect veterans, reservists, eligible family members and cadets to apprenticeships and employment in the unionized construction sector. My perspective on this problem draws on 26 years of regular force infantry service, as well as a doctorate in education, where I examined training, education and employment pathways for transitioning service members, reservists and military families.

Let's establish a common definition from our perspective today.

Prior learning assessment and recognition evaluates experience acquired outside formal education against established standards. It may result in academic credit or competency recognition but not necessarily occupational certification or employment. Helmets to Hardhats does not issue credentials. We work with unions, training centres and employers to see where military skills are recognized and where pathways may need some assistance.

Since our founding in 2012, 76% of our veteran and reservist referrals have been from army backgrounds. That is key. While not representative of all veterans, this aligns with VAC studies identifying former army soldiers, younger veterans and lower-ranking members as more likely to need employment and transition support. Moreover, the life after service studies series found that 47% of junior non-commissioned members had difficulty adjusting to civilian life compared with 21% of officers. A Canadian study of over 1,400 veterans also identified challenges associated with junior rank in army service. A 2026 VAC study reported that 28% had difficulty finding civilian work, with credential recognition being among the barriers indicated.

These findings do not prove that unrecognized learning causes transition difficulties. They do raise a policy question: Are recognition systems reaching those who need them the most? Consider a young infantry soldier skilled in leadership, instruction, logistics and risk management. Those competencies may not translate into academic credit, apprenticeship standing or employer requirements. Experience is undervalued when civilian systems cannot interpret it. Effective policy must connect three distinct systems: academic recognition, occupational certification and access to work. Progress in one area does not guarantee the next. We must measure employment outcomes, not credits alone.

I recommend that this committee call on the federal government to establish a nationally coordinated framework that documents military competencies in civilian language and connects them to education, apprenticeship and certification, along with employment pathways. The Canadian Armed Forces should lead competency documentation. Veterans Affairs Canada should integrate recognition into transition planning. Employment and Social Development Canada should align pathways with labour market demands. Employers must define competencies and translate recognition into employment opportunities. Provinces, territories, educational institutions, unions and regulators must shape implementation while retaining their credentialing and safety authorities.

No single organization has a monopoly on this issue. Pathways must respond to individual capabilities and regional labour market needs. This is an economic imperative. Housing, infrastructure, energy and defence projects need skilled workers. Veterans should not repeat demonstrated learning, but occupational standards must remain intact. Recognition systems must also adapt as industry evolves.

We heard in the previous session that Canada has invested in military talent. The opportunity is now to align government, education, organized labour and employers to ensure that talent is recognized, valued and connected to meaningful employment.

Thank you, and we welcome your questions.

● (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now open our first round with Mr. Barrett for six minutes.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

I want to first say thank you to you and colleagues for the statement that was issued by the committee last week following the tragic events at CFB Wainwright. This is my first time speaking at committee since then, and I wanted to just quickly and briefly acknowledge the lives lost from 3VP, Private Shaun Farrell, Private Aidan Goulding, Private Hayden Lykkemark and Sergeant Morgan Wong from the Loyal Eddies, with 39 other service members who were injured and 27 who are still in hospital, 13 in critical condition.

Like all members of the committee, I extend my deepest condolences to their families, their friends and fellow service members. Thoughts and prayers from members of Parliament and from Canadians are being offered up, and I take this as an opportunity to redouble my commitment, as I know all members of this committee and all members of Parliament do, to do right by those who are affected directly and indirectly during this tragic event. It certainly is a stark reminder of the importance of the work that we're called to do to honour the service that these men and women offer up for us every single day.

With that, I'll turn my question to Mr. Cathcart.

Could you tell me about the framework and expand on that a little bit? I've suggested previously that as early as at the recruitment stage—and I remember when I went into the recruiting centre and they had all the trades up on the board, and there were details about what I could do—there was a section that I know the recruiter kept kind of steering me towards, because that's what they were looking to fill, which was signals trades.

I think what would have been really helpful for me would have been to be able to see what jobs I could get if I left the forces. For example, the average member of the line trade leaves at the rank of master corporal or sergeant and finds employment in these areas with an average annual salary of *x*. That would be informative to the men and women who are seeking employment. I think that it requires a consciousness in the training that we're giving to our service members.

I also think there should be an imperative within the Canadian Forces to create an environment where people want to stay. Then they have the training, and they know that now they have their ticket. They have their journeyman qualifications and they have demonstrated leadership capabilities, but they stay because the environment is so good.

If they want to go.... In some cases they involuntarily need to leave, perhaps due to conditions that arise from their service or are caused by their service. That's what I imagine. Just to boil it down and update that pamphlet, if there are even pamphlets on the wall anymore—it's probably all online, on tablets or whatever—what does that look like? What does that framework look like for you?

● (1700)

Darryl Cathcart: These conversations often leave out an important partner, as we heard earlier in the previous session. Clearly, at Helmets to Hardhats, we're focused on the skilled trades, but that's a small percentage. We talked about the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and their peer organizations across the country.

What's missing from this equation are the employers. Schools—and when I say schools, I mean all post-secondary institutions—can grant credits for being a lineman, for being an infantry soldier or for being a stoker, as we heard, but if the employers aren't at the table providing their input, that is an essential gap. We're simply giving people credits for their military service. Whilst important, as Dr. Whelan mentioned in the previous session, that does not lead to meaningful employment outcomes, so we need to have the pathway not stop with that. Employers certainly need to become active participants in defining these competencies.

The other thing I would say that potentially addresses your question is that success must not be measured through employment outcomes or simply the number of credits that we gain through whatever framework. We need to ensure that sustainability is built into this process. We literally—the greater "we"—have been talking about this for decades. This is not a new problem. While some historical examples were indicated earlier, we can solve this problem. It's not insurmountable. We need to be really innovative and get some employers or employer representatives at the table.

● (1705)

Michael Barrett: I have 30 seconds left.

Who should be putting together that table of employers across the skilled trades? Should this be driven by the private sector or organizations like yours, or should this be led by government?

Darryl Cathcart: Helmets to Hardhats certainly should be at the table, but this is a federal-level initiative that's led by VAC, CAF and, I would recommend, ESDC to bring in the important players.

Michael Barrett: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Fanjoy for six minutes.

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for this important discussion.

Ms. Paige, I'd like to begin with you. Since joining the City of Ottawa veterans task force, how has the military-to-civilian career transition evolved over time and what do you feel are the primary issues that we need to address to improve that transition?

Andrée Paige: To a large extent, we've seen terminology not be understood by employers. As that visibility and that understanding continue to increase and that awareness happens at the community level across Canada, that's been huge, but there's also been what I'll call a stereotype issue as well. It comes down to people who are maybe not familiar with the military having a perception that all veterans are broken.

There are a lot of injuries and there are a lot of issues around mental health that we need to take care of and to make sure that we're there for our veterans, but we have talked with certain employers who, without realizing it, were actually saying, "We can't give any priority hiring to veterans. We need them to apply for jobs like everyone else, but once they're in, we're going to accommodate them." Well, what do you mean by "accommodate them"?

It's that perception that there is a lot of education that needs to be done to increase awareness of the skills, the leadership and the talent that come out of veterans and how to best support them, and I think the incentives come into play as well. If people don't have an incentive to prioritize veterans.... I'm not talking about organizations that have a mandate to hire veterans or a business priority to hire veterans—there are many of those—but there are no other incentives here in Canada, apart from a feel-good sort of perspective.

We need a lot more of that.

Bruce Fanjoy: Yes, it's very interesting that you brought that up, and I sense that there is a cultural element to this. Even in civilian careers, people go through pivots. It could be a parent who's off work for a period of time and tries to re-enter the workforce. Women for a long time have talked about a glass ceiling, and perhaps there's a parallel here for veterans. Perhaps they face a camouflage ceiling where they are seen differently from other candidates.

I'm wondering how we break through that.

Andrée Paige: If you're not a veteran, usually you know a veteran. I think that's why municipalities need to get more involved and also be aware of what's happening at national and provincial levels.

We deal with far more than career transition. We also deal with health care, which is often considered a provincial issue. We also deal with housing issues, which are happening more and more at community levels, but how can we take the sources, the resources and not assume that they're going to magically trickle down to where they're needed?

We need community. We've heard it said that people want to talk to a person. They don't want to go onto a database and try to find things. They want to talk to someone who understands how to connect them to the services they need because sometimes they don't even know what they need yet.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

I'd like to move to Helmets to Hardhats, and in particular, Mr. Giannou.

You weren't in our first hour of witnesses, so you missed the Nova Scotia theme. Welcome to committee. Although I represent an Ontario riding, I grew up in Nova Scotia, particularly in Halifax, so it's a big day for Nova Scotia at the ACVA committee.

What are the main barriers that you see preventing veterans from having their skills and experience recognized towards civilian apprenticeship programs?

● (1710)

Dave Giannou (Director, Atlantic Region, Helmets to Hardhats): Thank you, sir, for your question.

The biggest barriers I find are financial barriers. I joined in the 1980s. I served 36 years in the navy. When I joined, you could sign a contract for 20 years, at the end of which you got out with an immediate annuity. For me, I was 38 coming out with 40% of my pension. That money would allow me to transition into a new job and a new career if my old career didn't align. You heard earlier that 11 of our trades can challenge the Red Seal. That leaves close to 100 that can't. There's no civilian equivalency for those trades. You need to look at a different career path if that's what you want to do when you get out.

Now it's a 25-year contract. You're getting out in your mid-forties and looking at an option to move into a new career, if you want to stay that long and draw the pension. If you get out before then.... Most regular force members cannot draw EI when they release. They have no financial support. They have to move into something that pays the bills. They have families, mortgages and car payments to make. It's a big financial burden. The average corporal or sailor first class, once they have four years of service, earns $84,000 a year. The average new apprentice starts around $40,000 to $50,000 in Nova Scotia.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

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

Now, for six minutes, we have Madame DeBellefeuille.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us.

Mr. Cathcart, in 2023, a representative from your organization testified as part of a study. He said that, despite the efforts made, the results were rather lacklustre. The qualifications and experience gained during military service that enabled individuals to pass the Red Seal interprovincial equivalency tests didn't match the qualifications and experience gained in the construction sector.

Three years later, have you reached the same conclusion?

[*English*]

Darryl Cathcart: As stated in the opening remarks, it's important to desegregate who our clients are: lower-ranking army who do not come from a skilled trades background. Without commenting specifically on what was said in 2023, because it's not before me, what I can tell you is that we're not dealing with carpenters, plumbers or electricians in the military today coming out and becoming a civilian carpenter, plumber or electrician. We're dealing with people coming from the military with a combat arms background. A number of those military occupations come with skills that do not translate into a civilian equivalent.

That would be a response to that.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Cathcart.

Ms. Paige, I visited the Veterans Affairs Canada website. It stated that, in 2021, almost 23% of veterans were from Quebec. I don't know whether the proportion is the same today. However, so far, not enough emphasis has been placed on the importance of ensuring bilingual transition services that remain accessible to people in both languages. Think tanks, action groups and all the experts who come together should make it a priority to ensure that these transition services are always provided in both official languages.

Do you notice this concern coming up in all the business of the committees that you sit on? In your opinion, is this concern important?

● (1715)

Andrée Paige: Yes. It's really important to be able to speak in the language of your choice. Here in Canada, our communications are bilingual. People should have the choice to communicate in their preferred language, especially when they're working with the government.

Claude DeBellefeuille: In the task forces on which you serve and through your regular interactions with veterans, do you feel that this is a concern for National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada?

Do you get the impression that this issue is considered important, or do people need to lobby a bit to keep it on the agenda and to make sure that the topic is discussed and recognized as a key part of military members' transition to civilian life?

Andrée Paige: The veterans whom we've spoken with say that this matters to them. However, they care more about the communication itself than about the ability to use the language of their choice. They need visibility and coordination. They must have someone to talk to. They need someone who can show them where to go and what to do, especially when they leave the Canadian Armed Forces. They immediately end up in a whole new situation, so they need to talk to someone. Right now, no one at the community level can do this. On our end, we're working to build a bridge. We want to create a more visible space where they can talk about what they need with one or two people.

Claude DeBellefeuille: You're basically recommending a clearly marked one-stop shop to welcome veterans wherever they are in their journey and even to help them, at times, navigate different paths.

You're talking about Ottawa here. However, would you recommend that every veteran, in their home province, have access to this proposed one-stop shop?

Andrée Paige: Yes. Right now, when we want to know how many veterans have been released in our community, we don't have access to that information. It's private. So when they're released, they need to start all over again. Even we don't know how many veterans have been released in our community this year and in previous years. We face a big wall when it comes to privacy and consent.

Claude DeBellefeuille: You know, as members of Parliament, we receive a list of newcomers to our constituency once a month so that we can welcome them.

Andrée Paige: Are you talking about veterans?

Claude DeBellefeuille: No, I'm talking about immigrants. As members of Parliament, we have access to this data.

You're suggesting that we do the same thing for veterans so that we can quickly welcome them into their own communities and better point them towards all the tools already available to them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

This wraps up the first round.

We'll now move on to the second round.

[*English*]

For five minutes, we have Mr. Tolmie.

Fraser Tolmie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our guests, our witnesses.

Mr. Cathcart, earlier on you referenced the previous panel, where it was brought up—and I was the one that brought it up—that we've been studying this since 1917. We did it in the 1990s and the 2000s.

I'd like to marry this with an understanding that it's great for us to do studies, but the world is fast-paced. It's moving, and it's changing. With regard to the people you were talking about—the infantry, the combat veterans—and their skill sets, do you think it makes it harder for them to find employment in this day and age, where it's very technologically advanced and where, even within the trades, some of the skill sets have changed?

● (1720)

Darryl Cathcart: The answer to your question is yes, but let me expand. What is missing is employers. We've been having these conversations for decades. I'm not privy to everybody who was on the witness list, but I don't see employers on the witness list. I don't see major businesses and industry. Are they? If so, that's good. If they're not, that's problematic. We can sit here as experts in our fields—construction, education or the local and municipal impact—but without the aft end of that, it's problematic.

What Canada doesn't need is another credentialing system. We need to work together. I proposed the framework of the CAF, VAC, ESDC and educational institutions, where we work within the existing constraints that we have today in order to achieve this objective. It's not simply about recognizing military service. It's about converting all of that into meaningful employment to have that economic impact for the member, for their family and for their region.

I hope that answers your question.

Fraser Tolmie: It does partially.

With your organization and your interaction with Veterans Affairs, have you been part of career fairs or job fairs? Has Veterans Affairs ever held a career fair for veterans who are looking for employment that has attracted businesses? Have they said, “Okay, this is a gap we have, and we can't get employment for veterans, so let's have a career fair”?

Darryl Cathcart: Again, the answer to that question is yes, but I'll expand on it with a little less verbiage.

Not only have we had that opportunity, but we get it through the Canadian Armed Forces as well. Those are dual partners in this transition space. We're often consulted when these initiatives are put forward. VAC has reached out frequently for some advice in these areas.

Fraser Tolmie: You presented to the Nova Scotia Legislature in June and said that veterans don't need charity.

Were you consulted about the announcements the government made about the $430 million for a union-led apprenticeship training and the $258.6 million they announced the next day to speed up certification? Were you made aware of that before the announcement?

Darryl Cathcart: I was not made aware of it, but we have a good relationship with the Government of Nova Scotia and are running an independent program down there with their support and with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.

Fraser Tolmie: If part of that money were aimed at veterans, what could you do with it? How many more people do you think you could place?

Darryl Cathcart: That's a bit of a hypothetical. At the end of the day, what I would say is that we would certainly work with unions, locals, training centres and employers to place as many people wanting to go into that space as we possibly could.

Helmets to Hardhats, at the end of the day, is a not-for-profit and works with all governments—provincial and federal—in order to achieve that local and regional impact for veterans, reservists and family members.

Fraser Tolmie: Thank you. I think that's my time.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Auguste, you have the floor for five minutes.

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question will be for all the witnesses.

A bit earlier, you and my colleague, Mr. Fanjoy, discussed corporate culture as it relates to veterans. You spoke about preconceived notions, cultural factors and biases that, unfortunately, sometimes make it more difficult for certain companies to hire veterans.

What do you think is the biggest preconceived notion about veterans and the skills acquired during their military service?

How could the federal government help dispel people's preconceived notions about veterans and their skills?

● (1725)

[*English*]

Priya Bhaloo: One of the biggest areas is the lack of communication about what the life of the veteran looked like when they were in the military. What types of projects were they working on? What type of work were they actually doing? One of the programs that they have in the U.S. is called SkillBridge. What that program does is that when a veteran has their discharge date, the last 180 days before they leave, they have a work term. Then they can go to work with a private sector employer. The U.S. Department of Defense covers the salary for them. That way they're getting the opportunity to try out their skills in the workforce somewhere. It also gives them a taste of what work would look like. It alleviates the financial burden for the private company to hire somebody who may not have worked in the private sector before.

The other thing that we're finding is a really good understanding of what skill sets translate where. At the same time—on the earlier question we were talking about—when you signed up for the military, for example, and they gave you an idea of what a career would look like, if you're looking at a 25-year career, the world is going to change.

There need to be check-ins, almost like when high school students are going through high school. There's a guidance counsellor along the way who meets with them every little while to say, “This is what your path looks like right now, and these are the options that are open for you.” If they wanted to expand, grow or transition within the military so that they were better poised for the role or the life they wanted afterwards, they could absolutely be assisted with that.

The other issue we're finding is that there's a difference in the technology that is used within the military versus the pace at which the private sector is moving. If there were opportunities to calibrate along the way, and if there were best in class or if there were advancement happening for military members while they were actually in the military so that they were working on best of class systems as well, then when they come out, they would have the skill sets that the private sector is currently looking for.

It's more about the ability to learn versus a set of skills that somebody knows. Is this person going to be adaptable? Do they know how to pick up new things? If they can practice that muscle while they're in the military, it's going to make them that much more efficient afterwards.

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste: Thank you, Ms. Bhaloo.

Mr. Cathcart, do you have any comments on preconceived notions and how to dispel them in order to help veterans in the private sector?

[*English*]

Darryl Cathcart: Thank you for the question.

It was mentioned earlier by Ms. Paige. We need to continue to remind ourselves that veterans are an asset in any workplace. Let's approach it from a positive perspective and deal with challenges and barriers as we face them. Let's build a system for success. Let's not build a system for continued real and perceived barriers, which may or may not be happening.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Paige and Ms. Bhaloo from the City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force.

Which specific organizations or companies have you identified as being strongly committed to veterans? How could we support these companies so that they continue to dedicate themselves to veterans?

Andrée Paige: These companies have a mandate to hire veterans or are open to considering their experience and expertise. If this is a priority for their success, it forms part of their mandate.

Tatiana Auguste: Thank you, Ms. Paige.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Paige, you brought up a key point when you said that we need the political will to prioritize veterans.

Last week, we heard some bad news regarding the commissionaires. Their right of first refusal was taken away by the government. As a result, veterans who are working and who have managed to become security guards in the civilian sector—a role comparable to their former position—will likely lose their jobs. Another major call for bids will take place on April 1. Public Services and Procurement Canada has also removed the commissionaires' right of first refusal for this call for bids. We estimate that approximately 2,000 veterans work for the commissionaires, including 700 veterans in Quebec.

I appreciate your passion and energy. You're saying that it's a matter of will. Right now, many ideas are being discussed. There are many recommendations. Many studies have been carried out. However, ultimately, National Defence, Veterans Affairs Canada, and the government need to show political will to implement this. We can't afford any more setbacks such as the ones currently affecting the commissionaires. That's my opinion on the matter, but I would like to hear yours.

● (1730)

Andrée Paige: We need to protect businesses that want to help veterans. The government is responsible for figuring out how to protect them. However, we must keep thinking of how we can improve the situation and support businesses that want to help veterans.

Claude DeBellefeuille: We spoke with commissionaires. They feel quite discouraged to see that this was once a priority but no longer seems to be one as a result of rollbacks. Today, we're carrying out a study to see what we could do better. However, the things that we used to do well are being eliminated.

It's quite clear that, if we want to recognize the work of veterans, we must agree to prioritize them. I think that the government is making a mistake by taking away this right of first refusal from the commissionaires. I encourage organizations such as yours to speak out loud and clear so that this message can be heard.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

[*English*]

We'll do four minutes each for the last round for our panel, with Mr. Gill for four minutes, and then we'll close with Ms. Royer.

I'm so sorry. Mr. Diotte, go ahead for four minutes.

Kerry Diotte: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I'm not a veteran, but I had some experience transitioning out of a job as an MP when I lost the 2021 election. One thing that was very useful to me was that I had a dedicated public servant, who was invaluable to me, who walked me through a difficult time, obviously. Do veterans have anything similar? I'll ask whoever wants to weigh in on this.

Darryl Cathcart: The answer is yes. We certainly do have something different, but we also must be cautious of drawing a comparison between a veteran's transition and our transitioning jobs. There was a lot of great work from Nancy Schlossberg in the 1980s about transition.

When you join the Canadian Armed Forces, as a voluntary force, you forgo education, business, entrepreneurship and a number of areas civilians can freely go into. By the time you complete your career, that transition is different. Whilst we should look at veterans from an asset-based perspective, we must understand that they join at a relatively young age, they go through a completely different pathway to employment and they leave, and there are significant differences between civilian transitions and a military-to-civilian transition.

Kerry Diotte: Excellent.

I just talked to a friend of mine who's a veteran. He said that something called a transition centre was very valuable to him, but he said that not that many people actually know about it. Is that something that you would agree with, or do you know...?

Priya Bhaloo: I definitely agree with that. There just isn't enough awareness within the actual community. There's often a lot of information until your actual discharge date. After your date, as Andrée was saying earlier, you essentially fall off a cliff. For something like medical attention, you may not have access to an actual doctor. Depending on the community that you land in, there could be long waits to even find a family doctor. Especially for women, when they leave, if they don't have a family to go to it's actually harder for them to find housing. There are a lot of issues.

I don't think there is enough support at the various stages when people need it. There will be a little bit of a care package as you're actually exiting, but it's actually six months after that when the grief sets in and when you realize that the ground beneath you is gone now.

Kerry Diotte: Dr. Cathcart, you said that the biggest barrier to transitioning out of the military is financial. What do we have to do to fix that?

Darryl Cathcart: Although that's a great question, I'll pass that to my colleague who actually stated that. Thank you.

Dave Giannou: I have found over the years that it's very difficult for members to leave the military to go into a new trade. We pay very well in the military. I joined. I signed a five-year contract. Thirty-six years later, I got out. In the eighties, there weren't a lot of jobs for people, so I stayed in. They paid well.

We're now at a point when people are getting out earlier. They're getting paid very well in the military. If they have to start again, and they don't have those financial supports to do that, it's a real challenge because most of them are married, have mortgages and have car payments, as I said.

How do we get past that? We keep doing the work that you guys are doing. Find the answers. Talk to the people who have the knowledge. My colleague speaks very well to this. Bring them in, find the answers and put programs in place for all military veterans as they get out. We're not all old and broken as we get out. A lot of us have a lot of life left in us, and we can be very productive members. I talk to a lot of veterans who say, “I want to learn a new trade to get back and to give back to my community.”

I'll leave it at that.

● (1735)

Kerry Diotte: Thanks for that.

The Chair: Thank very much.

Finally, go ahead for four minutes, Ms. Royer.

Zoe Royer (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses today.

I'm going to begin with Helmets to Hardhats. First of all, I recognize Dr. Cathcart and his 25 years in service, and Mr. Giannou and his 36 years with the Royal Canadian Navy. Thank you very much.

I've been thinking a lot about the civilian language around skills.

Mr. Giannou, you mentioned combat arms in the army, but more broadly than that, I'm thinking about the directly transferable skills that are actually missing in much of the workforce today. One of those things is the work ethic and, actually, not only adherence to a standard operating procedure but thriving with standard operating procedures. The discipline, leadership, technical skills and ability to manage through crisis are pretty profound skills.

First, Dr. Cathcart, I'd like you to speak a little bit more to the nationally coordinated framework that would document military competency into civilian language—we have very limited time.

Then, maybe Ms. Paige can follow up with the coordinated pathways. You started to touch on that.

I'd really like to envision how we can turn military service into a badge of honour.

Dr. Cathcart, go ahead.

Darryl Cathcart: Thanks. That's a great question.

I think military service is a badge of honour, and I think that the Canadian public writ large understands that.

We've tried this several times in the last.... I'm not going to go back to 1917, but we've tried it a couple of times in the last decade and a half to two decades. We have some models out there. Those models have ebbed and flowed, and likely have ebbed and flowed as a result of interest.

We're now in a competition for skill. We now recognize, nationally, that there is a labour shortage, and we understand that despite being in a volunteer service, we all take the uniform off and contribute successfully to Canadian business and industry.

I said it earlier: It's not about another credentialing system. It's about looking at what we've done recently in the last 20 years, and the institutions that, including the Canadian Armed Forces, have developed some great competency work. It's tying that aft end together, that employment perspective, and having those employers at the table.

We talked about incentivization earlier. It's something that comes up frequently—the incentivization of hiring veterans. The Canadian government, today, is really trying to build some great national projects across the country. I don't think it's a very big leap to get our skilled, unionized construction workers in there, through labour project agreements, with a higher percentage or *x* number of veterans.

We don't need to think outside the box. We need to think inside the box with the systems that are here and really be creative and innovative in this time.

Thank you.

Zoe Royer: Thank you.

Ms. Paige, there are 20 seconds left for you.

Andrée Paige: We need to make sure we're better coordinated across municipalities, provinces and nationally to make sure that it's consistent across the board as seamlessly as possible. It's the only way it's going to happen. You have different pots of money from different departments, and you can't just pass the buck because then the perception is that someone else is taking care of veterans. That's not what's happening. We all need to.

● (1740)

Zoe Royer: Thank you very much.

The Chair: This will complete our second hour for our panel.

I want to say thanks to Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Giannou for their service and their continuation of service.

To Ms. Paige and Ms. Bhaloo, thank you very much.

In Ontario, there is a municipal election today. For anyone who's watching, I would encourage you all to go vote. It is thanks to all of our currently serving members but also our veterans, who allow us to have that democracy. Certainly, thank you very much for that.

Before I move forward with Mr. Barrett, I would just like to say thanks to our witnesses. Thank you very much. You may leave.

We're going continue to a few housekeeping notes, so just hold on for about five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Our next meeting will take place on Thursday, October 29. We'll resume our study on the civilian recognition of military skills.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like the committee's approval to adopt the proposed budget for our briefing on trauma-informed practices. This briefing has been rescheduled and will take place on Thursday, November 5.

Does the committee approve this budget?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Sophie Chatel: Madam Chair, November 5 is the federal budget day.

Claude DeBellefeuille: The government is set to introduce its budget on that day. Will the committee meet anyway?

The Chair: Yes, I know, but our meeting is scheduled for 8:15 a.m. I can't predict when the budget will be introduced, but it certainly won't be at 8:15 a.m. We can go ahead with our meeting.

Please note that the budget that we just adopted isn't the federal budget, but the budget that will enable us to meet with the witnesses joining us on November 5 at 8:15 a.m.

[*English*]

Before we adjourn this meeting, I believe Mr. Barrett is seeking unanimous consent.

Michael Barrett: Yes. I'm not sure whether it needs to be done in two parts, but we've discussed—colleagues have discussed—that I seek unanimous consent to be able to move a motion.

The Chair: I will just make sure that we do have unanimous consent to introduce the motion.

I see everyone saying “yes”. Perfect.

Mr. Barrett.

Michael Barrett: I've provided the text to the clerk in both official languages, Madam Chair.

I move:

> That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs undertake a study of up to four meetings to examine how emerging, innovative medical treatments and therapies, as well as domestic and international best practices, could be relevant to improving the physical and mental health outcomes of Canadian Veterans and to identify opportunities to better support the long-term health and well-being of Veterans and their families.

The Chair: Do I have approval from everyone?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Perfect.

This is a bit of housekeeping. I've reached out to our clerk. We want to make sure that you send us some names by November 9 ideally, or by November 12 at the latest. We'll keep it open, but the earlier the better.

To put it in perspective, we technically could be starting this particular study on November 26. We'll see. I'm juggling the calendar, but just to keep it in perspective, the earlier we have the names, the faster we can go forward in starting our business.

Madame Chatel.

Sophie Chatel: I just want to congratulate my colleague for bringing this very important topic to the floor of this committee.

Thank you.

Michael Barrett: Thank you.

Fraser Tolmie: What is the deadline?

The Chair: Ideally it's November 9, but I was talking with our clerk, and I mentioned that November 12 would be the last day, please.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

The meeting is adjourned.

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