

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON
VETERANS AFFAIRS



ANNUAL REPORT
2012

© **2012** Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Province of Nova Scotia
Printed and Published by the Queen's Printer
Halifax

ISSN: 1705-1541

This document is also available on the Internet at the following address:

http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/reports/veterans_affairs



**Legislative
Committees Office**
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3P7

Telephone: (902) 424-4432
Fax: (902) 424-0513

Honourable Gordie Gosse
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the committee for the period from September 2011 to August 2012 of the Sixty-first General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Burrill, MLA, Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley
Chair
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	i
Membership	i
Membership Changes	i
Procedures and Operations	ii
Notices, Transcripts and Reports	ii
Research Material	iii
Acknowledgements	iii
Witnesses	iv

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Commissionaires Nova Scotia	1
Call to Remembrance Program	2
Veterans Emergency Transition Services	4
Canadian Army Veteran Motorcycle Units	7

<u>STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION</u>	10
---------------------------------------	-----------

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Motions	12
Appendix B – Documentation	13
Appendix C – Additional Information	14

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, an all-party committee of the House of Assembly, was struck at the beginning of the First Session of the Sixty-first General Assembly, pursuant to Rule 60(1) of the *Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*.

Although there is no written mandate for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, this report was written with the understanding that the committee is established for the purpose of considering matters pertaining to Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Legion.

MEMBERSHIP

There shall be no more than nine Members of the Legislative Assembly appointed to this committee. The current membership of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs is as follows:

Mr. Gary Burrill, MLA – Chair
Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley

Hon. Wayne Gaudet, MLA
Clare

Mr. Jim Boudreau, MLA – Vice Chair
Guysborough-Sheet Harbour

Mr. Harold Theriault, MLA
Digby-Annapolis

Ms. Michèle Raymond, MLA
Halifax Atlantic

Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA
Cape Breton West

Ms. Lenore Zann, MLA
Truro-Bible Hill

Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Mr. Howard Epstein, MLA
Halifax Chebucto

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

There were no membership changes during the period from September 2011 to August 2012.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Veterans Affairs Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are usually held on the second Thursday of the month in the Legislative Committees Office. During the period from September 2011 to August 2012, the committee met on the following dates:

October 13, 2011
January 12, 2012
February 9, 2012
March 8, 2012

The committee agreed not to hold meetings when the House of Assembly was in session.

NOTICES, TRANSCRIPTS AND REPORTS

NOTICES

Notice of committee meetings are sent to all members of the committee, caucus office staff, legislative staff and Communications Nova Scotia. The notices are also posted in Province House and on the Nova Scotia Legislature website at the following address:

<http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/calendar/>

TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts of all Veterans Affairs Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office, or on the Veterans Affairs Committee website at the following address:

http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/

REPORTS

All reports of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the report, the Chair tables the report with the Speaker of the House of Assembly or with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

Distribution of the report is as follows, to: the Speaker and the Clerk of the House of Assembly; committee members; all witnesses who appeared before the committee; the Nova Scotia Legislative Library; the caucus offices; and the House of Assembly Press Gallery.

This report is also available to the general public upon request from the Legislative Committees Office and is available on the committee's website at the following address:

http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/reports/veterans_affairs

RESEARCH MATERIAL

Research material for the Veterans Affairs Committee is compiled by the Legislative Library in consultation with the committee clerk and distributed to members by the committee clerk. Reference material is provided to committee members and caucus staff prior to the meeting date. A copy of this material is also made available to the witnesses appearing before the committee, to the Legislative Library in Province House and to Hansard Reporting Services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to all witnesses for their time and co-operation; to the staff of the Legislative Committees Office for their coordination of committee meetings; and to Ms. Heather Ludlow, Information Services Librarian, for the organization of research for committee meetings. Others whose assistance has been invaluable to the committee are: Mr. Robert Kinsman, Editor of Hansard Reporting Services, and staff; Mr. James MacInnes, Coordinator/Director of Legislative Television and Broadcast Services, and staff; and Ms. Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian, and staff.

WITNESSES

October 13, 2011	Commissionaires Nova Scotia
January 12, 2012	Royal Canadian Legion-Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
February 9, 2012	Veterans Emergency Transition Services (V.E.T.S.)
March 8, 2012	Canadian Army Veteran Motorcycle Units (2nd C.A.V., Eastern Canada)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

COMMISSIONAIRES NOVA SCOTIA

October 13, 2011

WITNESSES

Colonel R. Barry Wark - Chair, Board of Governors
Vice Admiral D.E. Miller - Chair, Veterans Support Committee
Colonel J. Michael A. Brownlow - Chief Executive Officer

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Commissionaires Nova Scotia is a not-for-profit organization that provides quality security services with a mandate to provide meaningful employment for veterans of the Canadian Forces and RCMP. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the organization.

MOTIONS

The Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs was reviewed. Some minor changes were suggested and agreed to by the committee. The committee passed a motion as follows:

To approve the Annual Report for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and has been received:

- Debriefing information regarding the unsuccessful bid with respect to the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) screening contract at the Stanfield International Airport.

TRANSCRIPT

Further details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va_20111013.

CALL TO REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

January 12, 2012

WITNESSES

Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Mr. Roger Purnell - Co-Chair, Call to Remembrance Committee

Mr. Joe Murphy - Co-Chair, Call to Remembrance Committee

Mr. Les Nash - Chairman, Veterans and Seniors Committee

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Royal Canadian Legion is Canada's largest veterans organization which serves military and RCMP veterans, their families and communities and promotes remembrance. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information on the Call to Remembrance Program that is sponsored by the Legion.

MOTIONS

It was indicated that Legion representatives met with the Minister of Education to discuss the Call to Remembrance Program and the importance of continued support being provided for the program. The following motion was passed by the committee:

“That the committee write a letter to the Minister of Education in support of this program and provide her with some more information and encourage her to keep that open dialogue over the course of however long the program continues.”

The Honourable Ramona Jennex, Minister of Education provided the following response:

“The Nova Scotia social studies curriculum provides various opportunities for students to gain an appreciation for the sacrifices and achievements of those who have served the cause of peace and security for our country. It is important that our students actively engage in learning about Canada's military history.

As noted in the meeting with representatives from the Royal Canadian Legion – Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command on October 18, 2011, the Nova Scotia Department of Education provides detailed information on a wide range of Veterans Affairs Canada and Royal Canadian Legion programs that allow students to further their understanding and appreciation of Canada's military history and veterans. The department is particularly keen to support and recognize those programs that require students to utilize a wide range of 21st century skills and competencies, such as the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command's Youth Leadership Program. The Call to Remembrance program does not reflect these same skills and competencies and thus cannot be endorsed.

It is important that Nova Scotia students recognize the tremendous efforts and sacrifices of those who have served and those who continue to serve in the Canadian military. The Nova Scotia Department of Education appreciates and values the input of a wide range of education partners in the support of learning about Canada's military history, including the Royal Canadian Legion - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command."

DOCUMENTATION

There were no documents requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Further details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va2012jan12.

VETERANS EMERGENCY TRANSITION SERVICES (V.E.T.S.)

February 9, 2012

WITNESSES

Mr. Jim Lowther - President

Mr. Roland Lawless - Vice-President

Mr. David MacLeod - Director of Communications and Policy

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Veterans Emergency Transition Services (V.E.T.S.) is a volunteer-led, apolitical, non-profit corporation centralized in Nova Scotia that aims to provide aid and comfort to Canadian veterans that are at risk. The purpose of this meeting was to obtain information on the V.E.T.S. organization and activities.

MOTIONS

During this meeting, it was indicated that V.E.T.S. had submitted an application for charitable status and, if received, this would be of great assistance to their organization. This matter was discussed and the Veterans Affairs Committee unanimously passed the following motion:

“That this committee send a letter of support to Minister Gail Shea recognizing the charitable status application that has been made by V.E.T.S. and that we as a committee send a letter of support to that application.”

The Honourable Gail Shea, Minister of National Revenue provided the following response:

“The confidentiality provisions of the *Income Tax Act* prohibit me from discussing the tax affairs of any particular organization without written consent from that organization’s authorized representative.

However, I can confirm that I have sent a copy of your letter to officials of the Charities Directorate. They will give your letter every consideration during the application process.”

An issue that was of concern to this organization was their lack of office space to operate from. As a result of the discussions regarding this issue, the committee passed a motion as follows:

That we ask the chairman to approach property services of the Province of Nova Scotia to look for a small space on an interim basis [6 months to one year] that would allow V.E.T.S. to have a home and

that the department liaise directly with V.E.T.S. around the requirements and such and really just open that dialogue.

The following response was provided by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal:

“Staff have liaised with Mr. Jim Lowther of V.E.T.S. and discussed a recent vacant leased premises in Lower Sackville which will expire later this year. After a site visit to the premises, the organization preferred to be located closer to the downtown business core of Halifax.

As of this date, we do not have any vacant space in owned nor leased space in the downtown area but will continue to work with the organization to ensure they are at the top of the list if and when any vacancies come up in the near future.”

During the meeting it was indicated that V.E.T.S. had contacts throughout the province. Committee members felt that it would be helpful to have this information as well as a V.E.T.S. brochure made available to all MLAs. The committee passed a motion as follows:

That the clerk obtain the information about the V.E.T.S. contacts in different parts of the province, as well as a V.E.T.S. brochure and that this information be provided to all MLAs.

The following response has been received from V.E.T.S.:

“The V.E.T.S. Board of Directors has been attempting to gain permissions from our volunteers to provide their contact information. Not all volunteers were willing to provide that information to the committee. With the best interests and concerns of our volunteers Jim Lowther, President of V.E.T.S. Canada has decided to provide only his and the Director of Policy and Communication’s contact information.

Jim Lowther CD
(Dartmouth)
(902) 469-1345
jim.lowther@bellaliant.net
jim.lowther@vetscanada.org

David T. MacLeod CD MA
(Antigonish)
(902) 482-0753
dt_macleod@glenalpine.ca
david.macleod@vetscanada.org

V.E.T.S. will not be providing a brochure/flyer. We have ceased printing the flyers due to changing information and costs; however, those with internet access can find V.E.T.S. Canada at: <http://vetscanada.org/>. Our new website has a blog and contact information.”

V.E.T.S. representatives indicated that there is a Veterans Transition Program in British Columbia which they are hoping will be available in Nova Scotia soon. Committee members felt that this program would be of interest to the committee. The committee passed as motion as follows:

That we place the Veterans Transition Program on the list of subjects to be considered sometime over the next 12 months.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and has been received:

- Information on the Veterans Transition Program based on the program in British Columbia, including an outline of the program, as well as the contact information for those involved in bringing the program to Nova Scotia.
- Comments and suggestions on ways of maintaining contact with members of the military once they are no longer serving and comments on assigning a lifelong e-mail address to every member when they are discharged.

TRANSCRIPT

Further details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va2012feb09.

CANADIAN ARMY VETERAN MOTORCYCLE UNITS

March 8, 2012

WITNESSES

Canadian Army Veteran Motorcycle Units (2nd C.A.V., Eastern Canada)

Mr. Tony Lynch - 2nd C.A.V., President

Mr. Mike Burke - 2nd C.A.V., Sergeant at Arms

Mr. Roger Mailman - Sergeant at Arms, Battle of the Atlantic Unit

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Canadian Army Veteran Motorcycle Units (C.A.V.) is a veteran-based riding club made up of retired and still-serving members as well as veteran supporters. Their mission is “Ride, Have Fun and Help Others”. The purpose of this meeting was to obtain information about the C.A.V. and their activities.

MOTIONS

The C.A.V. representatives indicated that they have been working to have a section of Highway 104 in Nova Scotia labelled as the “Highway of Heroes” to honour Nova Scotian soldiers who were killed while serving in Afghanistan. As a result of the discussions regarding this issue, the Veterans Affairs Committee unanimously passed the following motion:

“That the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs write to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to indicate our support of the efforts of the Canadian Army Veterans Motorcycle Unit, to have a section of Highway No. 104 in Nova Scotia known as the Highway of Heroes.”

The Honourable Bill Estabrooks, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, provided the following response:

“... Highway 104 is presently named as “Miners Memorial Highway”, therefore, we are not in a position to rename a section of Highway 104.

That being said, I would ask that you consider an alternate suggestion. Highway 111 is a provincial highway in Halifax Regional Municipality which runs between Pleasant Street in Dartmouth and the A. Murray MacKay Bridge. This highway is the main arterial highway connecting CFB Shearwater (12 Wing), the second oldest military airfield in Canada, and CFB Halifax, the largest Canadian Forces Base in Canada, and home of Maritime Forces Atlantic. Given the large number of posted personnel living in this area, and high volumes of traffic on Highway 111, signs recognizing it as the “Highway of Heroes” would get a lot of exposure.”

DOCUMENTATION

There were no documents requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Further details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:
http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va2012mar08.

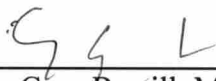
STATEMENT

OF

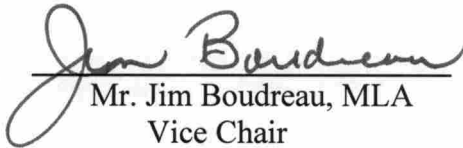
SUBMISSION

STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

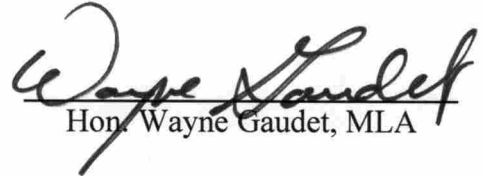
All of which is respectfully submitted to the
House of Assembly this 8th day of November, 2012


Mr. Gary Burrill, MLA
Chair

I concur


Mr. Jim Boudreau, MLA
Vice Chair

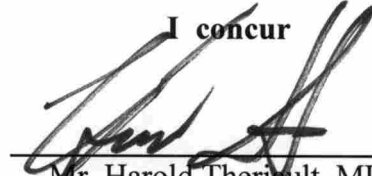
I concur


Hon. Wayne Gaudet, MLA

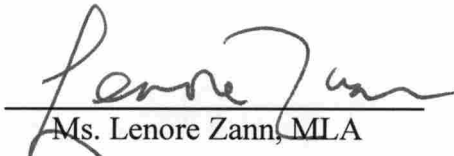
I concur


Ms. Michèle Raymond, MLA

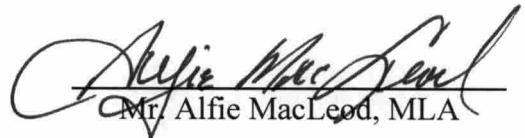
I concur


Mr. Harold Theriault, MLA

I concur


Ms. Lenore Zann, MLA

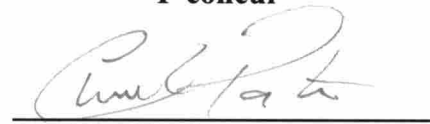
I concur


Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA

I concur


Mr. Howard Epstein, MLA

I concur


Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - MOTIONS

The following is a list of motions of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs:

Commissionaires Nova Scotia – October 13, 2011

To approve the Annual Report for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Royal Canadian Legion-Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command – January 12, 2012

“That the committee write a letter to the Minister of Education in support of this program and provide her with some more information and encourage her to keep that open dialogue over the course of however long the program continues.”

Veterans Emergency Transition Services - February 9, 2012

“That this committee send a letter of support to Minister Gail Shea recognizing the charitable status application that has been made by V.E.T.S. and that we as a committee send a letter of support to that application.”

That we ask the chairman to approach property services of the Province of Nova Scotia to look for a small space on an interim basis [6 months to one year] that would allow V.E.T.S. to have a home and that the department liaise directly with V.E.T.S. around the requirements and such and really just open that dialogue.

That the clerk obtain the information about the V.E.T.S. contacts in different parts of the province, as well as a V.E.T.S. brochure and that this information be provided to all MLA's.

That we place the Veterans Transition Program on the list of subjects to be considered sometime over the next 12 months.

Canadian Army Veteran Motorcycle Units – March 8, 2012

“That the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs write to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to indicate our support of the efforts of the Canadian Army Veterans Motorcycle Unit, to have a section of Highway No. 104 in Nova Scotia known as the Highway of Heroes.”

APPENDIX B - DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of documents and information requested and received by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs:

Commissionaires Nova Scotia – October 13, 2011

- Debriefing information regarding the unsuccessful bid with respect to the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) screening contract at the Stanfield International Airport.

Veterans Emergency Transition Services (V.E.T.S.) - February 9, 2012

- Information on the Veterans Transition Program based on the program in British Columbia, including an outline of the program, as well as the contact information for those involved in bringing the program to Nova Scotia.
- Comments and suggestions on ways of maintaining contact with members of the military once they are no longer serving and comments on assigning a lifelong e-mail address to every member when they are discharged.

APPENDIX C - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following is provided to update information contained in the 2011 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs pertaining to the March 10, 2011, committee meeting, wherein it had been indicated that a response had not been received from the Honourable Vic Toews.

The following response has since been received from Honourable Vic Toews, Minister of Public Safety.

“When the CPP was introduced in 1966, the federal government decided to co-ordinate it with the RCMP, Public Service, and Canadian Forces Pension Plans to provide a stable, combined retirement income at an affordable cost.

Coordination was accomplished by providing that plan members would continue to receive a pension benefit based on two percent of average earnings from the date of retirement to age 65, at which point the public sector pension would be reduced by a formula set out in the appropriate pension legislation (the *Public Service Superannuation Act*, *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act*, and the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act*). This reduction at age 65 coincided with the date at which the member became eligible for CPP benefits. Since pension benefits payable from the RCMP Pension Plan are reduced at age 65 when plan members become eligible for CPP retirement benefits, or earlier, should they receive disability benefits, they also pay lower contributions on the portion of their salary subject to CPP contributions.

In light of this, the benefits provided under both pension plans (RCMP Pension Plan and CPP) are consistent with the contributions that have been paid by the plan members.

As the Minister responsible for the RCMP Pension Plan, I agree with the position taken by my colleague, the Honourable Peter Mackay, Minister of National Defence, and do not believe former Bill C-201, *An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity)* to be in the best interest of the RCMP and the Canadian public. Currently, there are no proposed amendments being considered that would change the relationship between the CPP and the RCMP Pension Plan.”

The following is provided to update information contained in the 2011 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs pertaining to the March 10, 2011, committee meeting, wherein it had been noted that responses had been received after the reporting period but prior to printing from the Honourable Gail Shea and the Honourable Steven Blaney.

The following is the response received from the Honourable Gail Shea, Minister of National Revenue.

“I am aware that the Honourable Peter G. MacKay, Minister of National Defence, sent a letter to Mr. Gary Burrill, Chair of the Standing Committee, on June 27, 2011, about the Standing Committee’s concerns and explained the Government’s position on the matter.

I appreciate your concerns and understand the importance of the issues you raise. However, as noted above, Mr. MacKay has responded with the Government’s position, which I fully support.”

The following is the response received from the Honourable Steven Blaney, Minister of Veterans Affairs.

“...this matter falls under the purview of the Department of National Defence and Public Safety Canada. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of your correspondence to the Honourable Peter MacKay, who is responsible for the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act*, and to the Honourable Vic Toews, who is responsible for the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act*.”

**Legislative Committees Office
3rd Floor, Dennis Building
1740 Granville Street
PO Box 2630, Station "M"
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3P7**

Telephone: (902) 424-4432 or Toll Free 1-888-388-6489

Fax: (902) 424-0513

E-Mail: legcomm@gov.ns.ca

Website:

http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/standing_committees/veterans_affairs