



# **Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2014**

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Halifax

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Honourable Kevin Murphy  
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 January 2014 to June 2014 of the Sixty-Second General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. Eyking', written over a large, stylized blue flourish.

Pam Eyking, MLA, Victoria-The Lakes  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
2014



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## **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-second 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 Veterans Affairs Committee is as follows:

Ms. Pam Eyking, MLA (Chair)  
Victoria-The Lakes

Hon. Pat Dunn, MLA  
Pictou Centre

Mr. Ben Jessome, MLA (Vice Chair)  
Hammonds Plains-Lucasville

Mr. Larry Harrison, MLA  
Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley

Ms. Patricia Arab, MLA  
Fairview-Clayton Park

Hon. Dave Wilson, MLA  
Sackville-Cobequid

Mr. Stephen Gough, MLA  
Sackville-Beaver Bank

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA  
Sydney-Whitney Pier

Mr. Keith Irving, MLA  
Kings South

## **MEMBERSHIP CHANGES**

There were no membership changes during the period from January 2014 to June 2014.

## **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.

The Committee met on the following dates:

February 13, 2014  
February 17, 2014  
March 24, 2014

## **NOTICES, TRANSCRIPTS AND REPORTS**

### **NOTICES**

Notices 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 webpage at the following address:

[http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee\\_hansard/C11/](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 media. This report is also available to the general public upon request from the Legislative Committees Office and is available on the Veterans Affairs Committee webpage at the following address:

[http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/reports/veterans\\_affairs](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 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**

**February 13, 2014**                      **Organizational/Agenda Setting**

**February 17, 2014**                      **Mr. Ron Clarke**  
**Mr. Vince Rigby**  
**Mr. John Ardelli**  
**Mr. Simon Gillis**  
**Mr. Mel Birmingham**  
**Mr. Blair McIvor**  
**Mr. Joe Wilson**

**March 24, 2014**                      **Intergovernmental Affairs**



# **PUBLIC HEARINGS**



**ORGANIZATIONAL/AGENDA SETTING**

**February 13, 2014**

**WITNESSES**

There were no witnesses present at this meeting.

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

The Committee met to organize its agenda of potential witnesses and topics for future meetings. As this was the first meeting of the newly constituted Committee, the Chair provided a brief overview of the Committee mandate, meeting time and procedures.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence from Commissionaires Nova Scotia requesting to appear before the Committee was reviewed. The Committee agreed to their request.

The Committee reviewed agenda items and set its agenda for upcoming meetings. The Committee agreed to receive presentations from the Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre - Carolyn O'Malley; and Major Tim Dunne regarding the commemoration of fallen Nova Scotians from Afghanistan missions.

As the March meeting date fell during March break, the Committee agreed to move the meeting date from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Further to a motion that was passed to hold an emergency meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup> in Sydney, Nova Scotia, the Committee agreed that the meeting time would be from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm and that the meeting would proceed even in the event that the federal representatives were not able to attend.

**MOTIONS**

Concern was expressed regarding the closure of Veterans Affairs Canada offices across Canada. A motion was introduced:

To encourage this Committee to consider having an emergency meeting in Sydney, Nova Scotia on February 17<sup>th</sup> and that veteran Ron Clarke and Federal Minister of Veterans Affairs, Julian Fantino appear before this Committee on February 17<sup>th</sup> in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

-Moved by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA

An amendment was introduced:

To add the Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs, Mary Chaput.

- Moved by Hon. David Wilson, MLA
- Amendment Motion carried
- Motion carried

Discussion was held regarding a provincial advocate for veterans. A motion was introduced:

That the Committee support appointing a provincial veterans advocate for the Province of Nova Scotia.

- Moved by Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
- Motion defeated

## **DOCUMENTATION**

There were no documents were 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/va20140213](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va20140213)

**CLOSURE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA AREA OFFICES**

**February 17, 2014**

**WITNESSES**

Mr. Ron Clarke  
Mr. Vince Rigby  
Mr. John Ardelli  
Mr. Simon Gillis  
Mr. Mel Birmingham  
Mr. Blair McIvor  
Mr. Joe Wilson

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

As a result of a motion passed by the Committee at the February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, an emergency meeting was held in Sydney, Nova Scotia. The Federal Minister and Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs were invited but were unavailable to attend this meeting. Mr. Ron Clarke, a Canadian Armed Forces veteran, was invited to appear before the Committee to provide information on the impact of the closure of Veterans Affairs Canada area offices.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no Committee business on the agenda.

**MOTIONS**

A number of interested citizens who attended the meeting wished for an opportunity to speak regarding the topic before the Committee. A motion was introduced:

That the Committee be allowed to hear from those who are here in the audience regarding the Veterans Affairs issue that we're here to deal with.

-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA  
-Motion carried

The meeting was scheduled from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Concern was expressed that there might not be sufficient time to hear those who wished to speak. A motion was introduced:

To extend the time to allow those who need to talk, talk - and those who would like to make discussion from the Committee, give them the time to do what it needs.

-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA  
-Motion carried

Discussions were again held regarding a provincial advocate for veterans. A motion was introduced:

That the Veterans Affairs Committee support the creation of a veterans advocate, who would report directly to the Minister responsible for Military Relations and advise the province about what steps need to be taken to replace the services lost by the closure of the Veterans Affairs office in Sydney.

-Moved by Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA

A motion to table the motion introduced by Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA, was introduced.

-Moved by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA

-Motion tabled

As a result of information provided during the meeting regarding changes to the Public Service Health Care Plan, a motion was introduced:

That this Committee send a letter to Minister Tony Clement, saying that we are not in favor of the 100 per cent increase in the medical and the insurance for retired military personnel and RCMP officers.

-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA

-Motion carried

The Honourable Tony Clement provided the following response:

“On March 26, 2014, I announced that the Government of Canada had reached an agreement with federal unions and pensioner representatives on revisions to the Public Service Health Care Plan which will result in both billions in savings for Canadian taxpayers and improved benefits for federal public servants and retirees.

Beginning April 1, 2015, cost-sharing for all retirees who choose to participate in the voluntary and supplementary Public Service Health Care Plan will gradually increase over a four-year period to attain 50:50. Present retirees and employees who will retire before March 31, 2015 will not be affected by the change in contributions if their income is below the Guaranteed Income Supplement threshold under the *Old Age Security Act*. Also, effective April 1, 2015, new pensioners will require a total of six or more years of pensionable service to be eligible for the Plan. Exemptions to vesting will apply to disabled retired members, survivors and the Veterans Affairs Canada Client group.

The agreement also secured benefit enhancements for all Plan members, effective October 1, 2014: a doubling of psychological benefits to \$2,000 per year; reimbursement for laser eye surgery with a lifetime maximum of \$1,000; and \$300 in annual coverage for repairs and replacement of parts for sleep apnea



devices. In addition, the Plan deductible will be eliminated at the beginning of 2015 for all Plan members.

I am committed to the sustainability and comparability of federal public service pay and benefits. These changes will ensure that the Plan remains fair and reasonable to federal employees and Canadian taxpayers.”

Discussion was held regarding the Minister responsible for Military Relations. A motion was introduced:

To hold an emergency meeting of the Veterans Affairs Committee on March 18, 2014, or another date of the witnesses choice before March 27, 2014, and invite a representative from the ministerial office for Military Relations provincially, and a representative from the ministerial office of Veteran Affairs Canada federally, to talk about the plan and to request a response to the invitation by February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA

-Motion carried

## **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/va20140217](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va20140217)



## **CLOSURE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA AREA OFFICES**

**March 24, 2014**

### **WITNESSES**

#### Intergovernmental Affairs

Ms. Catherine Blewett – Deputy Minister

Mr. Paul Gillis – Executive Director

### **MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

The position of Minister responsible for Military Relations was created to provide the provincial government with an avenue to communicate and work directly with the headquarters, offices, units and agencies of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces in Nova Scotia. The Department of Intergovernmental Affairs has been assigned responsibility to support this position. The Department of Intergovernmental Affairs is responsible for coordinating and advancing the province's interests with the Government of Canada, other provinces, and foreign governments at the national and sub-national levels. The Deputy Minister of the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs was invited to appear before the Committee in her capacity as the head of the department that provides ministerial support on military relations regarding the closure of Veterans Affairs Canada offices.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence from Dennis Manuge supporting the work of the Committee was reviewed.

It was agreed that the Committee would not meet when the Legislature was in session.

### **MOTIONS**

Discussion was held regarding Mr. Gordie Gosse's motion that was tabled at the February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. The motion was re-introduced:

That the Veterans Affairs Committee support the creation of a veterans advocate who would report directly to the Minister responsible for Military Relations and advise the province about what steps need to be taken to replace the services lost by the closure of the Veterans Affairs Office in Sydney.

-Moved by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA

-Motion defeated

The Committee was provided with a copy of a letter written by the Minister responsible for Military Relations to the Minister of Veterans Affairs in support of a federal advocate

for veterans. A motion was introduced:

That this Committee write a letter to endorse the Minister responsible for Military Relations' letter in support of a federal advocate.

-Moved by Mr. Ben Jessome, MLA

-Motion carried

Concern was expressed regarding the difficulty members have in attending Remembrance Day services in their constituencies when the Legislature is in session. A motion was introduced:

That this Committee write a letter to ask the House Leaders to consider a break in the regular Legislature sitting to allow MLAs time to travel to their local constituencies to attend Remembrance Day services that usually happen at schools and service clubs before the actual Remembrance Day ceremonies take place.

-Moved by Mr. Eddie Orrell, MLA

-Motion carried

The Honourable Michel Samson provided the following response:

“The House Leaders have reviewed your committee’s request to consider a break in the regular sitting of the Legislature to allow MLAs time to travel to their local constituencies to attend Remembrance Day services.

I am pleased to advise your committee’s request will be accommodated. Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.”

## **DOCUMENTATION**

There were no documents requested.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

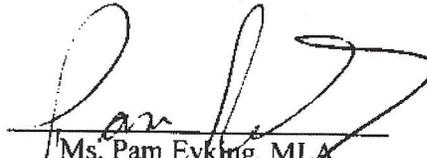
Further details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: [http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee\\_hansard/C11/va2014mar24](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C11/va2014mar24)

# **STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION**

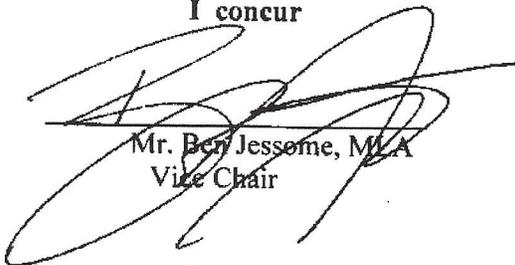


**STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION**

All of which is respectfully submitted to the  
House of Assembly this 11<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2014

  
Ms. Pam Eyking, MLA  
Chair

**I concur**

  
Mr. Ben Jessome, MLA  
Vice Chair

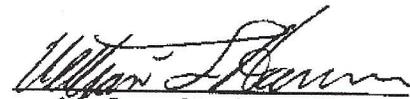
**I concur**

  
Hon. Pat Duhn, MLA

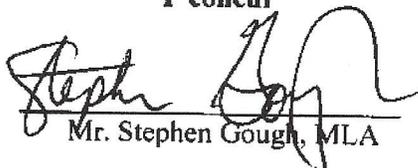
**I concur**

  
Ms. Patricia Arab, MLA

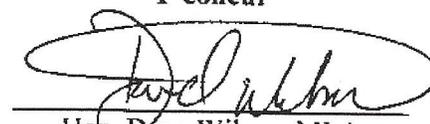
**I concur**

  
Mr. Larry Harrison, MLA

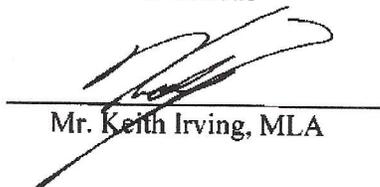
**I concur**

  
Mr. Stephen Gough, MLA

**I concur**

  
Hon. Dave Wilson, MLA

**I concur**

  
Mr. Keith Irving, MLA

**I concur**

  
Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA





# **APPENDIX**



## **APPENDIX - MOTIONS**

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

### **February 13, 2014**

Concern was expressed regarding the closure of Veterans Affairs Canada offices across Canada. A motion was introduced:

To encourage this Committee to consider having an emergency meeting in Sydney, Nova Scotia on February 17<sup>th</sup> and that veteran Ron Clarke and Federal Minister of Veterans Affairs, Julian Fantino appear before this Committee on February 17<sup>th</sup> in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

-Moved by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA

An amendment was introduced:

To add the Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs, Mary Chaput.

-Moved by Hon. David Wilson, MLA

-Amendment Motion carried

-Motion carried

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That the Committee support appointing a provincial veterans advocate for the Province of Nova Scotia.

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-Motion defeated

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-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA

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-Motion carried

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-Moved by Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA

A motion to table the motion introduced by Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA, was introduced.

-Moved by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA  
-Motion tabled

As a result of information provided during the meeting regarding changes to the Public Service Health Care Plan, a motion was introduced:

That this Committee send a letter to Minister Tony Clement, saying that we are not in favor of the 100 per cent increase in the medical and the insurance for retired military personnel and RCMP officers.

-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA  
-Motion carried

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To hold an emergency meeting of the Veterans Affairs Committee on March 18, 2014, or another date of the witnesses choice before March 27, 2014, and invite a representative from the ministerial office for Military Relations provincially, and a representative from the ministerial office of Veteran Affairs Canada federally, to talk about the plan and to request a response to the invitation by February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

-Moved by Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA  
-Motion carried

**March 24, 2014**

Discussion was held regarding Mr. Gordie Gosse's motion that was tabled at the February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. The motion was re-introduced:

That the Veterans Affairs Committee support the creation of a veterans advocate who would report directly to the Minister responsible for Military Relations and advise the province about what steps need to be taken to replace the services lost by the closure of the Veterans Affairs Office in Sydney.

-Moved by Mr. Keith Irving, MLA

-Motion defeated

The Committee was provided with a copy of a letter written by the Minister responsible for Military Relations to the Minister of Veterans Affairs in support of a federal advocate for veterans. A motion was introduced:

That this Committee write a letter to endorse the Minister responsible for Military Relations' letter in support of a federal advocate.

-Moved by Mr. Ben Jessome, MLA

-Motion carried

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That this Committee write a letter to ask the House Leaders to consider a break in the regular Legislature sitting to allow MLAs time to travel to their local constituencies to attend Remembrance Day services that usually happen at schools and service clubs before the actual Remembrance Day ceremonies take place.

-Moved by Mr. Eddie Orrell, MLA

-Motion carried

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**Website: [http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/standing\\_committees/veterans\\_affairs](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/standing_committees/veterans_affairs)**