



Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

ANNUAL REPORT

2018

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Halifax

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

PO Box 2630, Station M
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3P7
Telephone: (902) 424-4432
Fax: (902) 424-0513

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 November 2017 to June 2018 of the Sixty-third General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rafah DiCostanzo', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA,
Clayton Park West
Chair
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2018

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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-third 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. Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA (Chair)
Clayton Park West

Hon. Alfie MacLeod, MLA
Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg

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

Ms. Kim Masland, MLA
Queens-Shelburne

Mr. Brendon Maguire, MLA
Halifax Atlantic

Ms. Lisa Roberts, MLA
Halifax Needham

Mr. Bill Horne, MLA
Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank

Ms. Tammy Martin, MLA
Cape Breton Centre

Mr. Hugh MacKay, MLA
Chester-St. Margaret's

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

As of December 10, 2018, Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA (Clayton Park West) replaced Bill Horne, MLA (Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank) as Chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Brendon Maguire, MLA (Halifax Atlantic) replaced Chuck Porter, MLA (Hants West) as member, Kim Masland, MLA (Queens-Shelburne) replaced Tim Halman, MLA (Dartmouth East) as member, and Lisa Roberts, MLA (Halifax Needham) replaced Hon. Dave Wilson, MLA (Sackville-Cobequid) as member.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Veterans Affairs Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month in the Legislative Committees meeting room, Granville Level, One Government Place.

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 web page 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 or 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 web page at the following address: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/reports>

RESEARCH MATERIAL

Research material for the Veterans Affairs Committee is compiled by the Legislative Library in consultation with the committee clerk. Research material is compiled in an electronic format and is distributed by the committee clerk prior to the meeting to members, staff and witnesses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to all witnesses for their time and co-operation. Special appreciation is extended to the Legislative Committees Office; Hansard Reporting Services; Legislative Television and Broadcast Services and the Nova Scotia Legislative Library.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

WITNESSES

There were no witnesses.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The committee agreed to continue choosing witnesses as per the directive of the Liberal House leader in 2015 -- three from the Liberal caucus, two from Progressive Conservative caucus and one from the New Democratic Party caucus.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs agreed to the following topics.

Liberal Caucus:

Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command re: Veterans Outreach Program, Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada (VETS Canada) re: Boots on the Ground campaign, and Guitars for Vets, Wounded Warriors Canada re: Veteran Trainers to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers (VTECS program).

PC Caucus:

Veterans for Healing – Egypt Falls, Proposed Veterans’ Memorial Medical Centre.

NDP Caucus:

Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority re: update on the federal-provincial Camp Hill agreement.

The committee received a request regarding the Veterans for Healing – Egypt Falls program from Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Inverness, at a previous committee meeting prior to the election. The current committee did agree to grant this request in conjunction with the PC topic.

UPDATE: The meeting was set for January 23, 2018, however, at the last-minute Mr. Fabian Henry, an associate of the program, cancelled his appearance and stated he would contact the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to reschedule.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The committee reviewed correspondence from Ms. Watts regarding her uncle. Ms. Watts expressed her concerns regarding her uncle's driver's license being revoked and wait time for a bed at Camp Hill.

The committee agreed to take the correspondence back to their respective caucus' for review so they can appropriately respond to her.

The committee agreed to keep the same time schedule of meeting on the third Tuesday of each month from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

DOCUMENTATION

No further documentation or information was requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/archive/veterans-affairs/va2017nov21>

WITNESSRoyal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia Command

Mr. Steve Wessel – Chairman - Veterans Outreach Committee

Ms. Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte - Executive Director

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Royal Canadian Legion's mission statement is to "...serve Veterans...and their families, to promote Remembrance, and to serve our communities and our country." Formally founded in 1926, the Royal Canadian Legion reaches across the country and abroad. The Legion is Canada's largest veteran and community service organization. Membership includes current-serving and retired Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well as the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, sons and daughters, and grandchildren of veterans.

The Legion connects, builds relationships, shares resources with like-minded veterans' organizations, collaborates with key stakeholders to identify challenges, and advocates for change.

Funds raised during the annual poppy campaign are held in trust at each level of the organization (local branches, provincial and territorial commands, and at the Dominion Command level) are used to solely help veterans of all ages and their families, and to foster the tradition of remembrance.

The Royal Canadian Legion Service Bureau Network works on behalf of veterans and their dependents to ensure they receive the benefits they deserve. Professional Command Service Officers extends assistance, information and representation at all stages of the disability claim process free of charge to all veterans whether they are a Legion member or not.

Under the Benevolent Fund, the Nova Scotia Nunavut Command provides immediate emergency financial assistance to still-serving and retired CAF and RCMP members in financial distress.

Under the Benevolent Fund is the Veterans Outreach Program. Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command delivers transition and support programs to veterans and their families dealing with morale and mental health injuries. They were the first to deliver the Veterans Transition Program outside of British Columbia to veterans in Nova Scotia having trouble transitioning to civilian life. They were instrumental in having the VTN adopted as a service provider with Veterans Affairs Canada so that veterans across the country can access this program.

They have delivered further transition support programs such as Aftershock and the Trauma Relapse Prevention program, and are committed to the delivery of further programming in this field.

The Nova Scotia Nunavut Command also sponsors participation in programs such as Project Healing Waters, Wounded Warriors Weekend, and Outward Bound, and have developed a local program called Healing on the Fly. Many impromptu fishing expeditions have taken place whose purpose is to help people who are withdrawn from society interact with others.

They continue to support peer support groups such as Porchlight, and the Operational Stress Injury Social Support Program. They are also a founding partner of Paws Fur Thought, which pairs up service dogs with veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder, and brought the first and only Homeless Veterans Forum to Nova Scotia, training outreach workers in mental health first aid.

Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, through its Veterans Outreach Program, has played an integral role in the development of the Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre, they are a member of the Nova Scotia Group of IX committee, they are represented on the Camp Hill veterans' council and participate in the Veterans Affairs Canada Outreach and Visitation Program.

Through the office of the executive director, they continue to coordinate with Veterans Affairs Canada on the Integrated Personnel Support Centre, Military Family Resource Centres, Support Our Troops and various arms of the Military Family Fund and the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services to deliver support to veterans and their families.

They coordinate on an as-required basis with Commissionaires Nova Scotia, the Society of Atlantic Heroes, the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia, Rally Point Retreat, the Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund, VETS Canada and all social service agencies in Nova Scotia.

The Articles of Faith of the Royal Canadian Legion state, in part: "THAT THOSE WHO DIED in the service of the nation will always be remembered together with their widows and widowers. THAT THOSE WHO SURVIVE and need our aid may be assured of reasonable and adequate assistance."

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motion

The committee received a request from the members of the PC Caucus for the appearance of the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society.

“that the letter here from the PC caucus, which outlines the requests of the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society, be deferred to the meeting in January”.

Moved by: Mr. Tim Halman, MLA
Dartmouth East

An amendment to the motion:

“that the letter be accepted and that we move forward with inviting these fine folks from the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society at some point onto our agenda”.

Moved by: Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Motion: Carried

Correspondence

The committee discussed the correspondence from Ms. Watts which was deferred from the previous committee meeting of November 21, 2017. Ms. Watts is a constituent of Mr. Hugh MacKay, MLA, Chester-St. Margaret's. Mr. MacKay's constituency office is taking care of Ms. Watts' uncles issues. Ms. Watts copied her previous correspondence to provincial MLAs, federal MPs and others. There is nothing that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs can do at this time. It was stated that if there was any further pertinent information in the future, the issue will be brought back to the committee.

The committee agreed to change its January meeting from January 16 to January 23, 2018, due to an out-of-town caucus the week of January 16.

DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested but has not yet received the following information:

- The amount of dollars the poppy campaign brings in for the province.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/archive/veterans-affairs/va2017dec12>

WITNESSES

Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre Society

Sgt. (ret) Roland Lawless, CD - President

Lt/Col John F. Harrison, CD - Official Agent

Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Ms. Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte - Executive Director

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Veterans' Memorial Medical Society came up with the idea of proposing a medical centre specifically for veterans dealing with any kind of injury be it medical, mental or physical. The idea of housing the proposed Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre at Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial building seemed like a good fit. All the facilities are there in case of an emergency either through ER or Abbie J. Lane.

During discussions it came to light that people in the rural areas and other places outside HRM may find coming into the centre of the city difficult, if not impossible in some cases. After the society viewed the bottom floor of the OSI Clinic in Burnside Industrial Park, they noted that it would create an easy, accessible location with no obstructions.

The OSI Clinic is a multi-faceted clinic with a collaborative health-care model to treat both physical and mental injuries. Having a medical centre designed specifically for veterans, with doctors on hand who are knowledgeable about medical discharges and veterans' needs would be a seamless transition for veterans. By co-locating with the OSI Clinic, the federal government already provides mental health care for those who have incurred a mental health injury while serving. The medical centre will also provide data to the federal government to produce expedient Veterans Affairs claims.

There are many veterans throughout the country and province struggling to find health care somewhere within the provincial health care system. That is why the Veterans' Memorial Medical Society is trying to raise interest in this medical centre, so health-care can be provided 24-hours a day, seven days a week to veterans.

The Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command states that, when a member of the Canadian Armed Forces can no longer meet the terms of service due to an injury or illness, they are medically released from the CAF. Some who retire identify with injuries related to service only after many years of trying to cope with, and compensate for, damage to body and soul.

The nature of these service-related illnesses and/or injuries is extremely complex. Service providers typically do not understand the influences of military culture and experiences on veteran patients' health care needs. To receive treatments, medical benefits and financial disability benefits, practitioners administering to veterans must complete on an ongoing basis under tight deadline a constant barrage of reports and documents. If the reports are considered incomplete or not submitted on time, the treatments and benefits and financial supports stop; if a doctor cannot be found, these treatments and benefits cannot even begin.

The civilian model of health-care often cannot sufficiently and sensitively meet the needs of veterans. Serious and tragic effects of this are high levels of isolation and suicide in the veteran population and it also has far-reaching negative impact on families. The Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre model calls for an accessible, personal, simple and a highly culturally relevant strategy for the provision of physical and mental health services to veterans. Veterans seeking help will experience an atmosphere designed to minimize triggers and minimize the need to explain and re-explain their experiences to service providers who do not understand the influences of military culture and experiences on their health-care needs.

Treatment at the Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre will include a comprehensive, holistic referral network developing a long-term health care plan.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motion

After some discussion the following motion was put.

“The Nova Scotia Veterans Affairs Committee write to both the federal and provincial ministers responsible for Veterans Affairs and health care to support the proposal of a pilot project brought forward by the Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre Society.”

Moved by: Hon. David Wilson, MLA
Sackville Cobequid

The motion was deferred for further discussion at the next meeting, February 20, 2018.

DOCUMENTATION

No further documentation was requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/archive/veterans-affairs/va2018jan23>

WITNESS

Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada

Mr. Jim Lowther, CD - President & CEO

Ms. Debbie Lowther - Co-Founder

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

Jim and Debbie Lowther founded the Veterans Emergency Transition Services (VETS) Canada in Halifax in 2010. Their aim is to provide immediate, on-the-ground assistance to veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP who are in crisis, at risk of becoming homeless or who are already homeless. The major concern for the organization is securing funding beyond March 2018 from the Federal Government, and the lack of affordable housing for homeless veterans.

VETS began as a grassroots initiative in Halifax and quickly expanded across the country. In 2012, they received charitable status from Revenue Canada, and in 2014 were awarded a contract with Veterans Affairs Canada, making VETS service providers in the field of homeless and in-crisis veterans outreach.

VETS is a volunteer-driven organization with only four paid staff to manage the entire country. One staff member is dedicated to the Guitars for Vets Program. They have an extensive pool of hundreds of volunteers across the country who provide hands-on support. Many volunteers are either veteran or still-serving members or family members, which lends to a great environment of peer support. This is a key component to successfully helping the veteran transition from their current state of crisis to a more stable life.

Volunteers conduct Boots on the Ground walks where they patrol the streets and visit shelters in search of veterans who may need support. They also respond to referrals from outside sources such as Veterans Affairs case managers, shelter staff, family members and self-referrals from veterans, themselves.

What sets VETS apart from other organizations and what contributes to its success is: the peer support component; proactive approach; non-judgmental approach; and the immediacy with which they can assist. VETS can immediately assist a veteran because they do not have strict criteria that veterans must meet to receive assistance.

Since being awarded their contract in 2014, VETS has responded to over 3,000 requests for assistance. This has more than doubled each year and, in 2017, they received 1,956 requests - 16 per cent (304) came from Nova Scotia alone.

The Guitars for Vets program came about of out necessity. One of the presenters who suffers from PTSD said that playing the guitar helped move them through their dark times. A lot of veterans suffer from PTSD, and since playing the guitar worked for the presenter, they thought the same could be done for others. VETS did not have the money to buy guitars, so they asked the public to donate their gently-used guitars. A guitar is given to a veteran along with some online lessons by volunteer guitar instructors. The program became a tremendous success across the country. However, the issue of how to get the guitars to the veterans became problematic. Through the generosity of Long and McQuade, guitar donations can be made at any one of these stores across Canada where volunteers can pick them up and deliver them to a Vet in need. To date, they have been able to provide 1,000 guitars to veterans suffering with mental health and PTSD.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motion

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs entertained the following amendment to the motion put forth by Hon. David Wilson (Sackville Cobequid) at the January meeting regarding the proposed Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre:

"I move that this committee write a letter to the provincial Minister of Health and Wellness and the federal Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada to express support for enhancing medical services for veterans, as proposed by Sergeant Roland Lawless. The letter should request that the respective departments continue to work with Mr. Lawless to partner on a plan of action".

Moved by: Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Motion: Carried

Hon. Dave Wilson agreed to the amendment reiterating that:

"The last motion was that the Nova Scotia Veterans Affairs Committee write to both the federal and provincial ministers responsible for Veterans Affairs and health care to support the proposal of a pilot project brought forth by Veterans' Memorial Medical Centre Society. So, if we just add in what Mr. Porter brought in, I guess I move the motion as amended".

Motion: Carried

After further discussion on the topic of VETS Canada, the following motion was put:
“That the committee write the Minister of Veterans Affairs on behalf of VETS Canada, inquiring when they would anticipate approval of their budget”.

Moved by: Hon. David Wilson
Sackville Cobequid

Motion: Carried

The committee agreed to the following motion:

“that the Veterans Affairs Committee do not meet during the sittings of the House in the Spring and Fall – from now throughout the course of the government’s mandate – so we do not have to repetitively go through this each and every single time when it has been a common practice for at least 12 years. I would so move.

Moved by: Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Motion: Carried

DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested but did not yet receive the following information:

- A list of volunteers for the Veterans Emergency Transition Services including areas where they live so that MLAs of those areas can acknowledge them.
- Statistical breakdown regarding both mental and physical health issues in terms of men vs. women; age, officers vs. regular forces members of the Army, navy or the Airforce.
- Homeless veterans who do not have access to a physician.
- Please provide educational packages (or brochures) such as those distributed to VETS volunteers.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/archive/veterans-affairs/va2018feb20>

WITNESS

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Ms. Joëlle Badman – Education Program Manager

Captain RCN (Ret'd) Ken W.A. Hoffer, CD

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative mission is to progressively end “child soldiers” through a security sector approach. The organization was based on Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire’s experience in Rwanda and some encounters that he had with children on the ground. Upon his return from that experience he made it his life’s mission to address this issue both domestically and internationally.

The organization has four specific pillars: research specifically on issues related to children affected by armed conflict; conduct advocacy efforts at a local, international, and national level; partnering with the federal government launching the Vancouver Principles, which are principles related to child soldiers internationally and which have been adopted by about 65 countries; and deliver training to the military police and other security sectors internationally on how to interact and prevent the use and recruitment of child soldiers.

The organization works in countries all over the world – Rwanda, Jordan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda to name a few. They also educate these countries focusing on changing attitudes and behaviours that relate to the prevention of child soldiers.

VTECS was created in 2016 through a partnership with Wounded Warriors Canada. Wounded Warriors supports veterans in a variety of different capacities, and they wanted to invest in a program that would provide greater education skills and training for veterans. Wounded Warriors is the primary funder of VTECS. VTECS also received funding from the Air Canada Foundation initially, but is now just through Air Canada, who provides transportation for the VTECS who come from all over the country. They also have two private donors who support the program by sponsoring spots for VTECS from other regions.

Veterans from the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian Police are invited to apply to the program. Once accepted, they need to successfully complete a four-month online course offered through the Dalhousie College of Continuing Education. Then they must attend the program in Halifax for a month-long campus residency during the month of July.

VTECS are selected through a panel of adjudicators comprised of Dallaire Initiative Staff, as well as VTECS' alumni. Fifteen participants are selected each year and the program is fully funded in terms of the courses, transportation, accommodations. VTECS take two campus classes with undergraduate students, one on children and war, and one on UN and world politics. They also do two weeks of full-time classes and then switch to the Dallaire Initiative Specialized Training of Trainers course. In those courses they learn facilitation and presentation skills, how to talk about the issues of children affected by armed conflict and child soldiers, and scenario and interactive training.

After training, some VTECS take what they learned and apply it in their current careers, for example a high school teacher teaches his students about the issues of child soldiers; an RCMP officer utilizes his training working with gangs. Many go on to be champions and advocates for the issue, overall, engaging in public speaking seminars and sharing their passion and commitment to protecting children. There are also VTECS who demonstrate a lot of the skills for being an international trainer and who are invited to be on the VTECS training roster.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motion

The committee agreed to write a letter of support to VTECS donors for their continued support.

“The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs recognize the important work they do and would like to lend our support on behalf of the Child Soldiers initiative to thank you and to further encourage you for your continued support regarding this important initiative”.

Moved by:	Hon. Dave Wilson Sackville Cobequid
Motion:	Carried

The committee agreed not to hold an agenda-setting meeting in June and instead will hold it at the last scheduled/approved meeting in September.

DOCUMENTATION

No further documentation has been requested.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/archive/veterans-affairs/va2018may15>

WITNESS

Nova Scotia Health Authority

Ms. Lindsay Peach – Vice President, Integrated Health Services

Department of Health and Wellness

Ms. MJ Macdonald – Executive Director, Continuing Care

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The role of the Department Health and Wellness (DHW) falls under three areas of responsibility: long-term care system planning; setting strategic policy and standards for the sector; and licensing and funding for the long-term care services that are provided. In terms of other services, DHW provides funding and services that range from community-based care, home-care as well as long-term care.

Veterans are eligible for long-term care beds that are licensed and funded by DHW. They may also be available for other services provided by DHW through its Continuing Care services such as home-care based on their eligibility of their unmet needs.

Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial Building falls under the purview of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Veterans Affairs Canada financially supports veterans in long-term care facilities throughout Nova Scotia and that includes contract beds at Camp Hill and those individuals living in community nursing homes.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) is one of four providers that VAC provides long-term care funding to. The others are High-Crest Springhill in Springhill, St. Anne Community and Nursing Care Centre in Arichat and Wynn Park Villa in Truro. Eligibility for services is determined by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Provincial policies for long-term care placement do not apply to the Veterans Affairs Canada contract beds. Veterans in receipt of the Veterans Independence Program may have the full per diem costs funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs with a contribution from the veteran for meals and accommodations.

The Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial Building was transferred to provincial jurisdiction from federal jurisdiction in 1978. VAC has continued as both a collaborator and a funder of services since that time. The negotiated agreements established between the province and the facilities to provide long-term care can be terminated or amended under terms that are mutually agreed to by both parties.

Camp Hill is not an acute care hospital, it is a long-term care facility that includes 175 long-term care beds located on seven units. The budget for Camp Hill is \$25.4 million fully funded by Veterans Affairs Canada. In addition to nursing care, it also provides a broad interdisciplinary support team including respiratory therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, recreation therapy, social work, psychology and spiritual care. It also has support from local Legions, military organizations, many veterans' support organizations and volunteers.

An update on the new agreement – In the Spring of 2016, there were several vacancies at Camp Hill. VAC and NSHA were hearing from veterans eligible for care in a community bed wanting to be placed at Camp Hill. Discussions took place as to how that capacity could be used to meet the needs of other veterans. In June 2016, the new agreement expanded access at Camp Hill with a targeted bed allocation of 15. In May 2017, conversations with VAC and NSHA took place about increasing that capacity. It was increased to 25 beds plus one respite. There was an increase in the number of beds occupied by veterans, in large due to the veterans who were being admitted under the new agreement policy. The number of beds used for other reasons started to drop as other acute-care beds were being brought into the system.

The new agreement, which has been extended until June 2019, functions the same way as the agreement for contract beds. That is, VAC completes the assessment of the veteran and determines eligibility. In this case, eligibility is those veterans who are covered under the veterans' health care regulations for care in a community facility other than a contract bed.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence

The committee received correspondence from the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada regarding the new contract (Budget) for Veterans Emergency Transition Services (VETS) Canada.

The Minister advised the committee that the contract held by VETS Canada, which includes funding of their outreach programs for Veterans in crisis, was extended for an additional six months. Under this contract, Veterans Affairs Canada will continue to provide monthly funding to VETS Canada until September 30, 2018.

After some discussion it was agreed to write back to the minister stating the committee's disappointment with the short extension and inquiring why such a short extension.

DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- A breakdown on the number of patients who use the 106 long-term beds not required by Veterans Affairs Canada and how those patients pay for them,
- The statistics on the level of care and satisfaction provided by the Veterans Affairs contract facilities that are operated under the Nova Scotia Health Authority,
- A breakdown on the vacancies and the timeline on single-entry access to community beds throughout the province.

TRANSCRIPT

Full details of this meeting can be found in the transcript which is available online at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/veterans-affairs/archive/veterans-affairs/va2018jun19>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - MOTIONS

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

November 21, 2017

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs agreed to the following topics.

Liberal Caucus:

Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command re: Veterans Outreach Program,
Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada (VETS Canada) re: Boots on the Ground campaign,
and Guitars for Vets,
Wounded Warriors Canada re: Veteran Trainers to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers (VTECS
program).

PC Caucus:

Veterans for Healing – Egypt Falls,
Proposed Veterans’ Memorial Medical Centre.

NDP Caucus:

Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority re: update on the
federal-provincial Camp Hill agreement.

Motion: Carried

December 12, 2017

The committee received a request from the members of the PC Caucus for the appearance of the
Canadian Youth Remembrance Society.

“that the letter here from the PC caucus, which outlines the requests of the Canadian
Youth Remembrance Society, be deferred to the meeting in January”.

Moved by: Mr. Tim Halman, MLA
Dartmouth East

An amendment to the motion:

“that the letter be accepted and that we move forward with inviting these fine folks from
the Canadian Youth Remembrance Society at some point onto our agenda”.

Moved by: Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Motion: Carried.

January 23, 2018

After some discussion the following motion was put.

“The Nova Scotia Veterans Affairs Committee write to both the federal and provincial ministers responsible for Veterans Affairs and health care to support the proposal of a pilot project brought forward by the Veterans’ Memorial Medical Centre Society.”

Moved by: Hon. David Wilson, MLA
Sackville Cobequid

The motion was deferred for further discussion at the next meeting, February 20, 2018.

February 20, 2018

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs entertained the following amendment to the motion put forth by Hon. David Wilson (Sackville Cobequid) at the January meeting regarding the proposed Veterans’ Memorial Medical Centre:

“I move that this committee write a letter to the provincial Minister of Health and Wellness and the federal Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada to express support for enhancing medical services for veterans, as proposed by Sergeant Roland Lawless. The letter should request that the respective departments continue to work with Mr. Lawless to partner on a plan of action”.

Moved by: Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Motion: Carried

Hon. Dave Wilson agreed to the amendment reiterating that:

“The last motion was that the Nova Scotia Veterans Affairs Committee write to both the federal and provincial ministers responsible for Veterans Affairs and health care to support the proposal of a pilot project brought forth by Veterans’ Memorial Medical Centre Society. So, if we just add in what Mr. Porter brought in, I guess I move the motion as amended”.

Motion: Carried

After further discussion on the topic of VETS Canada, the following motion was put:

“That the committee write the Minister of Veterans Affairs on behalf of VETS Canada, inquiring when they would anticipate approval of their budget”.

Moved by: Hon. David Wilson
Sackville Cobequid

Motion: Carried

The committee agreed to the following motion:

“that the Veterans Affairs Committee do not meet during the sittings of the House in the Spring and Fall – from now throughout the course of the government’s mandate – so we do not have to repetitively go through this each and every single time when it has been a common practice for at least 12 years. I would so move.

Moved by: Mr. Chuck Porter, MLA
Hants West

Motion: Carried

May 15, 2018

The committee agreed to write a letter of support to VTECS donors for their continued support.

“The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs recognize the important work they do and would like to lend our support on behalf of the Child Soldiers initiative to thank you and to further encourage you for your continued support regarding this important initiative”.

Moved by: Hon. Dave Wilson
Sackville Cobequid

Motion: Carried

APPENDIX B – CORRESPONDENCE

The following is a list of the correspondence received by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs:

November 21, 2017

The committee reviewed correspondence from Ms. Watts regarding her uncle. Ms. Watts expressed her concerns regarding her uncle's driver's license being revoked and wait time for a bed at Camp Hill.

The committee agreed to take the correspondence back to their respective caucus' for review so they can appropriately respond to her.

December 12, 2017

The committee discussed the correspondence from Ms. Watts which was deferred from the previous committee meeting of November 21, 2017. Ms. Watts is a constituent of Mr. Hugh MacKay, MLA, Chester-St. Margaret's. Mr. MacKay's constituency office is taking care of Ms. Watts' uncles issues. Ms. Watts copied her previous correspondence to provincial MLAs, federal MPs and others. There is nothing that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs can do at this time. It was stated that if there was any further pertinent information in the future, the issue will be brought back to the committee.

June 19, 2018

The committee received correspondence from the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada regarding the new contract (Budget) for Veterans Emergency Transition Services (VETS) Canada.

The Minister advised the committee that the contract held by VETS Canada, which includes funding of their outreach programs for Veterans in crisis, was extended for an additional six months. Under this contract, Veterans Affairs Canada will continue to provide monthly funding to VETS Canada until September 30, 2018.

After some discussion it was agreed to write back to the minister stating the committee's disappointment with the short extension and inquiring why such a short extension.

APPENDIX C - DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of documentation requested and received by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

December 12, 2018

Royal Canadian Legion

Re: Veterans Outreach Program

The committee requested but has not yet received the following information:

- The amount of dollars the poppy campaign brings in for the province.

February 20, 2018

Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada

Re: Boots on the Ground Campaign and Guitars for Vets

The committee requested but did not yet receive the following information:

- A list of volunteers for the Veterans Emergency Transition Services including areas where they live so that MLAs of those areas can acknowledge them.
- Statistical breakdown regarding both mental and physical health issues in terms of men vs. women; age, officers vs. regular forces members of the Army, navy or the Airforce.
- Homeless veterans who do not have access to a physician.
- Please provide educational packages (or brochures) such as those distributed to VETS volunteers.

June 19, 2018

Nova Scotia Health Authority

Department of Health and Wellness

Re: The Federal-Provincial Camp Hill Agreement

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- A breakdown on the number of patients who use the 106 long-term beds not required by Veterans Affairs Canada and how those patients pay for them,
- The statistics on the level of care and satisfaction provided by the Veterans Affairs contract facilities that are operated under the Nova Scotia Health Authority,
- A breakdown on the vacancies and the timeline on single-entry access to community beds throughout the province.

**Legislative Committees Office
One Government Place
1700 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@novascotia.ca

Website:

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