



Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

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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 September, 2019 to August, 2020 of the Sixty-Third General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafah DiCostanzo'.

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

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2020

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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 Second 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. As of August 31, 2020, membership of the Veterans Affairs Committee was as follows:

Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA (Chair)
Clayton Park West

Kim Masland, MLA
Queens-Shelburne

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

Murray Ryan, MLA
Northside-Westmount

Brendan Maguire, MLA
Halifax Atlantic

Lisa Roberts, MLA
Halifax Needham

Bill Horne, MLA
Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank

Claudia Chender, MLA
Dartmouth South

Hon. Margaret Miller, MLA
Hants East

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Murray Ryan, MLA replaced Barbara Adams, MLA in September 2019.

Claudia Chender, MLA filled a vacant seat in February 2020. The seat had become vacant earlier that month when Tammy Martin resigned as MLA.

Hon. Margaret Miller, MLA filled a vacant seat in August 2020. The seat had become vacant in February 2020 when Hugh MacKay, MLA resigned from the Liberal Caucus to sit as an Independent member in the House of Assembly.

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.

Because of physical distancing protocols observed during the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chair cancelled the April 20, 2020 meeting. On April 29, she announced that all meetings of this committee were cancelled until further notice.

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:

<https://nslegislature.ca/get-involved/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:

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

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

Canadian Youth Remembrance Society

Patrick Milner – Chairperson

Jade Hunt – Board Member

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs discussed a past motion from the June 18 meeting that this committee look into the possibility of making it easier for veterans and their spouses to be together in facilities.

After some discussion the following motion was made:

- For the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to write to the Department of Health and Wellness to explain how veterans and their spouses are placed in long-term facilities and provide information why the current policies exists, and also provide information on policy options that might be explored to bring veterans and their spouses together.
 - Moved by Keith Irving, MLA
 - Motion carried

The committee also agreed to have an agenda-setting meeting on November 19, 2019 after the presentation from the Veterans Emergency Transition Services (VETS) regarding an overview of their organization.

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>

AGENDA-SETTING

November 19, 2019

WITNESSES

There were no witnesses present at this meeting. Jim Lowther and Debbie Lowther had been scheduled to appear on this date to discuss Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada (VETS). The Lowthers were unable to attend the day's proceedings, however. Attempts to reschedule this meeting on a later date have not been successful.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Annual Report:

The committee agreed to the motion to accept the 2019 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Agenda-Setting:

Liberal Topics:

- Air Cadet League of Canada
- Commissionaires Nova Scotia
- Legion Capital Assistance Program
 - Moved by Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion carried

Progressive Conservative Topics:

- The Poppy and Remembrance
- The Northumberland Veterans Unit
 - Moved by Tim Halman, MLA
 - Motion carried

NDP Topic:

- Using Physician Assistants to Address Health Human Resource Shortages
 - Moved by Lisa Roberts, MLA
 - Motion defeated

Liberal and Progressive Conservative members recommended deferring the NDP topic to the Standing Committee on Health. A motion was made:

- [T]hat this committee write to the Health Committee members to consider this topic for their next agenda setting.
 - Moved by Barbara Adams, MLA
 - Motion carried

Because the NDP Caucus put forward only one topic, that left an opening for them to present another topic. Ms. Roberts said the caucus had no other topic at this time and would consider bringing one forward in the future.

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>

AIR CADET LEAGUE OF CANADA – OVERVIEW

December 17, 2019

WITNESS

Air Cadet League of Canada, Nova Scotia Provincial Committee

Bruce Morse – Chairman

Elaina Gaetan – 1st Vice Chair

Katie Clyburne – Flight Sergeant (Air Cadet)

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from the Air Cadet League of Canada:

- In an effort to maintain knowledge or an awareness about war time and pairing veterans with youth, is there anything the league, as a whole, is trying to achieve to protect the history of the sacrifices made by veterans?
- Please provide information on any cuts/increases to the Cadet League program from the federal government including the distribution of funds and the percentage of these funds to Nova Scotia's Cadet branch.

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>

COMMISSIONAIRES NOVA SCOTIA - OVERVIEW

February 18, 2020

WITNESS

Commissionaires Nova Scotia

Cmdr. (Ret'd) Marjorie Hickey CD, QC – Chair of the Board of Governors

Cmdr. Geoffrey Hamilton CD – Chief Executive Officer

Deputy Commissioner (Ret'd) Stephen Graham OOM – Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors

Honourary Lieutenant-Colonel Corinne MacLellan – Governor

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- Correspondence: Request to appear from Rear-Admiral (Ret'd) Barry Keeler, Past President of the Last Post Fund. The organization last appeared before the committee in 2010, and wished to do so again. The committee agreed by consensus to add it to the list of potential topics at its next agenda-setting, slated for Fall 2020.
- Murray Ryan, MLA asked about the status of a letter the committee had written to the Dept. of Health, about making it easier for veterans and their spouses to live together in long-term care facilities. The clerk undertook to look into it and report back at the next meeting.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from Commissionaires Nova Scotia:

- [O]f the 64 per cent veterans, what percentage is Canadian Forces versus RCMP or other law enforcement?
- What is the percentage of your business from provincial contracts?
- Under your Surprising Facts it states that because you're a Nova Scotia-based not-for-profit, you generate 20 per cent more provincial tax revenue for every dollar and create 18 per cent more employment for Nova Scotians. I'm just wondering if you can break down those stats a little bit for me.
- I just want a little more information about the 16 per cent to 20 per cent contracts from provincial. I know quite a few of the commissionaires that work here, for instance. I'm just wondering if they're the long-term – not just them but any other provincial contracts you have – are they kind of the long-term contracts? We do employ a lot in the province, and I just wanted to know a little bit more on how long they stay and what kind of salary range they might make over a number of years and that sort of thing.

TRANSCRIPT

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

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - MOTIONS

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

September 17, 2019

- For the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to write to the Department of Health and Wellness to explain how veterans and their spouses are placed in long-term facilities and provide information why the current policies exists, and also provide information on policy options that might be explored to bring veterans and their spouses together.
 - Moved by Keith Irving, MLA
 - Motion carried.

November 19, 2019

An agenda-setting meeting was held:

Liberal Topics:

- Air Cadet League of Canada
- Commissionaires Nova Scotia
- Legion Capital Assistance Program
 - Moved by Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion carried

Progressive Conservative Topics:

- The Poppy and Remembrance
- The Northumberland Veterans Unit
 - Moved by Tim Halman, MLA
 - Motion carried

NDP Topic:

- Using Physician Assistants to Address Health Human Resource Shortages
 - Moved by Lisa Roberts, MLA
 - Motion defeated

Liberal and Progressive Conservative members recommended deferring the NDP topic to the Standing Committee on Health. A motion was made:

- [T]hat this committee write to the Health Committee members to consider this topic for their next agenda setting.
 - Moved by Barbara Adams, MLA
 - Motion carried

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

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

December 17, 2019

The committee requested the following information from the Air Cadet League of Canada:

- In an effort to maintain knowledge or an awareness about war time and pairing veterans with youth, is there anything the league, as a whole, is trying to achieve to protect the history of the sacrifices made by veterans?
- Please provide information on any cuts/increases to the Cadet League program from the federal government including the distribution of funds and the percentage of these funds to Nova Scotia's Cadet branch.

February 18, 2020

The following information was requested and received from Commissionaires Nova Scotia:

- [O]f the 64 per cent veterans, what percentage is Canadian Forces versus RCMP or other law enforcement?
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