



Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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Halifax

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Honourable Karla MacFarlane
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House Halifax,
Nova Scotia

Dear Ms. 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 2022 to August 2023 of the Sixty-Fourth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Palmer, MLA, Kings West
Chair
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2023

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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-Fourth 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:

Chris Palmer, MLA – Chair Kings West	Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA Hammonds Plains-Lucasville
Danielle Barkhouse, MLA – Vice-Chair Chester-St. Margaret's	Hon. Tony Ince, MLA Cole Harbour
Larry Harrison, MLA Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley	Gary Burrill, MLA Halifax Chebucto
Tom Taggart, MLA Colchester North	Kendra Coombes, MLA Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier
Nolan Young, MLA Shelburne	

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Hon. Tony Ince, MLA for Cole Harbour, replaced Ali Duale, MLA for Halifax Armdale, August 2022. Gary Burrill, MLA for Halifax Chebucto, replaced Suzy Hansen, MLA for Halifax Needham, June 2022. Kendra Coombes, MLA for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, replaced Lisa Lachance, MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, August 2023.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Veterans Affairs Committee traditionally meets 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:

<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 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 and distributed to members by the committee clerk. Research 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 cooperation. 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

Mental Health Support for Veterans and Their Families

September 20, 2022

WITNESSES

CLANNAD Counseling and Consulting Inc.

- Michelle MacIsaac, Co-Founder, and Veteran of the CAF

Mood Disorders Society of Canada

- Dave Gallson, National Executive Director

Office of Addictions and Mental Health

- Francine Vezina, Executive Director

OSI Clinic

- Patrick Daigle, Program Leader

Veterans Affairs Canada

- Dr. Cyd Courchesne, Chief Medical Officer
- Shawn MacDougall, Acting General Director, Policy Division

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence

- The Legion Capital Assistance Program guidelines and application were sent in per the Committee's request.
- Dave Gallson, National Executive Director for Mood Disorders Society of Canada, made a request to present the MIRA project.
 - o MLAs Burrill and Young moved to have a discussion in the next Agenda-Setting.

Discussion

- Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte, Executive Director for The Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, has asked to have Sandra Clattenburg replace her in the meeting she would attend.

Motions

- To approve the 2022 Veterans Affairs Annual Report.
 - o Moved by Nolan Young, MLA
 - o Motion carried
- To maintain the November 15th meeting date.
 - o Moved by Tom Taggart, MLA
 - o Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

No documents/information were requested.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard-transcript)

Military Transition into Skilled Trades

November 15, 2022

WITNESSES

Canadian Armed Forces Transition Centre Halifax

- Sandra Clattenburg, Acting Services Manager
- Ross Bonnell, Lieutenant-Colonel and Commanding Officer

Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

- Nicole Johnson-Morrison, Associate Deputy Minister
- Marjorie Davison, Senior Executive Director

Mainland Nova Scotia Building Trades

- Brad Smith, Executive Director
- Dave Giannou, Atlantic Canada Representative for Helmets to Hardhats Program

Nova Scotia Community College

- Don Bureaux, President

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Discussion

- The document of Past Witnesses, as requested by the Committee, was discussed.

Motions

- To expand the Committee's mandate to include matters related to presently serving military families to support the work of Seamless Canada, as was ratified by the Minister responsible for Military Relations and the Nova Scotia Government.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion deferred

DOCUMENTATION

No documents/information were requested.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

Veterans and Families: Importance of Community and Peer Support

December 20, 2022

WITNESSES

Department of Community Services

- Tracey Taweel, Deputy Minister
- Tracy Embrett, Executive Director, Child, Youth, and Family Support

Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre

- Shelley Hopkins, Executive Director
- Mara Toombs, Family Liaison Officer and Team Lead

Veterans Farm Project

- Jessica Miller, Founder and Director

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motions

- To write a letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs calling for a reduction in financial barriers to accessing peer support services and improvement in training accessibility peer support, with the body of the letter referring to Ms. Jessica Miller, founder and director of the Veterans Farm Project, specifically the first two recommendations.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

No documents/information were requested.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://nslegislature.ca)

Overview: Last Post Fund

January 17, 2023

WITNESSES

Last Post Fund

- Robert Carter, President
- Steve St. Amant, Vice President and Lieutenant Commander

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motions:

- To write a letter to Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services to connect with the Last Post Fund and explore ways in which they can be supported to further their cause of ensuring all veterans have a dignified burial.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried
- To have the Committee reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada to ask about the recognition monument at Fort Massey, specifically with regard to the one-year time limit and a possible extension to that date. Moreover, as added by a friendly amendment made by MLA Kent Smith, ask for an increase in the \$7000 burial cost limit.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion carried with a friendly amendment
- To expand the Committee's mandate to include matters related to presently serving military families to support the work of Seamless Canada, as was ratified by the Minister responsible for Military Relations and the Nova Scotia Government.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion deferred

DOCUMENTATION

No documents/information were requested.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

Agenda-Setting

February 21, 2023

WITNESSES

N/A

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence

- The request for financial barrier reduction to access peer support services has been sent to the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada, Honourable Lawrence MacAulay.
- The request for recognition of the Fort Massey monument, the time limit concerning the application, and an extension for the respective date have been sent to the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada, Honourable Lawrence MacAulay.

Agenda-Setting

- The first topic of the PC Caucus be Peer Support: Community Facilities. The witnesses would be: representatives from Rally Point Retreat, Landing Strong, Replenish Around Shipmates Retreat, and the Atlantic Centre for Trauma.
 - Moved by Nolan Young, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The second topic of the PC Caucus be True Patriot Love Foundation: Virtual Veteran Hub/Veteran Volunteerism. The witness would be Eleanor Taylor, Representative for the True Patriot Love Foundation.
 - Moved by Larry Harrison, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The third topic of the PC Caucus be an Overview of The War Amps. The witness would be Tim Verney, Regional Representative of The War Amps.
 - Moved by Tom Taggart, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The first topic of the Liberal Caucus be The Impacts of the Healthcare Crisis at Camp Hill. The witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, and the Director for Veterans Services and Geriatrics.
 - Moved by Hon. Tony Ince, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The second topic of the Liberal Caucus be Medical Coverage for Veterans. The witnesses would be representatives from Blue Cross Atlantic and Veterans Affairs Canada.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA

- Motion carried
- The topic of the NDP Caucus be The Use and Availability of Veterans Affairs Canada Long-Term Care Beds in Nova Scotia. The witnesses would be the President of the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and the Deputy Minister for the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care.
 - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
 - Motion carried

Motions

- To expand the Committee's mandate to include matters related to presently serving military families to support the work of Seamless Canada, as was ratified by the Minister responsible for Military Relations and the Nova Scotia Government.
 - MLA Danielle Barkhouse pointed out that the Seamless Canada Agreement is still in its early stages and needs more time before it could be incorporated into the Committee's mandate.
 - MLA Lisa Lachance agreed and asked that a list of other jurisdictions' Veterans Affairs Committee mandates for the Committee's Review.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion defeated
- To add another meeting date for the purpose of discussing the expansion of the mandate.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion defeated
- To have the clerk build a list of other jurisdictions' Veterans Affairs Committees.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

No documents/information were requested.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://nslegislature.ca/hansard-transcript)

Overview of The War Amps

May 16, 2023

WITNESSES

The War Amps

- Tim Verney, Local Organizational Representative

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Discussion

- Deputy Minister Joanne Munro has responded to the Committee's request for information regarding collaboration with the Last Post fund.
- Veterans Affairs Canada's Minister MacAulay has responded to the Committee's request for information regarding Veterans' funeral and burial programs as well as Fort Massey.
- The Committee requested that the Clerk prepare a list of Veterans Affairs Committee mandates in various jurisdictions. The compiled list was shared.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested from Tim Verney, Regional Representative for The War Amps:

- MLA Tom Taggart asked if the War Amps' Label Campaign can be integrated into constituencies.
- MLA Kelly Regan asked for statistics regarding how many people the Key Fob Service has helped.
- MLA Tony Ince asked how many donations were given to the organization.
- MLA Gary Burrill asked if Mr. Verney could expand on policy advocacy, income, and federal initiatives.
- MLA Tom Taggart asked about other workshops The War Amps hosts.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

Update on Seamless Canada Agreement

June 20, 2023

WITNESSES

Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services

- Laurie Ogilvie, Director of Military Family Services

Department of Intergovernmental Affairs Nova Scotia

- Darryl Eisan, Director of Military Affairs and Canada-United States Relations

Department of National Defence/Government of Canada

- Pamela Chiasson, Director General Military Personnel

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Discussion

- Landing Strong has sent in a request to appear before the Committee to discuss the impacts of the wildfires on Veterans' mental health.
- The Hon. MLA Ben Jessome asked when the government wants to discuss the expansion of the Committee's mandate.

Motion

- To have the caucuses consider the Landing Strong request more thoroughly to possibly be part of their caucus topic lists.
 - o Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - o Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested from Pamela Chiasson, Director General of Military Personnel for National Defence, and Darryl C. Eisan, Director of Military Relations and Canada-United States Relations:

- MLA Gary Burrill asked about the mobility challenges of moving transitioned veterans and its effect on family coherence.
- Hon. MLA Ben Jessome asked about particular outreach with community-based organizations.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – MOTIONS

The following motions were made throughout the 2022-2023 Committee year:

SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2022

- To approve the 2022 Veterans Affairs Annual Report.
 - Moved by Nolan Young, MLA
 - Motion carried
- To maintain the November 15th meeting date.
 - Moved by Tom Taggart, MLA
 - Motion carried

NOVEMBER 15TH, 2022

- To expand the Committee's mandate to include matters related to presently serving military families to support the work of Seamless Canada, as was ratified by the Minister responsible for Military Relations and the Nova Scotia Government.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion deferred

DECEMBER 20TH, 2022

- To write a letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs calling for a reduction in financial barriers to accessing peer support services and improvement in training accessibility peer support, with the body of the letter referring to Ms. Jessica Miller, founder and director of the Veterans Farm Project, specifically the first two recommendations.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion carried

JANUARY 17TH, 2023

- To write a letter to Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services to connect with the Last Post Fund and explore ways in which they can be supported to further their cause of ensuring all veterans have a dignified burial.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried
- To have the Committee reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada to ask about the recognition monument at Fort Massey, specifically with regard to the one-year time limit and a possible extension to that date. Moreover, as added by a friendly amendment made by MLA Kent Smith, ask for an increase in the \$7000 burial cost limit.

- Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion carried with a friendly amendment
- To expand the Committee's mandate to include matters related to presently serving military families to support the work of Seamless Canada, as was ratified by the Minister responsible for Military Relations and the Nova Scotia Government.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion deferred

FEBRUARY 21ST, 2023

Agenda-Setting

- The first topic of the PC Caucus be Peer Support: Community Facilities. The witnesses would be: representatives from Rally Point Retreat, Landing Strong, Replenish Around Shipmates Retreat, and the Atlantic Centre for Trauma.
 - Moved by Nolan Young, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The second topic of the PC Caucus be True Patriot Love Foundation: Virtual Veteran Hub/Veteran Volunteerism. The witness would be Eleanor Taylor, Representative for the True Patriot Love Foundation.
 - Moved by Larry Harrison, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The third topic of the PC Caucus be an Overview of The War Amps. The witness would be Tim Verney, Regional Representative of The War Amps.
 - Moved by Tom Taggart, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The first topic of the Liberal Caucus be The Impacts of the Healthcare Crisis at Camp Hill. The witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, and the Director for Veterans Services and Geriatrics.
 - Moved by Hon. Tony Ince, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The second topic of the Liberal Caucus be Medical Coverage for Veterans. The witnesses would be representatives from Blue Cross Atlantic and Veterans Affairs Canada.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion carried
- The topic of the NDP Caucus be The Use and Availability of Veterans Affairs Canada Long-Term Care Beds in Nova Scotia. The witnesses would be the President of the Royal

Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and the Deputy Minister for the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

- Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
- Motion carried

Other Motions

- To expand the Committee's mandate to include matters related to presently serving military families to support the work of Seamless Canada, as was ratified by the Minister responsible for Military Relations and the Nova Scotia Government.
 - MLA Danielle Barkhouse pointed out that the Seamless Canada Agreement is still in its early stages and needs more time before it could be incorporated into the Committee's mandate.
 - MLA Lisa Lachance agreed and asked that a list of other jurisdictions' Veterans Affairs Committee mandates for the Committee's Review.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion defeated
- To add another meeting date for the purpose of discussing the expansion of the mandate.
 - Moved by Hon. Ben Jessome, MLA
 - Motion defeated
- To have the clerk build a list of other jurisdictions' Veterans Affairs Committees.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried

JUNE 20TH, 2023

- To have the caucuses consider the Landing Strong request more thoroughly to possibly be part of their caucus topic lists.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion carried

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of documents and information requested and received by the Committee:

MAY 16TH, 2023

The following information was requested from Tim Verney, Regional Representative for The War Amps:

- MLA Tom Taggart asked if the War Amps' Label Campaign can be integrated into constituencies.
- MLA Kelly Regan asked for statistics regarding how many people the Key Fob Service has helped.
- MLA Tony Ince asked how many donations were given to the organization.
- MLA Gary Burrill asked if Mr. Verney could expand on policy advocacy, income, and federal initiatives.
- MLA Tom Taggart asked about other workshops The War Amps hosts.

JUNE 20TH, 2023

The following information was requested from Pamela Chiasson, Director General of Military Personnel for National Defence, and Darryl C. Eisan, Director of Military Relations and Canada-United States Relations:

- MLA Gary Burrill asked about the mobility challenges of moving transitioned veterans and its effect on family coherence.
- Hon. MLA Ben Jessome asked about particular outreach with community-based organizations.

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