

HANSARD

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COMMITTEE

ON

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Legislative Committees Office

Organizational / Agenda Setting Meeting

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VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Bill Horne (Chair)
Ben Jessome (Vice-Chair)
Chuck Porter
Hugh MacKay
Rafah DiCostanzo
Alfie MacLeod
Karla MacFarlane
Hon. David Wilson
Tammy Martin

[Hugh MacKay was replaced by Brendan Maguire.]

In Attendance:

Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2017

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

2:00 P.M.

CHAIR
Bill Horne

VICE-CHAIR
Ben Jessome

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, welcome to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I'm pleased that I'm the Chair. Before we go any further, I'd like everybody to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you all for being here on time. I'm a little late, in the sense of getting started, but here we are. What I would like to say first is that we have the washrooms out here to the left, when you go out the door, and have your phones off or on vibrate. There is an emergency plan for getting out of the building. In case there's an emergency please exit through Granville Street entrance. Proceed to the corner of Granville and George Streets, walk up George Street to Barrington Street, then cross over to Grand Parade by St. Paul's Church.

I would like you to have a look at the lists that we have. This is our inaugural agenda setting so we do have the three caucuses that have put forward their lists. We normally would do three from the Liberals, two from the Official Opposition - the PCs - and one for the NDP.

I'm just wondering if we could have someone approve or make a recommendation to approve the Liberals. Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For topics from the Liberal caucus I move the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command on the subject of their Veterans Outreach Program, with Kenneth George and Stephen Tedford, both Command Officers, as the witnesses.

The second one, Veterans Emergency Transition Services Canada, VETS Canada, on the subject of two of their initiatives - the Boots on the Ground campaign and Guitars for Vets - with the witness, Jim Lowther, who is the founder.

Finally, the Wounded Warriors Canada, Veteran Trainers to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers, VTECS program, the presenter being Joëlle Badman, who is the program officer.

THE CHAIR: Are there any comments? If not, do we approve those?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

I'll turn to the PCs. Ms. MacFarlane.

KARLA MACFARLANE: We would like to put forward Veterans for Healing - Egypt Falls. As you will see, a request was put in by letter from them directly as well. The witness will be Fabian Henry.

We would also like Veterans Memorial Medical Centre to come in and present, and the witness would be Sergeant (Retired) Roland Lawless.

I would like to have those approved.

THE CHAIR: Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We'll move to the NDP caucus. Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'll move our suggestion forward: the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority regarding the update on the federal/provincial Camp Hill agreement. That is the use of the Camp Hill site. I believe we had them in a couple of years ago, but it would definitely be worthwhile to have them back to see what's going on and give an update on that agreement.

THE CHAIR: There's a motion on the floor. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We have some correspondence. There's some correspondence that is not showing on our agenda, but we had received it a while back.

Actually, one of the topics that was brought in by the PC Party, Veterans for Healing - Egypt Falls, I don't think there need to be any further comments made on that particular one. We will wait until it's brought forward.

Ms. DiConstanzo.

RAFAH DICONSTANZO: Because it's the same one, are you doing it at different times? We'd like to combine it as one time. That's all.

THE CHAIR: Ms. MacFarlane.

KARLA MACFARLANE: As I stated when I was putting the two forward, I indicated that one was under the request, so it is the same.

THE CHAIR: Okay, that clarifies. Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I have a comment on the remaining two pieces of correspondence we have before us today. Frankly, I haven't had a chance to review the letter we received from Ms. Watts about her father, so I would just say at this point in time, this letter will be reviewed and we will move forward accordingly.

Then on the second piece, the item from - I guess they're both from Ms. Watts. In regard to her request for, I guess, a spot at Camp Hill, we're going to get an update, care of the topic from the NDP caucus, sometime over the next little while, so I would just suggest that we need some more information to move forward to appropriately respond to that request from the Department of Health and Wellness.

THE CHAIR: Ms. MacFarlane.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I would agree with Mr. Jessome, but I'm just wondering, after having a quick look at that, is it possible to reach out to her and let her know when the presenter or witness would be coming in who might have an influence on what she's speaking about? Yes, okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On establishing a meeting time, I guess normally it's the third Tuesday of each month from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Next month, there could be a problem because we normally don't meet the last week before Christmas. I don't think that happened last year either, so I'm just wondering if we can keep that particular day - I think that seems to work out the best for us. In the past it has. Mr. MacLeod.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Are you suggesting that we will not have a meeting in December?

THE CHAIR: I think that would be the ultimate plan to do, but it just kind of went in at the same time.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: My personal preference would be to move it ahead a week and actually have a meeting because we haven't had a meeting now since prior to the election. Although these issues are very important to the individuals that we've asked and identified as witnesses, I think it would be fair to them to have a meeting. If the committee would allow us to do it a week ahead of the normal scheduled time for this one month, I think that would be serving our committee better.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Porter.

CHUCK PORTER: I'm curious if the clerk could enlighten us. I know that we've made some other changes to schedules from previous committees, as well, so maybe the clerk could advise us on the availability to do exactly that. I'm not sure. I know it's a busy time.

THE CHAIR: She indicates that it is available.

DARLENE HENRY: On December 12th, as far as I know, there's no other committee meeting that day. However, it does depend on the availability of the witness, if they can come in within that short period of time. It depends on if we can get (Interruption) Oh, you have Human Resources. It does depend on how quick of a turnaround for a briefing package, so it could be very tight, but I can't speak for the committee.

CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Chairman, maybe we should leave it with the clerk and yourself. I'm fine to go as well. I think we are all in agreement with Mr. MacLeod, but based on the ability to find a witness in that short a time frame, does that work? If not, I guess we'll move to January.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: I'm cool with that.

THE CHAIR: Ms. MacFarlane, did you have anything to add to that? Okay. The next meeting date will be determined later.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 2:13 p.m.]