

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Tuesday, November 19, 2019**

**Legislative Committees Office**

**Agenda-Setting Meeting**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

## VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Rafah DiCostanzo (Chair)  
Ben Jessome (Vice-Chair)  
Brendan Maguire  
Bill Horne  
Hugh MacKay  
Kim Masland  
Murray Ryan  
Lisa Roberts  
Tammy Martin

[Bill Horne was replaced by Hon. Iain Rankin.]  
[Kim Masland was replaced by Barbara Adams.]  
[Murray Ryan was replaced by Tim Halman.]

### In Attendance:

Darlene Henry  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2019**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**2:00 P.M.**

**CHAIR**

Rafah DiCostanzo

**VICE-CHAIR**

Ben Jessome

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. I call the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to order. I just want to start by asking if everybody can check their cellphones and make sure that they're off or on vibrate.

Everybody received an email this morning that our witness was not able to attend. Jim and Debbie Lowther had a family emergency and were not able to attend, so this meeting is an agenda-setting meeting.

We can start by introducing all the members here. We'll start with Ms. Roberts.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: The first thing that we need to do is the annual report. Is there any discussion or motion to accept the report?

Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I move that we accept this year's annual report.

THE CHAIR: The motion is to accept this year's annual report. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The second thing is setting the agenda and review of correspondence that was received from the PC caucus. It seems to be included in one of the topics from the PC caucus, so we'll deal with it when that comes.

Now we can choose the topics and we can start with the Liberal caucus. Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Just to clarify, will we proceed with topics one at a time or may I state them?

THE CHAIR: You can state them either way. Is there any objection? No.

BEN JESSOME: Okay perfect. So Topic No. 1 is the Air Cadet League of Canada, and the witness is the Nova Scotia Provincial Committee.

Topic No. 2: Commissionaires of Nova Scotia, and the witness being the Commissionaires stakeholder.

Topic No. 3: the Legion Capital Assistance Program, and the witness being the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. It's administered by CCH.

So moved.

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

The motion is carried.

Now we move to the PC caucus. Mr. Halman.

TIM HALMAN: From the PC caucus, we're looking at the topics of the Poppy and Remembrance Protocols, current programs and options for the future. The witnesses being from Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command: Poppy and Remembrance Chair Don McCumber, and Executive Director Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte.

Second topic that's being put forward is the Northumberland Veterans Unit; the topic being capacity and utilization and the witness being Residence Council Committee. I refer you to the letter signed by the MLA for Pictou West, Karla MacFarlane.

I so move that these topics be added to the agenda.

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

The motion is carried.

Ms. Roberts.

LISA ROBERTS: Our proposed topic is Using Physician Assistants to Address Health Human Resource Shortages.

Physician assistants are widely used in the military and have been for decades and we know that there are physician assistants who moved to Nova Scotia for whatever reason in the course of their career and are looking to work here, so we thought it would be interesting to hear from their experience.

Our witnesses would be representatives from the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants and also the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons to understand more how they work under the supervision of GPs.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion? Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Madam Chair, it's an important topic but I'd like to put a motion on the floor. My motion is as follows:

We recommend that the NPD caucus submit this important topic of Using Physician Assistants to Address . . .

THE CHAIR: I'm sorry, Mr. Maguire she already has a motion on the floor. Would you like to make an amendment to that motion?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Essentially what I was going to say was this is a very important topic, but this is also a topic that should come before the Health Committee as it's a health topic, and we're asking for the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons along with the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants.

What we would recommend is while we're not against it - we are, in fact, in favour of these topics coming forward - there is a committee that is solely meant for witnesses such as the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons to appear before it and that is the Health Committee, so we would recommend that that's where it goes.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion on the floor already.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I was speaking on the motion.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to speak to that, Ms. Roberts?

LISA ROBERTS: I think I've said similar things in the Public Accounts Committee that obviously health is one of the highest budget items in Nova Scotia and it's also a topic of huge concern where we have clear jurisdiction.

In this case, I think this topic fits under Veterans Affairs because many veterans and people who are used to military life - who are part of military communities - are quite accustomed to the use of physician assistants and so we could learn from their experience, hear from their experience and that might generally inform us.

I think if we hold ourselves very tightly to only topics that are directly related to veterans, frankly it becomes hard to select topics for this committee because, as a province, we actually don't have any jurisdiction when it comes to veterans. For us, this is an opportunity to say okay, how can we learn and benefit as MLAs from something that is related to the experience of veterans who live and have served Nova Scotians.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions or any more comments? Ms. Adams.

BARBARA ADAMS: I think this is a fantastic topic, but I have to agree with Mr. Maguire. I think that the most appropriate place for it is to be in front of the Health Committee. As someone who serves on the Health Committee, I think there's a benefit to it being in front of the Health Committee.

Certainly, we agree that the health issues related to veterans and what the military have to show us, because often they are much further advanced in terms of what they have to offer because military personnel get a lot of health care that the general public do not. I think it would be better served to be presented in front of the Health Committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Adams. We have a motion on the floor. Can we vote on the motion, please?

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

The motion is defeated.

Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What I would say is that still leaves one space open for the NDP to pick a topic. It's not a space that the Liberals, and I don't think the Conservatives, plan on trying to take or anything like that. If the member has another topic

or wants to come forward at the next committee with a topic, that space is obviously their right to have.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Roberts.

LISA ROBERTS: We have no other topic at this time.

THE CHAIR: But you will forward one in the future?

LISA ROBERTS: I will consider that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, and I think that was all for the agenda setting. Is there anything else? There's a question from Ms. Adams.

BARBARA ADAMS: I know that the Health Committee has its own agenda-setting process and I know that it's coming up. Is it possible for this committee to write a letter to the Health Committee members recommending this as a topic for their agenda?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I don't see any problem with that. I think, like we said earlier, this is a topic that should be before the Health Committee, and it is a very important topic. If the member for the NDP would like to write a letter - or the committee will write a letter, I think we all agree that this is something that we would be in favour of.

THE CHAIR: A motion? Ms. Adams.

BARBARA ADAMS: I'd like to make a motion that this committee write a letter to the Health Committee members to consider this topic for their next agenda setting.

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

The motion is carried.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Our next meeting is scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup>. We don't have an exact witness yet, but we have sent a letter to Jim and Debbie Lowther to see if they can appear on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I just wanted to add a good news story to the record. Many of you would be aware that November 8<sup>th</sup> was the second annual Hockey Helps the Homeless fundraiser in support of Mr. and Mrs. Lowther's organization that they were here to speak about, VETS Canada.

This year we raised double what was raised last year, so we raised \$100,000 to support local veterans. Thank you to those members who supported the cause, and I would put a shameless plug in for more to take part next year. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Good job, Mr. Jessome, and thank you. Ms. Adams.

BARBARA ADAMS: It's my understanding that you possibly played during that tournament? We're just wondering what the score was of the game.

BEN JESSOME: We did all right. We had some fun. The Speaker was there to witness and the game that he was there, we actually got bushwhacked pretty good. I'm not one of the young guys there anymore. (Interruptions) I'll retract that comment.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Jessome.

Back to the next meeting, if we can't get Mr. and Mrs. Lowther, the clerk will schedule one of the topics that we have chosen today, if that's okay with everyone.

I guess the meeting is concluded and we're adjourned until the next meeting. Thank you, everyone.

[The committee adjourned at 2:14 p.m.]