



**DOMINION COMMAND
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Saturday, November 24, 2018, 1:15 p.m. ET
(In person meeting - Ottawa)**

File: PR-MN-2018-11

In Attendance	Owen Parkhouse	-	Chairman
	Sharon McKeown	-	Vice-Chairman
	Stephen Gallant	-	Member
	Nathan Lehr	-	Member
	Kenneth Ouellet	-	Member
	Chris Strong	-	Member
	Nujma Bond	-	Committee Secretary
	Dion Edmonds	-	Ass't Committee Secretary
	Leah O'Neill	-	Ass't Committee Secretary

MINUTES

1. Opening

Owen

The meeting commenced at 1315 hours (Eastern).

- a. Introductory remarks
- b. Meeting objectives reviewed

2. Regional & National Roundtable

All

National Initiatives

- a. Nujma reviewed recent national initiatives overall and the widespread attention they received.
 - National Remembrance Day initiative
 - Digital Poppy
 - Bells of Peace
 - National Silver Cross Mother
 - Marketing campaigns
 - Promotional video on making of the Poppy – more videos planned for 2019

- b. Dion provided highlights of recent campaigns
- Recent media articles indicating record Poppy Campaigns are being acknowledged across the country
 - The Digital Poppy Campaign brought in \$253,000 which will be dispersed back to Branches where donations were made. Plans in the works to expand next year's Digital Poppy to accept donations outside of Canada.
 - Bells of Peace well received at local level with participation from across the country.
 - Selection of Silver Cross Mother brings renewed focus on mental health in the Veteran community
 - These key initiatives offered incredible positive brand perception across the entire organization. Efforts underway to look at future initiatives that engage the public like these did.
- c. Leah highlighted that this year's Remembrance period, with the prominent Remembrance activities discussed, and strong marketing activities, resulted in an overwhelmingly positive showing of support and engagement on social media - greater than seen in any previous year.

Regional updates and discussions

- a. PR Committee members all noted increased turnout at Remembrance Day ceremonies in their areas. Impressive turnout at Bells of Peace activities, many with youth and Veterans involvement, were also noted.
- b. Chris highlighted the Innisfail, AB Branch brought in 52 new members leading up to Remembrance Day, and noted that a relaxed, casual dress code at the Branch supported recruitment numbers. This initiated discussion on Legion Dress and how clothing can influence perception and behaviour as it pertains to both recruitment and retention.
- c. Ken and a few other others noted there were fewer Veterans on parade on Remembrance Day.
- d. Owen asked whether Dominion Command received critical commentary on funds used for the Virtual Poppy Drop. Comments were received through email and social media and Leah offered the response that is currently used:
- The Dominion Executive Council (DEC), comprised of the Senior Elected Officers elected at Dominion Convention, as well as the elected President of each Provincial Command and Special Section, approved a maximum of \$30,000 from Dominion Command Poppy Trust Funds to be used for the Virtual Poppy Drop. As outlined in the Poppy Manual under Section 205, Dominion Command is responsible for researching, creating, publishing and distributing Poppy and Remembrance promotional material for use during the annual campaign. Poppy Funds were approved by DEC for the Poppy Drop under Section 402i to support the Legion's mission to perpetuate Remembrance and honour the Fallen. Use of Poppy Funds for Remembrance activities does not impact our ability to support Veterans and their families. Poppy Funds will always be available to assist Veterans and their families in need as outlined in the Poppy Manual.*
- e. Owen noted an article written by a "veterans advocate" about the Poppy Trademark and whether the Legion should possess it. Though invited to do so, the Legion did not publicly engage in this questionable debate, as our focus was on the Remembrance period, and this article was a personal opinion editorial that distracted from the solemn period of Remembrance.

- f. Stephen noted a growing focus on questions around cannabis and possible cannabis smoking spaces in Legion Branches, saying he would monitor and bring forward any issues that arise.
- g. Chris talked about continued public confusion around the Calgary Veteran's Food Bank and Poppy Fund involvement, saying it impacted the local Poppy Campaign. Alberta/NWT Command is monitoring the situation.
- h. Ken discussed increased media focus and political involvement in the Veterans license plate design in Quebec, with a new design expected to be released in February 2019; he also noted a Member of Parliament approached Legion Branches asking for support for a petition about Pension For Life. QC Command reminded Branches that as an apolitical organization, Branches should not support or endorse the petition. In addition there is continued media focus on the operational concerns about the St. Anne Hospital for Veterans in Quebec.
- i. Sharon indicated they are addressing outstanding promises by the Ontario Government around Long Term Care. Also, Ontario Command was approached by Ontario's official opposition party requesting information about the Legion. The Command met with Andrea Horvath to provide information about the Legion's programs and services, and to remain apolitical, also invited the party in power to have the same conversation, thought that hasn't happened yet. She shared information about the successful start of the Command's partnership with Wounded Warriors Canada. Sharon also brought up the Purple Poppy and whether Dominion Command has a response to questions about the Purple Poppy, created to honour animals that served in military missions. Nujma advised that the Legion's poppy is the red lapel Poppy and we do not support/promote other coloured poppies for Remembrance. It was noted the Ontario SPCA currently sells a commemorative pin to remember animals, with proceeds going to the Legion. During the discussion Sharon noted there are some operational issues related to the disbursement of funds within the Leave the Streets Behind program in ON, which they are tackling.
- j. Nathan noted an issue whereby a Newfoundland Branch recruited 400 non-member volunteers to help with the Poppy Campaign – this brought up concerns with liability. The issue was resolved with the Branch.
- k. Ken shared that CMHC offers funding and financing opportunities for research for housing. He also mentioned he plans to conduct video information sessions with Branches to help explain policies and procedures for a variety of activities.

3. Committee Function

Nujma, Owen, All

- 1) Nujma reviewed the Terms of Reference. Chris recommended the terms be amended to include video teleconferencing as a meeting option. Committee members approved the Terms of Reference, with Chris's recommendation. Owen recommended a Standard Operating Procedure be developed to provide guidance to Branches on how to deal with a public relations emergency, which may include contacting Nujma and Owen. Members agreed. Nujma also reminded members of the current process developed for dealing with PR issues of national importance.

Action: Nujma to update Terms of Reference

- 2) Assignment of Responsibilities: To support public relations activities and communications across the organization, PR Committee members volunteered to support and directly communicate with Commands not represented by PR Committee members. The following Commands will be supported as follows:
 - BC/Yukon Command – TBD
 - Saskatchewan Command – Chris Strong
 - Manitoba NWO Command – Sharon McKeown
 - New Brunswick Command – Ken Ouellet
 - Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command – Steven Gallant

Action: Owen to follow up with DEC to determine if PR Committee support can be offered to the BC/Yukon Command Trusteeship

4. Brainstorming

All

All PR Committee members engaged in a brainstorming activity to look at ideas to support the Committee's goals.

Three overarching goals were approved for the Committee, which stem from the Dominion President's mandate:

- 1) Strengthening PR/public awareness and Communications
- 2) Create a welcoming atmosphere/culture
- 3) Supporting membership goals = help in growing Membership

The idea is that upon accomplishing the first two goals, the third will flow naturally. A number of suggestions were generated during discussion, including:

- Offering more thank yous, recognition for volunteers in particular
- Improved demographic analysis for Provincial Commands through the Member Services Website
- Encourage Branches to open their emails
- Development of myth busting tools
- Need for Branch rates in the Member Services Website
- Creating a positive culture
- All levels to encourage and share good news stories & "keep it simple"
- Improved outreach to serving CAF members
- Sharing of best practices from Branches and Commands
- Need for ideas for Branches to implement to help welcome and retain members

Action: For the next meeting, all PR Committee members will come back with 3 or more tangible ideas to support our key PR goals.

5. Other business

All

- a. Chris shared a new video from Alberta/NWT, featuring a veteran's personal story, which was recently launched on their updated website.
- b. Nathan shared his Legion Branch initiative called a "Veterans Stand To" - a Veterans-only event that brings together Veterans for camaraderie and support.

6. Next meeting

Owen

The next PR Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday February 6, 2019, 1 pm ET. Details to follow.

- Likely delivered via GoToMeeting
- Instructions will be provided prior to the meeting

7. Adjournment

Owen

Meeting adjourned: 4:50 p.m.