

**DOMINION COMMAND  
DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE  
TELECONFERENCE – 5 November 2021  
MEETING MINUTES**

File 82-27

<b>In Attendance:</b>	<b>Andrea Siew</b>	-	<b>Chair</b>
	<b>Brendan Heffernan</b>	-	<b>Deputy Chair</b>
	<b>Mindy Pearson</b>	-	<b>Member</b>
	<b>Carolyn Gasser</b>	-	<b>Coordinator</b>
	<b>Mike Smith</b>	-	<b>A/Coordinator</b>

**1. OPENING**

The teleconference of the Defence and Security (D&S) Committee commenced at 10:00 hours beginning with a review of the previous minutes of 17 September 2021.

**2. ADMINISTRATION POINTS**

- a. **Review of TOR** – The TORs were reviewed and finalized by the committee. They will be put forward for approval at the November DEC.
- b. **CDS and RCMP Commissioner Meetings** – Comrade Andrea suggested that these meetings be scheduled after the mandate letters are released for the new Ministers of National Defence and Public Safety. The mandate letters are expected after 22 November 2021 and meetings with the CDS, the RCMP Commissioner, and others will be arranged early in the new year. In preparation for these meetings the Committee is updating a briefing deck. Comrade Andrea noted that more images that highlight the RCMP members engaged with the Legion are required for the briefing deck that will be presented at these meetings.
- c. **In - Person Meeting and Tour of Legion House** – We are hopeful for an in-person meeting in December and an introduction to various sections and staff at Legion House. COVID protocols will be followed.

**3. UPDATES**

- a. **CDA/CDAI Member Executive** – Comrade Andrea attended the annual CDA/CDAI virtual meeting with the A/CDS and the Deputy Minister of National Defence on 25 October 2021. They were very candid about the

key issues affecting the CAF. They reported that the most important issue facing the CAF is related to sexual misconduct and culture transformation which erodes public trust in the institution.

They also discussed the impact of the pandemic on the CAF which affects recruitment, retention and operational readiness. The CAF is currently 7,000 members short (one in ten positions), and this number does not include those in the process of release, on sick leave, maternity or paternity leave, or awaiting training courses. This is further exacerbated by a phenomenon called the missing middle – the leadership and experience in the middle ranks of both officers and non-commissioned members. The last issue raised was the housing crisis and the cost of housing. These issues all have an impact on operational readiness.

- b. **Afghanistan Refugees** – A virtual meeting was held at Dominion Command with Veteran organizations, volunteers, and advocates who have been assisting with the evacuation from Afghanistan of translators and other partners who assisted Canada and the CAF in their mission.

The danger and threat of retaliation and death from the Taliban to those who aided Canada and our allies, and the lack of government action on their promises, may also be having an impact on the mental health on CAF members and Veterans.

The Committee drafted a letter from the Dominion President to the Prime Minister and various ministers urging the government to fulfil their commitment for the urgent and safe evacuation of our Afghanistan partners. The letter was released on 5 November. It can be read in full at <https://legion.ca/news/articles/2021/11/05/leave-no-one-behind-crisis-in-afghanistan>.

The Committee will continue to monitor in coordination with the VSS Committee.

- c. **RCMP** – Comrade Brendan noted that the RCMP releases *The Quarterly* magazine four times a year and there may be some communications coordination and opportunities to promote both the RCMP and The Legion. Comrade Brendan will provide a contact from the RCMP to introduce to the Legion Magazine and to Marketing and Communications at Dominion Command.

**ACTION: Comrades Brendan and Carolyn**

He advised that the new Independent Centre For Harassment Resolution provides support services to RCMP members and employees who

experienced harassment. This includes awareness of options for resolution and directing them to resources within and outside of the RCMP as well as assisting serving and retired members to navigate the criminal justice system as needed.

The Committee discussed the recent Veterans Ombud report which recommended that the CAF and VAC establish a peer support program for CAF members and Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma. The report did not examine the need for RCMP members and Veterans. Attached below is the link to the report.

<https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/en/publications/reports-reviews/Peer-Support-for-Veterans-who-have-Experienced-Military-Sexual-Trauma>.

The Committee will investigate if there is a similar deficiency/gap for RCMP members/Veterans reference the need for a peer support for sexual trauma.

**ACTION: Committee**

The RCMP are experiencing similar HR challenges to that of the CAF with vacancies partially caused by the number of competing municipal Police Services, and attrition.

Training at the Depot was temporarily halted during the first wave of the pandemic and the number of participants in each Troop was reduced to follow protocols for COVID-19 and social distancing. Ongoing COVID-19 Rapid Testing has been implemented at Depot for instructors and recruits.

The RCMP are actively recruiting 100s of new members each year for the next several years

The National Police Federation, the bargaining unit for non-officer ranks of the RCMP has been successful in negotiating a new salary contract including retroactive payments for the outstanding contract years. Officer pay packages currently fall under the federal government Executive pay scheme and will be negotiated separately.

As a one year free membership is currently offered to the CAF top student at CFLRS, Comrade Carolyn spoke with membership regarding the provision of a similar offer to each top student at the RCMP Depot upon graduation, approximately 52 per year. Membership agreed with the idea. Comrade Carolyn will provide the Depot with information regarding the offer to be communicated when plaques are presented.

**ACTION: Coordinator**

- d. **CAF and RCMP Human Resources** – Certain stresses have been challenging regarding retention. Similar to the CAF, the middle leadership in the officer and NCO ranks have increasingly been retiring or released and as a result, there is a gap in these ranks and the experience and leadership skills they hold. New retention policies may be forthcoming regarding longer periods. The Committee will review as they are released.
- e. **NIJMEGEN 2022** - The call for applications was sent to Provincial Commands in the October All Branch with a deadline of 14 January 2022 for their top three nominees. Comrades Carolyn and Mike will receive and coordinate the applications for consideration by the Committee.

**ACTION: Coordinator**

- f. **Military Sexual Trauma and the CAF** – Minister Anita Anand, the new Minister of National Defence, has acted on one of Madame Arbour's recommendations that sexual assault cases will now be forwarded to civilian authorities for investigation and prosecution.

Although a positive first step, the Committee has concerns regarding the implementation including that it is an interim action only at this time and could change, who determines the criteria and which cases are forwarded to civilian authorities, who will provide oversight of the process and what is the role or involvement of the survivors.

This is only one initiative and does not address the cultural and leadership change requirement nor does it address the Legion's recommendation to establish a fully independent Office of the Inspector General of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence reporting to Parliament to ensure that initiatives to change the culture and eliminate sexual misconduct are implemented by the CAF.

The Committee will continue to review to determine if action is required.

#### **4. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

- a. **Housing Market** – Given the escalation of housing costs across the country, we are concerned for those being posted and the affordability of housing either rental or ownership.

Base housing for CAF members where available is limited and the rent is at fair market value regardless of rank or salary. It has also been reported that members on House Hunting Trips (HHT) have put in multiple offers on houses, are outbid, and cannot afford the over asking prices.

Like the CAF, the RCMP have limited housing supports which exist mainly in the Territories and the extreme north. Many first postings for newly graduated RCMP members are to the BC lower mainland where it is very difficult to find affordable housing.

The Committee will investigate both CAF and RCMP compensation policies related to housing affordability.

**ACTION: Committee**

- b. Canadian Victoria Cross (VC)** – The highest award of bravery in the CAF is the VC. The VC has never been awarded since its inception in 1993. The second highest award of bravery is the Star of Military Valour (SMV) and 20 of these were awarded during the Afghanistan conflict. The Committee has reviewed the call from some Veterans for Private Jess Larochelle, a SMV recipient from the Afghanistan conflict, to be considered for the VC. The Committee questioned why just one name was put forward, what was the criteria and the evidence to support the recommendation for awarding Private Larochelle the VC.

In a recent 2021 Legion Magazine article it is reported that all the criteria for these SMV recipients were reviewed by the CAF to determine if any met the criteria for the VC. The review concluded that the processes for nominations and subsequent awards were fair, efficient, and consistent, and that none should have been higher or lower.

In the Legion Magazine article Lieutenant-Colonel Carl Gauthier, the military's Director of Honours and Recognition, stated that no one met the high standard required for a Victoria Cross where actions considered would be "when somebody voluntarily or knowingly draws the enemy's fire upon them in order to relieve the pressure on somebody else" or when "somebody just gets up and charges the enemy against overwhelming odds". The entire article can be found at:

<https://legionmagazine.com/en/2021/02/new-details-emerge-in-the-case-for-the-first-canadian-victoria-cross/>.

The Committee will continue to review the evidence supporting the awarding of the VC.

**ACTION: Coordinator**

- c. 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RCMP in 2023** - The Committee will coordinate with Dominion Command on potential initiatives to support this significant milestone anniversary.

**ACTION: Coordinator**

## 5. FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 15 December 2021 in person, if possible and if not, via videoconference at 1000 hrs.

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1215 hours.



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**Andrea Siew**  
Chair



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**Carolyn Gasser**  
Coordinator

Dated this day of 6 October 2021

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