

**DOMINION COMMAND
DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE
28 March 2022
MEETING MINUTES**

File 82-27

In Attendance:

Andrea Siew	-	Chair
Mindy Pearson	-	Member
Brian Sauvé	-	Member
Carolyn Gasser	-	Coordinator
Ray McInnis	-	Observer

Absent:

Brendan Heffernan	-	Deputy Chair
Mike Smith	-	A/Coordinator

1. OPENING REMARKS

The meeting of the Defence and Security (D&S) Committee commenced at 1300 hours. Since our last meeting on 2 February, we can confidently say that the defence and security landscape has drastically changed.

The truck convoy took over the parliamentary precinct in Ottawa for over a month as well as international border blockages in several other provinces. These protests resulted in the federal government's implementation, for the first time, then revocation of the *Emergency Act*, as a result of the perceived threat to the security of Canada. The implementation of the *Act* requires the establishment of a joint parliamentary committee of both the House and the Senate. The *Act* also requires that cabinet, within sixty days after the expiration or revocation of a declaration of emergency, establish an inquiry into the circumstances that led to the declaration being issued and the measures taken for dealing with the emergency. The Committee will monitor the progress of both reviews and will watch for the final reports. Whatever the outcome, the domestic security landscape is probably forever changed.

The second change to our security landscape is the illegal and unprovoked invasion of the Ukraine by Russia. This incident is the most significant threat to peace in Europe since the end of the Second World War, marking a significant change to global security and Canada's national security.

The D&S Committee will also be watching the Federal Budget announcement on 7 April closely. There is some indication that there will be an increase to defence spending to meet NATO's 2% of GDP (from around 1.3%) requirement. As well, we

expect to see additional funding to support the new DND/CAF Health and Wellness strategy and to address sexual misconduct and culture change in the CAF.

The Committee is also watching for former Chief Justice Louise Arbour's report on CAF Sexual Misconduct which should be released to the Minister of National Defence on 20 May.

2. ADMINISTRATION POINTS

The previous minutes were reviewed and approved by the committee.

3. UPDATES

a. Veterans Services & Seniors (VSS) –

- i. **Homeless Veterans Initiative** - Comrade Ray explained that the Leave the Streets Behind program form for police to complete to assist Homeless Veterans is in legal review with the OPP and RCMP. Toronto police have also been reminded to send these completed forms to Ontario Command to action as some had been received at Dominion Command which causes delays. A training document is also in review.
- ii. **RCMP Homeless Veterans** – Comrade Ray is working on better Legion outreach to the RCMP to assist homeless Veterans. He advised two former RCMP members have have been supported since the last meeting.
- iii. **RCMP Service Sexual Trauma** – Comrade Ray has reached out to Jane Hall, from the RCMP Women Veterans organization, regarding the requirement for a peer support program for those who experienced service sexual trauma.

b. CDA Defence and Security Conference 9 to 11 March 2022 –

Comrades Andrea, Carolyn and Mike attended the Conference virtually.

Presentations from the Secretary General NATO Jens Stoltenberg, the National Security Advisor Jody Thomas, the Chief of Defence Staff General Wayne Eyre, and the Minister of National Defence Anita Anand were Conference highlights. While the Conference focused on the war in the Ukraine and NATO's response, there were excellent panel discussions on the security situation in Afghanistan and the security issues in the Indo-Pacific region and the threat from China.

A common theme raised throughout the conference was the requirement for the government to review/refresh the 2017 Defence Policy (*Strong, Secure and Engaged (SSE)*) as a result of Russia's attack on the Ukraine

and the need to address the modernization of capabilities to confront threats and hostile actors, align defence spending and reassess national security capabilities and readiness. Comments included: when it was developed it was rushed, was insufficiently costed, was oriented on evolving threats, and it needs a disciplined review given six years have passed since it was published. It was also written based on the Afghanistan threat model and now it needs to be more strategic and based on the existential threats to NATO, the Arctic, Indo-Pacific region, Space and from Climate Change.

The CDS spoke of his top three priorities as follows:

1. People – evolve the culture, attract and retain talent (CAF reconstitution). As part of this discussion, he said he was “seized with the skyrocketing cost of living”.
2. Operations – ensure the security of Canada and North America, ensure stability and security in the world, and support domestic issues. The size of the CAF is a key enabler of this.
3. Modernization – maintain a fighting force – need a capability in the North, NORAD Modernization, Space and Cyber investment.

Comrade Andrea advised that the CDA AGM will probably occur this spring, but no date has been set. There is a meeting of the Board on 4 April to discuss the agenda objectives for the AGM.

- c. **RCMP** – Comrade Brendan was unable to attend the meeting but advised that starting 1 May 2022, Nadine Huggins will be the next RCMP Chief Human Resource Officer. She has over 20 years of Public Service and began working for the RCMP in 2020, leading the development of their People Management Modernization. Under her direction, the RCMP created and are currently driving the People Strategy and the Vision 150 Equity Accountability and Trust action plan, both of which are shifting mindsets and behaviours and preparing the RCMP to meet its future mandate.

The Independent Centre for Harassment Resolution (ICHR) was launched on 30 June 2021 to demonstrate the RCMP’s commitment to address workplace harassment and to establish a consistent harassment resolution process that is accessible and supports accountability.

As of the end of 2021, the ICHR received 373 notices of complaints compared to 213 complaints in 2020 and 190 in 2019. The D&S Committee will continue to monitor the implementation of the ICHR to ensure it is meeting the needs of RCMP members.

The Committee discussed the Inquiry on the Mass Shooting in Nova Scotia and the requirement for RCMP members to testify. Comrade Brian informed Committee that prior to any subpoenas to testify, the RCMP is required to follow a trauma informed approach. It was not that the RCMP members did not want to testify, as reported in the media, but that the correct process was not being followed.

- d. **Housing Crisis** – The Committee continues to be concerned with the affordability of the high cost of housing across Canada and the financial impact this has on serving CAF and RCMP members when they are required to relocate on a frequent basis, often without choice, to meet the needs of their service.

In 2022, the average price of a house in Canada is now hovering over \$800,000 and, as reported by the Canadian Real Estate Association, is up 31.6 per cent in a year, the biggest annual gain on record. This creates financial stress and insecurity for some serving members of the CAF and the RCMP who cannot afford this high cost of housing.

To provide some relief the CAF has a Post Living Differential (PLD), introduced in 2000, which is a monthly taxable benefit payable to CAF members to mitigate the negative financial impact when posted to a region with a cost of living above the national average. The PLD is not available in all locations and in April 2010, the DND/CAF froze PLD rates at their 2009 levels to allow a review of the how the PLD is calculated. This review is still ongoing. Additionally, Base housing for CAF members where available, is limited and the rent is at fair market value regardless of rank or salary.

Unlike the CAF, the RCMP fall under the National Joint Council's Isolated Post Government Housing Directive (IGPHD) for many remote and isolated communities. However, there is no other cost of living differential benefit for RCMP Members posted elsewhere in the country.

The Committee will continue to investigate and provide a recommendation to DEC for consideration in April.

- e. **Cyprus 1973 – Unit Commendation** - The Committee will continue to review and will provide a response to the DEC for consideration in April.
- f. **Swiss Air – Special Service Bar** - The Committee will continue to review and will provide a response to the DEC for consideration in April.
- g. **Persian Gulf War Veterans Association** – The Committee will continue to review and will provide a response to the DEC for consideration in April.

- h. Definition of a Veteran** – The Committee discussed the definition of a Veteran. Several years ago the Legion changed its definition of a Veteran to include the RCMP. However, Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) defines Veteran for commemoration purposes as “*Any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training and is honourably discharged.*” It makes no reference to our Comrades who served with the RCMP.

The VAC Ombuds has called for the Minister of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Ministers of National Defence and Public Safety, to amend the definition to include former members of the RCMP for commemorative purposes. There has been no action taken to change the definition.

As the RCMP approaches their 150th Anniversary of service to Canada it is time that the RCMP be formerly recognized as Veterans and receive the commemoration they deserve through their service to Canada.

The Committee will provide a recommendation to the DEC for consideration in April.

- i. Op Harmony Initiative** – Comrade Carolyn is investigating various Indigenous summer employment programs with the CAF and the RCMP and will provide more information as to how we may be able to engage with them.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

4. NEW ITEMS

- a. 2021 Mandate Letters** – The December 2021 Mandate letters for the Ministers of Veterans Affairs, National Defence, and Public Safety were reviewed by the Committee. The Committee will monitor the implementation progress and follow-up with Government as required. Recommendations relevant to the D&S Committee are attached for information.
- b. New CAF Dress Code** - A new CAF dress code will be released in the near future with the aim to become more inclusive and to reflect the current Canadian societal norms. The D&S Committee will monitor for the medial release and any impact from the new code.

5. FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting will be held in June. Date and time to be confirmed.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1430 hours.



Andrea Siew
Chair


For

Carolyn Hughes
Coordinator

Dated this day of 7 April 2022

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