



**DOMINION COMMAND  
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, February 3, 2022, 2:00 p.m. ET**

**In Attendance**

Sharon McKeown	PR Committee Chair
Donna McRury	PR Committee Vice Chair
Paulette Cook	Member, QC
Karen Kuzek	Member, BC
John Mahon	Member, AB/NWT
Carolyn McCaul	Member, ON
Roberta Taylor	Member, SK
John Yeo	Member, PEI
Tom Young	Member, NS/NU
Ronn Anderson	Attending for Jerry Lava, MB/NWO
Nujma Bond	PR Committee Coordinator
Leah O'Neill	Assistant Coordinator/minutes
Dion Edmonds	Assistant Coordinator

**Regrets**

Jerry Lava	Member, MB/NWO
Nathan Lehr	Member, NL
Jack Clayton	Member, NB

## RECORD OF DISCUSSION

### **1. Opening**

**Sharon**

- a. Comments: December notes

The meeting commenced at 2:03 pm. Sharon greeted all present. December meeting minutes were accepted by the Committee. Sharon requested that members who are not able to attend to please notify Nujma in advance.

### **2. Consultation/updates: timely national topics**

**Sharon, Nujma**

- a. Advocacy

- i. Backlog of disability benefits

Sharon highlighted the VAC backlog of disability benefits continues. Paulette and John Y mentioned that all ages of Veterans are waiting up to 18-20 months for benefits.

Nujma confirmed the VSS Committee is advocating to raise the profile of the issue and it is on agenda for this year as a main advocacy position. John M sits on that Committee and stated VAC is telling clients to go to the Legion with their paperwork. A VAC contact of Tom's indicated it's a staffing issue. Both John M and Paulette agree Services Officers don't have the capability to do VAC work. Only so much we can do. Sharon highlighted the importance of the PR Committee to support the Legion in pushing this issue. Promote the issue within Commands and Branches and encourage Branches to bring the issue forward with their MPs at every opportunity. Pushing information out to Branches and members is one of the most important thing a member of this committee can do.

- b. Media coverage of note

- i. Truckers' protest in Ottawa & National War Memorial site

Nujma highlighted that the Dominion President issued a statement condemning disrespect at the National War Memorial. Dominion Command is using this opportunity to educate Canadians about this symbol and the history and significance of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

- ii. Victoria Cross for Jess Larochelle: update

Nujma indicated the Dominion President issued a statement requesting the Government re-examine the Larochelle file. Additionally, Legion OSI started a petition of support of Larochelle. At this time, no decision has been made.

- iii. Branch burns down

Sharon shared that the Ontario Hepworth Legion Branch building burned down. This Legion was in a smaller community with a population around 2000 and the Legion was the hub of that community.

- c. DEC/HQ items affecting PR

- i. Homes for Heroes/Legion decision

Sharon shared the Homes for Heroes email notice from Dominion Command to Branches was a reminder that Poppy Funds are not to be used for major infrastructure. Any questions on the notice should be directed to the Provincial or national Command. John M noted that the Legion is always there for the Veteran and can help with rent or with modifying a space for accessibility, but not large building development projects.

ii. Cancelling member sports championships

As information, Sharon shared the cancellation of Member Dominion Sports Championships. Paulette asked if there was any word on Legion Nationals in Sherbrooke. Currently it is still scheduled.

iii. Digital member card/ HST

Sharon reminded the Committee that the digital member cards are under development, and members will have a choice between a digital card and a printed card. Additionally, the Legion may be required to add HST to membership fees for applicable provinces. More info to come.

— d. Committee work

i. Provincial newsletters

Sharon asked Committee members that have Provincial Command newsletters to share the link or PDF with all PR Committee members. This will help the Committee learn about other Command activities and updates. John M suggested posting the monthly Provincial Command newsletters on the Legion national website. This was considered by marketing after the Committee meeting. There are currently relatively low viewing rates for the national Branch newsletter, and no evidence Branches would actively access and use the Command newsletters if posted online. Therefore, Marketing recommends the Command newsletters be shared through the PROs to interested Branches.

ii. Poppy use requires approval

Leah updated the Committee on an education campaign being developed to help Branches understand the scope of the registered trademark Poppy and common areas of misuse. This will be shared in March and over the coming months. The Legion.ca website has also been updated to better inform the public about the trademark: [www.legion.ca/poppy-trademark](http://www.legion.ca/poppy-trademark). Nujma reminded that help will be required at all levels to educate members and the public to prevent Poppy misuse and avoid needless disappointment by some members who are just trying to help.

iii. Biodegradable poppies/wreaths

Nujma informed the Committee that biodegradable poppies and wreaths are under development and expected to be launched this year.

iv. Velcro Poppies for service members

Nujma informed the Committee that Velcro poppies are in the works for service members who cannot wear traditional poppies due to their roles. Sharon suggested they be expanded to be available to other first responders who can't wear poppies with pins.

**ACTION ITEM:** Nujma to ask the P&R Committee whether the Velcro pins are for all, or a select audience.

- e. Other/follow up
  - i. RCMP 150 anniversary in 2023

Nujma highlighted that Dominion Command is looking at how the Legion and the RCMP might collaborate to promote the RCMP 150<sup>th</sup> commemoration.

- ii. Member 100th birthdays

Sharon confirmed that Branches wishing Dominion Command to send a letter to a member turning 100 can send the request to Angela Keeling. Additionally, 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Branches are typically automatically noted through Dominion Command, however a Command or Branch can follow up with Angela if they wish to confirm.

Sharon noted in the Defence and Security meeting minutes that a request for a program to celebrate the last remaining Second World War Veteran would be forwarded to Marketing and to the Poppy & Remembrance Committee and PR Committee. Dion clarified that, nationally, Dominion Command is not currently trying to locate these Veterans, but encouraged Branches to begin to reach out into their communities to identify their Second World War Veterans, and recognize their service. John Y mentioned that in PEI, every Veteran who is 100+ gets flowers from the Branch and a photo posted in Legion Magazine.

While celebrating the last remaining Second World War Veteran is not likely to occur for a number of years, John M asked Sharon to bring it up at DEC to get discussions and planning started.

### **3. Regional matters**

### **All**

Karen from BC Command indicated their provincial government provided a second round of funding (\$750K) to branches affected by the pandemic. She also noted that unfortunately a couple of staff were lost due to downsizing. Linda Candelaria will be asked to help with office PR matters going forward.

Tom indicated that the Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships held at Cape Breton University allowed the Legion and CBU to forge a strong relationship, resulting in opportunities for the Legion to host Remembrance commemorations at half time during games.

John Y highlighted a poignant campaign where the Korean Embassy distributed gifts to Korean War Veterans in partnership with PEI Command. Also, the Command is researching the feasibility of building a Legion House for Veterans and low income personnel. Additionally, John shared how touched he was to learn that the winner of the Charlottetown Legion poster and literary contests donated all her prize money to a local food bank.

Donna shared that Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command has also partnered with the Korean Embassy to deliver masks to Veterans through their Service Officers.

#### **4. Any other business**

**All**

Ron was substituting for Comrade Jerry. Ron mentioned Jerry is doing well, and Sharon asked Ron to give him our best.

Paulette indicated Comrade Ken Ouellet is on the mend after surgery and Sharon asked Paulette to know we wish him the best.

#### **5. Adjournment**

**Sharon**

The meeting ran a little overtime and Sharon and Donna thanked the committee members. The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 pm.

**Next meeting** – planned for Thursday April 7, at 2pm by Zoom.