



**DOMINION COMMAND
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 2, 2024, 2:00 p.m. ET**

In Attendance

Sharon McKeown	PR Committee Chair (ON Command)
Donna McRury	PR Committee Vice Chair (NS-NU Command)
Nathan Hoffmeister	Member (SK Command)
Mary-Ann Latimer	Member (QC Command)
Rosalind LaRose	Member (AB-NWT Command)
Law Power	Member (NL & L Command)
Ernie Tester	Member (MB-NWO Command)
John Yeo	Member (PEI Command)
Tom Young	Member (NS-NU Command)
Nujma Bond	PR Committee Coordinator
Leah O'Neill	Assistant Coordinator

Regrets

Jack Clayton	Member (NB Command)
Paulette Cook	Member (QC Command)
Michelle Courtney	Member (BC-Y Command)
Dale Johnston	Member (BC-Y Command)
Carolyn McCaul	Member (ON Command)
Dion Edmonds	Assistant Coordinator

(NOTE: the PR committee is composed of all PROs (Public Relations Officers) from each Command, and in cases where such a position does not exist, the Command has delegated a representative such as an Executive Director or President.)

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

1) Opening

Sharon

a) Welcome remarks

Due to technical difficulties, the meeting started at 2:13.

Sharon McKeown welcomed Committee members to the meeting. Sharon apologized to Tom Young for the omission of his name from the PR Committee DEC report. However, she made sure to acknowledge his contributions at the DEC meeting.

Sharon noted the next, and last PR Committee meeting before Convention will be held on July 4. Members were asked to let Sharon know if they can attend.

2) Discussion

All

a) National items affecting PR

Nujma

Nujma reminded Members that the items she will discuss were distributed to Committee Members through the monthly PRO report and the monthly all-branch Dispatch emails.

The Legion responded to the [Federal Budget](#) and the [Defence Policy Update](#). These articles are useful for PR Committee Members to review and are helpful in their roles.

The [FAQ section](#) on Legion.ca has been updated with common questions that come in, such as 'can someone create a Poppy Crosswalk' or 'can they use a Purple Poppy to acknowledge animals of war' (Note: always review [Poppy Trademark](#) guidelines). The FAQs are a great resource for Command and Branch PROs.

b) DEC items related to PR

Sharon/All

Sharon shared that the DEC meeting was productive, with an overwhelming "mind-boggling" amount of information shared. Highlights of the meeting included:

- The P&R Remembrance Ceremony Locator initiative went over well
- The Two Minutes of Silence TV Commercials were a success
- There is talk of a new 'red alert' Poppy where a pop up on your phone will encourage you to pause for 2 minutes
- The Legion National Foundation (LNF) is organizing the 2025 Pilgrimage and Commands can begin to consider applications
- LNF is accepting grant applications and looking for opportunities where they can support Veterans.
- Speakers from the Royal Canadian Navy gave a good talk and are aware of housing issues for Veterans
- Ontario Command is opening a new Branch in Wasaga Beach
- The Legion is still pushing for a Women's Veterans Monument in Ottawa

Donna added the DEC meeting was a success with a lot of conversation. Participants had an opportunity to visit [The Pepper Pod](#), a healing retreat for female Veterans impacted by various challenges. Donna encourages all PR Committee Members to read about their work and the

support they offer. Donna encouraged Committee Members to read the minutes of the DEC meeting once available as there was so much discussed; a suggestion also made by Sharon.

Sharon added that they learned at DEC that The Poppy Store had a very successful year. Related to this, Nujma added the important contribution public relations made and can make, in helping the store generate funds. For example, last year, the Legion facilitated a media story that featured the Legion talking about the store, and a customer from Alberta who spoke about their positive experience and the items they purchased. When the story ran nationally, the Poppy Store phones rang off the hook. The revenue generated from this opportunity was significant. Nujma stressed the significant role PR has in engaging media to help promote and educate about the Poppy Store offerings, or other initiatives the Legion, Commands and Branches want to promote. Such coverage can have a domino effect, including word of mouth, and reach thousands of potential customers and members.

Sharon added to this that at past meetings, she would wear a Poppy Store shirt and people would notice and start buying shirts. Dion would also wear a shirt at DEC, and sometimes give them shirts, that others would ask where they got it, and were always surprised to hear it was from The Poppy Store! Word of mouth is so important.

Sharon noted that she wanted to share an opportunity around Branch revenue and facility bookings. She invited Nujma to present a recent example. Nujma shared that she received a call from the Ontario Provincial Police who were interested in using a Legion branch hall in the Toronto area to host a media event around 'Grandparent scams.' Nujma put them in touch with the Pam at Ontario Command. Sharon highlighted that it's a great idea for Commands and Branches to promote their space to the community to hold media events and help generate revenue. Sharon also highlighted that the Sturgeon Falls Branch has leased its hall to the Provincial Government for court proceedings. In return, the Government contributed to the needed upgrades for Branch accessibility.

Sharon indicated that DEC approved the four recommendations proposed for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) for the Legion.

1. The official Legion EDI statement
2. The development of a glossary (as recommended by the PR Committee)
3. The development of an annual budget, to include materials and training
4. The establishment of an EDI Officer for each of the Commands, Sections and Branches of the organization.

Sharon indicated that while it might not be feasible for small Branches to have an EDI Officer (as it's already difficult to find volunteers for other positions), it would make sense to have them at minimum at the district level, to advise and respond to issues at Branches.

Action Item: Sharon to provide details of the approved EDI recommendations.

Nujma shared an idea supported by Sharon for consideration: that the PR Committee develop a Branch survey to gather PR data on what members and Veterans need. She suggested that perhaps Carolyn McCaul could provide input based on how Ontario Command conducts their Branch survey. The tool could help Branches determine what initiatives could be implemented, and what initiatives are already successful.

Sharon added that as the past Provincial President of Ontario Command, she surveyed Branches on general needed areas of support that Ontario Command could help with. Her survey indicated

Branches were looking for information on how to obtain grants, and on how to borrow money from Command.

Sharon indicated she would be very interested to know if our current Legion Veteran members are happy, what do they want and need, and what is working.

c. Regional PR updates

PR reps

NFLD – Law Power: The Provincial Command established an EDI Committee. Diversity is low in NL. The Committee is waiting to see what Dominion Command comes out with.

The remains of the unknown soldier from Northern France will arrive in NL at the end of May and lie in state until interred in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on July 1. The Legion will be responsible for ceremonies at the Tomb going forward from that date. All Branches in NL will host a Memorial Day Service.

PEI – John Yeo: The Command elected a chair and 4 zone Commanders to be part of their EDI committee. They don't know where to start and have asked if there are terms of reference. Sharon noted that it is under development.

They received notice that VAC will be doing a Townhall at a local venue on May 28th for Veterans and Serving Personnel.

John asked about the status of the VAC-Legion OVI Program. Nujma indicated that while there has been no official notice, information from Veterans Services' colleagues indicates it appears unlikely to continue.

John indicated that a female member involved in the 'Lest We Forget' incident in that province was charged and has been removed from all Legion committees.

NS – Tom Young: With Dominion Convention happening in NB, Tom indicated we may see more East Coast members at Convention.

The NS Veteran Outreach program is steadily growing.

Command President Don McCumber is working to secure more long-term beds for Veterans in the province.

Tom asked whether Dominion Command had identified a problem with EDI in the Legion. He is not sure there is a problem and would like to understand why this was presented. Sharon indicated this is in response to issues such as people yelling in Branches about hats, and issues with the Indigenous community and LGBT community. Tom indicated that the issue is with society, and not the Legion. Sharon agreed and commented that people simply need to be kind to each other. She noted a Legion EDI program makes the Legion look better, and to keep up with today's standards. It shows we are proactive, although requiring an EDI representative at the Branch level may be asking too much. Donna added to the conversation that in terms of EDI, from the ground level up, there is room for improvement. If there are areas of concern, we must face it head on and unite everyone – to be welcoming everyone for who they are and what they stand for. Law added that from his understanding of the Legion's EDI initiative, it looks like the action plan the RCMP have in place, but the Legion's plan does not consider how this will be fed down to volunteers who want to do good for the community. It places too much responsibility on volunteers. He noted that Dominion Command needs to simplify the EDI policy for volunteers. It needs to be easy to understand at the ground level.

QS – Mary-Ann Latimer: Mary indicated Quebec Command introduced EDI to the District level. No one knows where to start. Mary-Ann has not seen an action plan.

Mary-Ann was happy to report that a closed Branch is reopening, and another Branch now owns its own building.

MB – Ernie Tester: As part of their EDI initiative the Command has sent a letter to the Metis Association and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. In terms of EDI, he indicated we just need to get back to simpler ways of life.

They are hosting a Kentucky Derby event, including women wearing fancy hats and drinks. As well, they are running a Filipino night to encourage local Filipinos to get involved in the Legion. The Command Vice President is working to get all MB schools involved in Remembrance. The Hutterite schools are very involved.

SK – Nathan Hofmeister: Saskatchewan Command is curious to see what Dominion Command pushes forward for EDI. There is concern it might come across as preachy or focus on any one population. Nathan highlights that the Legion must focus on 'a Veteran is a Veteran is a Veteran' without pushing any lifestyle, religion, or agenda. There is concern they could lose a lot of Veterans from the membership if the focus becomes too much on other agendas.

AB – Roz LaRose: Roz agrees with the Legion EDI initiative. The membership is divided, and how the Legion deals with diverse cultures, thoughts and processes will be interesting.

Roz indicated that Veterans House was coming along nicely. As well, HiMARC, a University of Alberta program, is growing, now offered at 10 locations in the province.

3) Any other business

All

Sharon highlighted the Last Post Indigenous Veterans Initiative presented at the DEC meeting. The program is looking for researchers to help find unmarked Indigenous Veterans graves and asked committee members to let her know of anyone. She added that helping with this is a good public relations gesture.

4) Adjournment

Sharon

The meeting was adjourned at 3:12.

Next meeting – Next meeting– Thursday, July 4, 2024, 2 PM ET