

Dominion Command Defence & Security Committee

Meeting Minutes 23 September 2026

Our Mission is to serve Veterans, which includes serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote Remembrance and to serve our communities and our country.



**DOMINION COMMAND
DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE
23 September 2026
MEETING MINUTES**

File: 82-27

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andrea Siew	-	Chair
Brendan Heffernan	-	Vice – Chair
Rob Farrer	-	Member (absent)
Mindy Pearson	-	Member (absent)
Chris Voller	-	Member
Greg Jensen	-	Member
Richard Coltart	-	Coordinator
Carolyn Hughes	-	VSS Committee Chair
Nujma Bond	-	Communications Manager (Observer)

1. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

As the meeting was held in hybrid format the Dominion Executive Director welcomed Committee members to Legion House and thanked them for their contribution to the Defence and Security (D&S) Committee.

2. REVIEW PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the previous minutes from the last meeting on 15 June 2026. No changes or concerns were noted.

MOTION: It was moved that the 15 June 2026 minutes be approved as presented. **CARRIED**

3. CONVENTION UPDATE

The Committee Chair provided highlights from the 2026 Convention in Winnipeg,

26-28 August.

Details are available here: <https://legion.ca/news/articles/2026/08/27/royal-canadian-legion-wraps-up-50th-dominion-convention>

4. UPDATES

Committee Chair highlighted that there has been a lot of activity in the Defence and Security space particularly with regards to procurement. Of significant note was the government announcement in June that the preferred supplier for the submarine project was TKMS.

Additional information is available here. <https://www.canada.ca/en/defence-investment-agency/news/2026/07/backgrounder-government-of-canada-advances-canadian-patrol-submarine-project.html>.

The Chair also highlighted the Coast Guard's (CG) current activity in the Arctic, which is now operating under the Department of National Defence. A CG helicopter is also deployed for the first time ever on Navy ship, the AOPS HMCS Robert Hampton Gray. Also deployed is a CG ship.

The government also announced in the summer the construction of two polar icebreakers to operate year-round in the arctic. The Committee will continue to monitor the governance relationship between the CAF and CG.

Additional information is available here: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/article/exclusive-canadas-claim-to-the-arctic-faces-growing-threats-the-coast-guard-is-trying-to-remind-the-world-were-here/>

RCMP – Comrade Brendan provided an update on RCMP initiatives which are attached to these Minutes. Specific items included:

- Increase in Federal Policing positions
- New fitness test
- Reconciliation initiatives
- EDI report published

VSS Committee – Comrade Carolyn provided an update on Veteran Services and Seniors issues including:

- Legion Phd Scholarship presentation at CIMVHR
- Help at Home for Seniors initiative
- Ukraine-Global Affairs-Veterans Affairs initiative to support Ukrainian war Veterans
- Updated action plan for Veterans experiencing homelessness

5. ADVOCACY ISSUES

The Committee reviewed their current advocacy issues:

RCMP Definition of a Veteran for Commemoration Purposes – The 2012 Ombud's Report recognized the RCMP's long history of military and operational service to Canada, including participation in major conflicts, peacekeeping missions, and overseas deployments, and recommended that former RCMP members be included in the definition of a Veteran for commemoration purposes. Although The Legion expanded its own definition of a Veteran in 2014 to include regular RCMP members, the Government definition used for commemoration has not been amended. With over 150 years of service to Canada, there is renewed support to formally recognize the service and sacrifice of former RCMP members through Veteran commemoration. The Legion requested that the Minister of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, amend the current definition of a Veteran for commemoration purposes to include former members of the RCMP.

Status: An initial letter was sent to the Minister of Veterans Affairs in May 2022, and a response was received in October 2022 which did not support formalizing the definition. The Dominion President sent a follow up letter to the Minister on 26 October 2023. As a response had not been received, this issue was included in the Veteran Consultation Assembly November 2025 letter to the Minister. The D&S Committee Chair also reached out to the RCMP Veterans Association to ensure that they are also advocating on the issue. This has also been part of discussions between the Minister of Veterans Affairs, RCMP Commissioner and Dominion President. The D&S Committee continues to monitor for a response from the Government.

National Women Veterans Monument – The Dominion President sent a letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs on 15 January 2024 to request that the Government establish a national monument to honour the over 100 years of service of Women in the CAF and RCMP for their significant contribution and sacrifice to Canada.

Status: A response to the letter was received in March 2024 and a follow up letter was sent on 31 May 2024. As a response has not been received, this issue was included in the Veteran Consultation Assembly November 2025 letter to the Minister. The D&S Committee continues to monitor for a response from the Government.

CAF Sexual Misconduct Bill C11 – Military Justice System Modernization -

The Bill proposed that all CAF Sexual Misconduct Cases would proceed to civilian police for investigation and courts for prosecution. Testimony in the House of Commons and Senate Committees recommended that choice should be offered to survivors. In response the House of Commons made several significant amendments during final review including adding an independent statutory review of sections 7 and 8 of the legislation within three years after those provisions come into force. The review must also include consultations with military and civilian justice authorities, victims, advocates, academics and other stakeholders, with a report provided to the Minister of National Defence.

Status: The Bill was passed in June 2026. The D&S Committee will monitor the implementation of the Bill.

CAF Suicide Prevention – In April 2026 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA) released its report on *Suicide Prevention Among Canadian Veterans*. The report was the result of a comprehensive parliamentary study launched in September 2025 that included testimony from more than 54 witnesses and written submissions from experts, Veterans, stakeholders, and family members. Its findings and 16 recommendations highlight the urgent need for coordinated national action to reduce suicide among Canada's CAF members and Veterans and improve access to timely, effective mental health care and support.

The Report highlighted that suicide among Canada's CAF members and Veterans remains a significant public health concern. Evidence presented to the Committee indicated that approximately one Regular Force Member or Veteran dies by suicide every nine days, representing an estimated 50 to 60 suicides each year. The report also found that CAF Members or Veterans experience higher suicide rates than the comparable Canadian population. While males continue to account for the majority of deaths by suicide, women CAF Members or Veterans face a significantly higher risk than women in the general population. Witnesses highlighted the unique challenges experienced by many women, including military sexual trauma, harassment, discrimination, and gender-based violence, all of which can contribute to depression, post-traumatic stress injuries, social isolation, and an elevated risk of suicide.

The Committee also identified significant gaps in the collection and analysis of data, particularly relating to Reserve Force members, limiting the Government's ability to fully understand the prevalence and causes of suicide across the CAF and CAF Veteran population and to develop evidence-based prevention strategies.

In response, the Committee issued 16 comprehensive recommendations that provide a roadmap to strengthen suicide prevention efforts, improve coordination between the CAF and VAC, enhance transition services, expand access to

mental health care for CAF Members, improve data collection and research, and strengthen support for Veterans and their families.

Status: The Dominion Executive Committee, in August 2026, supported calling upon the Government to implement all 16 recommendations of the ACVA report, *Suicide Prevention Among Canadian Veterans*, in full and without delay, to publish a comprehensive implementation plan that includes clear timelines, measurable performance indicators, and accountability mechanisms to ensure the recommendations are effectively carried out, and urge the responsible Ministers to report publicly to ACVA on implementation progress within six months of the Government's formal response to the report, and again within twelve months thereafter.

The Committee has drafted a letter to the responsible Ministers and forwarded to the Communications Manager for consideration.

ACVA – Experience of Women Veterans Report – *Invisible no More* – The Royal Canadian Legion fully supports the 2024 ACVA report *Invisible No More: The Experiences of Canadian Women Veterans*, which documents widespread sexual abuse, discrimination, and abuse of authority experienced by women who serve and have served in the CAF and the RCMP. The report also highlights significant barriers for women Veterans in having service-related physical and mental injuries recognized by VAC, leaving many feeling invisible and unsupported. As the report's 42 recommendations represent a critical opportunity for accountability and meaningful reform, without a clear implementation plan, timelines, and oversight, the findings risk not being fully acted upon. In a letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs in November 2024 The Legion called on the Government to develop and publish a detailed implementation plan with clear timelines and defined oversight to ensure full and timely implementation of the *Invisible No More* recommendations, and that it work in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure women Veterans receive appropriate recognition, care, and support for service-related injuries

Status: There has been no response to the Legion's November 2024 letter. However, as 12 June 2026 marked the second anniversary of the release of the report, MP Anita Vandenberg rose in the House of Commons to recognize women Veterans and acknowledged the significance of the report. Following this, the newly established Parliamentary Friendship Committee, co-chaired by Senator Patterson and MP Anita Vandenberg, hosted a roundtable discussion with Dr. Maya Eichler and her research team on their independent assessment of the implementation of the report's 42 recommendations. The event was also attended by women Veterans and several Members of Parliament, including the Chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN), MP Sherry Romanado. The D&S Committee Chair participated in this discussion.

Dr. Eichler will convene a round table discussion on the implementation of the 42 recommendations at the October CIMVHR Conference in Halifax. The D&S Committee continues to monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Marriage After 60 Clause - The "Marriage after 60" clause, which affects survivor benefit eligibility under both the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act* and the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act*, continues to exclude spouses of members who marry after age 60 unless they elect a reduced pension option. While an optional survivor benefit exists, many Veterans cannot afford the required pension reduction. The clause was originally intended to align with public service pension provisions but is now viewed as outdated given increased life expectancy and changing life circumstances. The issue falls under the respective responsibilities of the Ministers of National Defence and Public Safety. ACVA also identified this issue in a December 2022 report and recommended that the clause be eliminated to ensure fairness and equity for Veterans and their spouses.

The Legion called on the Government to eliminate the "Marriage after 60" clause from the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act* and the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act*, consistent with commitments referenced in Ministerial mandate letters and the 2022 ACVA report in order to ensure equitable survivor benefit access for Veterans and their spouses.

Status: This issue was included in the October 2024 Veteran Consultation Assembly letter. As no response was received it was also raised in the November 2025 Assembly letter. A response has not yet been received.

CAF Bronze Service Pin – The Veterans Ombud reported in their 2025 annual report that the CAF may be expanding eligibility for the Bronze Service Pin from 12 years of service to include CAF members who release after achieving their occupational functional point. The Committee will monitor this possible program change. It is important to note that this change will not affect the eligibility criteria for the Canadian Forces Decoration (CD) medal, which still requires a minimum of 12 years of overall service for qualification.

Status: The D&S Committee continues to monitor for confirmation of changes to the CAF Bronze Service Pin to reduce the eligibility from 12 years to completion of occupational training (around 3 years).

The Committee discussed sending a letter to the Veterans Ombud requesting any further updates on the Bronze Service Pin.

Women Veterans Council (WVC) – In response to the five CAF women Veterans who resigned from the Council in January 2026 after just one year since

its establishment, The Legion sent a letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs concerned with the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of the Council moving forward. While the Minister of Veterans Affairs responded in a letter dated 3 February 2026 and committed to renewing the Council through a transparent process, no action has been taken to replace the five CAF Veteran members who resigned. The Council currently consists of three RCMP and three CAF representatives.

The Legion participated in the development of the Terms of Reference, as well as the assessment and selection process.

Status: The WVC first annual report was released on 24 September 2026. The Committee will review the report to determine if progress is being made

The Requirement for a Renewed National Security Strategy – Canada’s last comprehensive National Security Strategy (NSS) was released in 2004. Since then, the security environment has changed significantly, with emerging and evolving threats including great-power competition, cyber operations, quantum technologies, foreign interference, the impacts of climate change on Arctic sovereignty, increased domestic deployments, and hybrid warfare. Without clear strategic direction, operational demands can outpace planning and support, placing undue risk on CAF and RCMP members and creating long-term consequences for their health, well-being, and families. Budget 2024 also committed to publishing a NSS every 4 years. The Legion calls upon the Government to develop and publicly release a comprehensive NSS.

Status: The Dominion President sent a letter to the Minister of National Defence in May. A response has not been received.

The Committee anticipates a new NSS and revised Defence Policy will be released in the coming months. The D&S Committee continues to monitor.

Victoria Cross Update – The Canadian Victoria Cross was established on 1 January 1993 as part of Canada’s Military Valour Decorations, replacing the British Victoria Cross for Canadian honours while retaining its role as the nation’s highest award for conspicuous bravery in the presence of the enemy. Although Canadian service members performed numerous acts of exceptional gallantry during the Afghanistan conflict (2001–2014), the Canadian Victoria Cross has **never been awarded**. Instead, the highest honours for actions in Afghanistan were the Star of Military Valour and the Medal of Military Valour. Since 2022 the Valour in the Presence of the Enemy organization has been advocating for a review of the Afghanistan honours with a view to the awarding of the Victoria Cross. The Legion supported this initiative. In April they submitted a petition to the House of Commons resulting in the Government announcement on 31 May 2026 that they would establish an honours review committee with a view to

awarding a Victoria Cross. The Legion supports the establishment of the review committee.

Status: The Government should establish the honours review committee this fall. The D&S Committee discussed that it is important that the review committee members appointed have relevant operational experience and that the review process be transparent. The D&S Committee continues to monitor.

Bill S246 – *An Act Respecting the Recognition of Wartime Service* – This initiative, led by the Persian Gulf Veterans Association, seeks to establish a national framework for recognizing certain CAF and RCMP service as war service. The proposed legislation would create a process to determine the criteria for war service and where the established criteria are met, designate operations as war service for conflicts dating back to 1953 as well as future operations. The *Act* specifically states that its purpose is recognition rather than the provision of benefits.

Status: The Bill was passed unanimously in the Senate and was introduced in the House of Commons by MP Anita Vandenberg on 8 June for first reading. The Bill will proceed to second reading on 3 November 2026.

The PGVA is requesting letters of support and currently has 20 letters of support from Veterans organizations. A draft letter has been provided to the Communications Manager for consideration. The D&S Committee will continue to monitor.

Mobilization – The CAF is examining options to establish a CAF mobilization capability. This emerging mobilization force capability is intended to strengthen Canada's ability to rapidly expand military capacity in response to a major crisis or sustained operational demand, complementing the Regular and Reserve Force structure. While still in the early stages of design, the concept envisions a scalable system that could generate additional trained personnel by drawing on a broader national pool—including former members of the CAF, cadet instructors, and potentially other qualified volunteers—organized and supported through readiness frameworks, training, and infrastructure. Public planning discussions have referenced a notional requirement on the order of tens of thousands of personnel in a large-scale mobilization scenario, though no fixed force size has been confirmed. This initiative reflects a shift toward ensuring Canada can more quickly surge personnel and capabilities in response to heightened defence and security demands, both at home and abroad.

Status: The D&S Committee will continue to monitor.

6. NEW ADVOCACY ISSUES

Canadian Airborne Capability – Comrade Greg provided an update on the proposal from the Canadian Airborne Forces Association which calls for a renewed CAF airborne deployable capability and how this is potentially being integrated/aligned into the restructuring of the Canadian Army and recently proposed Joint Expeditionary Force.

Action: Comrade Greg will provide an issue note for discussion at our next Committee meeting.

Gaza Cemetery Destruction – The Chair highlighted recent media reporting on the destruction of the Gaza War Cemetery, including the section where Canadian peacekeepers are buried. It is deeply concerning and highlights the importance of preserving the final resting places of those who served our country. This section of the cemetery contains the graves of 22 Canadian peacekeepers who died while serving with the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), between 1956 and 1967.

Comrade Nujma briefed that The Legion has engaged with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to better understand the situation and explore available options for restoring and protecting the site once conditions permit. The D&S Committee will continue to monitor.

RCMP – The Requirement For Reform to the Public Safety Procurement Strategy - The National Police Federation (NPF) is calling on the Government to modernize the RCMP's procurement system, arguing that the current federal process is too slow and bureaucratic to meet the operational needs of frontline policing. According to the NPF, lengthy procurement delays have left RCMP Members using outdated equipment, increased costs to taxpayers, and created unnecessary risks to Members and public safety. The NPF is urging the Government to adopt a dedicated public safety procurement model that prioritizes accountability, efficiency, and timely delivery of critical protective equipment.

Comrade Chris provided background on the issue and the requirement for significant change in the Public Safety procurement process for protective equipment.

Action: The D&S Committee is reviewing a proposed recommendation.

CFB Gagetown Agent Orange and Chemical Exposure - Questions are being raised again about chemical usage at CFB Gagetown – Agent Orange in the 1960s, and the use of forever chemicals. A petition was submitted to Parliament in early June 2026 to re-open the Parliamentary Standing Committee on National Defence study on environmental chemical use at all CAF bases, calling into question the studies conducted by the Government in 2005-2007 and

a renewed call for additional compensation to families in Gagetown. The Government's position has remained largely consistent over the past two decades and continues to maintain that:

- Agent Orange and related U.S. military herbicides were tested at CFB Gagetown during limited periods in June 1966 and June 1967.
- Extensive investigations conducted between 2005 and 2007 found that most people who lived, worked, or trained at Gagetown were not exposed at levels expected to cause long-term health effects.
- Individuals directly involved in spraying operations or brush-clearing activities shortly after spraying were considered the group at greatest risk.
- Multiple environmental investigations found no buried Agent Orange barrels and that ongoing monitoring of former disposal sites has not identified evidence requiring new remediation measures.

In 2007, the Government created a one-time, tax-free ex-gratia payment of \$20,000 for eligible individuals who:

- were at, worked at, or lived near Gagetown during the 1966–67 testing period, and
- had a qualifying illness associated with Agent Orange exposure.

Veterans can also pursue disability benefits, but VAC requires evidence of actual exposure and a recognized medical condition linked to Agent Orange. Simply being present at Gagetown during the test dates is not automatically considered proof of harmful exposure.

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

7. VISITS AND MEETINGS

- Veterans Consultation Assembly – 31 October 2026

8. UPCOMING EVENTS

- CDA – Vimy Gala 4 November 2026
- DEC – 28 November 2026
- CDA – Army Day on the Hill 1 December 2026

- CDA Security Conference will be held 11-12 March 2027 at the Westin in Ottawa
- WiDS Breakfast – 27 February 2027

9. OTHER ITEMS

Comrade Greg commented that the recent announcement by the Government on 10 September 2026 regarding drones represents a major acceleration of Canada's domestic uncrewed systems capability. Through the Defence Drone Initiative Marketplace (DDIM), Canada intends to rapidly expand the Canadian defence industrial base, increase the number of drones in the CAF inventory tenfold through initial contracts, and establish the industrial capacity to produce millions of drones over the next two years. The initiative will also draw extensively on Ukrainian battlefield experience and expand Canada-Ukraine cooperation in uncrewed systems and counter-drone capabilities.

Comrade Greg highlighted that while this initiative presents significant opportunities for Canadian defence capability and industrial capacity, the expansion of production must be closely aligned with the operational requirements of the CAF. Industrial production, acquisition and innovation should not proceed independently of the CAF's operational concepts, force structure, command-and-control requirements, integration, interoperability needs and emerging doctrine.

For more information on the announcement:
<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2026/09/10/canada-and-ukraine-scale-drone-production-build-canadas-defence>

Action: The Committee will discuss this issue with the CDA for possible collaboration.

10. NEXT MEETING AND CLOSING

The next meeting will be in December, and the date is to be confirmed. Meeting was closed at 1200 hrs.



Andrea Siew
Chair

Richard Coltart
Coordinator

Dated this day on 5 October 2026.

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