

Dominion Command Defence & Security Committee

Meeting Minutes 15 June 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
15 June 2026
MEETING MINUTES**

File: 82-27

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andrea Siew	-	Chair
Brendan Heffernan	-	Vice – Chair
Brian Sauvé	-	Member (Absent)
Mindy Pearson	-	Member
Greg Jensen	-	Member
Jeff McGowen	-	Member (Absent)
Richard Coltart	-	Coordinator
Carolyn Hughes	-	VSS Committee Chair (Absent)
Nujma Bond	-	Observer

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Committee Chair highlighted that it has been a busy time both in the defence and security landscape, as well as within The Royal Canadian Legion. This year, The Legion is celebrating its 100th anniversary and membership has now surpassed 300,000, marking a significant milestone. Also, The Legion will be launching, at Convention in August, the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Learning Moments video, a major initiative to grow the organizational culture. This video will be available to all Legion members.

2. REVIEW PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the meeting on 3 March, and no changes or concerns were noted.

MOTION: It was moved that the 3 March 2026 minutes be approved as presented. **CARRIED**

3. DEC Update – April 25/26 – The Committee chair provided the following update:

- Sadly, the RCMP Commissioner was unable to attend.
- The Committee recommendation on the requirement for a renewed National Security Strategy was approved by DEC. A letter was sent from the Dominion President in May to the Minister of National Defence.
- It was discussed that the Corps of Commissionaires was advised that they will be losing their Right of First Refusal for all federal government security

contracts effective February 2027. DEC asked that the Committee draft a letter on behalf of The Legion to reconsider the decision.

- The question of cadet funding was raised by DEC given the significant funding provided by The Legion at all levels. There is concern that government funding has not increased sufficiently over the years. The Committee will review.
- DEC raised concern over the lack of RCMP housing in remote areas as well as their condition, and affordability in other high cost areas. The Legion raised this issue previously in 2022 with the RCMP. The Committee will review.

4. **National Police Federation (NPF)** – Comrade Brendan reported that the NPF leadership team may change following the recent elections. He will provide updates on any leadership changes and any resulting adjustments to the Committee membership.

5. **UPDATES**

CAF – Comrade Andrea provided the following update:

28 April – Economic Update – While there were no new major funding announcements for defence and security, the Economic Update highlighted that Canada met its NATO 2% of GDP commitment and focused on the implementation of the new Defence Industrial Strategy and establishment of the Defence Investment Agency.

New Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff (VCDS) and Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy - The commander of the Navy, Vice-Admiral Topshee, is being appointed VCDS, and Rear-Admiral Dan Charlebois is being promoted to the rank of Vice-Admiral and will assume command of the Navy.

Chief of Defence Staff - The Minister of National Defence announced in May that General Carignan's name will be submitted for consideration as NATO's military chair this fall.

Equipment Modernization – There is significant activity related to the modernization of the CAF including the procurement of new submarines, the F-35 fighter aircraft review, the replacement of the aircraft for the Snowbirds, a new AEW&C aircraft, and HIMARS launchers (long range missiles). This is in addition to the new River class destroyer project, the Remotely Piloted Aircraft (MQ-9B SkyGuardian) and the P-8 maritime surveillance aircraft.

Canadian Army Modernization program - Comrade Greg provided an update on Army modernization. The Canadian Army is restructuring into a modernized, mission-first model consisting of the Manoeuvre Division (1 Division), the Defence of Canada Division (2 Division), the Support Division, and a dedicated

Training Formation.

- 1 Division is headquartered in Edmonton and serves as the Army's primary high-readiness formation for major combat operations. It consolidates Regular Force Brigades 1, 2, 5, and 6 under a single tactical command. New capabilities include a military intelligence battalion, a long-range precision strike artillery brigade, a logistics brigade, and a light infantry regiment, with plans for future expansion into a brigade.
- 2 Division is headquartered in Montreal and is responsible for domestic operations, critical infrastructure protection, Arctic defence, and homeland surge capacity. It is composed primarily of part-time Reserve Force members serving in more than 120 communities across Canada.
- The Support Division provides unified command over bases, garrisons, and detachments to ensure consistent support readiness. The Training Formation assumes responsibility for all Army training to ensure preparedness for modern land warfare.

Several capital projects are also underway involving drones, self-propelled artillery, armoured capabilities, artificial intelligence integration, and loitering munitions.

Additional information is available in the "Inflection Point 2025" strategy document available here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/army/services/army-modernization/inflection-point-2025.html>.

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

6. **ADVOCACY ISSUES**

The Committee reviewed and discussed The Legion's Defence and Security advocacy issues:

The Requirement for a Renewed National Security Strategy – The Dominion President sent a letter to the Minister of National Defence in May.

Victoria Cross Update – Following the petition submitted by the Valour in the Presence of the Enemy organization, the Government announced on 31 May that they would establish an honours review committee with a view to awarding a Victoria Cross. The Committee discussed that it is important that the review committee members appointed have the relevant operational experience and that the process is transparent. The Committee will monitor.

RCMP Definition of Veteran for Commemoration Purposes – no progress but the Committee continues to monitor and engage when appropriate.

National Women Veterans Monument – no progress but the Committee continues to monitor and engage when appropriate.

Suicide - The Veterans Affairs Parliamentary Committee (ACVA) conducted a study on Veteran Suicide, and its report was released on 30 April <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/45-1/ACVA/report-4/> . The Report opens with the sobering statement: “Every nine days, one Regular Force Veteran dies by suicide in Canada.” The Committee will review the recommendations.

CAF Sexual Misconduct - Bill C11 – Military Justice System Modernization – The Bill proposes that all CAF Sexual Misconduct Cases will proceed to civilian courts for prosecution. Testimony at Committee recommended that choice should be offered to survivors. The Bill is in the final stages of review.

Women Veterans Council – While the Minister of Veterans Affairs, in a letter dated 3 February 2026 responding to The Legion’s January correspondence, committed to renewing the Women Veterans 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. Concerns remain regarding the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of the Council moving forward.

Of note, the five former Council members launched a grassroots initiative, the Women Veterans Collective, during the Women Veterans Forum (WVF).

The Committee will continue to monitor developments.

ACVA – Experience of Women Veterans Report – Invisible no More – June 12 marked the second anniversary of the release of the report. MP Anita Vandenberg rose in the House of Commons to recognize women Veterans and acknowledge 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 report’s 42 recommendations. The event was attended by several Members of Parliament, including the Chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN), MP Sherry Romanow. Dr. Eichler will release the first report card on the implementation of the recommendations at the October CIMVHR Conference in Halifax.

The Committee continues to monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Veterans Consultation Assembly – While there has not been a response to the 19 November letter sent by the Dominion President, it was discussed during a recent meeting with the Veterans Affairs Canada Deputy Minister.

The key issues included:

- Implementation of the recommendations in the ACVA December 2024 Report on the Persian Gulf War;
- Establishment of a National Monument to recognize the 100+ years of service of women in the CAF and RCMP; and
- Recognition of the RCMP as Veterans for commemoration purposes.

The Committee will continue to monitor for a formal response.

CAF Bronze Service Pin – The 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 (3 years).

7. NEW ADVOCACY ISSUES

The Committee discussed the following new advocacy issues:

Emerging Threats - Comrade Nujma discussed emerging threats and their impact on CAF and RCMP operations. The Committee supported the resolution for approval at Convention in August.

RCMP – The Requirement For Reform to the Public Safety Procurement Strategy - <https://npf-fpn.com/news-item/national-police-federation-calls-for-urgent-reform-to-rcmp-procurement/> The Committee will review the proposed recommendation.

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 military service as wartime service. The proposed legislation would create a process and timeline for the designation of wartime service, where the established criteria are met, for conflicts dating back to the Korean War as well as future operations. The Act specifically states that its purpose is recognition rather than the provision of benefits. The Bill was passed unanimously in the Senate and was introduced in the House of Commons by MP Anita Vandenbeld on 8 June. The Committee will continue to monitor.

Canadian Airborne Capability – Comrade Greg briefed about a recent proposal calling for a renewed CAF airborne deployable capability for the defence of Canada, specifically in the Arctic. The Committee will continue to monitor.

8. SPONSORSHIP

Indigenous Youth Programs - The Committee continues to support the CAF and RCMP Indigenous Youth Programs by recognizing the top candidate of each program with a plaque. Comrade Richard continues to facilitate and monitor.

CDA Vimy Gala 4 November 2026 – Comrade Richard has confirmed our commitment.

CAF Nijmegen March - Comrade Richard confirmed that the CAF Nijmegen March is being discontinued.

9. VISITS AND MEETINGS

CAF Stakeholder Engagement on Recruiting – 20 April – Comrades Andrea and Greg attended a virtual update briefing on CAF recruiting. It was largely positive as the CAF is meeting the Strategic Intake plan but there are still challenges including meeting trained effective strength and having sufficient trained personnel to meet the delivery of new capabilities. Following this briefing – new information was released to the media about recruit training challenges – training failures, language issues, harassment by recruits against other recruits, physical fitness etc. The Committee will continue to monitor.

CDA AGM – 23 April – Comrades Richard and Andrea attended the CDA AGM on 23 April. The highlight of the AGM was a briefing by the VCDS, which focused on recruiting and equipment modernization, noting positive momentum for the first time in several years, supported by sufficient funding.

CDA Defence Caucus Reception 3 June - Comrade Greg attended the CDA Defence Caucus Reception and provided an update. It was an opportunity to meet with Parliamentarians as well as network with other military associations.

Women Veterans Forum 9-10 June – Comrade Andrea attended virtually. The forum was very similar to previous events and was light on specific VAC progress related to women's health needs such as Entitlement Eligibility Guidelines, programs and services, as the focus remained on transition.

10. UPCOMING EVENTS

- Convention - 23-26 August 2026
- Veterans Consultation Assembly - October 2026
- DEC – November 2026
- CDA Security Conference (Westin) – 10-11 March 2027

11. OTHER ITEMS

Mobilization - Comrade Greg provided insight into work going on to establish a CAF Mobilization capability. He advised that the CAF is seized with developing a Mobilization Plan. This work is proceeding apace, supported by the research required to operationalize Mobilization. While much of the work to date remains “close hold”, there are several options under development including revitalizing the “Supplementary Reserve”. The Committee will continue to monitor.

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 PFAS (forever chemicals). A petition was submitted to Parliament last week to re-open the Defence Committee study on environmental chemical use at all CAF bases, calling into questions 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 of Canada 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 still 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 in coordination with the VSS Committee.

12. NEXT MEETING AND CLOSING

The next meeting will be in September with the date to be confirmed as Comrade Andrea would like a hybrid meeting with an opportunity for Committee members to meet with The Legion President and Executive Director.

The meeting was closed at 1515 hrs.



Andrea Siew
Chair

Richard Coltart
Coordinator

Dated this day on 19 June 2026.

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