



**DOMINION COMMAND  
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, March 7, 2024, 2:00 p.m. ET**

**In Attendance**

Sharon McKeown	PR Committee Chair (ON Command)
Donna McRury	PR Committee Vice-Chair (NS-NU Command)
Michelle Courtney	Member (BC-Y Command)
Nathan Hofmeister	Member (SK Command)
Rosalind LaRose	Member (AB-NWT Command)
Carolyn McCaul	Member (ON Command)
Ernie Tester	Member (MB-NWO Command)
Tom Young	Member (NS-NU Command)
Nujma Bond	PR Committee Coordinator
Leah O'Neill	Assistant Coordinator

**Regrets**

Paulette Cook	Member (QC Command)
Jack Clayton	Member (NB Command)
Dale Johnston	Member (BC-Y Command)
Mary-Ann Latimer	Member (QC Command)
Law Power	Member (NL & L Command)
John Yeo	Member (PEI 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/Nujma

#### a) Welcome remarks

Sharon McKeown welcomed Committee members to the meeting. All members observed a minute of silence to honour and remember Comrade Jerry Lava, Past President of MB/NWO Command and Past PR Committee Member.

An action item update was in the past meeting minutes, but Nujma shared it verbally: The OVI program remains suspended indefinitely due to continuing concerns about the spread of infections. You can keep track via the [OVI section on the Legion website](#).

### 2) Discussion

All

#### a) National items affecting PR

Sharon/Nujma

Sharon McKeown revisited the organization's focus on EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) as part of its strategic plan. She said there is a need to support all people and a need to update manuals and promote the concept. In that vein, she invited ideas from all commands asap, in terms of what can be done via the PR channels we have. She indicated we need to get members on board, so they also know we are following the route to EDI and are equally convinced it's the right path.

Ernie asked whether there was an understanding that provincial commands will put their own committees together, to which Sharon replied yes.

**Action item:** Commands to consider and send Nujma 1-3 actions by March 26/ April 2 at the latest for discussion at the upcoming DEC meeting - in terms of how their Command can promote EDI. Items will be compiled for review and Sharon will then present at the late April DEC meeting.

Sharon asked about whether members are still participating in initiation meetings when they join, and reiterated the value of face-to-face meetings to help new members understand what the Legion does, and their importance – and that this sort of interaction is vital to retention.

Nujma asked if there were some technical issues preventing people from RSVPing for the meetings and there were some issues noted. A solution will be investigated.

Nujma briefly highlighted a few national updates to be aware of:

- The closure of the branch in ON is due to biker groups overtly participating in activities and advertising at the branch. There was some initial media interest, but it has since stopped.
- The organization put out a statement in remembrance of former prime minister Brian Mulroney and Legion flags will remain at half-mast until his funeral on March 23.
- Dominion Convention information is now available online via Legion.ca.
- Canada's federal budget is scheduled to be released on April 16 and the Legion will review and offer public comments and feedback on items related to Veterans.

b) Regional PR updates

**PR reps**

Michelle Courtney from **BC/Y** shared that it is a busy time now. The Minister of Veterans Affairs will be in BC over the next week, visiting the UBC Legion branch, meeting some members, visiting a memorial ceremony etc. The command will be participating in a few public events like town halls and a trade show at CFB Esquimalt and another show focused on seniors, where they can get the Legion name out and share information about what we do. The command's provincial executive committee meeting is in April.

Roz from **AB/NWT** said they are working on arranging their provincial convention currently. Recently their executive met with Alan from Veterans House Canada about breaking land on a new project in Edmonton, and this idea will go to convention. Branches are now focused on their convention. Roz herself is feeling better after a health challenge.

Nathan from **SK** shared that their command still produces a newsletter every other month. The branches are being asked to push the positive sides of what the Legion does rather than focusing mainly on events. Their command regularly shares Dominion Command social posts as part of this effort to focus on the good. It was announced that the 2026/2027 Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships will be held in Regina.

Ernie Tester from **MB/NWO** noted there was a good service for comrade Jerry Lava in Kenora, with several members of their provincial command present. Ronn Anderson will become the immediate past president to fill Jerry's role. He mentioned there are many zone and district meetings underway or planned and their provincial convention is coming up on April 19. His own branch (#110 in Gladstone) is starting a Filipino night to welcome that community as they appear interested in being involved with the branch.

Carolyn McCaul of **ON** reported back on the Branch survey ON Command is conducting. She said that as of March 6, 280 branches had completed the survey which is 72%. She is waiting on 108 more branches. She will use that information to help create a command fact sheet. They are waiting for a list of all PR roles at the branch level, from every district, with a view to seeing which branches do not – and to find out if information is getting to branches as it should be. They noted that new PROs coming on board are not really being told what to do and are not always promoting the good things underway. She mentioned an example of the sort of information they can share because of the survey includes things like branches having supported youth with 1.3 million dollars in 2018.

Tom Young from **NS/NU command** again noted how that region has become a central focal point regarding homelessness in Canada. Because of the homeless encampment surrounding the monument at Grande Parade during the Remembrance period, the command decided to move their November 11<sup>th</sup> to Dartmouth's Sullivan's Pond. He indicated the municipality has realized it was not a good idea to have designated five sites to pitch tents. The command's executive director is helping some of the homeless with necessities and shelter and has identified some veterans. The 2024 service will likely take place in its usual spot. Their command president has had conversations with stakeholders re: long term care beds which are being used by the public instead of veterans. Tom said their benevolent requests are up, but they have been able to handle them. They are currently going through a website overhaul and creating new social media pages. Their command service officer is retiring after having helped thousands over his time with the Legion. NS/NU command saw a 5.3% increase in membership in 2023. Their outreach programs are doing well e.g. Heroes mending on the fly, the Veteran farming project, Buddy Check coffee is in almost 100% of branches now, and Operation Vet Build. Donna added that NS is busy

considering new ideas and initiatives and that there is a need to bring fresh stories about the Legion forward. Their flags are at half-mast for Mr. Mulroney. She confirms there is still a problem with information getting down to the branches and/or people are not reading the information.

Law Power of **NL Command** was unable to participate in person, Nujma provided his update verbally on his behalf:

“In preparations for the fast approaching 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ceremony of the National War Memorial in St. John’s NL on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, we are now canvassing our Branches in NL to determine how many members from each Branch are attending and if the Branch is bringing their Branch Banner. The intention is to get as many Legion participants as possible for the parade and ceremony as this is an extremely significant event and we are sure that Branches will want to participate.

The parade will be a short march on Water Street to the front of the National War Memorial where they will remain for a lengthy period as there are two parts to the ceremony. The first part is the funeral and internment of the unknown soldier, and the second part is the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary portion of the ceremony.

We are looking forward to seeing many Legionnaires at the ceremony participating on the parade and trust that Branches will be eager to have some of their members attend. As this event will be happening in a few short months, we ask that Branches inform their District Commanders of their intentions no later than 15 March 2024 or sooner if possible so that additional coordination for accommodations and transportation can be arranged.”

### **3) Any other business**

**All**

Sharon noted a concern during the meeting related to the Dominion Convention and what might happen due to apparent restaurant issues at the venue. Post meeting check: Nujma spoke with colleagues and shared an e-mail with committee members noting that construction is the cause of the restaurant issue, but there are many other nearby choices and colleagues will eventually circulate a list.

### **4) Adjournment**

**Sharon**

Meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM ET

**Next meeting** – Next meeting suggested – Thursday, May 2, 2024, 2:00 PM ET