

THE RIGHT MARKER



ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #7- MARCH 2015

Annual General Meeting of Members
~ The French Connection ~
AGM 2015 Quebec City - Register Now!

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Watch for the AGM 2015 Special Edition in June

***GOVERNOR TIM HOBAN
HONoured BY VETERANS AFFAIRS
OMBUDSMAN GUY PARENT***

At a ceremony on Nov. 5th, 2014, Veterans Ombudsman Guy Parent, presented Governor Tim Hoban with the Veterans Ombudsman Commendation. This award was in recognition of Tim's many years of service to the community through membership in such organizations as the Lions Club International and the RCMP Veterans' Association. Over the years, Tim has been particularly concerned about the welfare of troubled youth and retired members of the RCMP. At this same ceremony, Past President and Governor, Cal Small had the privilege of presenting Tim with a framed copy of the Veterans Bill of Rights. Congratulations Tim!



Veterans Ombudsman Guy Parent, Governor Tim Hoban and Past President and Governor Cal

Veterans Ombudsman Guy Parent, Governor Tim and Mrs. Betty Hoban





THE ROAD TO eVOTE IN THE RCMPVA

Dear Readers:

This is a round table interview with Director Peter Sorensen, Chair of the Association eVote Sub-Committee, John Francis, our National Treasurer and President Bryan Neville, Kingston Division, our Webmaster and Association Member Data Base manager. The interdependent relationships between the functionality and accuracy of the member database that directly impacts on the integrity of our absentee voting protocol and, our legislated responsibility for sound financial management practices are matters of the utmost importance to the Association. I invite you to take a moment to review the spring edition #4 and fall edition #6 of the Right Marker for previous discussions on the development of our new absentee voting policy and procedures.

Editor: Jack W. Briscoe

Jack: Peter, let me begin with the progress your team has made since our first interview a year ago on Absentee Voting, or eVote as it is often called. What have we managed to accomplish?

Peter: Before addressing the accomplishments, my attention goes to your question in the use of the “we”. It would be easy to say that the “we” is the “royal we” or the Association as a whole, but that would gloss over the few key individuals in our Association who have committed significant volunteer time to the eVote initiative and their efforts are to be highlighted, first and foremost. Our accomplishments include:

- ♣ the design and development of an Association Database that has each Division’s membership loaded and available for updating and reporting for the Division and Association purposes;
- ♣ the acquisition of an eVote Service Provider, Simply Voting Inc., of Montreal, to support the Absentee Voting requirements for each AGM, over the next 3-5 years; and
- ♣ a data clean-up plan so that all voting members will receive a ballot and can participate in the business of the Association at the Quebec AGM.

Jack: Would you say that the result, in other words getting our entire membership into one common database, and getting ready for our first eVote for the Quebec AGM was easy to achieve?



- Peter:** Regrettably it was far from easy. In fact it is still not completed. I am confident in saying that some Divisions struggled with the requirements to provide their membership data. In fact, I am personally aware that Bryan Neville, our database manager, was often overwhelmed and frustrated with the challenges of getting cooperation from some divisions to complete this important work. Bryan made it look easy to those of us looking on from a distance but you and I both know that it took an extraordinary vision and effort on Bryan's part to create a database and successfully upload over 6600 membership records.
- Jack:** Bryan, recently you and I spent a day together so you could educate me on the structure and use of the membership database. From our discussion, and as Peter points out, it was apparent that you were confronted with many challenges over the past several months as you built this database for the Association. What could have made this important work easier, indeed a more pleasant experience, for you?
- Bryan:** It's easy to look back and say what I could or should have done. Working with an online database was new to me so most of what I was doing was just trial and error. I feel I had a good vision of where we should be when the project was completed and this kept me enthused and wanting to get the job done. I put a lot of faith in the expression, "If You Build It, They Will Come" and it seems to be working. At first, a number of divisions could not see a lot of benefit in the new database. But now that it is up and running they are starting to realize that, once their membership data is up to date, life will be a lot easier for them with less work maintaining the information and less reporting required.
- Jack:** We are closing in on AGM 2015 in Quebec City and in your expert opinion Bryan, what is it going to take to get the database 100% accurate so our Association eVote can be executed effectively and efficiently?
- Bryan:** The ideal situation would be for the Member Data Base to be 100% accurate, but it is not a realistic expectation. The Member Data Base is up and running and the Divisions and individual members will now be responsible to maintaining their own details. The eVote will take place with the best information we have available. There will be members that slip through the cracks, or just do not want to participate in the eVote but that is normal and we can live with that. We will learn from the eVote at AGM2015 in Quebec what further efforts have to be done to increase the level of accuracy and participation.
- Jack:** In your opinion, what level of involvement from the divisions is necessary to ensure our data is always reliable in the future?



Bryan: Very little. It will take time for the initial membership data to be verified and everything is as up to date as possible. But, once it is done, the Division Member Data Base managers should only be dealing with dues and contact information for the Division and Executive. The individual members will be responsible for the accuracy of their own information.

Jack: Peter, we heard from Bryan about what he requires from the Divisions, both immediately and in the future, but as Chair of the eVote Committee, can you tell us if the Association will be ready for the first eVote event in Quebec City in May 2015?

Peter: We are well positioned, however I feel there is a very important quality assurance activity left to complete by March 15, 2015. All the members' records are now added and available to view but we need to confirm that, at a minimum, the seven (7) data fields in order to conduct the eVote process are in fact correct. This is *imperative*. Specifically we need to know the voting member's status, either as dues paid up for 2015 or as a Life Member, prior to June 6, 2014. Out of 6600 records on the database, we have 1000 members who are reported as having no status whatsoever (active, associate or life member) and only 40% have their 2015 dues status updated. The five (5) absolutely critical fields are: name, email and civic address, status of membership and 2015 dues and until we have that level of detail, we will be at risk for the AGM eVote.

Jack: Sounds like a lot of work is needed to clean-up the data before the AGM Peter?

Peter: Yes, but if our members in the Divisions work with us, the task will be achievable.

Jack: Have you experimented with the use of the database yourself?

Peter: Let me share a short experience with you: Bryan sent me my log-in details to review my own record on the database. To my amazement, my email address was wrong, my civic address was 10 years old, as was my telephone number. I contacted Bryan and told him what I discovered and after getting instructions from him, I successfully logged back in to the database, made my changes and in less than two minutes the record was updated and accurate.

What is important about this story is for our members to know that the information that is contained in each of our records comes from our Division's records. The information that Bryan receives is not changed or altered in any way when it is uploaded to the database; i.e. incorrect data in, incorrect data out! Given this situation I proposed to Bryan, and my Committee team members, that we need to identify a plan that will ensure all Divisions review and update their own membership records. Better yet, we enable individual members to update and manage their own record of personal information. If we enable the individual member to be responsible for maintaining their own personal information, not unlike we all do now for online banking and other services, then we can succeed with getting our database current and accurate.



- Jack:** Bryan, who will be responsible to update these records that may not be correct both now and in the future – surely you can't be tasked with this work forever?
- Bryan:** My job is done! I will continue to maintain the database, add reports, make corrections and try to fine tune it when necessary, but the job of updating and ensuring the validity of members records falls solely on the shoulders of the 30 Divisions and individual members.
- Jack:** So what is next?
- Peter:** With Bryan's guidance and the set-up of a secure log-in process for individual members to update their records, we will ask every member to accept the responsibility to update their personal information as soon as possible. At the same time, we will also be asking each Division to assure that the information and dues paid status for their members for 2015 is completed without delay.
- Jack:** When does all the data need to be clean and ready for the eVote?
- Peter:** All the data has to be ready by the Record Date, 60 days prior to the AGM date, which are March 30 and May 30 respectively.
- Jack:** What if a member's data is not correct by that date?
- Peter:** Then unfortunately the member will risk not receiving a ballot and will miss the opportunity to participate and vote on the business of the Association.
- Jack:** John, as our National Treasurer, is the Member Data Base a reliable source of intelligence for your Association financial management responsibilities?
- John:** At the moment it is the only source of data to establish a base for the operations of the Association at the national level. When we were in the process of selecting a Public Accountant, as required by the Act under which we now operate, the first question I was asked by all of the firms interested in being selected was "what is your revenue base and how is it established?" Because of how this was handled prior to this year the answer was "we don't truly know" and I think that played a part in (a) reducing the number of accounting firms willing to enter proposals to take on our work and (b) increased the cost contained in the proposals due to the anticipated greater potential work involved. Having a base revenue is fundamental to all financial management. If you don't know what you are going to have, how do you know what you can expend? At the national level we've seen the ramifications of that in the past: increase of Association dues to meet an immediate need, reduction in staff hours, deficit budgets, urgent requests for payment to meet cash flows. Now, with this national database, if accurately maintained, I can establish a revenue base and budget accordingly.
- Jack:** What information is the Association required to collect and report to government?



- John:** Under the Act the Association is required to collect and maintain a certain amount of information, some of which is only documentation such as articles and By-laws, committee meeting minutes, resolutions, etc.; but of particular note respecting the national database is the following: (a) register of directors, (b) register of officers, and (c) register of members. This last is important because the contact information for all members is required to ensure the ability to notify the members of meetings, resolutions, etc. For us, now that information is contained in the database and readily accessible. From a financial perspective, we are now faced, for the first time, with a requirement to provide the government – and the members too – with consolidated comparative financial statements. There are four of these financial statements actually, but with the agreement of the Public Accountant I am only working directly with the divisions in relation to income statements (i.e. revenue and expenses) and the financial position statement (i.e. balance sheet). The Public Accountant will prepare the remaining types of statements, based on the information provided by the divisions. For clarity's sake, it needs to be reinforced that only the data is required, not any of the actual assets. This consolidated information, once the audit is completed will be reported to government and at the AGM, to the membership.
- Jack:** I understand the Association has recently contracted with the firm of Welch LLP to act as the Public Accountant for the Association. When will the accountant conduct an audit, how will this be reported to Corporations Canada and what, if any, use can be made of the Member Data Base to facilitate this work?
- John:** The plan is to have the consolidation completed as soon as possible after the middle of February, on the basis that I have received all of the data from the divisions. At that time the Public Accountant will commence their audit and they may be contacting the division treasurers while doing random verifications of reported data. As I mentioned, once completed the financial statements will be reported to Corporations Canada. For this purpose, the national database, and therefore any specific information contained in this database, is not required. The only information utilized in the database for financial purposes is the gross data respecting numbers of members in each category to establish base figures for revenue (invoicing) determination purposes.
- Jack:** What is the relationship between the national database for financial purposes and the database for conducting the electronic voting?
- John:** As I said previously, the specific data contained in the national database is not used for financial purposes; only the gross numbers for invoicing. However, the collection of the Association dues is important, as Peter has pointed out, in order for the status of the member to be recorded as “active – dues paid” so they can participate in the electronic voting. The final collection date for the dues this year is March 30, 2015. Whether the Division assessment above the Association dues amount is collected is irrelevant for this purpose so long as the Association dues portion is collected. This also applies to the remittance of the Association dues to the national office. Of course, I would like to see the money as quickly as possible, but I also understand this isn't always possible for some divisions and they will remit according to their traditional timeframes. The point is that they can legitimately amend the member's status to “paid.”



- Jack:** Recently you told me that in order to accurately invoice Divisions for membership dues and liability insurance, it is important that you have accurate information about the number of Active and Life Members in each division. Since this impacts directly on the voting at the AGM, it is obvious that clean, accurate data is fundamental to your ability to manage our finances. Is this correct, John?
- John:** True and it became apparent to many divisions once the invoices for the Association dues started to flow. These invoices were prepared based on the division numbers available at the beginning of the year and for those who completed their entries during January. Association dues are payable for “active” members and since I had no way of knowing if members of “unknown status” were active or not, they were added to the active number to get the total for invoicing purposes. This certainly got a strong response from some divisions, and hopefully brought everyone to realize the importance – once a dollar figure is attached – of accurate data. This will be reinforced once the insurance premiums are established as these also add in the “Life” members.
- Jack:** The RCMP Veterans’ Association is required, by law, to report our consolidated revenue to Corporations Canada. What level of confidence do you have that our national consolidated financial statements will stand up to the scrutiny of a Public Accountant?
- John:** This is an interesting question and a difficult one to answer. I think that on the whole we will come out relatively well, but we will certainly not get a “clean” audit. The statements and report will be filled with “qualifications” and this is to be expected given the circumstances. For a start, we are supposed to report comparative financial statements, but since this is the first time we have had to complete these statements at this level there is nothing to compare them to, so that represents a significant qualification. For most of the divisions this is also the first time they have experience with accrual accounting for financial statements and therefore a lot of uncertainty surrounds the preparation of the data reported. Many decisions and allocation determinations, in consultation with the Public Accountant will be made get to the standardization level necessary to comply with the legal requirements; but in the end I think we can be satisfied we have done what needs to be done and that going forward the process will be better understood and much easier for all involved.
- Jack:** Gentlemen, it is very obvious the accuracy and integrity of our national database impacts directly on the probity of our financial management and our ability to vote at our Annual General Meetings. It occurs to me from this discussion, that if all members do their part, we will indeed get to the finish line. However, if we are all not moving in the same direction the risks to the future of this Association can be significant and should not be underestimated. Thank you all very much for your valuable insights.





IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEMBERS

President Rosemary (Rosie) Bowman, Victoria Division has reluctantly resigned her position on the Board of Directors owing to personal family commitments. Rosie was elected to the Board in June at the AGM 2014 in Ottawa and held the portfolio of Director, Membership and Recruiting. Although she was only in her role for a few months, Rosie undertook her responsibilities with enthusiasm and she will be missed by her colleagues on the Board and by all of us who have had occasion to work with her.

Former Executive Officer Jack Briscoe, Ottawa Division, has agreed to replace Rosie for the balance of her term. Jack was appointed at the Board of Directors meeting held on Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at the Canadian Police College, home of the RCMP Veterans' Association National Office.

On behalf of the Board, our sincere best wishes to you and yours Rosie, now and always.

Dave LeBlanc
President
RCMP Veterans' Association

ASSOCIATION WELCOMES THE NEW EXECUTIVE OFFICER MARK GAILLARD



July 2013 near Yellowknife,

On January 6, 2015, I was selected to become the Executive Officer of the RCMP Veterans' Association, an important role in the Association that I am honoured to accept. Like my father and brother, I am proud to have served in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and to count myself a "veteran." I served in the Force for seven years from 1978 to 1985, and was posted in "E" and "G" Divisions. I left the Force in 1985 to pursue careers in the Foreign Service and then in the Canadian Army, but throughout the intervening time I continued to feel pride in having served in the Force. Now I have been given this opportunity to return to my first regimental family and to be service to this historic association and my fellow veterans.

The RCMP Veterans' Association mission statement is twofold: to promote the welfare of former members of the RCMP and their immediate families; and to be of service to our communities and Canada when required or requested through rendering assistance to the Police, especially the RCMP, in matters of common concern. This mission was greatly in evidence in the immediate aftermath of the tragic events that unfolded in St Albert, Alberta last month. Through Edmonton Division, the Association assisted St Albert Detachment with matters related to the Regimental funeral and provided support, including some financial support through the Veterans Benefit Trust Fund, to the families of the fallen member and the injured auxiliary constable. In this way the Association was able to provide a level of support when and where it was needed most.

Here in Ottawa, it is certainly no secret that veterans' issues are high on the Government of Canada's agenda and on the minds of Canadians. As Canada's oldest veterans' association, in continuous existence since 1886, we are a stakeholder and have an important role to play. Veterans Affairs Canada, (VAC) as well as the Veterans' Ombudsman, among others, is consulting with our Association as well as with RCMP itself on a range of issues affecting both former and serving members of the RCMP. In concert with Ron Lewis, our Association Advocate, my key responsibility is to ensure that we are well-represented at all the various forums. This way the voices of all RCMP veterans and their families will be heard where it counts.

My other key responsibility is to mind the Association's affairs here in Ottawa. The decision last year at the AGM in Ottawa to continue to be a federally incorporated not-for-profit corporation places some significant legal and governance responsibilities on the Association. My job is to help ensure we are compliant with the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* and that the Association is never at risk.

But being a good "corporate citizen" is just a means to an end. The end is our strategic goal - it is the "what we want to achieve". My approach is always purpose-driven, how to make the Association stronger and focused on the future. The year to come will bring significant changes that will affect us in many ways we can't always foresee. We need to be well-informed and connected, and always ready to do our part firmly and constructively. The mission of our Association is probably more relevant than at any time during our long history. I am excited to have been selected to play a part in our Association's story.

Editor's Note:

Captain Mark Gaillard (rtd) is an Active Member of Ottawa Division of the RCMP Veterans' Association. His previous experience in the RCMP, together with his exceptional military career in the Canadian Forces, positions Mark very well to help lead the Association to a stronger future in the world of veterans. On behalf of Association President Dave LeBlanc and the Board of Directors, we welcome Mark to our family,



Executive Assistant Benoit Garceau

Benoit (Ben) is the son of Geoff Garceau and our very own Quarterly Circulation Manager, Chantal Renaud. Geoff is a retired member of the RCMP and Ben's grandfather served with the Surêté du Québec so growing up in the police family has been influential in the decisions Ben has made in his life. As a young boy Ben spent many hours in an aircraft when Dad was transferred to various postings in the north. As he puts it, "We traveled all over the map, we took too many flights to many places." The experience of flying soon got in his blood and Ben tells us that he knew he was destined to become a pilot. And, he did. Ben holds a commercial pilot's licence from the Rockcliffe Fying School in Ottawa and he was fortunate to have had some practical experience with the RCMP Air Services Branch in Ottawa. Ben tells us, "After the unique experience I had with Air Services, I was determined to command a Pilatus PC -12 for the RCMP. Before I decided to explore flying as a career though, I enrolled in the Police Foundations Course at la Cité Collégial in Ottawa. It wasn't long before I knew I had a decision to make. In other words, do I become a police officer and carry on the family tradition or do I pursue a new career? Why not both I concluded and so my sights are firmly set on being a pilot for the RCMP."

Ben said, "You may be wondering why I would want to take on a job with the RCMP Veterans' Association at this time of my life but frankly the answer is rather simple. I am young and I am trying to get the most life experience that I can in a variety of fields. My grandfather was a WWII veteran and I have an incredible amount of respect for those who served our country in the military and in law enforcement. In my mind, that is the perfect equation for the position I have been selected to fill here in the RCMP Veterans' Association national office. And if assisting our members in the Association and flying weren't enough to keep me focused, I also work part-time as Funeral Director for a business in the Ottawa/Gatineau region. I look forward to working with all members of the Association in the days and weeks ahead and I can be reached at (613) 993-5578 or by email at benoit.Garceau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca."

Association says....Welcome Aboard Ben!



RON LEWIS

Marriage After 60 - Survivor Benefits

There has been considerable discussion on this topic within the Veterans community, serving members as well as other public sector pension organizations. At this time, pension survivor benefits for retired pensionable members are not supported by serving members, the RCMP Veterans Association or the National Association of Federal Retirees (formerly known as the FSNA).

The major objection is the increase to pension contribution premiums for serving members who cannot predict the future. To provide for pension survivor benefits for those who marry after age 60 has been estimated at over 10 million dollars annually. Serving members would be responsible to pay for this increase.

However, it is not widely known that there is a provision in our pension plan to provide for a spouse who marries a member after 60 years of age. It is the Optional Survivor Benefit (OSB) which is described below.

Optional Survivor Benefits (OSB).....are available to Regular Members and Civilian Members who retired under the provisions of the RCMPSPA and married after age 60. Optional survivor benefits are also available to officers who retired under the provisions of the RCMPPCA Part II, who married after attaining age 60, or who married after retirement. The purpose of OSB is to provide a monthly pension to a spouse when no monthly pension is payable under the RCMPSPA or the Part II of the RCMPPCA.

You may choose to provide one of three levels of OSB, these being approximately 30%, 40% or 50% of the pension benefit being paid to you immediately prior to your death. The election of the OSB must be made no later than one year of the date of marriage.

If you elect to establish an OSB, it will reduce your pension payments. If your spouse predeceases you, or if the marriage is dissolved by divorce or annulment, the reduction applied to your pension would cease. However, you would not receive a refund of previous payments. At this time, the OSB is only available to members who were legally married after age 60. It is not available to common-law spouses.

Therefore, retired pensionable members have an opportunity to provide financial stability for a surviving spouse. They have to make an assessment of their individual financial situation. Factors such as existing life insurance or similar instruments, the survivor's own pensions, personal investments and the extended family situation will all play a role in the decision.

Public Service Health Care Plan (PCHCP) – Premiums

In recent years the cost of our PSHCP has increased due to the government requiring serving members and retired pensionable members to pay a greater percentage of the co-shared premiums. Further increases are coming soon. During 2014, we paid 25% of the premiums while the federal government paid 75%. As of April 1, 2015, our percentage will increase over a four period (until 2018) until our portion will be 50%.

Even though our health care benefits cost more, they still exceed many health care benefit plans provided by provincial/municipal governments. Retired Canadians families who pay for private health care plans can expect to pay several hundred dollars per month in premiums.

Retired members eligible for the PSHCP pay for a suite of healthcare benefits and hospital stay benefits. The healthcare portion is shared by the plan member and the government as described earlier, while the hospital stay portion is funded 100% by the plan member. The premiums are available by Level I, II or III. Whichever Level is chosen, the healthcare benefits remain the same; however the hospital room selection will vary. For example a Family will pay the following monthly premium as of 1 April 2015.

Level 1	= Ward Room	@\$64.05	Plan pays up to \$60.00 per day
Level 11	= Upgraded room	@\$80.61	Plan pays up to \$140.00 per day
Level III	= Upgraded room	@\$109.46	Plan pays up to \$220.00 per day

As you can see, the only opportunity to choose your benefits based on price is on the type of hospital room selected. By contacting hospital administrators, the following was learned:

- The availability of semi-private and private rooms can vary greatly. All rooms are allocated by the type of ward you occupy (i.e. maternity, psychiatric, urology, etc.) Therefore, if your ward is full, the other wards are not available to you even if they are vacant.
- Hospital stays have decreased dramatically over the years due to modern surgical techniques and the reality that infections spread within the hospital environment, therefore the risk of infection is higher the longer you stay.
- If a patient is in great pain and vocal, you will be provided a private room at no extra cost if one is available.
- The cost of the hospital rooms can vary by city and province.

The increased cost from Level I to Level III is approximately \$545 per year for the Family premium each year. That difference would pay for 3 ½ days in a private room. Perhaps saving that extra amount each year in your own bank account would build a substantial hospital room fund. Since PSHCP premiums will be more expensive over the next four years, reducing your plan Level maybe be an option to consider.

AGM 2015 THE FRENCH CONNECTION

*This is an important message from Gaston Desormeaux
Past President Quebec Division & Chair
AGM 2015 Organizing Committee.*

Dear Members of the RCMP Veterans' Association,

The AGM 2015 Organizing Committee has been busy planning various activities to assure all visitors a very successful experience in beautiful Quebec City. President Line Carbonneau and all of our members of Quebec Division are looking forward to a great response from our fellow veterans across Canada.

In case you have not yet registered, there are three hotels to choose from. The Hotel Palace Royale is the site of the AGM for the early bird registrations. The Marriott Hotel is immediately next door and the Hilton Hotel is across the street for late registrations. The Palace Royale and the Marriott rate is \$169.00 per night until March 15 but please note that the price will increase after this date. The Hilton Hotel has kindly agreed to keep the rate at \$169.00 until the close of the AGM. If you haven't already registered, please do so soon as it would be ideal to have all of our guests at the Hotel Palace Royale, if possible.

Transportation to and from the Airport to various Hotels is available until June 1, 2015. All tours in and around Quebec City will be accompanied by bilingual guides and all services in each hotel are offered in both official languages. A special day is planned for all Delegates, the Board of Directors, Association Executive Officers and Governors on Thursday, May 28. The gala dinner and dance will take place on Saturday night at the Hilton Hotel and guests will be entertained by a live orchestra. Final preparations for the Church Parade to be held on Sunday, May 31 at Jesuit's Chapel which is across from the Hilton are being made and a brunch will follow.

La filière française - The French Connection is awaiting with open arms. We hope to see you in Quebec City!

Gaston Desormeaux
Chair, AGM 2015.
Quebec Division

**PAST PRESIDENT NOVA SCOTIA DIVISION
GEORGE SAVAGE**



Jack: *George, you have successfully managed the recruiting portfolio for the Association for the past two and half years. Can you tell our readers what you have learned from your experience?*

George: *In the beginning, I pretty well knew it would be a big challenge coordinating 30 Divisions to achieve a common goal. After reviewing Division websites it was obvious there was generally no standardization, little advertising or promotion, poor access to information related to recruitment for potential members. So it would be a job of establishing some type of formal structure with set goals, measurable results, regular reporting and keeping everyone constantly focused on the business of recruitment. Therefore, job #1 was to try and get all Divisions to do various tasks in the same way. Like to act as a single entity in support of a common cause, not 30 individual versions of everything.*

One of the first items tackled was to have a standard Association Application form used by all Divisions. To my knowledge, all Divisions now use the standard application. During the past two and half years, I'm happy to say, that I've experienced a great improvement in the working relationship on the team. I am also pleased to have developed friendships with several Membership Directors. I stress in my monthly reports just how important the Association Recruiting Committee's role is to the continued growth and future of our organization.

Jack: *Can you give us a sense of the challenges you encountered over this period of time?*

George: The biggest challenge was to establish some type of standard working structure. The Howard Kearley Membership Award was already in place so it was decided to expand this award into a bona fide annual recruitment campaign. It is meant to be a friendly competition amongst Divisions just like many of the sports or games we participate in. It has taken some Divisions a bit longer to get support competing but we have made some important gains in attracting new members to the Association.

Another challenge was to establish ways to advertise and educate former and serving members and employees about their Vets Association. So considerable effort has been expended in how and where to get noticed to our best advantage. For example, we now have an impressive colour advertisement that runs in each edition of The Quarterly and recruiting banners displayed across Canada.

Jack: What level of assistance do you receive from our members in the divisions?

George: Well it goes from excellent in some Divisions, to very little in some others unfortunately. I must say overall however, it has improved considerably this last year. Now when information or stats are requested, they do come in, albeit sometimes late and maybe after a reminder or two. Also this year, some good recruitment ideas were received and shared and I published them in the monthly recruitment reports for the benefit of all Divisions.

Jack: What is planned for the 2015 recruitment campaign?

George: It will be a similar campaign to the last couple years with spreadsheets showing monthly results. One change will be that credit this year will be given to both Active and Associate members recruited. To make it easier for Divisions to report monthly results, they will no longer send in a separate report to the Association office as previous, but will enter their new members directly into the Member Data Base. I will then fill the spreadsheets for my monthly reports right from the database. This will mean that Directors and Divisions will have to insure that new members are regularly entered into the database right as they join. Full campaign details will be out in the 2015 Campaign Rules.

Jack: Given your experience, what do you recommend we do to ensure we continue to recruit new members into the Association?

George: All our various recruitment ads need to be updated and others developed. All RCMP employees shown in the enhanced Membership Criteria need to be invited to take membership. We have to regularly advertise on the Force's internal communications system, InfoWeb, to educate serving members and employees of their eligibility to join the Association.

As well, each Division needs a dedicated, full-time Membership Director focused solely on recruitment. Currently there are 12 Divisions that have their Secretaries also designated as the Membership Director. There is one Division President who is also required to act as Director of recruiting. This is not fair to the Secretaries, their workload is heavy enough and they can't devote proper attention to recruitment matters. Ideally, each Division should have at least a two-person team on its recruiting committee. This is vitally important work, if we don't bring in new members the Association will not survive. As a Past Division President, I fully understand how difficult it is to get volunteers to step up and take on executive positions and to serve on committees. But this has to be a serious objective for all Divisions to recruit within their membership so there is regular turnover in personnel. It's only fair that the workload should be shared and the need to revitalize divisions with folks that have fresh ideas. As the saying goes, many hands make light work.

Jack: Some members do not necessarily support a campaign that is competitive for recruiting. Is this a concern George and if so, what do you recommend we do to inspire participation from all our divisions?

George: Competition is part of life. Many of us have played sports, some still do and certainly there is a competitive spirit to do your best. We need others to pace us, or we won't perform to our optimum ability. I believe we need that competitive edge and we need other players in the game in order to gauge just how well we're doing. Competition is not bad, it enlivens us to do better. Our annual HK campaign is just a friendly competition between our Divisions whether large or small. Everyone should be able to handle this if it helps bring in many more new members that we need to grow our proud Vets Association.

Jack: We have designed a recruiting banner that has been placed in many strategic locations across Canada. The intent of this initiative was to attract serving members of the RCMP to consider joining the Association. Can you tell us how many new members we have recruited because of this investment? How do you know?

George: On the back of the Application form is the QUESTION: "What influenced you to join your Veterans' Association". I am currently waiting for all Divisions to send in the answers to this recruitment survey, Only a few Divisions have reported so far but certainly some new members joined as a result of seeing the Recruitment Banner. Once I have all the responses, a summary will be posted to show the effectiveness of our various advertisements.

Jack: Is there an opportunity to design and distribute a national recruiting pamphlet and do you believe this will help advertise and motivate serving members to join the Association?

George: This past year the stand-up Recruitment Banners were placed in all RCMP HQ buildings across Canada to make serving members and employees aware who is eligible to join the Veterans' Association. This is a visual form of advertising right where people work. The proposed handout Recruitment Pamphlet picks up on the format and appearance of the banner so there's consistency in the advertising message ... We need You / You need Us ... Together the RCMP Family is Stronger. The pamphlet will supplement the banner and will include the Why Join? hot buttons. On the reverse there will be an Application form ready to be filled out by anyone who take a pamphlet. The pamphlets would be widely distributed to both RCMP and Veteran divisions. In the past year I've had a couple RCMP HQs ask for pamphlets or literature on the Vets Association so it could be included with discharge documents. The more visible we are, the better opportunity to attract new members.

Jack: The Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, and the Certificate of Continuance we have been issued by Corporations Canada in June 2014, means that we are one Association with one set of By-laws with a singular purpose, mandate and vision. Even though we are geographically dispersed across Canada, we are the RCMP Veterans' Association and not 30 independent franchises. How then do you propose we build relationships with the divisions so we are all pulling in the same direction?

George: From my perspective, I think the Divisions have been gradually coming together as a singular entity over the past couple years. One reason I believe that this has happened, is the collaborative effort of working together as an Association team on the annual recruitment campaigns. The new Member Data Base should also be very positive in drawing all the membership to more fully participate in the operation of the organization. We need to get Division members to think beyond just the affairs of their own jurisdiction but to take more interest in what's happening across the country. It would be beneficial if the Association Directors consulted more regularly with the Division Presidents to solicit their views on various aspects of the organization. Try to cultivate a team feeling amongst all our stakeholders. On recruitment specifically, I will be reaching out to my Directors on the recruiting committee, not just electronically but on a verbal basis as well this year. I have a new i-phone 6 that has unlimited long distance at no charge.

Jack: The concept of "member at large" has been identified as something we should consider. This means that anyone can join the Association from anywhere in Canada and become an Association member and not necessarily belong to any one division. What do you think of this concept as a way to recruit new members, particularly in light on the principle of one Association not divided or identified by geography?

George: Personally I don't think this idea has much merit or benefit. Our by-laws currently allow members to choose whichever Division they wish to take membership in. No doubt most will likely feel more comfortable joining a Division where they have served and still have Force friends and community contacts.

Jack: What other activities should we consider to add substance to WHY JOIN? In other words, are there other motivators to offer prospective members other than simply belonging to a social fraternity? What can we do to inspire growth in the Association and ensure we remain relevant in the world of veterans?

George: The challenge of attracting new members is not unique to our Association, other organizations face the same struggle. As I've reiterated in my recruitment reports you have to have a "good product" in order to draw interested buyers. What benefits will I derive from becoming part of this Association? The Why Join? was created basically to have talking points when approaching prospective applicants. The "hot buttons" in the Why Join? hopefully one or two will be meaningful to various individuals and prompt them to consider membership. This is a subject for continual study and I invite anyone to send in other good reasons to add to the Why Join? list.

Jack: Thank you George and continued best wishes for a successful 2015 and beyond recruiting campaign. Your initiative, dedication and determination is highly valued by the Board of Directors and by all of our 6000 plus members.





NATIONAL SECRETARY ALEX GEDDES BIDS FAREWELL

For the past five years, Alex Geddes has been the anchor in the RCMP Veterans' Association consistently performing the role of National Secretary with determination, skill and unparalleled dedication to the job. The role of Secretary is no easy task and having witnessed the work that Alex has delivered for the Association time and time again is quite frankly remarkable. He was a clearly a leader on the Board of Directors and a tiger in the corners when he needed to be. His winning smile and charming personality stood him apart from the crowd and he will be missed by everyone who had the pleasure of being in his company formally and informally. Alex, please know that you will be conspicuous in your absence on the Executive of the Association and Bev, thank you for lending Alex to us. Enjoy your retirement and God speed.

William (Bill) Maxwell, Director, Audit and Finance, has been appointed as our interim National Secretary.

Jack Briscoe
Director
Membership and Recruiting
Editor, Right Marker

The End!

