

Minutes of the Maritime Air Veterans Meeting

Held at the Monterey/Ramada Hotel

Wednesday, 20 May 2015

I. INTRODUCTION

- Attendance was 40 persons including the guest speaker, Retired General, now Deputy Minister Walt Natynczyk and his associate, Ms Trudy Burke, from Veterans Affairs Canada.
- Following the initial 'meet and greet' between 1130 and 1230, and as per prior agreement MAVA members were afforded the opportunity to propose any further candidates for the position of MAVA President. With no further candidates nominated, Duane Daly was acclaimed unanimously, as the new MAVA President and graciously accepted the position.
- Following the induction of the new President, Duane Daly assumed his first official function in the welcoming of several invited guests, including Mr Fred LaForge, a senior military retiree, now a recognized author; Father Stephen Silverthorne, Anglican priest of the Church of the Good Shepherd, adjacent to the Barrhaven Legion, Mr Jerry Cyr, former maritime air navigator from Kingston; and Ms Trudy Burke, a Director General within the Dept of Veterans Affairs who was accompanying DM Natynczyk for orientation. The guest speaker's official introduction was reserved until the end of lunch. Attendees sat down to a lunch of grilled New York striploin (single main course menu) which appeared to be well received by all.
- Following the luncheon, Vice President Jeff Tasseron, introduced the guest speaker, retired General Walt Natynczyk, former CDS of the Canadian Forces, recent head of the Canadian Space Agency; and currently Deputy Minister of Veterans' Affairs.
- General Natynczyk provided a spirited presentation, focusing on his new, and sought-after role with the Dept of Veterans Affairs... motivated by his abiding concern to better handle the wellbeing of, and to provide client-centred quality assistance to, Canada's growing contingent of military/RCMP veterans. In his speech many important issues were covered, leading to a lively Q and A session, led off by the new MAVA president Duane Daly. Both the presentation and the following Q and A session are documented at Annex A to the minutes.

II. PRESIDENT'S AND OTHER REPORTS

A. President's Report

- President Duane Daly opened the business meeting. He extolled the excellent presentation given by Ret'd Gen Walt Natynczyk, and suggested to attendees that further high calibre presentations will be one of the core motivations surrounding the MAVA luncheons and that

he felt a number of future high profile speakers would be willing to address MAVVA in the tradition of Gen Walt's address today. The President extended Paddy O'Donnell's regret that as "Honorary President" he had not been able to attend today.

B. Approval of the Minutes of the last MAVVA Meeting.

- As new MAVVA Secretary, Jim McCutcheon requested approval of the last meeting's minutes, a copy of which had been provided to all in advance of this meeting. Approval of the last minutes was recommended by Paul Baiden, seconded by George Mayer and endorsed by general vote.

C. Treasurer's Report

- Bob Moffatt reported a bank balance of over \$3,500.00, with additional funds to be added from this meeting's collections of membership dues, etc. As attested to at the last meeting, we are financially stable and can cover any future planned events.

D. Membership Report

- Bob Moffatt has now received the membership database from Paul Baiden, the latter of whom had reported over 80 members at the last meeting, while not all were fully current in their payments. He also advised that the new MAVVA pins were available at the meeting. (cost\$5.00). In coordination with the President's wish to better stabilize the concept of the MAVVA "membership/fiscal year", it was agreed that this will in future extend from the May meeting each year, until the following May meeting.

Secretarial Note: Although it did not receive further discussion at this year's May meeting, it is suggested that a rudimentary pair of financial statements might be in order... such as a Balance sheet, and a Statement of Incomes and Expenses for the previous business year (for approval of the MAVVA membership at the start of the new fiscal year).

E. Veterans' Assembly Report

- A report was not presented at the meeting as the VP MAVVA had to attend a scheduled workplace event. The President, who had also attended the Veterans Assembly noted that the 'Assembly had not yet reached a consensus and submitted a joint report yet, so this will be reported in future.

F. Canadian Coalition for Retirement Security (CCRS)

- Paul Baiden described his continuing relationship with the CCRS, and its monitoring of the the Government's proposed "Target Benefit" pension reform. He reminded that the CCRS includes 24 groups including RCMP and other Federal pension recipients. The "Target Benefit" plan previously mentioned is being touted as replacing current guaranteed fixed pensions (Defined Benefit pensions) with a plan where benefits would rise or fall depending on the success of the invested pension funds. As discussed in the next business item, several

provinces are also considering, or have implemented, such a plan for provincial pensions. Paul further reminded that CCRS activity is being treated as confidential until consensus is reached, and a joint plan is formulated for the way ahead. One issue which bears concern for all veterans/pensioners, as commented on by the incoming secretary at the last meeting, is the seemingly too-ready acceptance of no 'grandfathering' of the old plan(s) if the new plans are passed by government. Paul Baiden's continuing attendance to the CCRS gatherings was endorsed at the last MAVA meeting.

G. Report on Attendance at the FSNA AGM (Key Pension Presentation).

- The Secretary reported on his attendance at the Annual General Meeting of the FSNA, or "National Association of Federal Retirees" in early May. The FSNA (Ottawa region) usually has at least two major gatherings per year, the last one held in the Fall 2014, focusing on Medical Insurance coverage while travelling. Attendance was overflowing at the RA Centre at that gathering, and was also strong at this May's session.
- The May meeting focused on the topics of adequacy of pensions for Canadians retirement, and the stability/financial viability of the types of pension schemes being proposed. Each of these have generated much debate and speculation throughout the news media. Ms Rosemary Pitfield, a previous government executive, provided a very stimulating and well-delivered presentation to several hundred pensioners from across the federal employment spectrum. Some of the particular points raised, or those which have evoked further points of controversy/debate, are summarized at Annex B.

H. Sports/Golf Report

- Jim Ward was not able to attend the current meeting, but provided the necessary information for the first MAVA Golf event of the 2015 season:

What: MAVA Golf Tournament

Where: Hylands Golf Club

When: Tuesday, June 16th Tee-Offs begin @ 11:08

Cost: Green Fees \$44 (for non-members of Hylands), Power Carts \$35 or \$20 for a single rider (Optional). Plus HST in all cases.

Pull/Push carts included in Green Fee

Food/Drink: Available in Club House after play, when we gather for socializing, prizes, etc.

- Additional Golf Notes:
 - Members are asked to pass golf information to others possibly not yet on the amalgamated MAVA lists.

- Advise Jim Ward if you are receiving golf info, and do not wish to be on the “golfers list”.
- As usual, guests are welcome, but if they are eligible to be MAVA members, we will attempt to recruit them! Hopefully our treasurer will be at the tournament and will gladly accept the \$20 membership fee! The same goes for former VPI-ers who may be in attendance but have not yet joined the MAVA!
- As usual, prize donations are most welcome, but the name of the game is fun and socializing.
- We hope to have a large turnout at this MAVA event. We have booked room for 40 golfers, but if we get more, Jim Ward needs to know well in advance so that more tee times can be arranged. So please respond ASAP with names, groupings, late or early requests, etc.

III. ONGOING AND NEW MAVA INITIATIVES

I. Outreach to Serving Members (VP)

- One of Jeff Tasseron’s VP roles is that of encouraging inclusion of serving members into MAVA, which has continued as a challenge. Having had to leave this meeting early, he will provide a fuller account of the initiatives taken and those seen as necessary for the future at the next meeting.

J. MAVA Website Development (VP)

- An excellent framework website has been installed for MAVA, by Jeff Tasseron, and only needs some refinements and expert website design considerations looked after, to be quickly functional. Discussion has occurred within the Executive in terms of what final enhancements need to be incorporated into the MAVA website. This is viewed as a likely best fulfilled through a budget-conscious professional contract.

K. Upcoming Events

- The following 2015 calendar for future meetings represents target dates pending availability of guest speakers and venues. The next meeting unless otherwise advised is to be at this location, Ramada (previously Monterey) Inn.
 - MAVA Golf- June 2015 event.
 - MAVA Golf-September 2015 event.
 - Dinner Dance TBD September.
 - Luncheon Meeting Wed Nov 4th 2015 (Sec’y Note: this was originally announced as the 18th Nov, but changed to accommodate the new guest speaker’s schedule)
Further details will be provided by email to all members.

IV. WIND-UP ACTIVITY

J. 50/50 Draw The 50/50 draw was worth \$75. The winner was Ernie Briggs.

K. Adjournment

- A motion to adjourn was made by Paul Baiden and seconded by Don Lowdon. The next luncheon meeting is scheduled for the Wed 4th Nov 2015, details to be forwarded separately in the future.

(Original signed by)
Jim McCutcheon (Secretary)

(Original signed by)
Duane Daly (President)

Annex A
To
MAVA Minutes, 20 May 2015

Presentation by Gen (Ret'd) Walt Natynczyk

(Secretarial Note: Following Background on Veterans Affairs Canada (Website Information), provides context for presentation).

- The Department exists to repay the nation's debt of gratitude toward those whose courageous efforts have given us this legacy, and have contributed to our growth as a nation.
- VAC's mandate stems from laws and regulations. Among the more significant is the *Department of Veterans Affairs Act*, which charges the Minister of Veterans Affairs with the following responsibilities:
 - "...the care, treatment, or re-establishment in civil life of any person who served in the Canadian Forces or merchant navy or in the naval, army or air forces or merchant navies of Her Majesty, of any person who has otherwise engaged in pursuits relating to war, and of any other person designated ... and the care of the dependents or survivors of any person referred to ..."
- The Department meets its responsibilities through its various programs. These include programs for disability pensions, veterans' allowances, pension advocacy, health care and commemoration. They provide compensation for hardships arising from disabilities and lost economic opportunities, innovative health and social services, professional legal assistance and recognition of the achievements and sacrifices of Canadians during periods of war and conflict.
- VAC provides services to a highly diverse clientele which reflects the remarkable breadth of Canada's contributions to world peace.

VAC Mission

To provide exemplary, client-centred services and benefits that respond to the needs of veterans, our other clients and their families, in recognition of their services to Canada; and to keep the memory of their achievements and sacrifices alive for all Canadians.

VAC Vision

To provide exemplary service which honours the sacrifice and achievements of our veterans and clients.

VAC Values and Ethics

At Veterans Affairs Canada we value our clients' contributions to the development of Canada as a nation and honour the sacrifices they have made in the defence of freedom and the pursuit of world peace. In expressing Canada's gratitude to them, we strive to exemplify the high principles which they have defended.

Deputy Minister Natynczyk's Presentation points:

- Six guiding principles:
 - (1) there is one vets community, no “us and them”;
 - (2) Care and Compassion- every case is unique/ dealing with may be “harder than rocket science, all in the grey zone;
 - (3) Respect and Commemoration- respect and commemorate all/ all locations/ all missions;
 - (4) Timeliness- time to respond to “asks”... 16 months far too long;
 - (5) Build Relationships with Stakeholders/ need to communicate with the Vet community, 700K in Canada, 28 Organizations being dealt with in Ottawa last month (US has 8 million and 50K associations); and
 - (6) Delegate authority to VAC employees/ empower / entrust them to do the right thing/ get the power back to those who need it.
- “The farther you are from the sound of the guns the less you understand”.
- Mental Health- only 25% of cases materialize while members are in uniform... other 75% occur up to 60 years later (e.g. of “living with demons” in the meantime...).
- Plea goes out to all- support those who need help... perceived, and actual stigma associated with appearing to be weak among Service personnel is a major problem with initiating and getting help.
- Three foci to approach: (1) Achieving wellness, (2) Providing Benefits, including RTW (return to work initiatives), Finding the right approach for serving vets (3) Culture: ensuring Care/Compassion/Respect.

Question and Answer Session

Q: Gerry Cyr: How do I go about donating \$1K to the Wounded Warrior Canine Support Program?

A: Wounded Warrior/ VAC is paying for research, seek to establish Govt of Cda standard re: dogs as “courageous companions”/ 137 dogs matched with vets/ Several organizations quoted: “Paws for Thought”, Wounded Warriors, others.

- Dog story- dogs bring vets to point where they can take therapy...dogs are on guard duty... e.g. of Vet in Steinbach Manitoba, who had become totally paranoid and had built a bunker in his basement and was out of communications for 6 months... Dog was sent down, rapport was achieved and the young vet was rehabilitated...

Q: Phil Somers: How do we attract vets to the Legion? There seems to be some hierarchy problems of definition as to who are actual vets? Does the Legion need to be run by vets?

A: from audience: “Legion in Comox... deglamourization of alcohol issue... found that interaction of all participants at the Legion was found to be very helpful @ work as well as after work. They found that a return of camaraderie was more important than just drinking”

A: (Gen Walt) There is a need to treat all vets equally/ not distinguishing between different types of service/ have to address the “buttons and bows” hang-ups... Foster wellness of all Vets, recognizing Jobs/vocations/ charitable endeavours... aiming for good, balanced mental health.

Q: Duane Daly: Re: Providing access to Long Term Care. In the past Vets Hospitals provided all care, but these became provincial hospitals. Hence we got Vets Homes structure across Canada, eg. Perley in Ottawa, Col Belcher in Calgary et al. Priority Access as a concept now disappearing. There seems to be a recognition of 2 classes of Vets: WWII Vets are the only ones who get Priority Access. There is issue in achieving equal recognition of past sacrifices... translated into the access afforded to Vets Homes. Moreover, decisions to do away with Vets Homes, such as Perley and Camp Hill in Halifax are emerging. How do we deal with this? There will be a tremendous need for exactly the kind of Long Term care which is proposed to be eliminated. Could we even keep 50 of the 250 LT care beds at Perley?

A: Gen Walt: Explained that LT care strategy not yet finalized. Begins with 44 hospitals. In 1963 Glasgow Commission stated Fed govt was not providing organized care. By late 1960s there was a separate category of “Korean Vets”. LT Vets are now cared for in 1400 facilities... Contract beds are for deployed WWII, and Korean Vets. Therefore, those not meeting those criteria have not qualified.

Sunnybrook General Hospital in Toronto was anticipating a decrease in Vets, but dependents have been bringing in Vets from all surrounding areas.

In 1963 and 1967 there were decisions to handoff Vet hospitals. Today there are 90K Vets associated with hospital care, 38K who are clients of VAC.

We need to return to Vet Centric perspective, dealing with all ages/ finding the appropriate facility for all Vets. The example was provided of a 30 year old Vet with multiple amputations... we now provide Caregivers in homes of Vets... or one of the 1400 facilities.

Wind-Up to Q and A and Guest Presentation

President Duane Daly thanked Deputy Minister Natynczyk for the excellent presentation and compassionate attention given to all issues raised. He mentioned that the intention of MAVA is to be an active participant in Veterans issues and to do so in an alert but not confrontational manner... He expressed the pleasure of all members in being part of the Veterans Assembly, and again thanked the DM for his making himself available to address our MAVA organization.

Annex B

To MAVVA Minutes, 20 May 2015

Attendance at FSNA Annual Gen Mtg- Jim McCutcheon, Secretary MAVVA

- FSNA is the main group of Federal Retirees across Canada... Pub Svc, RCMP, Military and others.
- Key presentation was given by Rosemary Pitfield, a past senior Govt executive, who has been taken on by FSNA to assess the future pension environment for Canada's public employees.
- Landmark Decision- NB 2013 Shared Risk Pension Plan – which was a hybrid of the Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution Plans..
- Overall aim has evolved of equalizing DB plans with those pension plans across Cda, the vast majority of which are more akin to Defined Contribution, or the more popular term Target Benefits Plans.
- Note. Even the Ontario Teachers Plan in 2009 was converted to a Target Benefits Plan...
- FSNA has pointed out the growing reality that **current members** of plans such as the Ont Teachers, are the ones who are making the rules and that retirees essentially have no voice.
- Investment rules are changing-eg. Instead of a wide range of investments (enhancing Diversity of one's portfolio, and minimizing risk) plans now are seeking "no diversity" requirements for the investment of funds. Who does this help? Governments, not only the Federal, but increasingly the Provincial Govts getting into the Pension game.
- Eg. The large provinces want to create large pools of funds, managed by the Govt, or an appointed agency, to support and essentially pay for large infrastructure development programs... mass transit, bridges, highways, etc.
- Secretarial Note: We pensioners, and those that follow us, need to remember that Ontario and Quebec have huge accumulated debts, probably approaching a third of a Trillion dollars, each, and less than a stellar record in government financial mgmt..
- Defined Benefit, ie arguably the best kind of pensions to date for the pensioner, are decreasing dramatically across the board... probably more towards the DC or Targeted Benefits model
- Right now 89% of Public sector are DB
- Only 12% of Private sector are DB. In the previously mentioned equalization initiative it is apparent which way the trend is going.
- What to watch for in particular... There is an evolving concept of Voluntary Consent to proposed pension changes, which is somewhat like Negative Option Marketing... This is being pointed out as particularly dangerous to the future of pensioners, as it is very difficult to muster enough opposition, eg. A threshold of 30% of participants officially documenting their opposition, to reverse or defeat this type of initiative
- However:

- There is a move afoot to line up a coalition to protect existing Defined benefit plans... the slogan being picked up is that of “Honour your Promise”... in continuing to honour the agreed upon and paid inputs and proportions of current retirees...
- Certainly there will be more to follow, and it’s in all of our own interests to remain tuned in and to understand the basics and some of the nuances of what is going on in the Public sector pension world
- Undoubtedly there is much more to follow, and that we will all be doing across the veterans and other retiree organizations.