

# **SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS OFFICER'S SUMMARY REPORT ON VARIOUS COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES December 2008**

Dear fellow veterans, I want provide you with a short update on our activities during the last Regional VAC, Gerontological Advisory Council (GAC) and New Veterans Charter Advisory Group (NVCAG) meetings held last month. The updates are as follows:

## **Gerontological Advisory Council (GAC) Committee (October 26-27 2008):**

The opening remarks by the Chair, Victor Marshall, set the tone for the meeting. He expressed on behalf of the committee that we were not at all satisfied with the progress of implementing the changes that the GAC endorsed at the end of 2007 for the Integrated Service Model and the Health Services Review. However, he did indicate that VAC was in fact doing what they could to implement the recommendations under the current fiscal restrains.

Col. (Retd) Patrick B. Stogran, our Ombudsman, gave the GAC committee a briefing on his new operational structure for his department. One note was that he did go out to veterans organizations with his "list" of veterans concerns looking for constructive feedback along with the veterans organizations identifying what they felt where the priorities. CPVA have received the list and have provided constructive feedback to the ombudsman.

Don Ethell, Chair of the Operation Stress Injury Support System (OSISS) Committee gave a short briefing to the GAC on what had been going on with the organization. We all know the importance of his work and the relevance of his OSISS infrastructure that has now been funded and developed across the country. As always, Don provided an excellent update while keeping focussed on the individual veteran.

One of the most interesting discussions was around the integration of the GAC and NVCAG committees. The department felt that with their new integrated structure and the undeniable facts that there are a lot of similar issues which both committees are dealing with at the same time, it should be one. CPVA's position was that it was not a good idea. We presented several arguments to support our position but the main one was that the Terms of Reference for both committees were diametrically opposite and it would be nearly impossible to integrate them unless you totally restructured from the bottom up and set new Terms of Reference. We understand that there are a lot of similar issues facing both committees; however, we must understand that we are dealing with two separate groups, i.e. new veterans and theirs families and traditional war veterans.

Mr. Dave Pedlar, VAC's top Research Scientist, gave an informative presentation on the Research Directorate and how much they have grown over the last few years. Ms. Jennifer Inglis, who is one of the most highly skilled and professional managers VAC has, gave an excellent presentation on VAC's Case Management Review. I had the opportunity to work under Jennifer in a working group for the restructuring in June and it was one of the most exciting and humbling exercises for me. I had an opportunity to work with some of the peer coordinators from the OSISS program and it was a real honour to meet and hear their and their families' hardships and stories.

Case management is a cornerstone of veterans care. All veterans are important and deserve the best of care and the most severely certain need to be cared for along with their families. Our organization backs and supports the department on the excellent work Jennifer and her team have done to this point. VAC closed the meeting with a briefing on future priorities for VAC. The most important one was that VAC will continue to work and consult with veterans organizations. They will do whatever they can within in their current mandate and fiscal structure to slowly implement the recommendations coming out of the GAC.

### **New Veterans Charter Advisory Group (NVCAG) (October 28-29 2008)**

Ms. Muriel Westmorland opened the NVCAG meeting with the hope and expectation that we would be able to work through the "draft" report during the next two days and get closer to a final product before end of the year. However, the Chair indicated that she had spoken with VAC and if there was a requirement for more time that it would not be a major stumbling block.

Dave Pedlar once again provided an excellent presentation on the programs and progress of the Research Directorate. Mr. Ken Miller briefed the committee on VAC policy updates. The focus of his discussion was reconciling existing policy with a needs based approach.

The Chairs from the GAC, Special Needs Advisory Group (SNAG) and OSISS committees gave the group updates. The Chair of the SNAG committee, Mr. Bruce Henwood, gave a straight up presentation to the NVCAG and held nothing back. The SNAG committee brings some very tough issues to the forefront for VAC to deal with and it can be a real eye opener for most. It can certainly surprise you when you hear some of the unbelievable stories of severely disabled veterans. I will not go into detail, but they are powerful.

For the remainder of the two days the sub-committees worked on their input to the report. CPVA sits on the Economic Sub-committee, chaired by Col (Ret'd) Joe Sharpe. Joe is an excellent leader and has pulled our committee together as a whole. The other two sub-committees are the Families, chaired by Mr. Don Ethell and the Rehabilitation, chaired by Ms. Vivienne Rowan.

VAC briefed the NVCAG on the proposed integration of the two committees. The general feeling is that it is the wrong time to be considering the integration. The integration was for now off the table. The feeling was that there is more than enough work for the two committees and the NVCAG was still in the process of producing their first report. The meeting wrapped up with the Chairs of the sub-committees receiving final instructions from the Chair on completion of their reports.

### **Regional VAC Committee**

The Regional VAC meeting was only one hour long and covered the overall work from both the GAC and the NVCAG. Mr. Ken Miller provided information on the new changes. As we progressed it was apparent that much of what we have worked on over the last two years was now being reflected in new "draft" VAC policy. This was very encouraging and of course we expressed our satisfaction to VAC.

### **Final Comments:**

I hope this briefing brings you up to date on what has been going on at the committees. Please give me a call at your convenience if you need any more information or explanation of the information provided.

Cheers and best regards,

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