

New Veterans and the Royal Canadian Legion

Executive Summary to the Report on Online Survey Results



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Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15

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Executive Summary

The Executive Summary may be used as a separate document but should not be considered to be as detailed as the full report with the raw data. The full report is available online at RCLBR15.com

Objective

In May of 2016, after witnessing the issues with recruiting and retention with the Royal Canadian Legion, the Executive Committee of Branch 15 set up an online survey to find out why Veterans are not joining the Legion in the hopes of attracting more Veterans to the Branch. The Survey went online on June 8th 2016 and ran until July 10th 2016. In that time, the survey reached over 18,000 people, was shared on Facebook 259 times and recorded 1606 individual responses. The scope of the survey was far exceeded and the scope of the report grew in response to the overwhelming response the survey received. Vocal critics of the Legion mentioned Branch 15 as being a lone progressive Branch and encouraged fellow Veterans to fill out the survey.

“I don't know if in the end this will make any difference at all but at least someone is finally asking for our input. I would recommend any of my friends who have served or are still serving take a minute and fill this survey out. Be brutally honest when you do and we'll see what happens.”

Brad Hart on Facebook

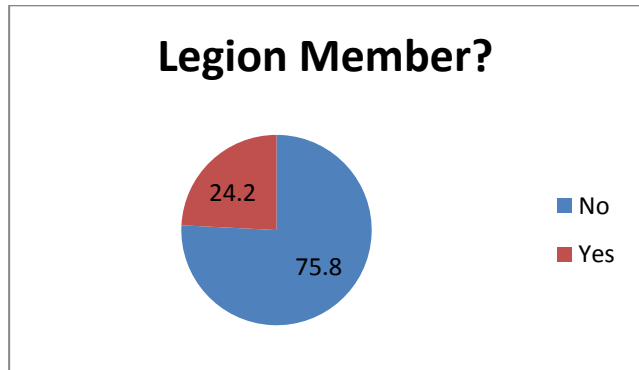
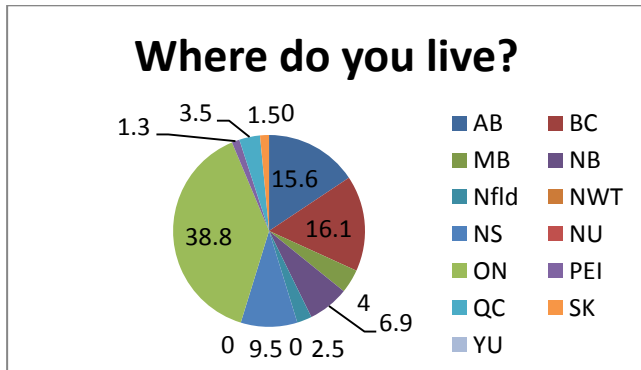
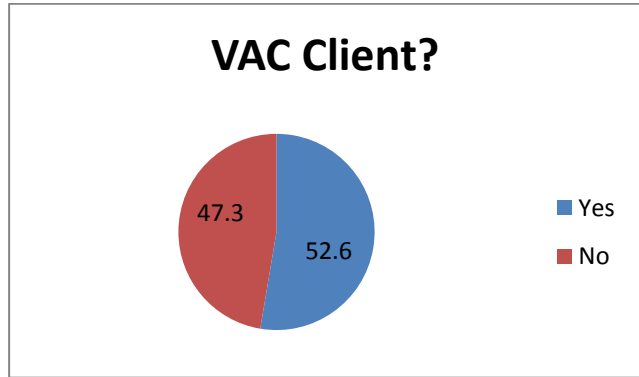
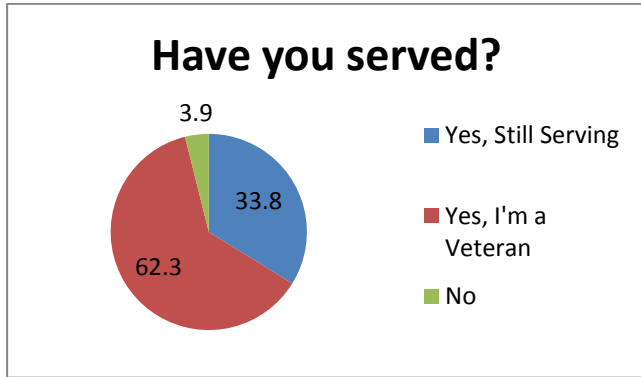
The Survey

The following questions were asked:

- Are you still serving or a Veteran?
- What branch(es) did you serve in?
- Are you a recipient of VAC benefits or pension?
- How old are you?
- What province/territory do you live in?
- What city do you live in?
- Are you a member of the Legion?
- *The following questions were only available to people who answered No to the above question:*
 - Why haven't you joined?
 - What changes could the Legion make to convince you or other Veterans to join?
- Which Veterans organization do you feel is best suited to advocate on behalf of Veterans with the Government?
 - Why?
- Which Veterans organization do you feel is best suited to care for Veterans?
 - Why?
- Which Veterans organization do you feel is best suited to help Veterans with their VAC claim(s)?
 - Why?
- What changes do you think the Legion should embrace?
- Do you have any final comments you'd like to offer?

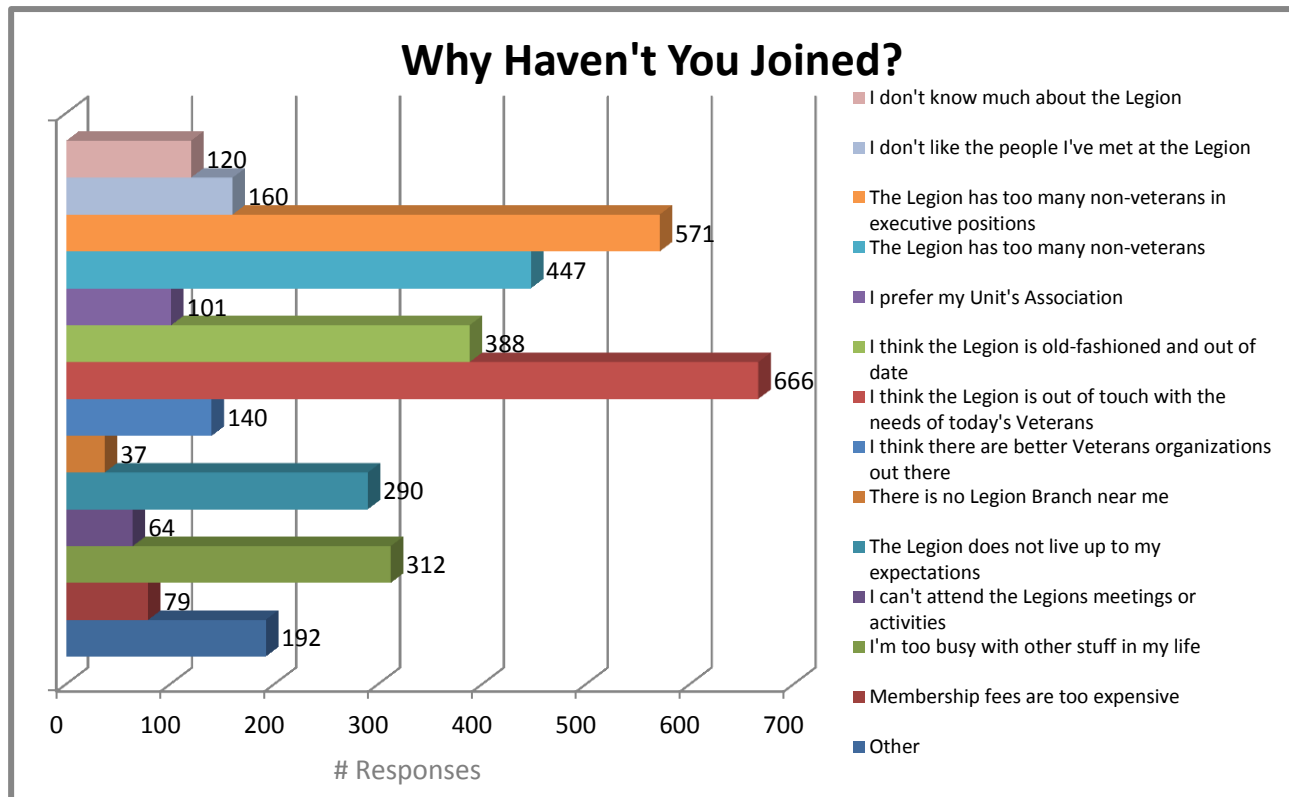
The Results

Demographics



*more demographic data is available in the full report

Why haven't you joined?



Which Veterans organization do you feel is best?

Which Organization do you feel is best suited to advocate on behalf of Veterans with the Government?



Which Organization do you feel is best suited to care for Veterans?



Which Organization do you feel is best suited to help Veterans with their VAC claims?



*more data is available in the full report

Stand Out Comments

I didn't feel welcomed whenever I attended Remembrance Day Ceremonies.

Used to be a member, but when I required help from the legion was left high and dry. Will never go back

It has turned into a rotary club for individuals who like to wear jackets with doodads

I was told that they did not need my kind in the legion referring to Afghanistan vets by a member of the legion that never served

I was in need a couple times and went to the legion and i was turned away

Everyone there always seems way older than me and I'm not interested in "hanging out" with them

I was told I'm not a real veteran and I'm not welcome. I served 3 tours in the Balkans. And 2 in Afghanistan while in the army.

I don't feel in as a French Canadian

Stop calling us new veterans. We are veterans period, full stop. Start supporting the push to make disability awards equal to and the same as those prior to 2006

Get rid of the separate women's league. Regardless of whether or not I am a veteran, I would be perceived as being a spouse.

Send legion members to military units, regular force and reserve, and educate those you wish to join. I do not feel compelled to be a member.

I was I'm uniform on Remembrance Day and was denied entry by non-veterans was told it was for veterans only, despite wearing an afghan campaign star.

I served 28 years regular and 12 years reserves and was never in conflict but at the legion here in Springhill on one Nov 11 went to legion after parade and the president a non-member was passing out tickets for a drink looked at me and said you're not a vet . My brother was a legion member for over 20 years but went to Amherst NS because he was treasurer at the time and started to look into the paper work at the legion and when he was finished he could not account for \$40,000 he passed the info to the president and nothing was done. There was a couple of brake in's no was charged and no one was caught it was an inside job

I have young kids, so nothing short of making it kid friendly would entice me to join.

I will not join the legion unless the national council's books become public

This is a dead organization. Let it die.

Joined you once and got nothing but sneered at by the branch, was one of 5 vets there, one died and they didn't even send an escort for him, never again

Recommendations

To Branch 15

- Wi-Fi service for the Branch during open hours.
- Host paid sporting events such as UFC and provide admission to serving soldiers, Veterans and Branch members.
- Host sporting events such as NHL playoff games, MLS games and the Olympics.
- More interaction with the Lorne Scots at their events.
- Give membership paperwork packages to the Lorne Scots Release Clerk to give to members who are releasing from the CAF.
- Liaise with the Lorne Scots Association to work jointly towards supporting events and members
- Advertise the assistance of the Branch Service Officer at the Mississauga VAC office.
- Invite a VAC file manager to conduct monthly visits to the Branch to answer questions from local Veterans.
- Improve the internal communications mechanism for promoting Branch events and sharing Branch news.
- Host an annual summer BBQ for serving members, Veterans and their families.

To Other Branches

In the survey comment responders left comments and issues referring to specific Branches, these suggestions are provided in the spirit of cooperation in the hopes that other Branches can benefit from this survey. More information on suggestions and the comment is available in the full report.

- To Branch 164 in Lac du Bonnet, MB
 - Reinstate Joan Beznoski
- To Branch 41 in St. Thomas, ON
 - Be proactive about offering help
 - Hang a white board near the entrance with information about the current Service Officer for the Branch
- Branch 54 in Sooke, B.C.
 - Commence a Branch level inquiry into the below comment left by a responder:
 - “I was going to join the legion in Sooke BC, but I decided against it when I was challenged for being in the legion while in uniform on remembrance day”
- Branch 62 in Sarnia, ON
 - Set up an internal mechanism for reporting issues within the Branch
- Branch 164 in Yellowknife, NWT
 - Be proactive about recruiting Veterans
- A Branch in Sydney, NS
 - Commence a Branch level inquiry into the below comment left by a responder:
 - “I didn't feel welcomed whenever I attended Remembrance Day Ceremonies”
- A Branch in North Bay, ON
 - Commence a Branch level inquiry into the below comment left by a responder:
 - “My membership has expired and I have inquired about getting involved, requested to have someone from the executive to contact me but was never contacted after several requests.”
- A Branch in Toronto, ON
 - Commence a Branch level inquiry into the below comment left by a responder:
 - “I was a member for 15 years and after I witnessed the way they did nothing for my fathers

passing (who was also a 27year veteran in the same legion as I) and the branch did nothing. I had to demand that his name be placed on the "Fallen Comrades" wall several times. I quit shortly after. 15 years of waste.”

- A Branch in Edmonton, AB
 - Commence a Branch level inquiry into the below comment left by a responder:
 - “I was [in] uniform on Remembrance Day and was denied entry by non veterans was told it was for veterans only, despite wearing an afghan campaign star.”
- Branch 17 in Springhill, NS
 - Commence a Branch level inquiry into the below comment fragment left by a responder:
 - “...My brother was a legion member for over 20 years but went to Amherst NS because he was [treasurer] at the time and started to look into the paper work at the legion and when he was finished he could not account for \$40,000 he passed the info to the president and nothing was done. [There] was a couple of brake in's no was charged and no one was [caught] it was [an] inside job”.

To Dominion Command

- At the national or provincial level, create a position to assist Branches, as well as Zones and Districts, learn how to set up and maintain Facebook Pages and Web Pages.
- The cost of membership fees was brought up by responders and the 2016 Convention brought a series of fee increases over the next two years; to assist members in paying their dues liaise with the Government to make Legion Dues tax deductible.
- The Legion can further help serving member afford membership if the Legion would subsidize dues for serving members. This must be done at the Dominion level as the Branches could not absorb that loss.
- Eliminate all reference to and use of the term New Veteran. As was brought up in a responders comment, it promotes segregation. A Veteran is a Veteran is a Veteran.
- Article IV para 417 of the By-Laws gives the Dominion President the power to overrule a directive made at a Dominion Convention therefore the President should reverse the decision made at the 2016 Convention and give Legion members the authority to wear their hard earned Specialist Badges with pride on their Legion uniforms.
- Eliminate the Legion medals as they do not fit in the Canadian Honours System. Awards that are not medals should still be awarded and truly exemplary service to the Legion can be rewarded with a nomination for medals such as the Sovereigns Medal for Volunteer Service.
- The Legion should use its Advocacy arm for decorations that would mean something to the Veteran community, such as the Combat Action Decoration that is often discussed by Afghanistan Veterans.
- Amalgamate the Ladies Auxiliary fully into the Legion at the Branch level. The Ladies Auxiliary promotes segregation in the Branches and as the Canadian Armed Forces has done away with the Canadian Women’s Army Corps the Legion should do away with the Ladies Auxiliary.
- The Legion has received a lot of negative press lately, and unfortunately some of that press points to legitimate concerns by the Legion membership. Concerns such as Privacy breaches between the Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada, aggressive copyright dominance of the Poppy, and undisclosed financial records such as the salary and benefits of Dominion Command. These issues are causing a good deal of concern from the members and critics of the Legion and must be address fully to earn back the trust of the membership.
- The New Veterans Charter is a harmful piece of legislation. It was wrong when it was drafted, it was wrong when the Legion supported it, it was wrong when it was brought into power and it is wrong now. The Legion is a Veterans organization and should not support a legislative action that

is harmful to Veterans, even if those Veterans are part of the new generation of Veterans. The Legion must enforce its Articles of Faith and challenge the Government to repeal the New Veterans Charter and replace it with legislation that does more to care for Veterans and treats all Veterans equally. The Legion should also support the Equitas lawsuit on behalf of Veterans.

- There are many petty decisions being made by the Legion which is driving away Veterans and members. The Legion must return to its grass roots origins and focus on its Articles of Faith.
- One of the largest issues that critics and members of the Legion are voicing concern over is the dismissal of Joan Beznoski from Branch 164 in Lac du Bonnet in Manitoba. Her actions while improper were clearly made with the best intentions and should not have ended in her dismissal from the Legion. The Legion Dominion Command must step in and return her membership and investigate her allegations. Failing to do so will likely fuel the critics that say the “Legion is no place for Veterans”.
- The Legion at higher levels must supervise their subordinate levels and Branches to ensure issues that are causing harm to the Legions image and negatively impacting the membership and Veterans are put to a stop. Higher levels of the Legion must also step in and conduct an audit of the Branches accused of mistreatment of Veterans.
- If more Veterans can be attracted it may be worth amending the By-Laws to state that only Ordinary Members can sit as President of Branches. It is also recommended that the Provincial and Dominion Executives be limited to Ordinary members.
- The 21st Century gives the Legion advantages that the Legion didn’t have in the 20th Century. Advantages such as communications infrastructure and the internet. Given this advantage it may be worth eliminating a level of bureaucracy and eliminate Zone Commands.
- Many responders felt that the Legion is old-fashioned and out of date. Much of this stems from the ceremonious approach to General Meetings. The Legion should amend its Manual of Ritual, Awards and Protocol to remove much of the unnecessary ceremony from General Meetings, such as the singing of the Royal Anthem, and the “Lord God of Hosts” reply from members. Modernize the meetings as potential members are driven away by over ceremonious meetings.
- The Legion needs to create a Special Section for Reform.

Conclusion

The report was compiled to benefit the Legion. Not to destroy its image but to show that the Legion, like any organization, has its flaws but it also has its passionate advocates and people willing to work to strengthen it. To also show that with each flaw there is a way to improve. The report is not a nail in the coffin; it is a warning from a doctor (merely an analogy).

Together we can move forward.

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[Branch 15 Online](#)

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