

New Veterans and the Royal Canadian Legion

Report on Online Survey Results



**Branch 15
Brampton, Ontario**

By Comrade Christopher Banks CD
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15

31 August 2016

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Comments and suggestions contained in the report are for informational purposes only. Out of respect to the Veteran Community and those who took the time to complete the survey the results may be shared freely.

WARNING : Some of the language and comments in this report may cause an emotional reaction, reader discretion is advised

This document is authorized for public release.

Forward

I would like to start by thanking all of those who responded to our survey. The anonymity and candidness of the responders led to a wealth of information and feeling. Having read the report in its entirety, I have come to the conclusion that a great number of our Veteran community has lost faith in the Legion. There were some harsh and sometimes shocking statements made regarding the overall treatment of Veterans across the country. For the many who were treated poorly and incorrectly I would like to apologize on behalf of an organization that should know better.

It is my belief, and that of my branch, that The Royal Canadian Legion needs to once again listen carefully to our Veterans and serving forces. This survey was formed so that Brampton Branch 15 could learn how to move forward and change for the better. It has grown into a national call for change. Therefore we have decided to take the final report up the chain and make sure your voices are heard. It is my hope that by doing this the reality of what is being presented will bring a change in tide. The organizers of this survey have opened the door, the responders have broadened our understanding. Now it is up to us as a whole to change and grow. We have a chance to make our organization viable in the minds of all Veterans and Canadian Armed Forces personnel. If we listen, we will be strong advocates for Veterans and Remembrance for generations to come. If we don't we may fall into obscurity and non-existence. For those of you reading this report and filled it out, I hope we expressed the essence of your words. For those reading who are in a position to help make the changes necessary, take these words as a way forward. Please do not dismiss the warnings we are being given.

Yours in comradeship,

Comrade Mike Henry Jr
President, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15

We were hoping this survey would let us know how we could improve our services as an organization. Comrade Christopher Banks our 3rd Vice President and Public Relations Officer took the lead on this project. Like most Legions our membership is declining, part of this is that the WW2 vets and the Korean War Vets are passing. Our goal is to find out how we can attract the younger Veterans in to our organization.

When reading the comments given by everyone I was sickened by how they felt about the Royal Canadian Legion. My father and my grandfather's fought alongside many men and women who gave their lives for our freedom today. With that alone I am proud to be a member of the Royal Canadian Legion and the work that we do for our Veterans and our community. With this survey, the results will not be taken lightly, as an organization we need to stand up for our veterans who has and still are out there putting their lives in danger so that everyone can have a better life.

I am very hopeful that this will bring some light at the top of the Royal Canadian Legion so that they may open their eyes and see how people perceive the Legion as a whole. Yes, changes need to be made and as a whole they can be done with the help of everyone involved. The first change that needs to be in place is to get rid of the saying of "New Veterans". They are all Veterans not matter the age and should always be treated in the same manner that our grandfathers were treated with "respect". I know that the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15 has very high standards towards their veterans and we will continue to help as many as possible.

I am hopeful that the other Legions will fall into place and make the changes that are needed

Yours in comradeship,

Comrade Jennie Clark
2nd Vice President & Membership Officer, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15

The Executive Committee of Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 15 set up an online survey in May 2016 to find out why Veterans are not joining the Legion and to help determine how we could improve our service as an organization. Although the Legion is the largest and most established Veteran support and community service organization in Canada, our numbers are declining at a significant rate. Part of this attrition is related to the passing of stalwart members comprising WW2 and Korean War Veterans. Attracting and retaining today's younger Veterans, their families and friends of the Legion, is a critical issue for our Branch and the Legion across Canada.

Comrade Christopher Banks, War Veteran, Third Vice and Public Relations Officer took the lead on the project. His efforts are of great credit to him and the results of the survey will be of tremendous benefit to the Royal Canadian Legion as a whole. This effort will be a game changer for the Legion and the gathered results will be shared across Canada. At 34 years old, Christopher Banks is the face of today's Veterans. His deployment experiences in theatres of war and military operations should place him at the forefront of the Legion's recruiting drive.

The Legion must adapt and welcome today's Veterans. For too long the Legion's attitude towards attracting and retaining post-Korean War veterans has been tepid to non-existent. Military service and all the sacrifices that it entails did not end at the end of the Second World War! Neither should celebrating and assisting the younger veterans who nonetheless served and made similar and at times even greater sacrifices than World War II and Korean veterans.

This report will provide insights into how we need to change, to welcome, and acknowledge these Veterans. The Legion membership itself needs to recognize and accept that the younger Veterans are Veterans, not New Veterans. Too many comments in this survey reflect a lack of respect or awareness of today's Veterans. We must mean it when we say all Veterans are equal, regardless of age or service, i.e. a 22 year old Afghanistan Veteran is a Veteran, full and equal to a WW2 Veteran. This message needs to be repeated until all Legion members understand. Going forward, we must broadcast this message through (PSA) Public Service Announcements and paid advertising campaigns until all of the public understands.

Remembrance Day is a day to remember service and sacrifice to Canada and the free world. It will not end when our earlier Veterans pass on. This information should be included in all Provincial curriculums. This is part of our history and should be a timeless message taught every year in our schools, in all grades.

We can and will meet this challenge. The Legion must be seen by today's generation of Veterans as a welcoming, supportive place, providing a social atmosphere and assistance, whether this means financial or assisting with Veterans Affairs Canada applications. The Legion must help our Veterans to meet the challenges our Veterans encounter. Today's Veterans need to know that we are here for them and we will assist in whatever transition they face. There is much hope in improving relations with today's Veterans and in the process enhancing our recruiting and retention effort

Yours in comradeship,

Comrade Robert Walsh MB CD
Service Officer, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15

Background

The Royal Canadian Legion

Founded in November 1925 in Winnipeg, Manitoba
Charter issued in July 1926

Over 300,000 members

1400 Branches

Source :

Royal Canadian Legion. Who Are We. Retrieved 19 July 2016 from <http://www.legion.ca/who-we-are/>

Royal Canadian Legion. Our History. Retrieved 19 July 2016 from <http://www.legion.ca/who-we-are/our-history/>

Canadian Veterans

Second World War

75,900; their average age is 91

Korean War

9,100; their average age is 83.

CF Veterans (Regular Forces and Primary Reserves)

600,300; their average age is 57.

Source :

Veterans Affairs Canada. General Statistics. Retrieved 19 July 2016 from <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/news/general-statistics>

Canadian Armed Forces

The Royal Canadian Navy is composed of approximately 8,400 full-time sailors and 5,100 part-time sailors.

The Canadian Army is composed of approximately 22,800 full-time soldiers, 18,700 Reservists, and 5,000 Canadian Rangers.

The Royal Canadian Air Force is composed of approximately 13,000 Regular Force personnel and 2,400 Air Reserve personnel (both Primary Reservists and officers of the Cadet Instructors Cadre.

Source :

Department of National Defence. About the Canadian Armed Forces. Retrieved 19 July 2016 from <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canadian-armed-forces.page>

Objective

In May 2016, the Executive Committee of Branch 15 in Brampton, Ontario decided to be proactive and seek answers as to why the new generation of Veterans are refusing to join the Royal Canadian Legion.

In the current Veteran climate, there are more and more Veterans Groups popping up and Legion membership is dwindling. Anti-Legion sentiments were on the rise and an exodus of Ordinary members from the Legion was underway. Speculation as to why the Veterans of Canada were not joining the Legion and conversely leaving the Legion was focused on what many described as core problems with the Legion, but no specific issues were clearly identified as being a cause, just more speculations based on bad experiences.

At Branch 15, after a discussion with several of the Executives the Branch decided to be part of the solution and find out why and be a voice for positive change. The objective was to find out why and evolve to meet the needs of current Veterans. A survey would be built to ask Veterans why they haven't joined, who they feel is doing a good job working for Veterans, and what changes do they feel the Legion should embrace. Google Docs was selected as the survey host due to it being cost free and the ability to export the results directly into a spreadsheet. The survey was aimed at Veterans, both members of the Legion and non-members, but specific questions were designed into the survey targeting non-members.

With a survey designed, it was approved and launched on June 8th 2016. The survey was shared with Legions across the country as well as national Veterans groups and across Facebook and Reddit. Within 24 hours over 900 responses came in. In less than a week the total reached 1200 responses. The power of social media got the attention of Veterans, pro-Legion responders and anti-Legion responders. The Survey was closed on 10 July 2016 after receiving over 1600 responses.

The results are compiled in this report and the raw data is attached in Annex 1.


Disclosure: the Author is a Veteran of the Canadian Army, having served in the Reserves for over 16 years, a Veteran of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003/4 and a Veteran of combat operations in Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2008/9. The Author is a member in good standing with Branch 15 of the Legion serving as 3rd Vice-President and Public Relations Officer.

Summary of Results

Before we discuss the results, it is important to note that this report is intended to highlight the shortcomings of the Legion so that they can be addressed and hopefully rectified. This report will not seek to conceal the results, conceal the comments made by responders, tarnish the credibility of the other national Veterans organizations, nor make impossible recommendations.


1,606 responses were recorded. The original post on the Branch 15 Facebook page about the survey reached 18,478 people and had 259 shares.

It is critical to remember that the report and the responses that are included are not intended to shame the Legion, the Branches or the leadership but to identify problems that can be corrected with work. Comments included in the report are not intended to drive change, only to make the readers aware of what Veterans are saying. Caution is advised as some of the comments are aggressively worded and main contain language that some may find offensive.

**Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15**
Published by Chris Banks [?] · June 8 · 🌐

We at Branch 15 are committed to serving our Honoured Veterans. Therefore we are seeking to find out why membership of the Legion is dwindling, why new Veterans aren't joining, and why Veterans are leaving.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions in this anonymous survey. And please, share this to as many Veterans and veterans groups as you can; the more answers we get, the more we can do to evolve to meet the needs.



New Veterans and the Royal Canadian Legion

Canada's Veterans are changing.

No longer do we believe that Veterans must have grey hair, that they only came from WW1, WW2 or Korea, or that they are no longer with us. No, today we embrace every soldier, sailor or air personnel as a Veteran. Peacekeeping Operations produced thousands of Veterans, Afghanistan produced thousands of New Veterans and conflicts ranging around the world will produce more and more Veterans every year.

Yet, membership in the Royal Canadian Legion is dropping. More and more Veterans Organizations are popping up. Thousands of Veterans are not part of any organization. Why?

That's what we're hoping to find out. Please fill out this short survey so we can better serve the needs of today's veterans. All responses are completely anonymous.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 15, thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important.

Janice Clark
2nd Vice-President & Membership Officer





Christopher Banks, CD
3rd Vice-President & Public Relations Officer


New Veterans and the Royal Canadian Legion

Canada's Veterans are changing. No longer do we believe that Veterans must have grey hair, that they only came from WW1, WW2 or Korea, or that they are no longer with us. No, today we embrace every soldier, sailor or air personnel as a Veteran....

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM




18,478 people reached Boost Post

 Like  Comment  Share 

 12 Chronological ▾

259 shares

[View 11 more comments](#)

 Write a comment...  

Section One: Identifying Data

All responses were anonymous. The choice to make the survey anonymous was to encourage honest participation without fear of reprisal.

Of the 1,606 responses 33.8 % were still serving, 62.3 % were veterans who no longer serve, and 3.9 % had never served.

An overwhelming percentage of responders were veterans of the Canadian Army at 69.6 %, followed by 16.4 % from the Royal Canadian Navy, 21.1 % from the Royal Canadian Air Force, 2.8 % from the Canadian Special Operations Force Command, 0.4 % from the Canadian Rangers, 0.8 % from defunct branches of the Canadian Military, and 1.1 % of veterans from service with Allied Militaries. Some responders identified as serving in multiple branches.

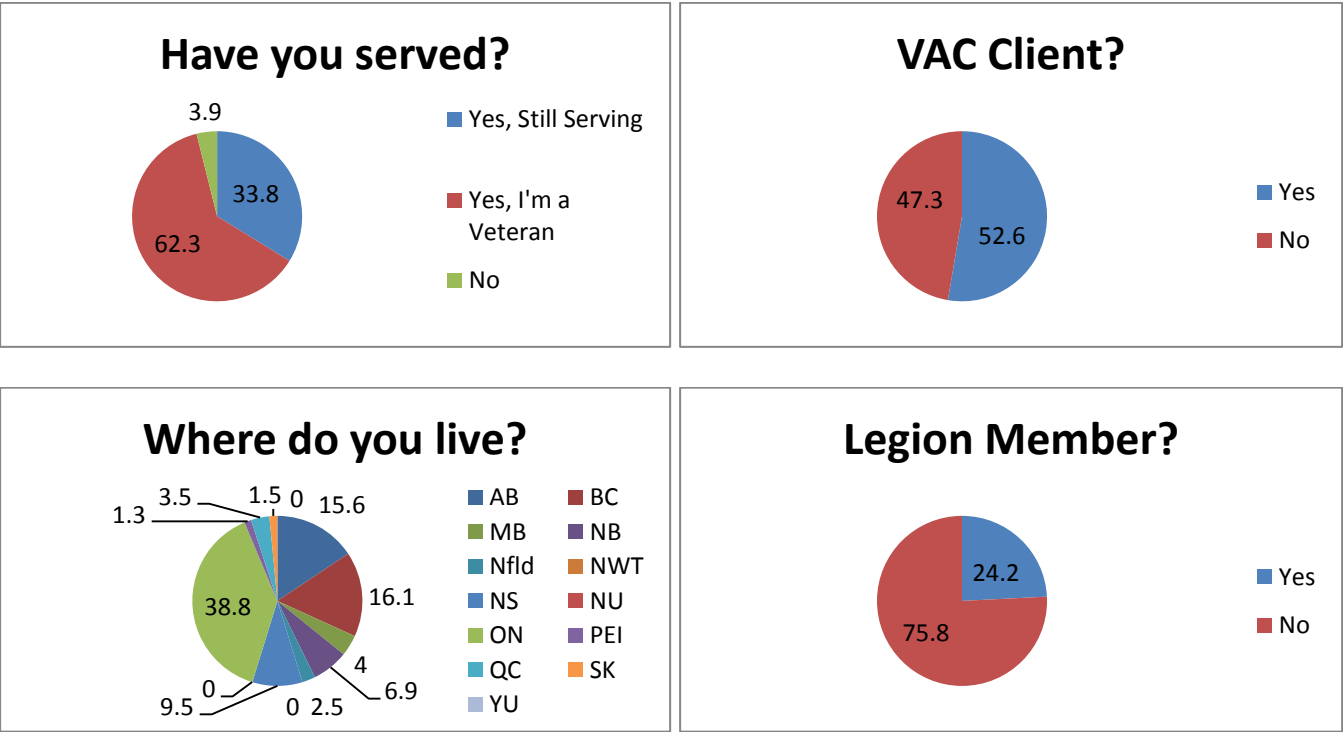
52.6 % were recipients of a Veterans Affairs Pension.

7 % were aged 18-29, 20.2 % were 30-39, 28.7 % were 40-49, 31.6 % were 50-59, 9.6 % were 60-69, 2.8 % were 70-79, and no responses were recorded from the age group of 80 or over.

The majority of responses came from Ontario at 38.8 %, followed by 16.1 % from British Columbia, 15.6 % from Alberta, 9.5 % from Nova Scotia, 6.9 % from New Brunswick, 4 % from Manitoba, 3.5% from Quebec, 2.5 % from Newfoundland and Labrador, 1.5 % from Saskatchewan, 1.3 % from Prince Edward Island, and no responses from Nunavut, Northwest Territories nor the Yukon.

Cities of residence were also included but are not pertinent to the results.

24.2% of responders were members of the Legion.

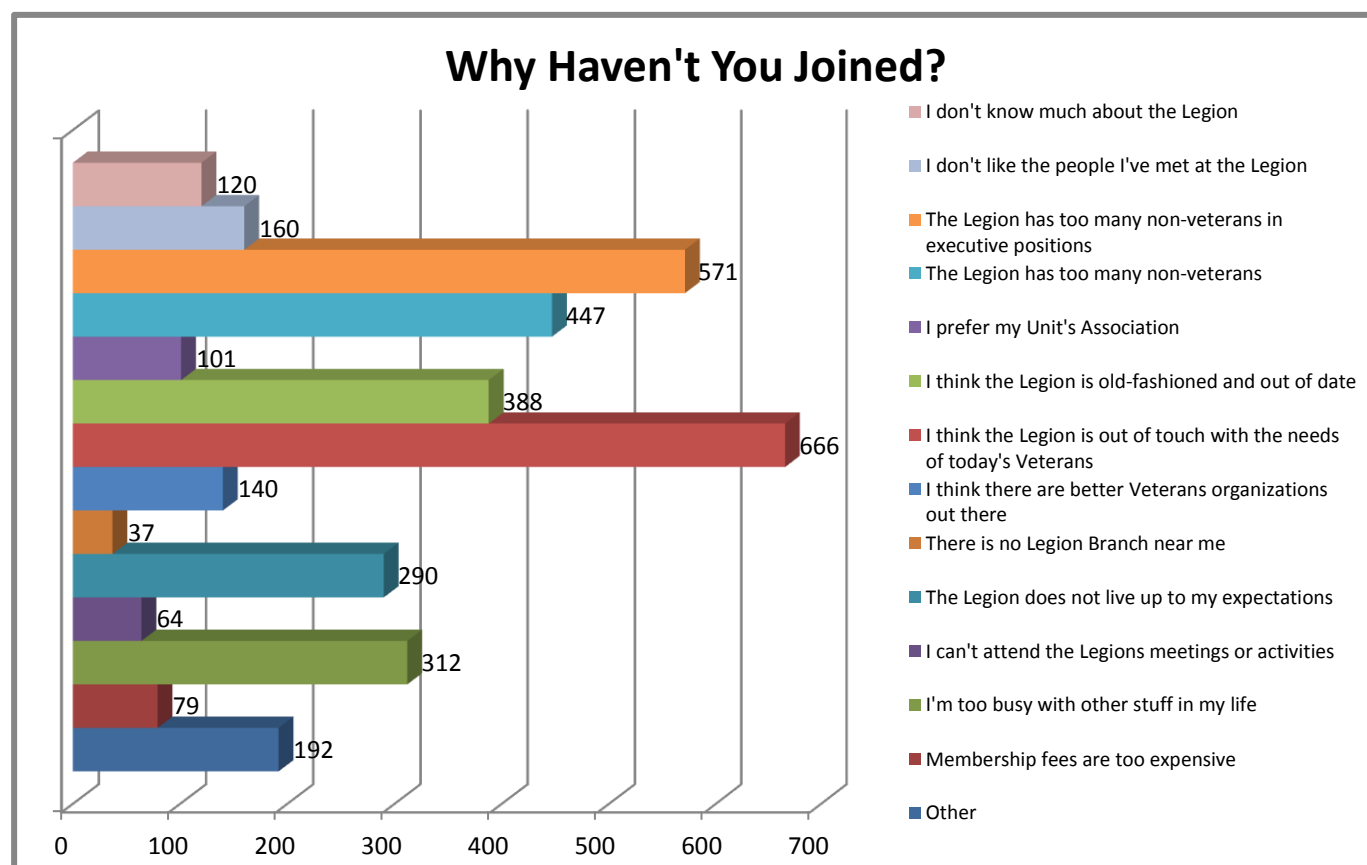


Section Two: Why Haven't You Joined?

This section was only open to responders who identified as not being a member of the Legion. Responders were asked to make a multiple choice selection of why they did not join the Legion, then asked what changes could the Legion make to encourage them to join.

The following responses to “Why haven't you joined?” were recorded:

I don't know much about the Legion (120)
I don't like the people I've met at the Legion (160)
The Legion has too many non-veterans in executive positions (571)
The Legion has too many non-veterans (447)
I prefer my Unit's Association (101)
I think the Legion is old-fashioned and out of date (388)
I think the Legion is out of touch with the needs of today's Veterans (666)
I think there are better Veterans organizations out there (140)
There is no Legion Branch near me (37)
The Legion does not live up to my expectations (290)
I can't attend the Legions meetings or activities (64)
I'm too busy with other stuff in my life (312)
Membership fees are too expensive (79)
Other (192)



The other field yielded specific answers as to why veterans aren't joining beyond the percentages list above, below are a highlight of custom responses, all responses are quoted directly to preserve authenticity. The complete list of responses can be found in the Annex 1.

As a serving member as was asked to leave a legion because I wasn't a member.

It still has the feeling that it is for real veterans of real wars and not for us young guys/girls who served in Afghanistan or other places. As long as these real veterans are still alive, young vets will not go to the Legion because it is still their house and not ours (yet).

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

The legion supported the New Veterans Charter. This sold out new veterans.

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

Was a member, stopped when I was told I HAD TO BUY \$Xx.xx amount from the bar each week AND PULL DUTIES FOR THE LEGION BY A F-ING NON VET WHO GOT HIS MEMBERSHIP BECAUSE HIS DAD WAS THE FRIEND OF A VET

majority of legions I've been to are run down and shabby. The atmosphere is not welcoming or comfortable and seem to only cater to the much older demographic. Meat draws and euchre tournaments don't appeal to me.

*Local legion is more worried about the older vets and themselves (non vets) than the current vets, i see it all the time, there functions for WW2 , Korea (older vets) at not cost to them, but then i see Afghan Vet functions that other Legions to have, then i ask my local legion here, they state, if you want that, will have to pay for it!. Thats why i am no longer with the legion, to many do
(Authors note: Local Legion in this case may be Merritt, B.C. based on the responders answer to their city of residence)*

*I once found a set of veteran's medals and contacted the Legion to help with their return. The Legion wanted nothing to do with the medals or me. 6 months later, with the help of a local news station, we found the owner. He was a Legion member and could have had his medals back in a few days if the Legion had cooperated. I have zero respect for the Legion and it's shoddy treatment of both the veteran who lost the medals and myself, a 27 year veteran of the CF.
(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Ottawa, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)*

I do not like the segregation of women.

*Tired of being told by civilian members that have never served that I am not a real veteran. I am in my 22nd year of serving and a tour in afghanistan.
(Authors Note: This is a recurring theme that came up in the survey results, an actual veteran shunned by a branch)*

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

Some legions are social club for small town rich and elite

<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-legion-suspends-82-year-old-member-for-questioning-groups-treatment-of-veterans>

(Authors Note: This the sole comment left by this responder in this section)

The high ececutive in Ottawa sre ripping off Vetrans according to the news and I wont belong to an organizstion that refuses to be transparent in their expenses

(Authors Note: spelling errors are left intact to preserve the authenticity of the responses)

I and many other get treated terribly

Lack of financial transparency.

Bad press from fellow combat vets

Too secretive, not enough veterans in top positions

No idea how

(Authors Note: This not the only person who seems to be interested in joining but doesn't know how, more outreach from the Branches can easily solve this. According to the responders city of residence they live in Kingston, Ontario)

To over crowded with older non-members who throw darts and treat the place like a city bar.

They force you her veterans out of space because they think they pay dues so they own the place.

Immiedtae feeling of Ranks Structure. Why would I work hard all my life to join an orgization that looks down on you like a Pte the moment you join.

Lack of inclusiveness for serving members at Legions not near military bases.

I WAS a Legion member for 37 years and not once was I noticed for my membership.

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

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Gatineau, Quebec based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I was a Legion member for many years, but the attitude of senior members at this near-by branch was enough for me to give up membership.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Chatham-Kent, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I was a member in the 80's. I have tried, at length, to get the Legion to reactivate my membership but they cannot find it.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Calgary, Alberta based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I went to a legion in my neighborhood asking for help, I got the cold shoulder & shown the door. I was able to fix my self eventually. I have been polite & cordial since but I wouldn't give the rcl my pocket lint.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Alliston, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I was a Mbr but legion were terrible when it came time to help with VA application

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Comox, B.C. based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

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

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

You do not resonate with modern veterans. You can start by losing the term "New Veterans." It relates to the New Veterans Charter and you should know that respective charter is an insult to all of us. Second, you are not an organization goverened by veterans. Third, civilians should be guests not full members. Many veterans do not care if your father or grandpa served - did you? Fourth, many veterans had such a bad experience releasing that they would rather not have anything to do with military culture. The release experience isn't an issue for many, some just did their time, don't care, and would rather move on with life.

(Authors Note: This responder makes a truly excellent point, the term "New Veteran" promotes segregation, post-Korea veterans, peacekeeping veterans and Afghanistan veterans are veterans, period.)

I see the legion as corrupt

(Authors Note: This is another reoccurring theme from responders)

Legion makes no attempt to attract Veterans in our area.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Yellowknife, NWT based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

The Legion doesnt have the transparency for expenditures and salary disclosure that i believe it should. Questionable spending with money from the Poppy Fund.

I don't feel welcome when I walk in with my Veteran UN-Nato Canada vest on.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Gananoque, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

To Clicky, no real legion in my town

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Rockland, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

The legion excludes veterans of foreign nations that have moved to Canada. It also excludes canadian veterans that joined allied foreign armies to fight in wars that our government refused to participate in.

This is an old boya club. There needs to be dialoge with younger vets to inderstand cirrent needs. Most of the leadership has not served, yet military vets are exelent leaders and understand the

unique military culture.

I know longer see the legion as an advocate for veterans, but an adversary who is fighting us as much as VAC. I would be as likely to go and have a beer at a VAC office.

Not alot of benefits for younger folks

Treated my generation like shit, not considered as real veteran due to fact we were not involved in ww2 or Korea.

Required sponsorship from a non-veteran to join a veteran organization

Jennie, you may say you embrace the modern vet but that is just lip service because on the ground at the local legions, the civies that run the place haven't considered me a vet after 22 years service.

(Authors Note: Jennie, in this case, likely refers to Jennie Clark, the 2nd Vice President of Branch 15 and co-sponsor of the survey)

The RCL refuses to disclose financial information

have belonged to 2 Legions but in fighting between cliques , attacks on members trying to do good but not part of clique in power shot down and put down

Lack of transparency and accountability, abuse of authority

Membership has been denied by four different branches and I am not made to feel welcome at any of the branches that I have visited.

Lgion is controled by corrupt non vets

My membership has expired and I have inquired about getting involved, requested to have someone from the excutive to contact me but was never contacted after several requests.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in North Bay, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

The structure and things like tossing out an elderly woman for questioning you. I won't join this 'old boys' club.

The Legion doesn't live up to my expectations, Too many non members are robbing the legion blind their are a few in NS should be looked at

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Springhill, Nova Scotia based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I don't see the Legion publicly standing up for new veyerans and advocating for them.

Lack of transparency from the executive.

(Authors Note: This is a reoccurring issue brought up by responders)

Activities and events are outdated, and rather uninteresting for young vets. Also I think the legion

served as not only a safe haven for war torn/shell shocked vets to get together with people who understand what they went through. However today, vets have more access to mental health agencies, so we can resolve our issues and maintain a personal life after the army.

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

They expect loyalty from vets but don't give it back

I left when the president of the legion announced their support for the new veterans charter

Have been discriminated against and was humiliated when I was starving and asked for help.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Saturna Island, B.C. based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

In all honesty, the Legion has the stigma for being exactly what we see it as. We go there after a remembrance day parade, have a few drinks and converse with the generations that served long before us. It's a rewarding experience, but always holds that elder to youth feel about it. The messes are near death because the young soldiers of today can't go there and relax, without their chain of command hearing about any actions "out of line" Held to such a standard, many would rather flee the area and give their money to bars or clubs that won't know their names, or have their RSM on speed dial should they have one too many. Be it the truth or not, the Legions are seen to be populated with the same types, retired high up brass that wishes to protect their watering hole, with the threats of names that may end careers. We are a different generation, and we have fought a much different war, much like pack animals, we go where our own kind is, and currently, it is not the Legion.

I was denied entry while I was in uniform. I have 28 years in and civilian not having served a single day in uniform walk past me?! Unsat.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Middle Sackville, Nova Scotia based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

Not seeing a lot of support for those like me, under the NVC I am, what? 40% less of another? Stand up to help us because it is awfully lonely knowing you aren't equal to half of the people you work along side of? All depending when they got injured... my injuries hurt the same amount as someone who doesn't fall under the charter.

Funds are not properly spent and there is no transparency with executive spending.

No benefit to join pay the same dues as non veteran

I am disgusted that remembrance day parades are commercialized

(Authors Note: I believe the word the responder was going for was commercialized)

Why do veterans have to pay fees????? Ridiculous!

Feel too young for the RCL.

The legion in Dundas is all about a social gathering of locals. I tried receiving grocery cards while in desperate need but was rejected by my hometown legion. However the London legion

bent the rules to help me from starving.

(Authors Note: This appears to be Dundas, Ontario and London, Ontario)

High paid executives, zero transparency regarding funds and the recent suspension of a 36 year Legion member for calling the head of the Legion (a non veteran) to advocate for veterans. You all should be ashamed of yourselves.

I applied to my local legion and was denied membership by the executive because they said my SIN number wasn't a service number even though during my time in the SIN was your service number

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Southampton, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

It seemed to me like a cliquish drinking club. A bunch of drunks trying to verbally advise me on how to get help with VAC matters. I was not impressed.

I was told im not a real veteran and im not welcome. I served 3 tours in the balkans. and 2 in afghanistan while in the army.

In one branch I was told that I am not a "real" veteran cause I did not fight in a war. In another legion, when I was a member, every time I questioned the Prez about what was going on, she told me to shut up or get kicked out, even though she was doing wrong things and putting her stamp on it. In several legions I have been to, I have noticed that it has become a private drinking club for the President's friends.

As an individual that has seen 2 tours of Afghanistan and served 28+ years it saddens me to not feel welcome at the Legion. It seems it's more of a social club of select people from the community vice a VETERANS Association. If someone speaks out against the executives or push for change it is quickly pointed out you are not welcome.

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.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Toronto, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I was told that I was not a REAL VETERAN according to a legion member. Even after 25+ yrs and 5 tours.

I don't feel in as a French Canadian

I have been told by friends in other provinces they were denied membership because they served in the reserves and the deployments today don't meet the requirements.

The reoccurring themes from the answers provided by the responders is that the Legion, to them, has lost its core values of looking after Veterans. Veterans have been turned away from Branches, Veterans in need and seeking help have been turned away. The responders feel that there is too much corruption and a significant lack of financial transparency. One responder made the truly excellent point that the term

“New Veterans” is promoting segregation, veterans are veterans.

The next question asked to responders to identify any changes the Legion could make to encourage them to join. The following are the highlights from the responses. Again, this is only a highlighted selection of responses, the total list of responses can be found in Annex 1. All responses are quoted to preserve the authenticity of the responses.

Start becoming advocates for veterans. National executive won't ruffle feathers because they have nothing to gain, they're not veterans. Be the voice Canadian veterans don't have to speak directly to government.

Adamantly oppose the New Veterans Charter (you supported it when it was brought in) New vets feel betrayed by that fact. Vets don't forget easily.

Updated image/uniforms, military service requirement for executive positions.

For as long as I've lived, the Legion was a place to go after remembrance day ceremonies. What little I do know about the Legion is that it's a Members only drinking club. The problem is, alcohol is not a big part of my life, nor is it a big part of my friends lives. I do plan on joining one day soon, but the Legion should consider rebooting it's image, and maybe making the Legion into a veterans community with a focus on citizenship, health and fitness instead of just a place one can go drinking.

Sort out this present fiasco involving the current Dominion President and ensure the Dominion Executive is actually in touch with the best interest of Vets

Stop treating veterans like we are the outsiders. Live up to the ideals the Legion was founded on. Quit turning your backs on veterans in need.

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

Be more supportive of veterans, make executives accountable for everything, make the Legion more transparent concerning money.

Input new technology within RCL establishments, such as WiFi, big screen TV's so members can watch things like UFC events every Saturday night with food/drink specials or NHL games especially during the finals (or both), tailor the benefits package to what a younger veteran would want unlike now where there is specials on hotels but with the economy the way it is people can't afford to travel as much as they like, USE SOCIAL MEDIA, more officers in branches who are knowledgeable about today's veteran and our situations with legislation and mental health awareness, incorporate things like draws for hockey tickets/pools, vacations, etc (this may not work for branches in small towns). Young veterans now will not go to a Legion branch that still has 60+ year olds in it playing darts or board games, they will likely go if a RCL branch were to change its image to a sports-like bar that incorporates things that young veterans would like, such as sports events, outdoor adventures, and/or a nice place to kick back and relax whilst watching something on a big screen with other vets and supporters. But, of course this is all dependent on the older membership accepting this drastic change, which they won't.

Give the Legion back to veterans

Get rid of the highly paid non veteran in position of authority.

Make it relevant to me and 2016

Get rid of the majority of non-veterans in executive positions and give veterans a chance to be executives.

If the legion wants younger members that are still serving they should be more active in representing the association at events on local bases. I.e. Sporting events ran by PSP. They could even sponsor such events

Nothing could make me join as I think it's an irrelevant organization focused mostly on being a place to socialize and drink. Twice I have made enquiries to the local branch and both times got referred to the national branch, who in turn referred me back to the local branch. Once was for a question about VAC and the other about what the 5 dollar fee was for when getting a vet plate. Two strikes was enough.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Russell, Ontario based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

Transparency. How much do executives receive and what are their travel budgets ?

Get rid of non-veterans in executive positions and publicly and politically attack the new veterans charter to reinstate the old pension system. Honestly I think the legion has gone too far in the wrong direction and has created a huge bitter feeling in many younger veterans.

Make it a more pleasant place to visit, the attitude of some of them old legion members got to stop, I was a member for a year didn't like what I saw

Reach out to new veterans, host events for new veterans, so we can get to know each other. When I left my unit and the military I have only kept in touch with a few people but wouldn't mind meeting others with similar experiences, particularly Afghanistan. Also, now that I have a family, family events would be nice as well.

Replacement of civilian executives with Veterans, tighten entrance requirements, limit power of civilian members, stop suing everyone who makes a Poppy. That would make me interested.

Respect the fact a veteran of today should be viewed no differently than a veteran of the great wars, Korea or any other conflict. The veteran of today does not necessarily have to have grey hair.

They need to realize that every one who has served with the CAF are VETERANS. I have served 3 tours to Afghanistan, 1 tour to Kosovo and 1 to Bosnia...I went to a legion event and I was TOLD that because I wasn't a VETERAN (older looking) I couldn't sit where my family and I were sitting. However, one of the ladies that I know personally informed the legion member that I most DEFINITELY was a VETERAN and I was going to sit where I was with my family.

Younger leadership

More encouragement to help new vets. A lot of the vets at my old branch don't consider us vets

Instead of inviting me to legion functions last moment maybe give me notice and make me feel like I am wanted.

1. change the stigma towards new vets as not deserving of the membership and as outsiders who had it easy 2. educate the present membership to visibility of all policies, transactions without hidden personal agenda's 3. not a discount drinking club for a privileged few, forcing membership potential out the door.

You would need to do a complete overhaul of your institution and stop being in the pockets of whatever government is in place. Defend the interests of veterans first and foremost

Have all aspects of the leadership be veterans only. Be open and transparent in informing the public as to how the funds are used at all levels including domino command president and Vice President etc.

Bring it into the 21st Century. Focus on veterans (including police & firefighters), and putting them into positions of responsibility, less focus on civilian members. The Legion was formed for veterans, it has seriously drifted and doesn't fight for their rights or privileges anymore.

spend on repairs so they don't look like condemned buildings. More of a bar/pub feel to make people feel more at home. As it is I wouldn't begin to think of bringing my wife to a legion. Plan events that appeal more to a younger demographic. Ease up on the poppy copyright. Suing bakeries just alienates you more.

Every vet is the same, whether young, old, different race, different war..... As far as I am concerned, there are a lot of legions that are racist to Afghan Vets, they only want us for their memberships and with that comes a great deal of money. Yes I know the legions have a great deal of other services, but if one legion won't give an Afghan Vet the time of day, right now, that goes along way now, especially with social media, case in point the non vet legion member suspension for asking why??!!, Well enough of my rants

Modernization. Make it an organization for veterans, not a bingo Hall and/or beer Hall for people that have never served. The Legion supported implementation of the New Veterans Charter that screwed modern vets.

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.

Membership to veterans only. Listen and respect today's veterans.....it seems like every year a branch does something to insult today's veterans.

Lower fees, accept Afghanistan vets, change the Legions stance on the NVC, change non-veteran positions toward actual Vets/ former members, new advertising campaign for 2016, come away from hawking poppies, etc

I stopped being a member of the legion due to lack of communication from the Bronte Branch. I

could not even send in my payment as they would not rtn calls or emails. Fed up with the unprofessional administration of the branch.

Vets should be in positions to insure that the things that are important to vets are managed and available at branches. The legion should be a place vets can go for help.

Actually advocate for veterans.

Tell the civilian members that have never served to not be so rude to currently serving members

Be willing to diversify events that would interest younger users in joining.

Less emphasis on cheap food and drink. Fewer branches by eliminating the non-effective and out-of-date ones. Support other veteran organizations.

I see nothing being done in the community by the legion. Maybe a smarter marketing campaign is needed. Many vets now are looking for a second career. There are great organisations working hard for this, such as Canada Company, that would be a great role for the legion. Many vets are getting beat down by DVA, easy access to assistance dealing with bureaucracy would be great. Hosting still serving members once or twice a year at the legion would be another gateway. Enlisting the help of still serving as volunteers, gives both sides exposure and volunteerism earns points towards promotion. There are a ton of things the legion can do if it shed some of the older traditional thinking. Remember, the most dangerous words spoken are "this is how we've always done it."

Stand up for the veterans. Support them in their transition into civilian life. Get more involved to prevent homeless veterans and/or veterans waiting months before receiving their pension entitlements. I feel that there shouldn't have to be the need for a veteran to pay fees.

Transparent, accountable, appropriately humble leadership, aggressive veterans activism, sponsorship of the type of event I would be actually be interested in attending, observance of appropriate military occasions such as VE day and D Day and consultation and active dialogue with currently serving members and especially units.

Better social media; local pages with events. More modern events geared towards younger vets.

The Legion's civilian executive is out of touch with today's veterans and retirees. Unfortunately there still exists a certain amount of misogyny as well. The changes that could be made are actively recruiting former military members for executive involvement in addition to educating current members as to the roles of serving members in the 70's and beyond as Canada's peacekeepers, whether at home or abroad as well as the important roles that women have played in Canada's military. Get back to the original roots of the Legion rather than catering to non veterans in the community that have no connection to the military. The Legion could also get more involved with our homeless veterans as I'm sure that each Legion would have community connections that could assist these individuals.

Limit the voting power of non veteran members.

Show me you aren't lapdogs

Open the books at national hq, be more relivent to younger veterans instead of the old boys club

- 1. Complete transparency and openness at all levels.*
- 2. Put the needs of veterans first in actions and in advocacy. Don't be a lap dog for the government.*
- 3. Limit civilian role to non voting associate member. How can you really belong as a legion member if you've never served?! If the membership has more civvies than vets, something is wrong.*
- 4. Clean house at the executive in Ottawa. It is a bloated bureaucracy.*

Stop making post Korean Veterans feel like we aren't Veterans last year a legion in Winnipeg said on Television last Remembrance day that they consider Afghanistan Veterans as Junior Vets not real vets same is said of cold war vets and reservists

It's a seemingly core issue, where the origins of the organization that was founded by vets for vets has shifted to be an inclusive organization to any and all who wish to apply. Such a shift has created a very out of touch association where people try to understand the military mindset, but having never served, ultimately end up missing the mark.

Have more support groups and councillors

Members without service have the same rights as veterans which is wrong

Overhaul of Executive positions;

Modern Veterans' Programs a Working Groups;

Find a way to blend tradition with adaptation and modern feel; and

The biggest impact I saw was the community involvement done by a younger, modern Vets. The Remembrance Day Speaker Initiative is a prime example. When I see younger, active vets working with the community I actually saw the benefits of join a branch and considered joining. I want to give back and be apart of that process.

Become a real legion , work for the new generation, make it a full volunteer place not one where some get paid. I help many get their disabilities by filling out there paper work, suggesting expert doctor , writting up letters, ect....been doing this for years and not paid. Recognition is good enough

Not all Legion branches have issues in my opinion, but I tend to find those near a military base to be far more active and inclusive. Unfortunately I don't think there is a good solution for the recruiting issues of the Legion, times have changed and the rise of better societal reintegration programs on retirement from the military is what has ironically hurt the Legion the most. Many retiring soldiers don't see the need to join a Legion, they have family and friends to return too. Many of the issues derive from I think there is a lot that the Legion could learn from similar institutions in the United States from my experience. Particularly inclusiveness of all serving members no matter where they served being primary. Secondary would be expanding the activities of the Legion to interest both younger and older age groups and both sexes as many soldiers only serve on one or two Terms of Service nowadays to address the "old boys club" stigma that exists.

Kick the new veterans charter to the curb. Make public support to returning to the older veterans

act

I had joined the aldergrove legion and when sworn in , I was embarrassed that I was sworn in with civilians , called to order with civilians no drill in their lives, yet there I was equal with them in a place that claims to honour veterans, in fact supposed to be in service of veterans. Non veterans have full voting rights, the legion is a club the same as shriners and other groups like that, no longer a veterans organization.

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.

Welcome new people. Welcome new ideas. Serve the community, not just senior Legion members.

- 1. Harden your stance on membership and only military and vets allowed in leadership positions.*
- 2. Getting your priorities right when it comes to your stance on the New veterans Charter. (I think you guys have played politics a little too much and did the popular thing and supported the new charter when clearly all it does is screw over vets.)*
- 3. Show some backbone and even if supported the well being of vets goes against government policy, don't bend or government pressure and stand up for the vets.*

Publicize their events calendar on the MARPAC DIN splash page.

The Legion needs to get back to its grass roots. The current organization is or appears to be run by people who have absolutely no time in the Military. The life experiences and priorities of these people are totally out of touch with the veterans. It has been my experience that Legion has now become a social club for people who want to be associated with those who were in uniform.

More activities besides drinking and meat draws would be a good start. Stop charging vets every time they move province is another. Do something positive for new vets. Right now you guys just whine, but don't show any real interest in new vets.

Too much lost trust. Too much politicking. Try playing nice with other organisations for awhile and we'll see from there....

There are lots of my ex military buddies who served overseas who are interested in the legion but it is not geared or run to attract the younger veterans in the community. We go to the remembrance day ceremony but none of it honors the younger veterans and none are asked to take part or wear their uniform. It's not hard for the legion to know who they are in the community because our local paper honors them by name and picture with their service every year which is more than the legion does for them. We go to some events and suppers but we are left feeling out of place. I support having non veterans in the legion as it helps pay the bills, but they should not have leadership roles when the legions should be pushing the younger vets to be involved. Young vets in leadership will help the legion adapt to the current needs of vets from more recent and ongoing wars. This in turn will encourage more of young vets to join. Also as an RCMP member I have a number of members that would join who are also friends to our young war vets and are accepted as equals to the younger vets (we have many non legion get togethers) but we are looked down on it feels from the old vets like we don't belong. If non vets didn't run the positions in the legion and didn't have voting rights so our younger vets could step up we can shift the decline in membership also many RCMP have military experience but are not vets. With hundreds of RCMP in

alberta alone if the legion support them they would join. This would have more positive impact then the current status of old retirees looking for a dance floor.

Being under the NVC I believe that the Legion dis not represent soldier in a proper manner when it came down to vote in Parliament. When I left to go overseas the NVC didn't exist but while deployed it changed and now I have to fight to provide for my family.

Support Equitas lawsuit, support Afghanistan veteran on the cenotaph, stop supporting new veteran's charter, support lifelong pensions for all veterans. In general, focus on younger generation vets and serving members and their needs. Try to attract younger (Afghanistan) vets to your executive so that you can learn what is important for the present generation. People don't want alcohol drinking clubs with meat draws these days. Club houses and facilities should be family spaces, wifi, coffee houses, with spaces for military clubs and events in support of informing and taking action on the causes I listed. There are many individual vets whose stories aren't being told. USe of PR and PA tools to get the stories and challenges told to the community.

Stop living in the past

realize that Veterans have changed, and the RCL needs to change with it. Stop fighting with the new generation of Veterans.

We pay mess dues. Why pay higher price at a legion? Why do both also when i was a member for a few years i went to my legion to rent the hall and they charged me full price. So why would i pay for a membership when i get no benefit at all. "No discount you still get public price" there is no difference between off the street and membership

The Legions have failed to represent the needs of modern veterans. We are not in our 80s or 90s and are not interested in a Ladies Auxiliary. These are remnants of a bygone age. Modernise or be left behind.

Re-vamp the executive branch and place veterans in positions to make decisions. Often I have attended Legions and been spoken rudely to by members who have never served or only had a family member who has served. At times it seems that they don't even recognize that I currently serve and that my opinion matters.

The RCL seems to have become more of an exclusive club for non-veterans, who are less interested in service to Veterans, and more interested in making profits from the sales of poppy related materials, bar sales, facility rentals, and pandering to politicians.

Stand up for Veterans in a meaningful way. Example: New Veterans Charter has to go! it's a detriment to every Veteran out there but where was the Legion on this issue? Standing beside the Government and endorsing it. Pension for life, that's what ill and injured Veterans need! Stand WITH the other Veterans organizations to make it a reality. Stop the politics and simply ADVOCATE for the BEST INTERESTS of VETERANS! On a brighter note; I think the work done to promote Remembrance day and keep History alive is incredible.

Stop pandering to bitter old drunks, and for god's sake, stop pretending like you invented the Poppy. Do stuff that will actually make younger members and veterans feel welcome.

Coordinate with Military and Veterans within Yellowknife, there is no advertising or promotional means attracting new members. Younger Veterans are looking for organizations that cater to younger generations. In Yellowknife, the Legion falls far behind the Elks Club in this regard.

If I felt like the money was for veterans and not for the pockets of Legion executives, it might make a difference. I will not join the legion as what I have seen and heard over the past years from this organization is borderline treason. I do not recommend that any veteran joins the legion, or even so much as buys a single drink at the legion. As a whole, you should be ashamed of yourselves!!!

More MFRC-type qualities: BBQs, sports days. Bus trips to locations that give discounts to CAF and Vets like shopping, parks, wine tours. For me, legions have seemed like dark drinking establishments full of older (not necessarily veteran) people, who on occasion play bingo. Bring young people in by making it more of a family atmosphere or do activities that attract younger crowd.

Today's veterans realize that PTSD and alcohol are a disastrous combination which causes extremely bad problems in relationships and day to day life. More and more veterans are using medical marijuana and we need a place to medicate. Almost every veteran I know has turned to the much safer cannabis over deadly pharmaceutical pills and alcohol. Make legions a medical marijuana friendly environment and veterans will come. If you don't believe me, go to any Peer Support Meeting at any Marijuana for Trauma location in Canada and see how many guys attend. Lots and lots!

Legion should back and be more vocal about bringing back lifetime pensions for injured soldiers. Legion should be vocal and push the Government on removing taxation on injury payouts for injured soldiers. The Legion has not been an entity that has listened to or actioned concerns from today's veterans.

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.

(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Edmonton, Alberta based on the responders answer to their city of residence)

I think they could offer more family veteran services and events to help out not only the Legion but foster the soldiers and veterans to join as well. Having more up to date venues and building as well as updating some policies could help as well as I am not familiar with them I cannot comment on them but from my listening I have heard this. Perhaps also including hunting and fishing with or for veterans if the interest exists would be a good idea to connect people as well.

Transparency WRT the Poppy Fund, executive salaries, and revamp the RCL constitution would be a start. Fast track 'new veterans' into executive positions.

Review entire mandate and develop a new paradigm to maintain its future. There is still good work to be continued.

I agree with non-veterans joining, but should not be able to hold executive positions

Treat serving veterans with more respect. For example, charging them a cover charge when they

visit a Legion branch and can prove service seems counter-productive to encouraging them to become members of any Branch. Also, start holding events that are friendly to younger veterans with families and are aimed at their needs (e.g. bouncy castles, BBQs, etc.) and younger and still serving veterans should become more interested in membership. The current practices solidly exclude newer veterans in favour of WWII and Korea veterans, which creates a "two-tier" veteran system in an organisation that claims it is interested in serving ALL veterans.

I don't know. I am no longer interested in rank structure and politics. So perhaps, nothing would make me join.

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 your 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. Their was a couple of brake in's no was charged and no one was caught it was a inside job

Start advocating. The poppy drive is great, but people need advocates. Hire some lawyers, take the government to court, flex the muscles of a national organization.

I'm not sure, I have wanted to join but life always gets in the way, that's not really an excuse but there is nothing really drawing me to them either. The legion is still seen as an old mans club, for retired men not 30 something still working. If anything the legion should be contacting veterans asking them to come and join and telling them what they have to offer. I can't really judge the legion as I have not been to one other then the odd lunch in when I was still serving and Remembrance Day. Really a lot of the veterans I hang out with we just get together at each other's houses I think it keeps it to the select group. There are a lot of veterans (today's young ones) that just want to talk about how bad ass they are or how hard they had it and all there problems and cause fights and we don't care for that, we want to enjoy each other's company and reminis the odd time and play some poker or whatever. I'm proud of the legion and what it stands for I just don't have anything pulling me to join life has enough on my plate.

When was the last time a legion held a meeting with only Veterans, listen to their concern and forward those concern to National Command to initiate the leg work with the Government on their issues? I have yet to meet a Veteran who supports the NVC, therefore, why is the establishment supporting it. This tells me that they are more preoccupied with the bingo results than the Veterans. I had inquired of joining the Legion Riders but found a more rewarding support and camaraderie with Veterans MC and groups. The networking within these groups assist the Veterans in a more efficient manner. A fine example is the SISIP LTD claw back, initiated Denis Manuge, on behalf of Veterans. And now with the Equitas movement returning to court being fought by another Veteran group without the assistance of the Legion, again, this tells me the Legion is not for the Veterans but more of a social club for a community where Veterans feel left out. Can I walk into a legion right now and talk to a Veteran about Veterans issues, I have a better chance of a response from a VM MC or Vet group than a Legion.

Own its responsibility for throwing every Vet since 2006 under the bus by supporting lump sum payments and work towards correcting that.

Stop disallowing Vets from participating in 11Nov services because they don't like how those Vets dress...as in Ladysmith.

First and foremost, frown upon the grumpy old men in the corner that offer rude looks to the younger soldiers every time they crack a joke or laugh. Why would go some place we don't feel welcome? Perhaps start with a small group, known for their love of drink, and work to be seen as their local hang out. Allow art from the groups that frequent on a table or two letting them set up a feeling of a place they belong. As a former LdSH (RC), I can tell you did have a Strat hang out, and it was packed most every night with not just Strats, but the friends we served with, be them infantry, engineer or support trades. After several afghan tours I have retired to the air force, I now spend my time as an Air Weapons System tech, a group known for it's love of good times a drink. A group that more often than not gather at the home of one of the members due to no establishment feeling like home.

Has the Legion tried reaching out to the Veterans Motorcycle group?

No business names are to be announced on parade. It disgusts me that our vets stand cold on parade, those who can stand, while the name of every business who "donated" a wreath is called out. You want to call names, call the names of the VETS on parade. I joined the legion a few years ago with hopes of changing this and was told by the members, not one a veteran, that this is how they do it and it won't change. So this VET is no longer a member. As long as the legion allows business to use this time for a commercial I not only do not attend, but actively speak out against the legion.

A return to tradition. Watching the Legion on parades is ridiculous. I understand that some have not served and it's not a military organization but there's also a noticeable lack of pride. From poorly fitting Blazers to horrendous marching. There's also a distinct lack of "modern" activities. Hanging out at a bar can be done anywhere. There should be something special about the Legion and it needs to reflect it's modern members.

Society does not hang out at a bar anymore, maybe the legion should advertise what it can provide for veterans, besides a cold beer.

Become a completely secular organization; remove religious elements in ceremonies

Veterans only on executives; abolish the 'command' system it looks sounds and acts ridiculous; only veterans salute cant stand to see another Benny Hill salute on Remembrance Day, saluting is a technique learned and earned during basic training only in the military. Get rid of the right side faux medal racks, want orders and decorations, join the military. Read in the news today that an old lady was kicked out of your precious little club for trying to help Veterans and getting some answers, then try to cover it up like a bunch of lying politicians

(<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/legions-decision-to-kick-out-82-year-old-woman-not-a-story-says-legions-craig-hood>) these types of people didn't last long in the real military and show no spine or courage, contrary - they're cowards - and you want me to join up with a bunch of assholes like that? you got to be kidding.

Stop the empire building, stop the nepotism, actually advocate for veterans rights, provide support services for injured vets, assist vets to navigate the VAC system and get through the red tape, and work with VAC to get rid of the red tape in the first place, run PTSD workshops and support, lobby the federal government to reinstate lifetime pensions for injured vets, get rid of the

powertripping non-vets running the boards who treat serving members like crap, kick out all the old racists and sexist jerks who treat minorities and women in uniform like garbage, stop using Remembrance Day as an advertising campaign and selling ads at memorial services... there's more, but that's a good start.

Get rid of, or reduce size of the Bar - Alcohol is not the big social binder it was in the past, and today's Veterans do not like to be likened to alcoholics that just sit around grouching about the "old days". They get out and do stuff, so that is what the Legion needs to do.

♦Become a Service Organization that offers FREE assistance to Veterans. Perhaps like the Sally Ann in the past and today. I know many serving soldiers that loved going to the Sally Ann Restaurant in Lahr Germany, and it was a good place to link up with "assistance" that the Brothers offered.

♦Perhaps the Legion should re-think the design of it's facilities - reduce bar size by at least half, if not more. Increase office space for Legion Support Activities. ♦Start offering Veterans a location to hold Family parties (at a rate lower than local venue's - Membership should have advantages, right?).

You know, really, I have no idea what will work - our Legion here in Ft. Saskatchewan is actually a pretty good one - it really banded together to assist in the Ft. MacMurray Fires/Evacuees - and THAT is what the Legion should be doing more of.

But every time I go into the Legion, all I find is a bar full of middle-aged and younger folks, almost always men, who are doing nothing but sitting around drinking. I have better things to do with my life than sitting around and drinking. I get the feeling that none of them ever served, but who am I to judge. It's just my opinion.

Time to evolve with the times, methinks. I wish you luck.

Civilians telling veterans how it is at the legion and not understanding what those who served have gone through. The Legion is supposed to be a place for veterans to gather and support each other, share stories, lend an ear, etc. Not civilians to simply have a place to buy cheap beer. A group of veterans were kicked out of the Bowmanville Legion on Remembrance Day by civilian executive because they had used a cursive word in toasting their fallen comrades. That group has not and will not return to that legion.

subsidize serving membris

Have a private area for vets only ...have community nights, show what Vets are doing now, like a presentation, talk/s or movie night: For example I have Best International Documentary 2015 at German Green Screen Film Fest, a Blue Ocean Finalist " Deadly Depths" or "Footprints of War" that won the Prince Reiner Award, and I am a Vet. Have Vets engage at the Legion with the public for awareness and sometimes for help in a cause they may be pursuing. The Vets needs to speak with the people in our communities, to bring us all closer together rather than apart. I am a retired Canadian Vets and Commissioned Officer of the UN, and I can state, that by constructively engaging our Vets, to hear their stories would make Canada a much better place and allow Vets to feel, that the legion is more like home where people understand one another.

Get rid of cilvilians branch presidents. Give the legion back to the military, and make th civilian members of little more respectful to combat veterans, an serv ice veterans of all branches. After are th one who served and did the things they will never do or see. It is pure garbage that a civilian no service veteran ha more say in a veteran organization than I do

Too many non-veterans at the executive level, flip flop on New Veterans Charter, no such thing as a "new veteran". Everyone who served is a veteran, regardless of when they served. For most of my career I felt out of place in a legion where I was not recognized as a veteran by members who had never served or had landed in Normandy and spent ten months on operations - my total of 9.5 years deployed overseas on ops was not deemed as valuable. I choose not to accept those who choose not to accept me!

Be more welcoming to all maybe attend SCAN seminars for those releasing from the CAF and inform those members about the Legion.

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

If mbr would like, contact mbr in last year of release to see the needs they may assist with. In becoming friends with the mbr they have a sense of family.

Increase accountability and transparency of leadership remuneration and decision making; return to serving veterans instead of simply providing a cheap place for people to drink; decrease non-veteran membership and leadership considerably, if not entirely; reduce number of legion branches if necessary to strengthen the core values and direction of the organization; stop giving out silly Legion medals.

1) Admit fault in supporting veterans charter of 2006, like any person in the military who makes a mistake is expected to do.

2) Cease wearing medals not gained through military valour, recognition and/or participation in military operations.

3) Enforce a standard of dress and deportment, especially when in public view, of similar nature to the CAF dress manual. ie. Men with Gotees wearing military cap badges.

Rest assured, that when I retire if I cannot uphold the standard I had while serving, I will not wear military headrest.

The legion is a place for old guys or people that never served. I know there has been some work done at the provincial and national level such as VTN but at the local level all the talk is still about ww2 or Korea Vets. Talk coming from people who have never put on a uniform. As a place to hang out the legion has to be one of the most depressing, dingy places in most towns. All you ever hear about is how the legion is failing and branches are closing. Really who wants to join a losing team?

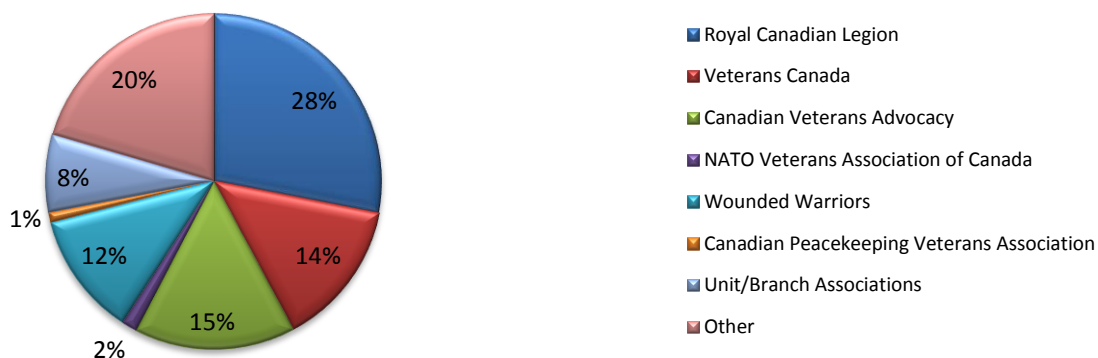
Section Three: Which organization

The next section of the survey asked responders to answer which organization they felt would be best at Advocating on behalf of Veterans, Caring for Veterans, and Helping Veterans with their Veteran Affairs Claims. The below results indicate how the responders replied.

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

Royal Canadian Legion 28.1 %
Other 20.5 %
Canadian Veterans Advocacy 15.5 %
Veterans Canada 14.1 %
Wounded Warriors 11.9 %
Unit/Branch Associations 7.5 %
NATO Veterans Association of Canada 1.5 %
Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association 1 %

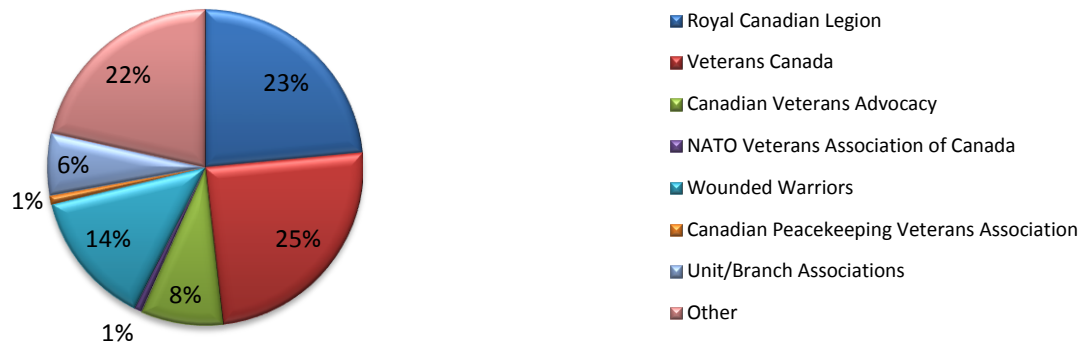
Which Organization do you feel is best suited to advocate on behalf of Veterans with the Government?



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

Veterans Canada 24.7 %
Royal Canadian Legion 23.5 %
Other 21.5 %
Wounded Warriors 13.9 %
Canadian Veterans Advocacy 8.4 %
Unit/Branch Associations 6.3 %
Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association 0.9 %
NATO Veterans Association of Canada 0.8 %

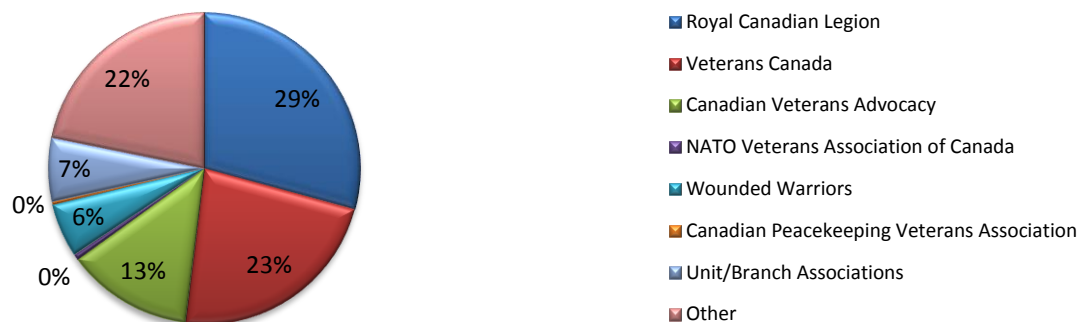
Which Organization do you feel is best suited to care for Veterans?



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

Royal Canadian Legion 29.2 %
Veterans Canada 22.7 %
Other 21.8 %
Canadian Veterans Advocacy 13.1 %
Unit/Branch Associations 6.6 %
Wounded Warriors 5.6 %
NATO Veterans Association of Canada 0.6 %
Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association 0.3 %

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



Other was left as an option because there was the inevitability that a relevant organization would be inadvertently left off the list. Some responders felt that organizations were intentionally left off the list, in fact the selection of organizations in the question was based on a web search in Google for “Canadian Veterans Organizations” and the top results were chosen. The Other option gave responders the ability to

write in an organization, their responses yielded the below (constructive) responses to the three questions:

Equitas
ANAF Vets
Veterans
Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association
Chief & Petty Officers Association
Lawyers
Courageous Companions
True Patriot Love
Facebook Veterans Well Being Networks
Peter Stoeffler
Marijuana for Trauma
Military Family Resource Centres
Military Minds
National Council of Veterans Associations
Operational Stress Injury Social Support
Royal Canadian Military Institute
Send Up The Count Facebook Group
Soldier On
Veterans Transition Network
Veterans Affairs Canada
Paul Franklin
Peer Support
Bureau of Pensions Advocates
Joint Personnel Support Unit

Why not the Legion

On average 72% of responders did not feel that the Legion was the right organization to help Veterans. The following comments highlight why the responders felt as they did. All responses are quoted directly to preserve authenticity. The complete list of responses can be found in the Annex 1.

[Wounded Warriors] Only one with legitimate veterans in leadership roles with the only goal of helping others. This should be the RCL's prime job.

[Facebook Veterans Well Being Networks] The Well Being Networks reach out to Veterans that also may not be a part of the Royal Canadian Legion. These networks like the RCL are there to protect the well being of our veterans and their families. They are encompassed by a large variety of serving and former serving veterans and understand the concerns that veterans deal with on a continual bases former serving veterans and understand the concerns that veterans deal with on a continual bases.

[Afghanistan Veterans Association] That's my generation and experience

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] Because it is staffed by Veterans who understand the struggles of today's Veterans and there are no ego to have to deal with.

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] They are fighting for the vets. We never hear the legion on any networks. Legion backed up the new chart in 2006, never thinking about the new vets. Classic baby boomers mentality, give me and fuck the rest.

[Veterans Canada] Feel like legion has lost touch, many leadership positions held by associates who never served a day. Had one say my war was not a real war.. I lost it changed branches, was going to leave legion.. peacekeeping was worse than Afghanistan in my opinion and I have done both..

[Royal Canadian Military Institute] The RCMI has the ear and respect of government and military command. Why is CVA on this list? They are thugs and bullies.

[Equitas] Only group actually fighting for us

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] The above list is comprised of rubber-stamp organizations which do as the sitting government's (which ever party is in power) directives. Though they may spin it any way they like, it doesn't change the outcomes. They are in it for themselves...just look at the Dominion Legion Commander who collects \$100k + salary and expenses and travel and to top it off...his kids get 2 of 4 legion scholarships...and you wonder why membership is down? There is NO TRANSPARENCY in the finances as well...it's all very fuzzy accounting.

[None] None are currently suited as there has become too much division among veterans starting with the legion and veterans advocacy.

[Unit/Branch Associations] They are more in touch with the troops, act more as a family due to branch/unit allegiances and connections, and a greater chance of having been deployed together.

[Wounded Warriors, Unit/Branch Associations, CVA] I don't relate to the Legion atmosphere and don't believe Legion advocates for or is in touch with current members or recent veterans

[Equitas] So far this is the only organization that I see making any headway with issues that matter to me. Modern veterans want compensation on par with other workers and right now we don't get anything near what a civilian Government employee would receive for a similar injury. I wish the Legion was the organization but with few veterans in the upper levels of the organization and the stance of supporting the New Veterans Charter there is a huge disconnect between the Legion and my generation.

[I don't know] Any organization not in bed with the government would be best. The government doesn't care about veterans; they have taken a combative stance against veterans. Veterans' Affairs is part of the government. The Legion seems to be in bed with Veterans' Affairs.

[Equitas] They have talked to wounded vets and know what is needed to help them. They realize that the first and most important thing a wounded vet needs is the tax free life long monthly disability pension. All the other stuff is good for the 1 or 2% that can jump through all the hoops to qualify but that is all that get it. The pension is the bug back bone of the disability system

[Soldier On] Soldier On bought me a bike so I can get back on the road and give me a chance to regain a sense of self esteem and feeling of accomplishment. I soldier On since april 2016

[Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association] Although being a Sgt-at-Arms at my branch, I feel disconnected with the local establishment. Very little emphasis toward anything military or for Veteran's of modern conflict or a "young" Veteran of 54 y/o like myself. They're good people but the whole place is stuck in the '70's and they call the Canadian flag, the "new" flag!!! The RCL for years has been eating their young by fostering the 'good 'ole boys club' and did not prepare the oncoming generation with relevant and coherent action toward making it hospitable to younger Veterans. Even to the level of being hostile toward (witnessed) serving members in uniform. Myself at my branch, I've been challenged by an older member who never served and disrespected me while wearing full dress uniform with medals.

[Veterans Canada] cause they actually helped me when I was homeless

[ANAF Vets] From last posting, ANAF Vets was more supportive even during Remembrance Day Ceremonies. Legion in Brandon had no plans for post parade activities. Majority of Vets attended ANAF Vets to listen to the Pipers and enjoy a brew with senior Vets.

[Veterans Canada] I believe the legion for the most part have forgotten their mission, to support Vets. I find the legions here in NI are just glorified banquet halls. Struggling to stay alive. They are not open only for events. When you go there looking for support or info no one knows what you are talking about for the most part most members are civilian with no military background. When there are events for a young Vet to attend it's always during the day and if your are young and still working you can not attend. Last year I took time off to go to different events in doing so I had to take time off work which in the long run hurt my family's finances. There is nothing to do

[Wounded Warriors] Sole purpose is to advocate for Veterans whereas Legion has become too political and intolerant of dissent or opinions that do not match Dominion Command "official" policy

[Marijuana For Trauma, Veterans Helping Veterans] Because they are not doing it for money, they are helping others because they've all suffered through the system and now they want to help the next guy in line out of pure intent and love. This is the only organization in Canada that I've found who help veterans because they truly care. One of a kind Peer Support system and now MFT is building treatment centres to help treat veterans for free because Veterans Affairs Canada is killing veterans to to lack of support for those suffering.

[Unit/Branch Associations] Two reasons. 1 your lot came off looking like a bunch of political lackies in the last election. Instead of being a/the voice for Vets you sounded like the voice for political parties. I didn't appreciate your TV antics. 2 My last visit to a Legion was memorable, but not in a good way. I was treated as an outsider, made to feel like I was trespassing all the while standing in my dress uniform on Nov 11. Stunning! My only connection to the Legion since is through the veterans speaking week in the fall. I would rather drive to some remote community's grade school and help them with their assembly and then stay to talk to kids about life in the military then rub elbows with "comrades" in the legion.

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] They are actually bringing forth real concerns and making it known in the media what we want changed. Legion has sat on its hands and done very little on our concerns of today. You can't change things unless you get the publics support. Government is very reluctant to change and the Legion needs to be engaged both at the Government and with the media. No hiding behind closed doors.

[Wounded Warriors] Again, I have done my time in hell, and I just don't trust most of the groups out there. I have been lied to by VAC, betrayed by the government I serve, 9/10 times unit/branches is just some ass hat looking for promotion points, hell if you ask me, even the minister of Vet affairs is a joke. The one thing that will never lie to your face, be it hurtful or not, is a soldier that's been to the front.

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] RCL talks a lot, but cannot show the public what they say they do is in fact effective. NSNU Command, in 2015, spent 38% of their \$7K budget for Veterans Outreach on brochures - not a penny for a vet. 44 vets begged for assistance from the Benevolent Fundeach got approx. \$250.....but I could not get details on how much went un-spent. Modern Day vets do not trust the RCL and, in many cases, if they ever ventured into a RCL branch, are met with "are you a member?", No?....well who will sign you in?" I joined the RCL in 1979 and since 2006 I have found it harder and harder to remain as a member. I served in Canada, Sinai, Bosnia and Afghanistan (3 tours). I stay on as a member in hopes that I can improve things and attract new vets. The culture of denying info by insisting that I use the chain of command (branch - zone - district-Prov Command) is frustrating in trying to get timely info. Now it appears that asking the hard questions, politely, may be responded with an Article 3. I have decided to stay with the RCL until end 2017, if there has been no marked improvement wrt vets support by that time I will not renew my membership. When I put on that RCL blazer I am always in fear of meeting one of my COIN team members from Kandahar days in the Dand and Panjwahi.....I fear the look of shame or disgust they will cast upon me.....and I don't like my own feeling of shame of wearing the accoutrements of an organization that I feel has lost its raison d'etre. Leaving the RCL will feel like defeat. But staying on with the RCL will feel like re-enforcing failure....by moving on to other vet groups could feel like re-enforcing success.

[National Council of Veterans Associations] No one organization appeals to all veterans. Some vets associate with people from their old regiment (regimental associations), others from their old trade group (naval divers, airborne, armour, etc), and yet others just want to be left alone because their experience in the military left a lot to be desired. The NCVA could step up its game but allow/encourage vets to join any veterans organization, so long as all vets are counted somewhere.

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] Because I no longer support fraud and false flag operations. Also, the Legion's handling of Rick Simpson has so outraged me in exposing the Legion's true agenda. - No Thank you. Not even for a poppy

[None] All of these organizations have good intentions, however there seems to be more time spent fighting between them than actually advocating for veterans. They all think their organization is the best instead of concentrating on working together and getting the job done. Unfortunately the RCL has become nothing more than a social club for associate members. As a veteran and a member of Br 105, I feel out of touch with my Br because they don't really understand the needs of veterans in this day and age. Out of a membership of roughly 200 - only 30 are ordinary members and less than half of that come out to the legion. The remainder are elderly and can't participate due to health reasons. Don't get me wrong my Br does honour veterans - they just don't understand the needs or how to assist today's veterans. I won't abandon my Br because I believe change needs to come within. I may not be able to change the RCL as a whole but I can affect change and promote understanding within Br 105.

[NATO Veterans Association of Canada] Could be Royal Canadian Legion if they would accept new ideas from Veterans and not afraid of going forward. They seem to be stuck in 1950's.

[Wounded Warriors] Because you (RCL) missed the biggest boat that has sailed in recent times and it was full of Afghan Vets!

[On my own] I did walk at the local branch to fill a claim after being injured in a suicide bomber explosion in Afghanistan. I walked out very disappointed of the "I don't care attitude" of the officer that was there. I would joint the legion that day, didn't know much about the legion at the time. CVA took real good care of helping me with my claim after.

[None] I did walk at the local branch to fill a claim after being injured in a suicide bomber explosion in Afghanistan. I walked out very disappointed of the "I don't care attitude" of the officer that was there. I would joint the legion that day, didn't know much about the legion at the time. CVA took real good care of helping me with my claim after.

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] The Legion, as I was member from 2002 to 2015, never helped me when I needed them, I was in good standing, but when it came to claims with VAC NO GOD DAMN BACK UP FROM THE RCL. I am sure the Graves of Dad and his brothers turned into Artic frozen land! Tried of the Legion being two faced!

[Canadian Veterans Advocacy] because Legions have lost touch with reality, I witnessed a former member who got assistance from a Legion service officer, when he finally got a award, he was meant to fell that he should be real happy with what he received and thankful that the legion helped him, even though the amount was way below what I know others had received for the same condition, when I said he should appeal the amount just as a formality of the process, as the amount can only go up or stay the same, the same branch service officer told him he would risk losing what they had granted him. Which is false, but he was told also by the same service officer that once he acknowledged the money in his account then there was nothing else he could do.

The data from these responses shows that the Royal Canadian Legion holds a slim minority of faith in its abilities over other Veterans organizations in Canada, an average of 27% of responders felt the Legion was the best organization. No historical data is available to show trends. However given the sentiments in social media and responses from the survey there is an assumption that can be made to suggest that there is a decline. If we further take into account that ten years ago the number of Veterans advocacy groups were few, and Unit Associations were limited to looking after their own, helping to promote Unit activities and maintaining a network of connections for former Unit members, there is an assumption that faith in the Legion to assist Veterans is further dwindling.

Section Four: Final Comments

The last section of the results asked responders two questions in an open context to address the issues they see at Legions. Below are the highlighted comments from both questions, all responses are quoted directly to preserve authenticity. The complete list of responses can be found in the Annex 1.

The following responses to “What changes do you think the Legion should embrace?” were recorded:

Vets only in control of your organization. Protest the New Veterans charter very very loudly.

There is a new crew of veterans out there (afghan vets). Embrace them. Make them part of your team.

amend the legion bureaucracy. It's set up for a legion which gets about 40-50 volunteers. Now it's about 10-15 dependable volunteers who shoulder way to much responsibility. Although I volunteer on my local executive, I have a family of three and a full time job. We need to reduce the bureaucracy ASAP. Let's keep what we must to meet the criteria of a service org so we can use our limited volunteer base focused on community service.

Reconize the vet , no matter if they are from war time or not.. I walk into the local Legion and 98 % have never seen a uniform

Update terminology (eg: "Dominion" Command), drop the Legion uniforms and medals; restrict leadership roles to bona fide veterans, stop apologizing for the NVC, take a look at better more inclusive social events, remind associates that younger vets have as much or more combat experience as their 1940s counterparts.

We need to study what other Veterans organizations are doing and borrow some of their better ideas- invite them to join us, the RCL. We need to ensure all Legion members understand what being a Veteran means. I went to an event and asked Legion members from other branches if they had any Veterans attending our Provincial Service Officers visit. I was told, "No, they are almost all gone." Well that chap got a surprise when five Veterans participated in a photo op. IF THE LEGION MEMBERS CANNOT IDENTIFY A VETERAN, HOW CAN WE EXPECT THE PUBLIC TO "GET IT?"

The RCL really needs to reimagine it's appearance, the stigma of a veteran is a grey haired 70 to 90 year old and that is one of the biggest reasons modern era veterans are not joining. They feel they don't belong in the "old Boys" club. Most of Canada's veterans are now under the age of 60 and we make new ones everyday that are as young as 16 by the VAC defined status of a veteran.

Limit command positions to those who can actually carry the title Veteran. This is a veterans organization that was created by vets for vets! Anything less causes a power struggle between those who are want to be's, never have been, and for the most part never will be veterans. Crass comments for sure but, I'm saying what many of the world war vets have wanted to publicly say and instead of saying it just departed off in to the sunset biting their lip ending their time with the legion.

Those that say they represent veterans should actually ask those veterans what are needed by today's "New" veteran

Changes in the way people are nowadays. With social media I keep in touch with the people I want and don't really have to attend a place to talk to those with similar experiences. By branching out more on social media plus providing events that would attract newer veterans to join, it may be successful in increasing membership.

Limit executive status for non veterans with an exception being granted by Dominion Command for locations where there are no veterans interested in holding or are incapable of holding office.

Transparency in their decisions, accounting and finance, respect of dissenting opinions, eliminate the oligarchy, and much more. Oh, and start supporting those members for whom the legion was initially derived for.

I think the Legion should preserve it's traditions rather than pander to special interest groups.

Veterans only as members. The Internet. Fighting for veterans and being vocal. Accountability for all funds raised and spent. Open and transparent. Messes on bases are dying. Partner with the messes, eliminate mess dues and put those funds into a veterans programs. Fight for better pensions for the military veterans. Look What a politician gets compared to a veteran. I hate legion medals they confuse the civilian population they should be eliminated. Civilians see these on people who never served and think they are a hero or veteran. It is stolen Valour.

Eliminate at least one level of command. 100% financial transparency to include all expenditures and compensation. Nothing at all secret. Accept more risk at the branch level to allow service officers to act without other signatures. Act on weekends, evenings, whenever a vet calls. Fast track actual vets in all executives.

The legion needs to talk to more of the new generation of veterans. Take into account that most of us have families and would benefit from more family oriented activities not just the current you of activities. They need to listen and not turn a deaf ear. When my ideas were presented at my local legion when I was inquiring as to joining, my application was never submitted and no longer do I get my calls returned. So why join. As a medical professional I could lead a lot of support to the organization in aiding with claims and medical forms. Need big changes to make me join now.

Accept all Veterans regardless whether they be Regular or Reserve, overseas tours or not. Also, enough political bullshit from Ottawa and get rid of the non Veterans on the executives.

Updating legions halls (they all seem dark and gloomy), offer events younger veterans/currently serving members would be interested in.

Revert back to supporting injured cf members, toss the wanker wannabe folks who collect a chest full of community service medals and go back to being a club for people who served that support down and out members.

I love my Legion branch and they have made me feel very welcome but this is not the case everywhere. My generation of veterans is looking for a place to go where people will understand what we have been through, something WWII vets, due to their numbers, never had to worry

about. What we find instead is many branches are run by people that never served who actually treat young veterans with suspicion and contempt, as if our presence is ruining their club. Striking a balance between the branches and the organization's mission is a big problem. The fact is the Legion is an organization that was built to advocate on behalf of veterans. It needs to get in step with the needs of the roughly 700,000 Canadian veterans alive today and stand up to the government on our behalf. That is, along with remembrance, the organization's purpose.

hosting lan servers

Make the Legion be relatable to the next generation of veterans. A change that will connect with us. Whether it be a niche in advocating changes at the federal level or niche for social setting to meet up with other veterans. I recommend a niche in advocating positive change to support veterans in need. I think that is where the legion can make the greatest impact. Secondly, I understand membership is dwindling, but I don't feel legion membership should be given to anyone, who was not a cf member. It will be hard to truly advocate for someone when the person advocating did not share a similar experience or event together.

Stop abusing the poppy selling cheap merchandise dividing veterans into groups and supporting the government over us

IF the Legion is still a Veteran organization then cater to Veterans and the basis of respect, start with removing hats at the door, I am a Salmon Arm member but spend more time at the Enderby Legion!!! Friggin politics!

It requires a top down overhaul. The target demographic is no longer veterans, as due to heavy influx of civilian executives, the for military by military modus operandi has faded into obscurity. That's not to say the best intentions isn't there, and it is unfortunate, but the legion is no longer seeing new vets joining as there is little interest in what is offered.

Stop thinking like World War II and Korea Vets and start thinking like Afghanistan Vets. This is a different generation. They think differently, act differently, communicate differently and participate differently. They want a space that represents them as much as it represents the past. There is a reason that you are not seeing as many Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Yugoslavia vets on parade or in our Legions.....its not a space that they feel welcome in.

Amalgamation with all other group n all executive must have prior service

More accountability. More people at the top who have served. As a matter of fact, all the senior officials should have served. Spend more money on public education.

See previous responses, but lack of gender or younger age group inclusiveness is the primary issue. Society continues to change as well, I'm not sure how well the current Legion structure fits into it, nor do I have a good solution for where it will go.

I have been very disappointed with how long things have been taking for support for Service Dogs. I recently received a service dog and am still awaiting funding from my branches poppy fund to cover the costs of my training and dog. To date I have born all these costs myself and am ok with that however I was hoping for funding in accordance with the poppy fund guidelines. I have seen many of my fellow service dog handlers being approved for funding by their branches

but denied by AB Command. This is very disappointing and making me consider leaving the legion.

Be the leader in giving hope for the veterans that dont see a place for them in todays society. We are soldiers without missions. A lot of veterans were medically release in early career. It leaves a big big scar and it should really be a priority for any veterans organization to partnership and support those organization that gives back to the veterans in need.

The Legion should change so that Retired/Military members are full members with voting privileges and those who have no ties to the Military are associate members and have no vote and should not hold any office except under exceptional circumstances.

The following responses to “Do you have any comments you’d like to offer?” were recorded:

Not once have i ever been approached by the legion for membership. Get out there. Actively recruit new membership, don't wait for it to walk through the door, because it wont.

We are a shattered group of new vets. Little cohesiveness and struggling to make ends meet & regain a semblance of a life after service. We are paraded for gain and find the powers that be turn their backs when we need help. I was medically released and I'm now looking at loosing my house after being gauged by the services that are out in place to assist me. I served 22 years and there isn't any honour despite serving my country in 3 different continents and in combat. Here at home I beg for services, support, and medical help. From serving to begging & people wonder why we have no heart... It's been taken.

Thanks for asking these questions, at least you are trying to listen

I will not join the legion unless the national councils books become public

Try to unite the groups and be open all the way to the top anyone who has had a problem and not fixed at local level should be able to keep going till they get to the top or they are satisfied

I am just about ready to stop paying my dues. My grandparents were charter members of my community branch. I worked/volunteered/held executive positions for over 20 yrs. i have transferred to another branch due to new (less than 10 yrs membership) executive with "my way or the highway" mentality and say they are now running the place like a business. I thought it was a non profit, service organization. Being fairly newly retired, I had planned to volunteer a good deal of time at my local branch. I am very disappointed. I truley miss the old fart military people that were active in my local branch that have passed away. They were level headed, kind, gentle people. Now, I just dont care. I havent stepped into any legion for more than a year. I could go on and on, but Ill spare you. After reading a newspaper story recently about a member that took their concerns to levels outside their branch being suspended from the legion for not following the military like lines of communications, Im done. I feel her pain. Myself and the other "sinners" (as we were called by the person chairing a general meeting) who dared to challenge and ask pointed questions are feeling pretty done. Good luck, comrades.

Still trying to figure out if I fit in, honestly I'm a cold war reservist vet who on occasion wonder if I should be there then I realize there really aren't many vets there anyway. But I'm truly interested to help out but it just feels awkward like I'm sitting in someone else's kitchen trying to have a

coffee but looking for a polite way to get to the door. Still haven't got my legion uniform yet

Stop making things to sell. The legion isn't a brand. I understand money is necessary to grease the wheels but there is obviously too much overhead in the organization.

Yes, for the first time in 100 years, the Legion has a chance to thoughtfully consider the direction it would like to go. Please keep talking to young vets, they're smart and they care about these institutions. Also, it's not enough to hand out applications to releasing soldiers, consider just giving them a temporary membership that they can renew after a set amount of time. The biggest challenge the legion is facing is just getting vets to walk in the front doors.

In the past, I have been called "a pretend Veteran" because I did not serve in the Second World War or Korea.

None, because the thoughts and problems of a Veteran have ceased to mean anything to the Legion.

The legion by their own charter isn't supposed to oppose government, but that doesn't mean they can't advocate against poor policies like the lump sum award. Basically grow a spine and use your gigantic voice for the people you claim you represent. Anything short of that and you have failed.

Pursue changes to the new veterans charter for lifetime pensions.

I served my country with distinction and honour, took part in the Swiss Air crash off Peggy's Cove, NS in 1998; did a tour with the Navy to the Persian Gulf in 2001; and a tour to Afghanistan with the Army in 2006. I've served on the executive committee with the local legion as the treasurer, membership chair, and service officer to be let down by one that only wanted more than what I could give and then made the comment that they are sick and tired of dealing with those that say they suffer from PTSD!!! I do in fact suffer from PTSD and have multiple physical injuries. I no longer serve on that executive committee because of this comment and am thinking about relinquishing my membership from the legion all together because there are too many "Non-Veterans" saying they only have the best interests of the veterans in mind but then treat veterans like crap! Feel free to quote my entire survey to National Command

The RCL screwed injured Afghan vets by voting in favor of the NVC and haven't done anything to correct it.

Active recruiting at community events, military displays and improving social media. Keeping members informed of upcoming events and meetings would be a bonus, I was a member of the Trenton Legion and never was informed of general meetings, gatherings, monthly events; they were posted within the legion by using social media to keep members informed would be a bonus.

I stopped being a member when I realized you didn't give a shit about my service because I didn't serve in WW1/2 Korea

It's time to rebuild from the ground up. If that means closing branches and starting over, so be it. Lets get back to a Legion my dad (WW II Navy Vet) would be proud of. It's time for Dominion Command to become transparent with it's members, why am I as a member of the Legion not

allowed to know how much my executive committee members are paid? The POPPY FUND is for VETS, not to be give out to cadets, school teams, etc. Read your own bylaws and ensure ALL branch executives are aware of this too. So sick of seeing pictures in the back of the Legion magazine showing branches giving away poppy fund monies as they so proudly announce in the write ups.

A veteran is a veteran is a veteran is wrong. I believe a veteran served in a conflict zone not just a military member or former military. The term veteran like PTSD is over used and has lost its true meaning.

I hope you share these results up your "chain of command" and that other branches or even provincial commands adopt a similar questionnaire.

I come from a strong RCL family. My dad a WWII D-Day vet is a strong supporter of the RCL. I lost faith in the RCL when they supported a flawed NVC which was harmful to vets

This is a dead organization. Let it die.

An example of how backwards this organization is was a recent broadcast on CBC radios west explaining how "Hipsters" were being recruited for the Prince George Legion. The organization is spending more time recruiting members of the public versus focusing on serving recently retired members. Good luck but I don't think this is changing in the near future - and I for one certainly will not be a part of the organization.

I like the idea of the Legion and wish to rejoin a legion. ...I just feel unwelcome in any one I attend. The only time patrons seem to care I'm there is remembrance day.

I wish you well and the RCL is not for me at this time. I was a member in the past and the only thing I remember as a benefit was the magazine. I served 17and half years total (part Militia (not Reserves please)) and part Air Force. I. was in the Persian Gulf Conflict. (Never officially recognized as a war at the time). In fact at the time the RCL did very little to make it recognized as one. I was not well for quite a few years, but the military said I was fine. Fortunely I am fine now but have many friends who remember my poor digestive condition. At the time I looked for info in Gulf War syndrome and basically, there was nothing. There was no one there for me. In fact when I tell/told people I was there I get/got more of a smirk than any kind of good reaction. In fact I still have trouble wearing my medals around other Veterans. I realize this has changed somewhat now, but in the end I helped myself.

I would like to say that I'm not trying to disparage the contribution that has been made by thousands of Legion members that never served in the forces. They keep this organization going day by day and I am grateful. I am a Legion supporter and have argued with many of my peers as to why we still need the Legion. I hope we can get it to a place where veterans of all ages feel it is relevant and want to be a part of it.

I am so disenfranchised with the legion I have grown to resent any member I see wearing a rack of legion gongs and no service tours/ CD. It's as if you say we want to help vets and be friends.... Just not with you or any of YOUR vet friends. It's a shame because I want the legion to be something I would be interested in... But it's not.

I have never had a positive experience when interacting with the Legion. When my father died, after being a paying member of the Legion his membership lapsed in the last year of his life, our family approached the Legion to get help accessing "The Last Post Fund". We were treated like scum. Later while I was on tour in Bosnia my children, while on tour of The Museum of the Regiments, were told by a Legion member guiding the tour that their fathers weren't real soldiers. Also in the 1970's when a friend of mine, also a soldier, was refused membership in the Legion because he wasn't a real soldier. My unit was on parade at a cenotaph in the cold and rain as a guard and cenotaph vigil party. The local legion was having the service indoors, my unit was not invited to that, they only wanted us at the cenotaph for last post and the wreath laying. It was decided at the service to do the last post there, my unit was not informed. This can give you a general indication of why I feel the way I do, there is more.

I was shocked to learn that a Past President over spent his budget by \$30,000.00 with no legal action being taken against him

<http://www.nationalpost.com/m/wp/blog.html?b=news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-legion-suspends-82-year-old-member-for-questioning-groups-treatment-of-veterans>

(Authors Note: This the sole comment left by this responder in this section)

As I said I was a member and a executive, 3 of us on the board resigned and quit the leagion do to the bull shit that was going on. The old members do not acknowledge the younger vet. In this branch it was said those guys are not vet, I served 6 months as a peace keeper in Cyprise in the 80s . I served a better part of 10 years in the CAF. There was even a gut that put down the branch on Facebook I sat at a meeting and demanded a apology from this man and nothing. This branch DOES NOT WANT TO CHANGE and bring in new things, it is bad we tried to bring food in but the ladies aux was in a shit fit and said no one is going to use.ower kitchen it is also sad on a Friday and Saturday night it is closed at 5 or 6 pm if you want to hear more Brian 604-414-9614, a Vet is a Vet young or old we gave ower county a blank check

Yes. Stop the campaigning to attract non-veterans to become members and focus on outreach and inclusion of a new generation of Veterans. And, for Gods sake, loosen up on the use of the Poppy!

Quit kissing the governments butt

Personally I believe that the legion has turned into a club of people who are more supporters than actual people who served. The last time we stepped foot in a legion we were made to feel unwelcome by people who had never served a day in their lives. They were there to drink cheap booze and play darts. We had one beer and left. The legion needs to listen to what actual military members want and need if they want to bring people into their doors. First off make it manditory for all legions to have a minimum percentage of actual vets or serving military members. Make it manditory for executive members to be actual vets or serving members. Just be more transparent with where the funds are going. There is too much lining of the pockets by so many legions.

I feel veterans associate the legion with ex army drinking buddies, old boys club, etc. This is not an environment most will seek out post release. The majority of soldiers releasing today are tainted against the 'old boys club', and prefer to disassociate with that dynamic. There should be more awareness brought to what the legion can offer in terms of support to the 'new/young' veteran.

I was a reservist and reg force over the past 15 years and did two combat tours. If we had known more of the Legions activities we might attend more often then just Remembrance Day.

Honestly I hope you guys will continue supporting Healing waters. I've been making flies with them never cost me a penny and it was held at the legion on Boul. Wilfrid-Hamel, Québec

Look at re-branding. A new attitude can be marketed.

Show Canadians and Veterans how funds are spent and salary's and per deims of all top members of the Executive of Dominion Command . Stop interfering in Veterans Advocating the Government

We (the veterans) have got to get off our rears and be more pro-active in the running of the legions. I admire and respect those individuals who are in these positions now, but if they never served, then they can never feel or understand what those who did. Listening to vets talking about their experiences (if they talk at all), does not give you the same perspective as having served. All veterans have to be recognized more , not just WW2/Korea/Afghanistan , but all of those Hundreds/Thousands who served with the UN, in Europe and at home. Does anyone really know how many of those people lost or gave their lives in the service of their country, but if not a war, so little notice seems to be given. Ask any civilian who a vet is, and I believe 99 percent will say those who served in WW2/Korea/Afghanistan. More people lost their lives in service with the UN than Afghanistan, but I rarely see acknowledgement of that fact.

The Legion has helped me when I needed it, and that was much appreciated, but I feel that the organization as a whole is more focused on next weeks meat draw than the issues facing current veterans. Grow a spine. Take a side.

Good luck, but I beleive the RCL is going to die a slow painful death becuase of the inability to effect change fast enough to keep up with the New Generation Of Veterans.

Support the equitas lawsuit

Mess is cheaper. I have to pay their dues. Legion seemded more interested in my dues then me as a member.

The Legion is entirely out of step with modern veterans. I would not join it after my 20 years of service, nor would I recommend it for any of my soldiers. I feel the Legion is outdated and out of touch with modern veterans. If it cannot modernise, it should make way for new organisations better placed to advocate on behalf of modern veterans rather than non-vets.

Legion needs to voluntarily open financial records, reduce executive salaries drastically and reduce corporate director level numbers. The few Legion buildings I have been in need upgrading and "freshening" ad I assume is indicative of most buildings. Also remove superfluous Legion "medals" awarded. The only medals worn should be those earned in service of the country.

Joined you once and got nothing but sneered at by the branch, was one of 5 vets there, one died and they didnt even send an escort for him , never again

I can be contacted at any time. Anonymous is for cowards. Warrant Officer (ret'd) Warren Cave CD. (RCR & RCEME) caveman919@live.ca I hope my answers have helped. Keep up the great work with the Poppy Campaign. Pro Patria!

The beret is outdated, not many know how to wear it properly.

Disgusting reports in the press lately. You are now making yourselves irrelevant.

My father and I were members of the Royal Canadian Legion from 1971 thru to his death in 2006 (he because I paid his membership and me as a serving and then retired). When he passed in February of 2006 NOT ONE LEGION member came to his memorial service, church funeral or burial as a member of the legion... I know there were some in attendance as friends however there was no formal "Legion" representation at any of those events. As of that event I cancelled my legion membership as well....

I have tried to join the legion on 2 different occasions in 2 different provinces and both times was meet with resistance. In both cases I was met with resistance and not felt welcomed. I was told that I needed a sponsor to join but when I asked who would be willing to sponsor me I was shunned by other members. When I told my story to a president from another branch I was lectured on how Afghan vet are elitists and far to snobby. Why doesnt the legion go into the recruit schools just like sisip does and offer the new troops a roaming membership? A membership that while they are serving they are welcome into any legion in Canada. When they retire they would then have to settle on a branch but until then offer them a taste. Offer them a familiar place that no matter where they are in canada they are welcomed in? Or set it up on line so they can join with proof of service recieve their membership without this need for sponsorship. I understand that some dont do sponsorship but I know what happened to me. I guarantee that if you asked the serving members now what the legion can off them 90% owould have no clue. The legion has lost a connection with those who are serving now. Introduce yourselves to them and welcome them in. get back on the bases and show up tho the christmas briefings and recruit schools. Legion needs to make the effort with them and welcome them. I am not the only one that has been shunned by the legion, there is alot of us out there.

Would like to see and hear more community engagement on behalf of Veterans.

You should have figured out how messed up the legion is a long time ago. I am glad that your membership levels are dropping. Your organization is a joke, and I will beg and plead to all the Veteran's I know, please don't support the Legion of Criminals!

A lot of members feel their service is better or more important that other members service. The NVC has only reinforced this mentality by the creation of a second class of veteran who feels their service is not as important as past service since our injuries and family's are not looked after the same way as past service veterans.

You are our quasi union. Start acting like one and not a puppet of the government.

I like that the Legion support the Cadet program.

Yes. My name is John Russelle snow. I belong to the Mount-Uniacke Nova-Scotia Legion. I have a total of 15 years with this organization and feel if the top brass does not change soon, the only

people that will be left in the legion will be civies! I have witnessed verbal abuse at a general meeting by a red haired lady on the branch executive, two meetings ago. I have witnesses if required. It is simple things like management, remove civies from management and insert Veterans. Your answer will be: we don,t have enough Vets to till fill these positions. My answer is: if you stay on the same 1900,s attitude, the legion will not last another ten years! Now us the time to change. I volunteer to replace a civie on the RCL staff. I have served our nation 26 years. I served and was hurt during a war conflict in 1990, Qatat. I have four real medals. I would stop and get rid of the fake right breast legion medals. My point is that ONLY Veterans have the God given right to wear the medals that they earned and deserved. I would cancel the 500 thousand dollars for this sports 2017 in Toronto! I would also order a federal audit on the RCL. I would go back as far as possible and charge any person who broke the law! Our jails would be busy, I presume. Anyways,enjoy your meeting on the rock as I will not re-new my membership for 2017. You have Six months to prove to me and the thousands of other Veterans, that REAL CHANGE is about to happen. Remember, Veterans and Families got rid of Mr. Harper and crew last election. We can do the same to Mr. eagles and team next year. So, in closing, I believe six months is a fair time line. After that, the RCL will get fair game for protests!

John Russelle Snow

277 Lakecrest Dr.

Mount-Uniacke N.S

B0n-1z0

P.s. I,m not afraid to put my name to this survey. You probably will ban me from the RCL for speaking out but when you take a 82 year olds legion card from her after 36 years and numerous volunteer hours. Her dad and brothers all Vets, the RCL should be ashamed of them selfs!

The branch I use to belong to couldn't even be bothered to stand around the cenotaph on Nov 11. They exit out a side door to place a reef leaving the honour guard out side by themselves. When I did apply to join I had to call to see if my membership had arrived (it sat behind the bar apparently, they said they didn't have my phone number, it was on the application) , when I did get the card, the clowns couldn't even spell my name right with the info in front of them, **(Authors Note: Legion Branch in this case may be in Fredericton, NB based on the responders answer to their city of residence)**

Be Proactive. dont wait for the Military members to come to you you go to them show that your there for us and what you can do for us.

Yes, if you want to talk about my answers give me a shout. Dave Scouten 587-335-2818

Additional Responses from Other Sources

In addition to the comments left in the survey itself, many people felt the need to comment on the survey as it was posted and shared on Facebook and Reddit. Below is a selection of highlighted comments. These comments were not left anonymous, because these comments were not left anonymous the credit is given to those who left the comments.

Comments on Reddit

No fun being hit on by a bunch of old dudes? Too many non-veteran members who just use it as a place to get cheap drinks?
u/angelcake

Opening up the legion to non members really fucked them over. Now many people who are in charge have never served
u/Western_Islander

Fuck the Legion. They lost their way after advocating for the NVC. I would love to see new blood at the top. We need some crusty old CWO from Astan days to sort that shit pile out. I want to believe but I am too jaded to have hope.
u/neckbeardbro

So, who wants to bet this never sees the light of day because we all know almost everyone is going to make reference to the amount of non-veterans involved lol
u/Cymion

This is the largest reason I (and many others I know) have a problem with the Legion (copied from further up in this sub)
<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/national/canadian+legion+suspends+year+member+questioning+group+treatment/11970860/story.html>
u/Ibmeister

Comments on Facebook

Maybe it's because the legion seems to be more concerned about catering to members who are descendants of veterans than actual veterans.

Of course, I'm not a "real veteran" like so-and-sos grandfather....as I've been told at a legion. Legion is full of Walter Mitteys that love wearing their "uniform" with their special legion "medals" on Remembrance Day. Look at the executive of so many legions-maybe if there were more actual former service members on the executives of legions you'd actually be there for veterans....

But maybe that's just my narrow view.
Andrew O'Gorman with 17 Likes

Because you get made fun of by civilian members. ("see ya later Jesus", followed by the laughter of full grown men), after placing a drink at the Table for One, and handing in my Poppy box, as I'd been out for my 5th straight day. Promptly turned in my membership
Ger Ramier with 1 Like

As a Client of Veteran Affairs under The New Veterans Charter i was cheated out of a lifelong disability pension along with other benefits for myself and my family, Thousands of wounded and injured Veterans fall under the NVC. Your royal canadian legion fully supported the charter back in 2006 and they still only support the lump sum no pensions today, You can take your legion survey and shove it up your ass !!!

Tony Makariak

Sadly the Legions own Constitution and By-laws make any real change impossible. To make the changes necessary at both the Branch and National level would require a majority of the full members to vote for those changes. As that would mean that many "Non-Vet" regular members would be voting the power away from themselves it's highly unlikely that any change re-empowering Veterans within the Legion would pass. Unfortunately the Legion as a whole is reaping the fruits of what it sewed years ago and you can't really blame us younger Vets from reacting accordingly

Brad Hart

let me see... I fall under the NVC and i am only worth what? 40% less than other veterans... and i haven't exactly seen a big presence in advocating for those like me, who fall under a system that isn't fair or just across the board. hard to sit across from someone when you know they are either A) Suffering under the NVC or B) Not under the NVC which is demoralizing and I don't exactly want to be in a place that has (or supports) a two-tiered system

Angela Czapiewska with 1 Like

We will know if they mean it by whether the results are published or not....complete with a breakdown by demographic.

Lorry Colin Bellamy

If younger military generations no longer attend messes, it ' s unlikely they ' d be interested in running Legions. Therefore, non-vet civilian-managed Legions would no longer have their inherent purpose hence become obsolete eventually - except for cheap booze.

Richard Courtemanche

Do you really think they give a shit about what we think? The Legion has lost all sway with new vets when they backed the New Charter and started letting civies hold positions of authority. Just my take on it.

Jamie Morel

As a veteran I have no interest in being part of the Legion. I don't see it as serving anyone's needs except its own. I don't even go to Remembrance Day Ceremonies run by the Legion as they have become too political and almost commercialized with how many wreaths they allow to be "on behalf of Joes Pizza Shop". I've been to ceremonies in Ottawa, Edmonton, Saskatchewan and Halifax. They are all the same. They have lost the meaning of Remembrance Day. Any Afghanistan Veterans in the Halifax Area, I would strongly recommend the Ceremony put on my 12 Wing Shearwater at the Afghanistan Memorial near the Wing Gym. It is short and to the point, focusing on Remembering, not profiting.

Kent Windover

Shares on Facebook

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

Don't forget to mention the "new veterans charter" or treatment of members like the lady who was kicked out because she asked embarrassing questions
Doug Richards with 1 "Wow" Reaction

I've been talking about a veterans Census for a few weeks now and someone was paying attention.
Aaron Bedard with 4 Likes

Well one branch wants input good to see.
VAC Veterans Accountability Commission with 4 Likes

Recommendations Based on Responses

No doubt that the readers of this report have felt their own emotions stirred by reading the comments from the responders and the additional comments on social media. Anger and sadness is a justifiable reaction when reading comments about how a Legion Branch literally turned their back to a Veteran or serving soldier who walked into a Branch. Or when requests for help from a Veteran in need went unanswered. Or when allegations of corruption went without investigation. Or the pain Veterans feel when the Legion, whose purpose is to protect Veterans, supported a piece of legislation that took away benefits from injured Veterans. And those are only some of the trends that came up during this survey.

Does that mean, as one responder put it, we should just “let [the Legion] die”? Progressive change is possible. The Legion can evolve and return to its grass roots foundations and meet the needs of today’s Veterans. To the readers of this report I suggest that if you are reading this you also believe there is hope that the Legion can evolve to meet the needs of our Veterans. But if this report were to fall on deaf ears than it would seem, at least to those who are on the fence about the Legion or have already given up on the Legion, that the Legion is on a one way street to obscurity. Regardless of how members, especially executives, of the Legion feel about the comments made by responders and how legitimate they feel the comments are, the sheer number of comments which echo the same trends warrants attention from executive members across the country.

Analysis of Responses

Initially the survey was set up to gather replies from the Veteran community to assist Branch 15 in attracting new members. It was inevitable that the responses would come from outside the Brampton area but the hope was to have all the responses serve the same end. The survey was set up to track the demographics of the responders to correspond responses to the Brampton and out of the Brampton area.

What was received in terms of responses was far and above what the Branch expected. 1606 responses were received from nearly every corner of Canada, pointing to positive and negative impressions of the Legion as a whole and the reasons why. The scope of the survey and this report expanded as a result.

Google Forms was an excellent medium for the survey allowing for real-time tracking of responses and was able to directly export the raw data into a spreadsheet (see Annex 1). Responses poured in during the first 24 hours, over 900 individual responses were recorded. During the first week a total of 1200 responses were recorded. This suggests that there is a lot of Veterans on social media with a stake in the Legions success or demise. After the first week results continued to come but at a much slower rate. When responses became stagnate the survey was closed.

In addition to the expected survey responses many people felt the need to comment on social media about the survey and actually yielded the same responses that were in the survey data. This reinforced the comments in the survey and brought to light other issues. The survey was shared among anti-Legion groups which brought the issues of former members and disenfranchised Veterans to light. Many of these comments and issues may never have been officially recognized as issues within the Legion had the Legion only asked members in good standing what the Legion can do to support Veterans.

Authors note: I personally felt anger, disgust and sadness reading some of the comments in the raw data. I could not believe the stories that were coming out. If half of them are true, there is indeed a cancer within the Legion. A cancer that is quite literally killing the Legion.

Factors Likely to be Contributing to Responses

Beyond the obvious factors that led to each response, such as the responders personal experiences with the Legion there are a number of high profile incidents and issues in the public light that have, as was shown by some of the comments made by the responders, influenced the negative impressions of the responders. Most of the key influencers are well known in the media and should not come as a surprise to anyone in the Legion's leadership.

Joan Beznoski

First on this list is the case of Joan Beznoski. It's effect on the survey results is mainly due to the timing of the story reaching the media and social media at the same time as the survey was online.

82 year old Joan Beznoski, a member of the Lac du Bonnet branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, was banned for speaking out in support of Veterans by directly reaching out to the Dominion President. From the perspective of the membership, Veterans and Legion critics, removing a member with 36 years of service to the Legion and in support of Veterans for a break in protocol while attempting to speak up about a serious issue regarding the treatment of Veterans proves everything that the critics have been saying: the Legion is no place for Veterans.

Aggressive Poppy Copyright Enforcement

From the Legion website regarding the Poppy Trademark:

Why does the Legion have a trademark on the Poppy?

On June 30, 1948, The Royal Canadian Legion was given the responsibility to safeguard the Poppy as a sacred symbol of Remembrance by the People of Canada through an Act of Parliament in which the Legion was granted trademark copyright of the Poppy symbol in Canada. This responsibility was bestowed upon the Legion to ensure that the largest Veterans organization in the country would be able to act in preserving the Poppy as a sacred symbol of the sacrifice of our Veterans.

In doing so, the Legion accepted the obligation to ensure that it would never be used for commercial or personal gain and would never be desecrated through inappropriate use. It is for this reason – ensuring respectful and appropriate use of the Poppy symbol – that the Legion requires permission for the use of the trademark Poppy, or the Poppy image as it relates to Remembrance.

One of, if not the most, popular social media mediums on the internet using the Poppy on the logo of a sub-Reddit to promote Remembrance does not desecrate the Poppy, nor is it inappropriate use, nor is it for personal or commercial gain. It is a sign of Remembrance no different than a person in the public eye wearing the Poppy during Remembrance Week. It creates the illusion that the Legion is controlling the Poppy trademark for commercial gain when social media sites as well as knitting groups are issued warnings for copyright infringement while the Legion runs a Poppy store which sells Poppy related pins and apparel. To many it appears that the Legion is not protecting the Poppy, just their monopoly.



She wanted Canada's veterans treated better and got banned from legion for her troubles

An 82-year-old woman, 82, has been banned from the Royal Canadian Legion for a year after worrying about the treatment of veterans at her Manitoba branch.

NEWS.NATIONALPOST.COM



Legion's decision to kick out 82-year-old woman not a story, says Legion's Craig Hood

On Wednesday I had an article on Joan Beznoski, a long-time member of the Royal Canadian Legion who got suspended for trying to contact the legion's Dominion...

OTTAWACITIZEN.COM



Royal Canadian Legion tells Reddit to remove poppy symbol over trademark concerns

Canadian Redditors who thought they were paying tribute to soldiers ahead of Remembrance Day have received a notice from the Royal Canadian Legion...

O.CANADA.COM



Legion asks group to stop distributing knitted poppies

The Royal Canadian Legion says a group of Fredericton women should stop distributing the poppies they are knitting. It's an informal request as of now, but it could become a formal one, and might even end up in court if the knitters refuse...

ATLANTIC.CTVNEWS.CA



Corruption and Theft

It goes without saying that people are distrustful of an organization rife with corruption and theft in their ranks.

Sadly this case in Yellowknife is not the only case nor is it the only accusation. There was an accusation from a responder in this survey of an issue at the Springhill, N.S. Branch that warrants immediate attention.

Financial Transparency

In addition to the corruption and theft allegations are the requests from members and Veterans which have gone largely unanswered for greater financial transparency from Dominion Command and Dominion Executives; specifically in regards to the Executives salary and expenses.

Breaches of Privacy

It is understandable that no person would want to be associated with an organization which willfully or not violates the trust of its membership by accessing sensitive documents of Veterans without permission.

Banning Veterans Group from Parades

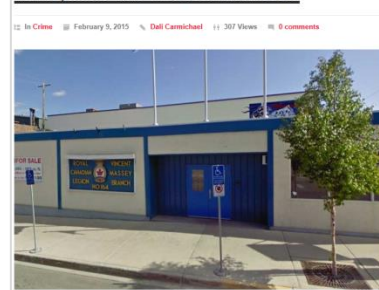
This echoes the trend of comments in this report that the Legion has a poor attitude towards Veterans.

Veterans and former Legion members speaking against the Legion

Any Veteran who has a presence on social media or maintains friendship with their fellow Veterans does not need to look far to find a fellow Veteran with a bad impression or worse of the Legion. While many pro-Legion groups exist in social media, equally as many anti-Legion groups exist. A Veterans organization which has lost the trust of Veterans will witness a snowball effect of losing more and more Veterans unless action is taken to change.

With all these points in consideration some readers of this report will undoubtedly find solace in the possibility that these stories are inaccurate or do not show the whole picture. While that is likely to be possible if not probable, the fact that these stories exist and are well known in Veteran communities will impact the overall impression of the Legion by Veterans. And the fact that they have not been adequately addressed further fuel the fires beneath our collective feet.

Legion staff caught stealing \$60,000 in Yellowknife



Royal Canadian Legion shoots down bid to reveal details about executives' salaries and travel
"Rather than have an open discussion about the finances and expenses required to support our executive, we have been denied that opportunity in a very arbitrary..."
NEWS.NATIONALPOST.COM



Canadian legion admits accessing government files on veterans without their consent

Such files contain the medical and, in some cases, financial details of the lives of veterans and retired RCMP officers

NEWS.NATIONALPOST.COM



BCLocalNews.com - No patches wanted at parade

Veterans Motorcycle Club members are welcome at the Remembrance Day parade in Ladysmith Wednesday, if they leave full-patch vests at home

BCLOCALNEWS.COM | BY DARRELL BELLAART



Does the Royal Canadian Legion matter anymore?

This year, members of the Royal Canadian Legion will be standing front and center at Remembrance Day ceremonies across the country. Since its founding in 1926, the Royal Canadian Legion has come to embody Canada's veteran community...

IPOLITICS.CA

Recommendations from Responders

Not all responders left harsh criticism; in fact some responders believed that there is something that can be done at the Legion and at the Branches to improve the situation, to which they have left the following suggestions to improve the state of the Legion.

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.

You do not resonate with modern veterans. You can start by losing the term "New Veterans." It relates to the New Veterans Charter and you should know that respective charter is an insult to all of us. Second, you are not an organization governed by veterans. Third, civilians should be guests not full members. Many veterans do not care if your father or grandpa served - did you? Fourth, many veterans had such a bad experience releasing that they would rather not have anything to do with military culture. The release experience isn't an issue for many, some just did their time, don't care, and would rather move on with life.

Input new technology within RCL establishments, such as WiFi, big screen TV's so members can watch things like UFC events every Saturday night with food/drink specials or NHL games especially during the finals (or both), tailor the benefits package to what a younger veteran would want unlike now where there is specials on hotels but with the economy the way it is people can't afford to travel as much as they like, USE SOCIAL MEDIA, more officers in branches who are knowledgeable about today's veteran and our situations with legislation and mental health awareness, incorporate things like draws for hockey tickets/pools, vacations, etc (this may not work for branches in small towns). Young veterans now will not go to a Legion branch that still has 60+ year olds in it playing darts or board games, they will likely go if a RCL branch were to change its image to a sports-like bar that incorporates things that young veterans would like, such as sports events, outdoor adventures, and/or a nice place to kick back and relax whilst watching something on a big screen with other vets and supporters. But, of course this is all dependent on the older membership accepting this drastic change, which they won't.

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.

Publicize their events calendar on the MARPAC DIN splash page.

subsidize serving members

If The Legion, VA and WW would create a MOU to work together, with clearly defined roles and financial support, I think all veterans could be served well.

Authors Note: VA likely refers to Veterans Affairs and WW to Wounded Warriors.

Recommendations from Responders not supported by this report

Although many passionate people left suggestions for ways to improve the Legion, not all suggestions are recommended.

Many responses indicated the wish for the Legion to remove all civilians (Associate and Affiliate

members) from the Legion. True that the Legion is a Veterans organization, it is also a community organization. The Legion supports the communities as much as they support Veterans. Additionally many of the civilians in the Legion volunteer their time to help Veterans; in some cases these civilians do more to support Veteran causes than the Veterans in the same Branch. Veterans do not need Veteran only help, they just need help. Removing civilians from the Legion is not recommended.

Following calls for the Legion to remove all civilians from the Legion were the calls to have Veterans only on executive committees. A reasonable request but it has the same flaw as calls to remove all civilians; denying a civilian from volunteering to help Veterans hurts the cause of Veterans. In some Branches, if not most, there are not enough willing and able Veterans to staff the executive committees. Making Executive Committees Veteran only is not recommended. Having said that it may be possible to respond to this call by changing the requirements of Branches to have an Ordinary member as the Branch President. Although this will in itself create controversy as there are many hard working and dedicated Branch Presidents who would feel alienated. Another option would be to have 1/3rd or 2/3rds of executive committees filled by Ordinary members. It is also possible to amend the regulations regarding District, Provincial and Dominion Executive Committee membership to allow only Ordinary members to serve on higher level Executive Committees.

Recommendations of Report

Taking into account the comments made by responders to the survey and the comments made on social media, as well taking into consideration the influencing factors, the report makes the following recommendations to address issues at the Legion and move the Legion into the 21st century to meet the needs of today's Veterans. A warning: as with the comments, some suggestions may cause an emotional reaction from readers.

Recommendations to Branch 15

This report was initially intended for the originating Branch to learn how we may attract new members especially from the Veterans communities. Branch 15 is fortunate enough to have an Army Reserve Regiment, the Lorne Scots, headquartered less than 1KM away and a Veteran Affairs Office located less than 5KM south of the Branch in Mississauga, Ontario. This survey report makes the following recommendation to the Executive of Branch 15:

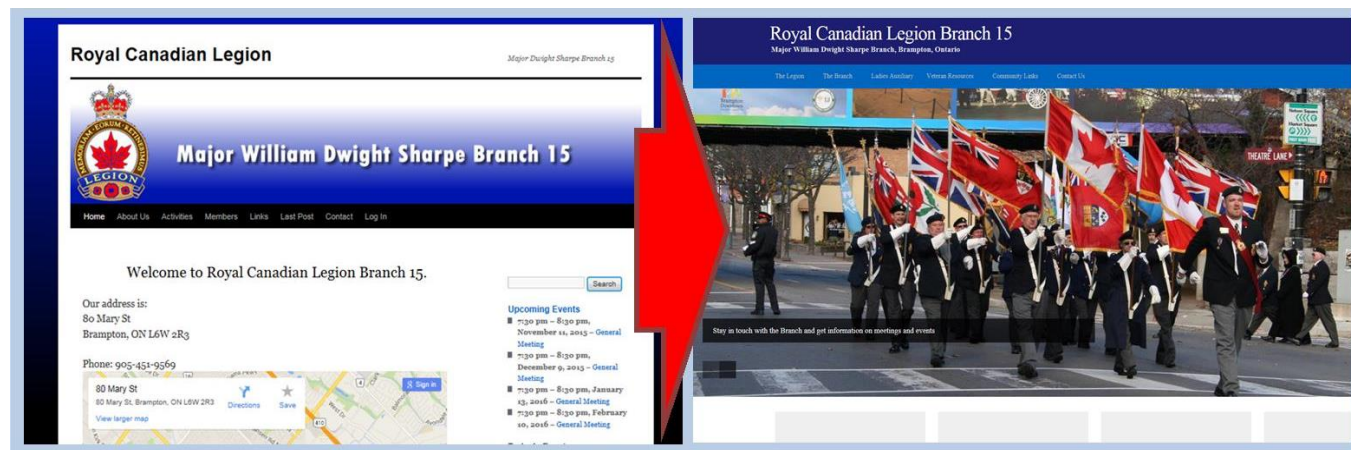
- Host paid sporting events, such as UFC nights and provide admission to serving soldiers, Veterans and Branch members.
- Host sporting events such as NHL playoff games, MLS games and the Olympics.
- More interaction with the Lorne Scots at their events.
- Give membership paperwork packages to the Lorne 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 with free admission to Veterans, serving soldier and their families with games and entertainment aimed at families with young children,

Successes of Branch 15

Branch 15, while room for improvement remains, has made some beneficial changes recently and it is included in this report to demonstrate to our fellow Branches that changes are possible. We welcome questions as to how this was accomplished and we will work to benefit the Legion as a whole. The following actions were taken by Branch 15 to assist our members and our Veterans:

- Complete upgrade of the Branch website (www.RCLBR15.com)
- Creation of a Branch Facebook Page to communicate with our members, our Veterans and our community (www.FACEBOOK.com/RCLBR15)
- Hosting O.S.I.S.S. group meetings at the Branch
- Visiting Veterans in hospitals in the Greater Toronto Area
- Working with the Region of Peel and Branch 609 to dedicate Dixie Rd (a major road and main supply route running the length of Peel Region from Lakeshore Rd in Mississauga to Hwy 9 in Caledon) as a Veterans Roadway
- Hosting the Defence Consultations Roundtable with MP Ruby Sahota
- Working towards a Veterans Consultation Roundtable with MP Ruby Sahota
- Supporting the Lorne Scots 150th Anniversary
- A motion to Dominion Command regarding the dipping of flags
- VAC asked Branch 15 to host the 100th Anniversary of Vimy Ridge Parade because of the format we use to host the City of Brampton Remembrance Day Parades



Recommendations to other Branches

In addition to the comments earlier in this report that made notice of short comings of individual branches, there were some suggestions and issues brought up by responders that, if addressed, can improve the state of these branches for the benefit of the membership and Veterans. Branches and suggestions are in no particular order. Location of the Branch is based on the comments left and the responders city of residence and therefore may not be accurate, as well some cities have more than one Branch. Accuracy of the comments cannot be guaranteed, however this is what the responders are saying and at least are worth consideration by the Branch Executive. The following is not meant to embarrass the individual Branches nor is it meant to dictate how other Branches conduct themselves, however it is meant to identify areas for which there is room for improvement.

Branch 164 in Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba

Many comments were left referencing a news article in the National Post (<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-legion-suspends-82-year-old-member-for-questioning-groups-treatment-of-veterans>) and the suspension of former Branch Secretary Joan Beznoski for phoning the Dominion President. This story, as I'm sure it's no surprise to anyone, is being used as a spear in which to attack the Legion. Her actions no doubt broke Legion protocols, however her heart was clearly in the right place and the issue she attempted to address is a serious one that has yet to be resolved. Revoking her membership has caused national outcry towards the Legion. The decision to revoke her membership has had an impact on Legion Branches across the country. Facebook groups and petitions have been started in her support and it is clear that many Veterans feel she did the right thing. Her allegations that there was "bullying and disrespectful behaviour against veterans" at the Branch, whether accurate or not merit a higher level investigation; as per the [By-Laws](#) Article VI paragraph 601. This is a reoccurring problem noted in this survey and this report will recommend that all branches of the Legion, as well as Provincial and Dominion Command investigate all allegations.

As a Veterans organization the Legion is by default a para-military organization, this is emphasized by the wearing of uniforms and medals. When a military member breaks protocol, they are disciplined, but not forced out of the military; they are counselled and returned to work. Military members are only released from the military for the most serious of crimes, such as charges from the Criminal Code of Canada or charges in the National Defence Act worthy of a Court Martial. In addition, military ethics rules give members the right to jump levels of the chain of command to report ethics breaches. By attempting to silence your accuser you are in fact justifying her accusations. Therefore I humbly suggest that an investigation into her allegations be opened. For your consideration.



Branch 41 in St. Thomas, Ontario

A comment was left “Branch 41 offered no help. To small i guess”. It is not known what help was sought by the responder but clearly the responder was in need and was either denied help or didn’t know how to ask. One of the positive suggestions left by another responder was to be proactive about offering help and another suggestion was to hang a white board near the entrance with information about the current Service Officer for the Branch. For your consideration.

Branch 54 in Sooke, British Columbia

A comment was left “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”. Under what context the responder was told this is not clear, nor can the accuracy be confirmed. However if this is accurate it would highlight the reoccurring theme in this report, that Legion Branches are turning their backs to Veterans. The past can not be changed however the future can, I would humbly suggest that a Branch level inquiry into this allegation be conducted. For your consideration.

Branch 62 in Sarnia, Ontario

A comment was left “Put better lighting in your bar areas I was in the Sarnia branch last Saturday it felt like a tomb”. Seems like a simple suggestion, too simple to be addressed by this survey. However it may suggest that there is no internal mechanism for the Branch to address simple issues such as lighting. For your consideration.

Branch 164 in Yellowknife, North-West Territories

A comment was left “Disappointed coming up to Yellowknife to see the lack of promotional attempts from the Legion here. First time in 26 years that I have returned to the Military Mess vice the Legion as there was very little attempt to attract serving and retired mbrs.” Another reoccurring theme from this report is that there is a lack of proactive recruiting of serving and retired members to the Legion. In this case a Veteran walked into the Legion, but no active recruiting seemed to have taken part. For your consideration.

Branch in Sydney, Nova Scotia

A comment was left “I didn't feel welcomed whenever I attended Remberance Day Ceremonies” by a serving member of the Air Force. Under what context the responder was told this is not clear, nor can the accuracy be confirmed. However if this is accurate it would highlight the reoccurring theme in this report, that Legion Branches are turning their backs to Veterans. The past can not be changed however the future can, I would humbly suggest that a Branch level inquiry into this allegation be conducted. For your consideration.

Branch in North Bay, Ontario

A comment was left “My membership has expired and I have inquired about getting involved, requested to have someone from the excutive to contact me but was never contacted after several requests.” A better communications system may solve issues of calls or emails not being returned. For your consideration.

Branch in Toronto, Ontario

A comment was left “I was a member for 15 years and after tI 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.” If this comment is accurate it is understandable why the member did not renew their membership. I humbly suggest that branches ensure they take a proactive approach to funerals of Veterans and Branch members. For your consideration.

Branch in Edmonton, Alberta

A comment was left “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.” If this comment is accurate it emphasizes the recurring theme that Legion Branches and Legion members are turning their back on younger Veterans as some believe that only World War Two and Korea Veterans are real Veterans. Education at the Branch level directed at current members as to the definition of a Veteran and the Afghanistan war is recommended. For your consideration.

Branch 17 in Springhill, Nova Scotia

A comment was left “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 your 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. Their was a couple of brake in's no was charged and no one was caught it was a inside job”. If this comment is accurate it points to a serious problem which could potentially lead to a criminal investigation. An immediate investigation is recommended. For your consideration.

And to the responder who made this comment: I would like to suggest that if your brother has any proof of this that he bring it to Provincial Command. If no response is given, advise him that he can contact his [local Police Service](#) or if he wishes to remain anonymous he may also contact his [local Crime Stoppers Office](#).

Recommendations to Provincial Commands

The Legion [By-Laws](#) under Article VI paragraph 601 dictate that the Branches “shall be under the discipline of its Provincial Command”. Given the above comments from responders and the suggestions to Branches across Canada, the following suggestions are recommended to address serious allegations made against Branches. For your consideration:

Manitoba/North-West Ontario Command

Prior to her dismissal from Branch 164, Joan Beznoski was attempting to alert the Dominion President to allegations within her branch. Her actions were incorrect in that she attempted to contact the Dominion President when she should have alerted Provincial Command. However her allegations are none-the-less concerning and merit a Provincial Command level investigation.

Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command

Branch 17 has been accused in a comment from a responder of a potential \$40,000 theft from Branch funds. When that information was passed to the Branch President, it is alleged that nothing was done. This warrants a Provincial Command level investigation.

Recommendations to Dominion Command

Although the survey was initially intended to assist Branch 15 in learning how the Branch could attract more Veterans, a vast array of responders pushed the potential of the survey to new heights. In addition to the comments made by responders of this survey, issues reported for individual branches and comments made about the Legion overall an analysis of the factors contributing to the comments and the comments themselves has yielded the following suggestions to Dominion Command for consideration and possibly resolution at the 2017 Convention. For your consideration:

- At the national or provincial level, create a position to assist Branches, as well as Zones and Districts, to 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.
- At the 2016 Convention, it was again decided that Specialist Badges such as Airborne Wings, SAR Badges and such were not to be authorized for wear on Legion uniforms. This action fuelled critics of the Legion by suggesting where the priorities of the Legion laid. A Specialist Badge that was earned has more place on the Legion uniform than the Legion Service Medals or any of the pins worn on jackets by Legion members across the Country. Article IV paragraph 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 that decision and give Legion members the authority to wear their hard earned Specialist Badges with pride on their Legion uniforms.
- Although it would be met with a large resistance, the medals given out by the Legion that do not fit in the Canadian Honours System should be eliminated. Unofficial commemorative medals which can be purchased and worn by anyone have no place in a Veterans organization as the medals are confusing to the public who would mistake them for real medals awarded by the Government of Canada; Commemorative medals are a part of the Canadian Honours System and there is no need for redundancy. Legion medals for exemplary service, such as the Legion's Meritorious Service Medal, can be replaced by volunteer medals in the Canadian Honours System such as the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers or in truly rare circumstances the actual Meritorious Service Medal for Civil Service. Awards that are not medals should still be awarded.
- During the 2016 Convention the Legion declared that it was advocating for the Canada 150 Medal

to be created by the Government. 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.

- Another suggestion that is likely to cause resistance, 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. As was previously brought up, a Veteran is a Veteran is a Veteran.
- 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". Although Dominion Command has stated that this is a Branch matter, it is not. The Legion [By-Laws](#) state that the Provincial Commands are responsible for the Branches (Article VI paragraph 601), additionally the By-Laws state in Article IV paragraph 418 sub-para a. that "The Dominion President may, after enquiry and for cause clearly stated, revoke or suspend the charter or powers of any command, branch or auxiliary, or suspend any officer thereof, or revoke the membership of any member, or take any other action necessary or advisable for the good of the Legion, and shall report to the Dominion Executive Council upon the action taken." Therefore the Dominion President may step in to resolve the situation in Branch 164 and launch an enquiry in the allegations and suspend any Branch members who are found to have violated the Legions By-Laws or Mission Statement.
- Branch 164 is not the only Branch with serious issues regarding the treatment of serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces or Veterans. Many comments were left by responders that indicate problems across the country. Although the Legion [By-Laws](#) state that the Provincial Commands are responsible for the Branches (Article VI paragraph 601), and although the By-Laws do not clearly state so, the hierarchy of organizations suggests that the discipline of Provincial Commands is the responsibility of Dominion Command. Provincial Commands must be governed by Dominion Command. Higher levels of the Legion Command must also step in and conduct an audit of the Branches accused of mistreatment of Veterans.
- Most of the responders felt that the executive committees should be Veterans only, or Ordinary Members. That is an impractical solution to the problems as there are not enough Veterans to staff all the executive positions on the committees, especially at some smaller Branches. However in

the future 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 by eliminating either Zone or District Commands.
- Develop a social media sharing strategy with Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces in which the Legion will agree to share posts and stories with the VAC and CAF social media sites sharing Legion posts and stories.
- 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 National Anthem, God Save the Queen, and the "Lord God of Hosts" reply from members. Modernize the meetings as potential members are driven away by overly ceremonious meetings.
- The Legion has created its own rivals by allowing short comings within its own organization. If these shortcomings can be rectified the Legion should seek to absorb the smaller Veterans groups by appointing the executives of those groups as advisors to the Legion and granting the membership of those groups membership in the Legion.
- Having read the Letter to the Editor from the Dominion President dated 29 July 2016, it is clear to see that the Legion has tried to address some of the concerns from Veterans and members which were echoed in this report, however it was underwhelming. Having taught public affairs lectures in the Army I was often asked why I thought the Canadian public knew so little of the Canadian Military, my response was always "it's our fault". It was our fault for not teaching the public what we did and why. In the Military we often saw the media as more of a hindrance than an asset; we operated in the shadows of both the public and the media so it was not surprising that the public still has little understanding of the Military. The Legion it seems is no different, reacting to the stories in the media instead of supplying them. The Letter to the Editor itself was underwhelming, it received almost no national media attention, poorly shared by Legion advocated across social media with no plan or organization about it. Further to the underwhelming nature of the Letter, it barely responded to the flurry of comments regarding poor practices in the Legion, failing to address many of the wide-spread accusations of corruption and bullying by Legion members. The criticisms it addressed it did so poorly, specifically:
 - Financial Transparency: From the Letter to the Editor "A resolution asking for the disclosure of executive salaries was denied as the resolution would infringe on Canadian privacy laws". Stating that the disclosure would be against Canadian Privacy Laws is a red herring. Veterans and members are concerned with the allegations that the Dominion Executive Committee is receiving a large salary as well as expenses including travel; which would be in violation of the [By-Laws](#) Article IV paragraph 421 which state "No salary shall be paid to any member of Dominion Executive Council". This is the point Legion critics have brought up and it has not been addressed. Is the Legions Dominion Command Executive Committee receiving a salary?
 - Joan Beznoski: From the Letter to the Editor "This situation is an internal branch matter

and falls under the provisions and processes of our General By-Laws. Dominion Command under those very By-Laws does not have the authority or jurisdiction to intervene in this matter. For this reason, the complaints brought forward by Ms. Beznoski were referred back to the Branch.” Article VI paragraph 601 of the [By-Laws](#) state that the discipline of the Branches rests with the Provincial Command; therefore referring it back to the Branch is not only against the By-Laws but unethical given the complaints made were against the Branch. Provincial Command does have the authority to intervene but has not. The Dominion President has the power to launch an enquiry but has not.

- With all the issues listed in this report, there is a clear need for the Legion to evolve, as has been stated numerous times in this report. To accomplish the evolution needed the Legion should seek to create a Special Section for Reform.

Conclusion

The focus of this report is to demonstrate what Veterans are saying about the state of Veterans issues in Canada and why Veterans are not joining the Royal Canadian Legion. This 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. Nothing reported here is unfixable. With hard work and reform the Legion can move forward towards a better future where the Legion is once again known for helping Veterans and advocating for them with the Government, and no longer known for controversy.

This is not a death knell. However failing to respond to the concerns of Veterans could be.

Together we can move forward.

Authors Comment

I too have seen the issues at the Legion. I have seen civilians with no military service run the Branches and the Legion as a whole. I have seen the negative press. I have seen the Legion support the New Veterans Charter against the benefit of the Veterans of Canada. I have seen the Legion remove a passionate woman from the Legion for attempting to bring to light allegations within her own Branch. I have seen the Legion, both Ordinary members and Associate or Affiliate members, vote against the benefit of Veterans at Dominion Conventions. I have seen what the critics see.

Although I also see the good. I see the same people with no military service spend countless hours in malls selling Poppies. I see members of my Branch go out of their way to spend time with Veterans at local hospitals. I have seen funds at my Branch be used to help Veterans, my own Army Reserve Regiment, the local Cadets, and other community initiatives. There is hope for the Legion because I know my Branch cannot be the only good one.

I also see that the Legion is ingrained in the Veterans communities in Canada and ingrained as a stakeholder in Veterans Affairs. I see that the Legion was once a powerful advocate for Veterans and a champion of Remembrance. And I believe that the Legion can be that again. Otherwise I would not have joined the Legion, otherwise I would have kept my mouth shut when I saw these issues. If I thought there was nothing left of the Legion I would not have spent three months creating a survey to hear from Canada's Veterans and completing a report to suggest to my fellow comrades across the nation ways we can do better.

But perhaps you believe I have overstepped my bounds as a simple Branch 3rd Vice-President. Perhaps you think I am diluted in thinking there can be change made. Perhaps while you were reading this you spent more time using the comments from responders to sharpen your spear to use against the Legion than believing that there is a possibility for progressive change. Perhaps you think that the issues and suggestions in this report are in fact not issues. Perhaps while you were reading this report you spent more time preparing arguments against this report than actually considering what the Veterans of Canada are saying. Perhaps you believe that I am betraying the Legion. Either way, should you not recognize the focus of this report then you have wasted your time here. Then you may as well use this to fuel your hatred of the Legion and cause further divide between Veterans in Canada. Or you may choose to advocate for my own banishment from the ranks of the Legion. Regardless of how you feel towards me, the Legion or this report, should you choose not to use this report and especially the comments within as a

tool to build a stronger Legion and work with the other Veterans groups toward the betterment of ALL Veterans, then you betray Veterans and have no place in any Veterans organization.

Veterans don't need Veteran only help. True that only a Veteran can know what it was like on the front line, but that doesn't mean that a helping hand needs to come from a fellow Veteran. There are many passionate people in the Legion who have never worn a uniform that still believe in honouring and supporting Veterans as the Legion once did. What Veterans need is a united organization that offers assistance and services to Veterans, an organization that can represent Veterans issues and advocate for them, an organization that champions the sacrifice of Veterans and serving military in Remembrance.

Bottom line, Veterans need an organization. It can still be the Legion, but if the Legion cannot be what it once was then there are many other organizations ready to take the reins as the "official" Veterans organization in Canada. You need only look to who is in the courts and in the streets fighting for Veterans to see the probable successor to the Legion.

Contact

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[Branch 15 Online](#)

[Branch 15 on Facebook](#)

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