

## **Public Not Wanted**

VAC has once again demonstrated its lack of openness with regards to Veterans' issues, particularly for those of the Veterans Community that do not belong to a recognised organisation. Just in case anyone is not aware, the majority of the Veterans Community is not represented officially by any one group. There are many that claim to represent a majority; however, no group can produce a membership list that includes the majority of the more than 800,000 Veterans and dependants who are part of our community. Only a select few have been invited to attend the Veterans Affairs Stakeholder Committee on 24 October. The invitees do not include anyone from Veteran Voice, which is a non-traditional organisation in that it does not have members just over 100,000 subscribers. The Veterans Ombudsman recommended that VVi be invited to the meeting. Having as many groups as possible seems to be reasonable if the Minister of Veterans Affairs truly believes in the purpose of having such meetings:

*“VAC is developing an approach to stakeholder engagement which is more flexible and adaptable, will evolve with time and will help position the Department to respond to Veterans and their evolving needs, as well as those of their families.”*

If VVi and other groups are not involved then it indicates that VAC will continue its long term habit of excluding the Veterans Community from any meaningful discussions of important issues. This was unfortunately the tactic employed in the development of the NVC, which resulted in many Veterans being stripped of services and benefits available to the Veterans Community up to 2006.

VAC seems more inclined to rely upon its bureaucrats, academics and consultants to develop its services and programs rather than the only stakeholders who matter, and that is everyone in the Veterans Community.

The exclusion of stakeholders from a Stakeholder Committee is another reason for a second national protest on 5 November, 2011.

VAC believes that VVi is a media outlet. This is wrong. VVi is a Veterans organisation staffed by Veterans to provide information about the Veterans Community.

One other major criticism of the Stakeholder Committee is the lack of time to discuss issues. The minister will only have two meetings scheduled each year. Furthermore only five or six issues will be addressed each meeting. This is a ridiculously low number given that there are almost 400 outstanding recommendations to the NVC, which VAC refuses to implement as well as thousands of outstanding complaints with regards to the lack of support for the Veterans Community. Systemic problems date back many decades and are one of the main reasons that

VAC finally agreed to the appointment of an ombudsman (after many complaints to the federal government).

All members of the Veterans Community should be outraged by the lack of interest expressed by the MVA and the federal government. We are being treated like disenfranchised citizens instead of getting the dignity and respect that Canada repeatedly says that it should give in return for the sacrifices of the Veterans Community. Many politicians and bureaucrats have said that the national debt owed to the Veterans Community cannot be realistically repaid, but that does not stop VAC from renegeing as much as possible and as frequently as possible.

Mr Blaney remember that God gave you two ears and one mouth. It may be better to do more listening than talking. On 24 October, listen to your stakeholders and hold your tongue until the end of the meeting.

**Below are the e-mails relating to the above.**

To: Andrew.Bernardo@vac-acc.gc.ca; Frederik.Boisvert@vac-acc.gc.ca  
CC: Steven.Blaney@vac-acc.gc.ca;  
Subject: Re: VAC Advisory Council Meeting: VeteranVoice.info  
**Date:** Tue, 18 Oct 2011 21:15:07 -0400

Dear Minister Blaney and Mr. Boisvert,

I trust you have had sufficient time to reconsider an invitation for VeteranVoice.info to attend the Advisory Committee on Monday October 24, 2011.

It has come to our attention that the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman supports the attendance of VeteranVoice.info.

As you are also aware, I will be attending the meeting in my capacity as Special Advisor to Don Leonardo and VeteransofCanada.ca. I am an advisor to a number of organizations and individuals and each of my capacities requires that I devote my attention to the organization at hand. As such, I will not be representing VeteranVoice.info. This leaves VeteranVoice.info uninvited and unrepresented.

I respectfully ask on behalf of VeteranVoice.info and its executive that you, as an alternative to my representation, invite executive members Perry Gray and Ron Cundell. The Chief Executive Officer, CJ Wallace is otherwise unavailable.

The attendance of both individuals is necessary in order to accommodate their disabilities by providing mutual support which would otherwise make individual attendance deleterious to their health.

Mr. Gray resides in Ottawa. However, Mr. Cundell resides an hour north of Toronto. As such, he will have to make appropriate travel and accommodation arrangements. I therefore request that you provide formal invitations to these two VeteranVoice.info executives no later than 18:00 (6:00p.m.) on Wednesday, October 19, 2011.

On behalf of VeteranVoice.info, I thank you for your attention to the matter.

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 12, 2011 12:16 PM

**Subject:** Re: Sean Bruyea Re: VAC Advisory Council Meeting

Mr. Bruyea,

Thank you very much for your expression of interest in having VeteransVoice.info participate in our newly established Veterans Affairs Stakeholder Committee.

As you know, the objective of this committee is to provide a forum for representatives of both traditional and non-traditional veterans' organizations, as well as others such as the Veterans Ombudsman, to come together in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada to discuss issues of common interest and concern related to the advancement of Veterans policy and programs.

**Unfortunately, it is not intended as a forum for media outlets.**

I note, however, that Veterans of Canada, a stakeholder organization of which you are a member of its advisory council, will be represented at the stakeholder committee this month.

Your continued interest in Veteran's issues is appreciated.

**Sent:** Thursday, September 15, 2011 4:05 PM

**Subject:** VeteranVoice.info Letter to Minister Blaney

Dear Minister Blaney

Please find attached a letter for your consideration. The letter requests an invitation for VeteranVoice.info representatives to attend the upcoming bilateral consultations between VAC and its stakeholders. We are a highly influential and prominent stakeholder in the community of CF, veterans, RCMP and their families.

Thank you for your Minister for your attention to this matter.