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## **RE-INVENTING THE RCMPVA – OUR FUTURE AS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION: A FOOD FOR THOUGHT PAPER**

Aim. The aim of this paper is to stimulate discussion at the National Council and amongst the broader membership on the future strategic direction and renewed purpose of the Association, leading to a 5-Year Strategic Plan for 2016-2021.

Our History. The year 2016 will mark the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association. By retaining and harnessing the *esprit de corps* and comradeship among its members, it has forcefully yet professionally spoken for the interests of former members of the Force. This mission has not changed. As RCMP veterans' we continue to need our Association to speak for us and pursue our interests.

The Opportunity. The Continuation of the Association under the new *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* at the AGM in Ottawa in 2014 is the golden opportunity for the Association to build on its past and orient itself towards a bright and fulfilling future. The Association is no longer what it was – a loose confederation of independent and geographically scattered Divisions who each had their own activities, by-laws and memberships. Today the Association is a single and interdependent corporation united under its own constitution and possessing, perhaps for the very first time in our long history, unity of purpose. We are one Association now, not a collection of 30 Divisions. This is the new reality that changes how we do business and interact with our membership and the broader Veterans Community.

The Board of Directors held a Strategy Workshop in September 2014 to plot a strategic path forward for the renewed Association. Since then there have been clear successes: re-vamping the bylaws and Association Manual; a National Database; e-voting and the 5 resolutions for the AGM, among others. But it has also become clear that being a not-for-profit Association in 2015 is administratively more complex and expensive to run than it was in the past.

Being an Association that is reliant on dues, declining membership means declining revenue and the concurrent weakening in our collective ability to fulfil our mission. Declining membership also means that more and more of the load of administration falls on fewer and fewer volunteers, which discourages retention. Other veterans' organizations with less administrative overhead and with skillful use of modern communications technologies are successfully attracting and mobilizing the younger cohort of veterans. We need to learn from their success to attract new members from the large cohort of younger RCMP veterans who have so far shown little or no interest in joining our Association. And with the upcoming changes in labour relations in the Force and the change in mentality that will result, there is a strong probability that increased

“militancy” will redefine our relationship both with the Force and our Veterans, especially the younger cohort.

The Challenge. Our challenge is to use this unique moment to re-invent the RCMPVA in order to leverage our history, traditions and connection to the Force into real power to do good things and grow our Association, and combines that with a renewed focus on our mission and making the best use of methods and technologies that are available today. Meeting this challenge requires LEADERSHIP, not more MANAGEMENT.

The Strategy. The credo of the Association must be: “what are we doing for the good of RCMP veterans and the Association today?” We need to sharpen our focus and develop an ambitious and inspiring strategic plan based on three fundamental goals:

## 1. MISSION

- “RCMP Veterans Helping Veterans” – doing good for RCMP veterans and families
- Representing RCMP veterans in the “veterans” community – strong public interest
- Assisting the Force - how can we help?
- “Thought leadership” – being the credible, trusted and respected source of information on the issues and interests of membership as RCMP veterans – when the Commissioner, the Government or other veterans groups or officials such as the Ombudsman want to talk about RCMP veterans, they come to us first
- Civilian Members, PSE, ME, auxiliaries – speaking out and acting on their behalf too.
- Articles of Continuance – can we state our mission and purpose better?

## 2. GROWTH

- More members = greater strength – 6000 members now, why not 16000?
- Why Join? – Why not Join Us! – what do we need to be more persuasive in our pitch?
- Members versus Supporters – what do we have to do to get support from those in our Veteran community who do not want to be part of the Association itself?
- You can’t join the Association; you can only join a Division.
- We need to attract members and supporters, not recruit them
- Too many manuals and policies – reduce administration to minimum necessary in order to encourage volunteer enthusiasm and member retention and to reduce costs
- Website – this is KEY INSTRUMENT – the portal through which all our visible activity must flow – focus on fresh and topical content to attract visitors and backlinks; don’t use website for recordkeeping – nobody surfs looking for administrative trivia; use blogging (interactive or not) to keep site interesting and changing, not static and banal; focus on Google search-ability; relevance, credibility and salience of content; on-page optimization; “power pages” for conversion, and back-linking to attract visitors and potential new members; people expect a quality organization to have a quality website – THIS IS ESSENTIAL – HOW WE TELL OUR STORY

### 3. MONEY

- An Association that is not financially professional is not professional.
- *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* imposes serious legal obligations which must be met – compliance with legislation is a key activity of the Association Office
- Accountability, transparency, probity – Corporate responsibilities
- More members = greater revenues – More members + cheaper dues/discounts = same money or more!
- Supporters and Sponsors – donations from non-member sources?
- Charitable donations and the BTF – use our charitable status as selling point to attract supporters
- Veterans' Benefit Trust Fund – how to better use BTF to achieve mission? How to work together with RCMP to complement RCMP BTF?
- Expertise – knowledgeable and current about RCMP and Veterans' benefits, pensions, insurance, programs and services in order to participate in consultations and to inform our membership on those programs that affect them.

Next Steps. The result of this discussion will inform a Board of Directors' Strategy Workshop in Fall 2015. The desired outcome of the Strategy Workshop would be a Strategic Plan of Action for 2016-2021. Any changes requiring membership approval will be presented at the 2016 AGM.

RCMP Veterans' Association  
rcmp.vets@rcmp-grc.gc.ca