

# The Veterans Ombudsman's Strategic Council

## *Terms of Reference*

*"For Veterans and Good  
Governance"*

### Origin

Order In Council #P.C. 2007-530, dated October 15, 2007, which established the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO) made provision for the Advisory Committee. In addition, the Office *Charter* makes reference to the establishment of a Strategic Council to serve the Veterans Ombudsman in a number of capacities.

### Why does the Veterans Ombudsman need a Strategic Council?

The Advisory Committee has been in existence since early 2008 and provides advice and guidance from the stakeholder community to the Office in the achievement of its mandate. It also helps shape the Veterans Ombudsman's agenda and the focus of the short-term operations of the Office. The Advisory Committee is chaired by an individual other than the Veterans Ombudsman and has its own Terms of Reference and established membership. The Advisory Committee reflects the Veterans' community demographics and its membership is based on community representation.

The Strategic Council is primarily an information forum whose *raison d'être* is to permit members to share with the Veterans Ombudsman the key priorities, current issues and challenges being pursued by each of the associations they represent. The Strategic Council deliberations are also important communications vehicles to ensure that the Office is not operating at cross purposes or conflicting positions with the respective agenda of the associations represented on the Council. The Strategic Council provides an opportunity for the Veterans Ombudsman to hear directly from approximately 11 recognized, bonafide Canadian Veterans associations to which membership has been extended. The Council is not intended to be a consensus-seeking or decision-making forum as it concerns OVO operations

### Mandate:

The mandate of the Veterans Ombudsman's Strategic Council is to:

- share, promote and delineate the respective forward agenda and priorities of the associations represented
- understand the position and perspectives of the Veterans Ombudsman vis à vis current affairs affecting stakeholders and the impacts this may have on associations represented on Council.

- participate in & stimulate dialogue to raise awareness of all stakeholder issues.
- promote the well being of Canadian Veterans through the dedicated work of associations represented on Council
- contribute to the positive outcomes of the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman.

Structure:

The Council will be comprised of the heads (or designate) of the following 12 associations/organizations:

- RCMP Veterans Association
- Royal Canadian Legion
- National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada
- Gulf War Veterans Association of Canada
- Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association
- Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping
- The Army, Navy and Air Forces Veterans in Canada
- Korean Veterans Association of Canada
- Special Needs Advisory Group
- Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association
- National Aboriginal Veterans Association
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Members will be appointed for a two-year term. It is expected that members will attend all meetings, unless exceptional circumstances prevent it. An alternate designate may attend in this circumstance.

At the end of the two-year term, members may be re-appointed by the Chair for a further two-year period. A member may withdraw from the Council upon notification to the Director, Strategic Liaison and Executive Support, OVO. The Veterans Ombudsman may terminate membership at any time and the Director, Strategic Liaison & Executive Support will provide written notification to the member.

The Council will be chaired by the Veterans Ombudsman and will also include senior officials from the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, including but not limited to the Director General, Operations; and the Director, Strategic Liaison and Executive Support. The Chair of the Veterans Ombudsman Advisory Committee will be a standing member of the Council. The OVO will provide the secretarial function for the Council.

### Compensation:

Members are not entitled to remuneration for participation on the Council. However, they will be reimbursed in accordance with the Treasury board travel policy and guidelines for travel expenses to and from scheduled Council meetings. See attached Appendix B and C for further information.

### Activities:

The Council will meet once per year, normally in the fall of the year, and normally in Ottawa, Ontario. A record of deliberations from each meeting will be maintained and shared with members. If a member is not available to attend a meeting, his/her designate will attend. The agenda will be set & circulated in advance, by the Chair.

### Roles and Responsibilities of the Veterans Ombudsman's Strategic Council

#### Chairperson:

- presides over all council meetings
- sets agenda
- serves as official spokesperson for the Council

#### Members:

- remain current and speak on behalf of the priorities of the associations they represent
- bring viewpoints to the discussion of issues before Council
- be available for Council meetings

### Principles:

All public office holders must adhere to the federal government's Conflict of Interest Guidelines. As members of the Veterans Ombudsman's Strategic Council, appointees to the Council will be expected to conform to certain principles. Members will be asked to sign a Certification Document (Appendix A) acknowledging that they shall observe the Principles as stated below.

In instances when an issue being discussed by Council gives rise to a situation that could cause real, potential or apparent conflict of interest with a member's duties as a council member, the member must report the conflict of interest situation which will be recorded in the minutes and he/she shall abstain from discussion on the issue.

### Council Hallmarks:

Members will conduct themselves in accordance with the following professional values and ethics:

Respect: the ability to speak freely knowing that the Council is a privileged platform where members may not always agree with one another's viewpoints, but where all opinions are respected and acknowledged.

Frankness: the assurance that members will speak their minds on any issue, in all Council meetings, knowing that these discussions will be held in confidence.

Openness & Transparency: the ability to freely share information on any topic germane to stakeholder issues and association positions.

Compassion and Fairness: the commitment to speak compassionately regarding all issues which are critical to the well being of Veterans and their families and to uphold the fairness principle and its application to stakeholders.

#### Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Principles

- Members shall perform their official duties and arrange their private affairs in such a manner that public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of government are conserved and enhanced.
- Members have an obligation to act in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny, an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.
- Members shall not have private interests, other than those permitted pursuant to this Terms of Reference, that would be affected particularly or significantly by government actions in which they participate.
- On appointment to Council, and thereafter, members shall arrange their private affairs in a manner that will prevent real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest from arising but if such a conflict does arise between the private interests of a member and the official duties and the responsibilities of that member, the conflict shall be resolved in favour of the public interest.
- Members shall not step out of their official roles to assist private entities in their dealings with the government where this would result in preferential treatment to any person.
- Members shall not knowingly take advantage of, or benefit from, information that is obtained in the course of their official duties and responsibilities and that is not generally available to the public.

- Members will not have access to personal information from OVO case / client files.
- Members shall not directly or indirectly use, or allow the use of, government property of any kind, including property that is leased to the government, for anything other than officially-approved Council activities.
- Members shall not act, after they leave Council, in such a manner to take improper advantage of their previous office.
- Members of the Council must keep confidential any information relating to the work of the Council from persons not authorized to receive such information.

**Prepared by W. Hanscome, A/D/SLES**  
**Draft dated August 31, 2010**

**Certification Document**

I, the undersigned, certify that I have read and shall observe the Conflict of Interest “Principles” attached to this document, as a condition of my being a member of the Veterans Ombudsman’s Strategic Council.

In addition, I shall observe the compliance measures adopted by the Strategic Council which require that I shall report any conflict of interest situation to be recorded in the minutes when any issue discussed is one where my private activities and interests give rise to situations that could cause real, potential or apparent conflict of interest with my duties and responsibilities as a Council member and I shall abstain from discussions on the issue if so directed by the Chair.

In respect of my outside business activities, I shall keep confidential any information related to the work of the Council from persons not authorized to receive such information.

Signature :

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Office of the Veterans Ombudsman  
Strategic Council**

**1.01 Detailed Guidelines for Expenses**

The purpose of this document is to provide information and assistance to Veterans Ombudsman Strategic Council members claiming reimbursement for expenses incurred while on traveling for Veterans Ombudsman Strategic Council.

It is each Committee member's responsibility to submit their receipts, and other supporting documentation for their travel expenses within **one month** of the Veterans Ombudsman Strategic Council meeting to Tammy Lidstone:

Email: [tammy.lidstone@ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca](mailto:tammy.lidstone@ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca)  
Fax: (902) 566-7582, Attention: Tammy Lidstone  
Mail: Tammy Lidstone  
PO Box 7700, Int. Box 409, NBT  
Charlottetown PE C1A 8M9

A blank form has been provided in **Annex C** to help with the submission of supporting information and receipts.

**1.1 Transportation**

**1.1.1 Air Travel, Rail**

- Members are responsible for arranging their individual travel and accommodations and can submit for reimbursement of expenses.
- Members will be responsible for any extra costs incurred for personal stopovers or extended trips.

**Office of the Veterans Ombudsman  
Strategic Council**

**1.1.2 Private Vehicle Travel**

Before using a private vehicle for government travel, the member should ensure that he/she has adequate insurance. In the event of an accident, the government will not be held responsible for deductible amounts related to comprehensive or collision coverage. *It is recommended that the member have a least \$1,000,000 in liability insurance.*

- Members must obtain prior approval (submit request to Tammy Lidstone) from the OVO to use their private vehicle to travel on government business.
- Total travel costs for use of private vehicle must not exceed the amount equivalent to the cost of commercial transportation.
- When members choose to use their private vehicle to travel on GOC business, the reimbursement for mileage will be calculated at the rate set by Treasury Board, Kilometric Rates.
- To be reimbursed for mileage, members must submit a signed letter indicating start and destination points, and total distance traveled.

**1.1.3 Taxis/Airport Transporters**

- Members must pay for their use of taxis and other local transportation and submit receipts for reimbursement.
- When an airport bus . shuttle serves the accommodation or meeting location, members should use this bus service rather than using the more expensive taxis.
- Members must send receipts to claim for taxi fares except when the fare is under \$10.00; however, appropriate details such as date, origin/destination and exact amount of a fare must be provided in a signed letter.
- When taxis are shared, only the person paying the fare may request reimbursement.

## **Office of the Veterans Ombudsman Strategic Council**

### **1.1.4 Other Out-of-pocket Transportation Expenses**

- Members must submit receipts for reimbursements of expenses such as parking, ferry and bridge tolls, incurred while traveling on Government business. These expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with the Treasury Board, Travel Directives.

### **1.2 Accommodation**

- Members are responsible for arranging their individual travel and accommodations and can submit for reimbursement of expenses.
- Members are responsible for paying all non-room costs such as meals, telephone costs, etc.
- Members will be required to pay all costs for an extended stay at a hotel that is longer than required for the purpose of the Government business.
- Members may make private accommodation arrangements when traveling (i.e.: with relatives or friends), and claim the amount fixed by Treasury Board for such accommodations.

### **1.3 Meals**

- Members must pay for their meals, and submit for reimbursements, if so desired. The exception being those that are pre-arranged by the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman.

#### **No meal allowance will be paid under the following circumstances:**

- When meals are included in the fare of air or rail transportation

Treasury and Policy Board, Travel Information: [http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/hrpubs/tbm\\_113/menu-travel-voyage-eng.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/tbm_113/menu-travel-voyage-eng.asp)

**Expense Claim**  
**Members of Veterans Ombudsman Strategic Council**

DATE	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidentals

Mileage \_\_\_\_\_ km x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Taxi(s) \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Parking \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Meals \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Incidentals \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Airfare: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Car Rental \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Fuel for Car Rental \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Please send completed form to: Tammy Lidstone, Veterans Ombudsman Office,  
Internal Box 409, NBT, P.O. Box 7700, Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 8M9