

DATE: December 13, 2023

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair, Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

SUBJECT: City of Prince George Veteran Community Covenant

ATTACHMENT(S): None.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Council adopts the City of Prince George Veteran and Families Community Covenant, as proposed in the report dated December 13, 2023 from the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs, to help guide Council, Administration, and the public in collaborating on issues important to the veteran community.
2. That the tangible actions described in Appendix A to the report dated December 13, 2023 from the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs, titled City of Prince George, be referred to Administration for further exploration.

PURPOSE:

At the November 20, 2023 Regular Council Meeting interest in exploring actions under a Veteran Community Covenant was discussed. Administration proposes that a first step in advancing this work would be to formalize the clauses of a Prince George Veteran Community Covenant. An example of this framework is contained herein for review.

BACKGROUND:

In 2011 the town of Conception Bay South, Newfoundland and Labrador, in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada, established a Community Covenant in support of veterans and their families.

Veterans Affairs Canada provided Conception Bay with a framework which defined a Community Covenant as “An agreement within a community, defined by the community, to support Canada’s Veterans and their families, in a manner specified within the Covenant document.”

The framework also identified four goals for the Community Covenant as follows:

- Leverage support for Veterans and their families by affirming or reaffirming a community’s willingness and commitment to maintaining and/or building an actively supportive environment where veterans and their families will be recognized.

- Develop and showcase partnerships, organizations, programs, and services within communities supporting veterans and their families.
- Provide an opportunity to encourage or announce new or existing initiatives or programs of support.
- Create a network of community-based resources across Canada, which will be featured on the Veterans Affairs Canada website.

The Conception Bay South Community Covenant pledges support to:

- The reintegration of military members and all veterans into the community.
- The efforts of community organizations to connect all military personnel, veterans and their families to service and programs.
- The annual ceremonies that remember veterans and honour heroes.

Halton Hills, Ontario became the second Canadian city to adopt a Community Covenant on June 6, 2014. The guiding principles of the Halton Hills covenant are:

- Work together to provide a healthy, vibrant, and safe community for our Veterans.
- Build on community programs that benefit Veterans and their families.
- Strengthen and connect community partnerships and resources.
- Celebrate and recognize Veteran contributions to the community.
- Lead and promote community initiatives and events that support Veterans and leave lasting memories in the community.
- Establish and measure support to determine community gaps.
- Preserve and invest in our heritage and community history.
- Educate and inform the Community.

In Prince George, during August of 2014 a motion was passed, stating “*That a member of Council be appointed to facilitate discussions with community partners regarding the creation of a Prince George Community Covenant*”. Work around this topic, with community groups, took place in 2015 at the time of the closing of the Prince George Ministry of Veterans Affairs Office (the office was reopened in May of 2017). Work to recognize and support the veteran community has continued but the formal act of establishing a covenant has not taken place.

In recognition that the original covenant was explored nearly a decade ago it seems reasonable to reengage with this work by formalizing a community covenant based on similar commitments to those in other communities and then explore actions that can be undertaken relevant to the conditions present in 2023 here in Prince George. Draft language for a City of Prince George Veteran and Families Community Covenant is presented in the summary and conclusion portion of this report.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

It is assessed that adopting a veteran community covenant supports the City’s strategic pillar or City Government and Infrastructure priorities. Specifically, focusing on meaningful communication and relationship development to advance shared priorities.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Adopting the covenant as proposed does not incur an expense for the City. The actions that may be taken under this framework may have costs associated and will need to be reviewed separately.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Please note this report comes with a recommendation from the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Relations:

“That the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs RECOMMENDS to Council endorsement of the 2023 City of Prince George Veteran and Families Community Covenant as proposed in the report dated November 20, 2023, from the Manager of Intergovernmental Relations titled “City of Prince George, Veteran Community Covenant.”

The language from the referenced report is:

The City of Prince George Veteran and Families Community Covenant pledges to:

- *reaffirm our willingness and commitment to maintaining an actively supportive environment where veterans and their families are recognized.*
- *work to support and showcase partnerships, organizations, programs, and services within the community that support veterans and their families.*
- *seek opportunities to encourage initiatives and programs that support the veteran community.*
- *celebrate and recognize veteran contributions to the community.*
- *preserve and invest in our community’s heritage and community history.*

These clauses are offered as guiding statements. Examples of specific actions that could be explored are included as Appendix A to this report.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Garth Frizzell, Chair, Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

Prepared by: Eric Depenau, Manager, Intergovernmental Relations

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2024/01/08

Appendix A

Tangible actions that may be considered related to the clauses within the City of Prince George Veteran and Families Community Covenant, as proposed, include:

- ***reaffirms our willingness and commitment to maintaining an actively supportive environment where veterans and their families are recognized.***
 - The signing of this covenant as a public declaration.
- ***work to support and showcase partnerships, organizations, programs, and services within the community that support veterans and their families.***
 - Work could be undertaken with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and the Regional District of Fraser Fort George to determine interest in a more regional covenant.
 - Outreach to The Rocky Mountain Rangers (the local primary reserve infantry regiment) could continue with the aim of formalizing recognition of April 1st as the regiment's birthday with a flag raising and proclamation as has been done in previous years.
 - A copy of the Veteran and Families Community Covenant could be shared alongside an invitation to discuss further actions with representatives from the Canadian Armed Forces Liaison Council, Mainland BC Military Family Resource Center, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, The Royal Canadian Legion and Veteran Affairs Canada as well as other groups identified by staff and council.
- ***seek opportunities to encourage initiatives and programs that support the veteran community.***
 - A list of street names could be developed by a relevant department or committee with direction for the inclusion of names related to local veterans. The list would be made available during the creation of new roads for consideration.
 - A street light banner program could be investigated that highlights veterans with a connection to Prince George and the area. Examples of similar programs in BC include Parksville and Valemount with many other examples across Canada.
 - The establishment of an indigenous veteran's monument, or similar recognition, could be explored in partnership with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. This conversation could take place through standing meetings between the City of Prince George and the Nation.
 - The drafting of a City of Prince George Reservist Leave Policy that builds on the statutory leave protected within the BC Employment Standards Act could be explored. Advocacy to encourage other local governments to explore their own reservist leave policies could follow.
 - Advocacy for British Columbia to join the Support our Troops license plate program.
- ***celebrate and recognize Veteran contributions to the community.***

- A review of municipal support to the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies as a key act of honoring the sacrifice of the uniformed community could be undertaken to identify enhancements.

Seek out opportunities to recognize service within the existing municipal honors and award framework. Note awarding of Freedom of the City to Canadian Forces Base Baldy Hughes (1984), The Rocky Mountain Rangers Army Cadet Corps (2008) and The Rocky Mountain Rangers (2018) has taken place.

- ***preserve and invest in our community's heritage and community history.***

- Maintenance and operations around the street names, banners, and monuments that may be, or are already, been put in place such as Veterans Plaza and the Granite Cenotaph near city hall have been (completed in 2009) as well as Cpl. Darren Fitzpatrick Bravery Skate Park (opened in 2016) as example.