

MEETING MINUTES

NATIONAL LABOUR-MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION COMMITTEE (NLMCC)

VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

and

THE UNION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' EMPLOYEES (UVAE)

Thursday, April 10, 2014

Chairperson:

Yvan Thauvette, UVAE National President

In attendance:

UVAE

Yvan Thauvette

Kim Coles

Debi Buell

Michelle Bradley

Daniel Gaulin

Jayne Auranen

Bonnie Heidt

Pat Mason

Ray Bailey

Anne Howard

Management

Mary Chaput

John Larlee

Michel Doiron

Glynnis French

Lieutenant General Walter Semianiw

Don Love

Charlotte Bastien

Rachel Gravel

David Robinson

Monique Pendergast

1. Welcoming Remarks

The chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and by stating that this would be the last NLMCC meeting over which he would preside as he will be retiring in the fall.

The Deputy Minister congratulated Mr. Thauvette on his upcoming retirement. She announced recent changes to management: Michel Doiron as Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery (ADM, SD) and Glynnis French replacing Charlotte Stewart as Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Corporate Services (ADM, HRCS). The Deputy Minister also announced that the Director General of Human Resources (DGHR), Don Love, will be retiring in September 2014.

2. Approval of Minutes and Review of Follow-up Items from September 26, 2013

The minutes were approved with no changes. All action items have been completed.

3. Ste. Anne's Hospital Update

The ADM, HRCS stated that the negotiations are ongoing and discussions continued during the election in Québec. Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) is waiting to see who the new Minister of Health will be and is anticipating completion of the transfer by the end of 2014.

The Executive Director, Ste. Anne's Hospital (ED, SAH) added that she is hopeful that activities will accelerate as delays are having an impact on resources. Some employees have left but they are continuing to recruit and focusing on what will happen on day one after the transfer to ensure that the hospital will be fully staffed and operational. They have been working with Logibec, which is the firm chosen by Quebec to implement the administrative and clinic system.

Y. Thauvette raised an incident with which he was not very happy. He had sent an e-mail to Mr. Jacques Fauteux, Minister Fantino's Chief of Staff, which was shared around a table including Mr. Richard Neville. The message, regarding issues with official languages, was sent to Jacques Fauteux and not to a group of people he did not know. Following the e-mail message being shared, Mr. Neville contacted Mr. Thauvette and was not happy. Mr. Thauvette stated that they should be able to communicate with each other without having to go through the minister's office.

The Deputy Minister responded that VAC can review the communication protocol between UVAE and VAC.

D. Gaulin spoke about the union counselling network which was launched around the end of November 2013. Ten union members were trained to be resource people on site to assist employees at Ste. Anne's Hospital, due to the high levels of anxiety and insecurity.

The Deputy Minister commented that early intervention is helpful, particularly from peers, and that this network sounds useful and healthy.

D. Gaulin commented that the union represents 600 members at Ste. Anne's Hospital. As the transfer gets closer, it is more important than ever to communicate to employees as many of the decisions affect their working conditions. The union is working hard to assure and retain employees. However, they hope that management will start to communicate more with the union and with employees.

The Deputy Minister commented that the union's level of professionalism and performance is appreciated. With regards to the exchange of information, management could further discuss how to improve communications and perhaps hold more face-to-face sessions with employees. The details of the negotiation are not shareable, but updates can be provided on the process and the expected timelines further to the election.

Action Item: The Deputy Minister, ADM, HRCS and ED, SAH to discuss the timing of having more comprehensive conversations and get back to UVAE.

4a). Branch Updates

Human Resources and Corporate Services (HRCS)

The ADM, HRCS provided the following update:

- VAC is one of the leaders in the Government of Canada on the notion of the virtual desktop, which will change the way information technology systems are delivered. During this migration, users will be upgraded from Windows XP to Windows 7.
- The Government of Canada is introducing a new system for storing records called GC Docs. VAC will be moving to this system as well as other departments. There will be training, and employees will have to change the protocols of how they work.
- E-mail transformation from GroupWise to an Outlook e-mail system will take place in late fall.

B. Heidt commented that Regina has the virtual desktop, and it is a real improvement.

M. Bradley commented on the transfer from Corel WordPerfect to Microsoft Word and that there has not been any training on how to create merge letters and make envelopes.

Action Item: DGHR to look into offering MS Word training, especially on merging documents and envelopes.

J. Auranen suggested that when a new system or program is implemented, training be offered in a timely fashion and not several months later.

K. Coles raised concerns regarding the upcoming transfer of Compensation to Miramichi and the intense workload pressures on Compensation staff. She indicated that due to delays in having staffing actions approved by the Finance/HR Committee (FIN/HR), staff are close to being struck off strength and then having to be put back into the system.

J. Auranen indicated that there are casual employees going up to two months without pay because the paperwork is not flowing in a timely fashion. Compensation units are running at a bare minimum and Compensation Advisors are in the office crying because they cannot keep up with the workload. In addition, they are not being given reliable information on what their future looks like. She asked when the accounts would start being transferred to Miramichi and when the transfer would be complete.

The DGHR responded that he was not aware that there were delays in employees getting paid and that he is working with the Director of National HR Operations to ensure that there is the appropriate number of employees in the Compensation units. VAC is in the third wave of the transfer to Miramichi, and pay accounts will be transferred in 2015. The pay system is very complicated and it is difficult to find qualified people to do this work. However, there are some options available such as contracting out some of the pay accounts to an external provider through PWGSC, as a last resort. The Director of National HR Operations and her staff are putting together a needs assessment to determine how many employees are required to get VAC through to late 2015.

K. Coles commented that due to the reporting and organizational changes, it is difficult even to have local LMCC meetings. She also asked when labour relations training would be offered in the western region.

The DGHR responded that the labour relations training would be offered in western within the next few months.

K. Coles also commented that with the HR generalists, the labour relations side is the busiest side, and that not all of the individuals have the same comfort levels and experience in labour relations. There have been some issues when dealing with grievances.

J. Auranen and B. Heidt described incidents where the grievance process was not properly followed and indicated that the issue is a lack of experience. It was also mentioned that the bargaining agent has not received an updated list in almost a year of which HR Consultants deal with which areas.

Action Item: DGHR to provide UVAE with an updated list of HR Consultants.

M. Bradley commented on the tight timelines around the Performance Management training, and that more advanced notice would be appreciated.

The DGHR responded that more dates have been added for this training.

Service Delivery (SD)

The ADM, SD provided the following update:

- SD has generally been meeting its service standards, whether in the National Contact Centre Network (NCCN), Disability Adjudication or other areas.
- Going forward, SD will be looking at improving its services for clients, as an 18-page form is not acceptable.
- SD received money in the last budget to work on My VAC Account.

J. Auranen commented that more and more clients are trying to use My VAC Account. However, they log in and then call the NCCN to verify whether or not they did it correctly. Although My VAC Account may be helping some people, it is doubling the work in the NCCN. Also, the 18-page form does not include all of the forms that are required.

B. Heidt indicated that in the minutes from the previous NLMCC meeting, the ADM, SD indicated that looking at the Client Service Agent (CSA) workload would be a priority and that CSAs would be staffed in some areas. She would like an update as to whether or not any CSAs have been staffed across Canada.

The ADM, SD responded that they are looking at both the CSAs and Case Managers workload as they are concerned about both.

The Director General, Field Operations (DG, FO) replied that approval was received to staff CSAs in some areas.

Action Item: DG, FO to provide UVAE with the number and locations of CSAs approved to be staffed from September 2013 until the end of March 2014.

B. Heidt stated that as an employee in Regina, they are in crisis. In looking at the workload distribution tool for CSAs, the number of Veterans per CSA goes anywhere from 674 to Regina's number of 2100. They have asked to staff nine times without receiving approval. Regina will be losing another CSA in August who is quitting because she has no work-life balance. They will also be losing the CSA in Saskatoon located at the Service Canada office. In October, the Saskatoon CSA's workload is going to the two remaining CSAs in Regina.

Action Item: ADM, SD to look at the CSA resourcing in the Regina Area Office as there is supposed to be six CSAs and there are only three.

J. Auranen added that in Ontario, the number of Case Managers on extended leave is phenomenal and that the remaining Case Managers are burning out.

The ADM, SD responded that he has had this discussion with the DG, FO, who is looking into it.

K. Coles raised the CSA education criteria and mentioned that, in the past, there had been a move to change the education criteria in certain regions, but UVAE pushed back. Since it was a national generic job description, you cannot have different education criteria for various regions. This issue is a challenge, particularly in the west, to recruit and retain due to competition with the higher paying private sector. The requirement of having a degree will only compound the problem.

In the past, this has been used as an asset, which is good career development when a vacancy comes up for a Case Manager. If the education criteria changes for a Case Manager, there will be an impact on CSAs who had included in their learning plan to work towards the previous education requirement for Case Managers.

The DG, FO responded that the education criteria for the statement of merit was revised for the new work descriptions for the CSAs, Case Managers and Client Service Team Managers (CSTMs). It was signed by the previous ADM, SD prior to his retirement but not distributed as there were a few considerations brought forward for which the new ADM, SD needs to be briefed. Something to keep in mind is that things change, job markets change, demographics change, and maybe it was an issue three years ago in some parts of western region. But when it was discussed at a management meeting last fall with all Area Directors, it was not identified as an issue. There have been more recruitment issues with staffing terms.

In looking at the potential employees who could be impacted, based on the information from HR, there are only two CSAs who would be limited. However the DG, FO stated that this could be verified again with HR.

Action Item: ADM, SD to review the revised education criteria for the CSA, CM and CSTM statement of merit.

M. Bradley inquired on the process used to review staffing requirements; for example, an office in Atlantic had two CSAs acting as Case Managers until March 31, 2014. These employees had not received letters to indicate whether or not their acting appointments were being extended, and therefore were not extended in time and their system access was cut off. The explanation received was that FIN/HR had to do a total review of the case management needs. Clarification is required on how that process works when looking at renewing acting appointments.

The DG, FO explained that Service Delivery Program Management (SDPM) is conducting the review, not FIN/HR. Some staffing actions were put on hold to ensure that approval to staff is recommended and sought for the proper locations.

Y. Thauvette had a question on the access centre in Charlottetown and whether or not there were any changes to the way it is operating.

The DG, FO responded that there is a WP-02 employee who is present in the access centre. This employee has a regular job but is available if a client walks in to the office in Charlottetown.

M. Bradley commented that the Charlottetown access centre directly affects the New Brunswick office and is concerned with the referral process. Clarification is needed on what their role is, how they interact with the Area Office, and whether or not there any business processes or procedures they are using.

The DG, FO confirmed the access centre is supposed to be using the same protocol as the employees located in Service Canada offices. The Area Director recently reported that there were some issues and they are following up with the Area Director and those in charge of the access centre.

K. Coles commented that in Charlottetown there are various managers and senior managers to support Service Delivery. However, in the field, there is only the DG, FO. When the ADM, SD is away, quite often the DG, FO is acting ADM with no one to replace her. The field needs to have some stable support to backfill for the DG, FO. This is unfair to the DG, FO and to the employees in the field.

The ADM, SD responded that he agrees and is reviewing the structure.

M. Bradley questioned the validity of the workload intensity tool for CSAs now that First Contact Resolution (FCR) and the Intelligent Call Exchange (ICE) system have been implemented. The CSAs are so busy with FCR that they cannot address their own work items. This will decrease the amount of long term care letters, for example, being created, which is one of the indicators that will be used to allocate CSA resources. She stated that there was a commitment not to make any changes during the first year; however, she has huge concerns that this will sway the statistics against their favour.

The DG, FO confirmed that they have been having the same concerns and inquiries regarding the implementation of FCR, which is not yet complete. The goal is to have a national implementation; however, they are moving very cautiously and will have consultation at that time.

B. Heidt commented on an e-mail she received as an FYI which had to do with the New Veterans Charter (NVC), which she did not read as she does not deal with NVC in her job. She later found out that this e-mail contained an important process change that

CSAs now had to do. Any changes to a job should have been communicated more clearly.

The ADM, SD noticed that notes are going out which are unclear for whom they are intended, and steps are being taken to ensure that there is no confusion.

M. Bradley added that there are so many different ways of getting information (Wiki, VS toolbox, e-mail). It would be helpful if information was communicated one way, not three different ways.

Policy, Communications and Commemoration (PCC)

The ADM, PCC provided the following update:

- In Policy, there are teams reviewing the NVC while awaiting government's decision on it. There is also a focus on Veterans employment in the public and private sectors. The issue of homelessness is also being looked at, including joining together community partners and agencies to address this issue.
- In Communications, the current focus is on the National Day of Honour on May 9, as well as how best to support all areas of the Department.
- Commemoration is extremely busy with "The Road to 2017" as well as five key events which are taking place during in 2014-2015. They are also trying to do more to make sure employees are hearing about what is happening.

J. Auranen commented that when something is in the news, the NCCN is getting many calls to answer questions. Anytime an announcement will be made in the news, mini-standup meetings are held in order to prepare the NCCN employees.

D. Buell commented that employees are working very hard and there is a lot of overtime which can result in burnout. There is less mention about work-life balance.

Y. Thauvette commented that asking employees to work overtime over and over again can become a vicious cycle.

The Deputy Minister agreed and added that after a certain point, there is less productivity and can lead to factions within the staff. Statistics are kept year over year, and overtime is actually lower overall this year. There are pockets of the organization where overtime usage is high, and other areas where there is no overtime used.

J. Auranen commented that there is a lot of unpaid overtime because employees have to leave the office feeling good about themselves.

The Deputy Minister commented that a conversation should be held with Area Directors and CSTMs regarding the unreported and unpaid overtime.

4b). Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) Update

The Chair, VRAB, provided the following update:

- VRAB continues to work on Business Process Redesign and has commenced a comprehensive review of Statement of Case preparation and content.
- VRAB is awaiting the results of an audit by the Office of the Controller General on the Protection of Personal Information and is encouraged that the information we provided them will support a positive report card.
- Staff has been engaged in Blueprint 2020 and several reports can be found on-line.
- Some organizational changes have been made at the Director level which adjusts the work of two directors to better reflect workload and alignment of functions.
- VRAB has had six Workforce Adjustment (WFA) situations that were due to lack of work or discontinuance of a function. Four have been resolved (three volunteers and one alternation) and two employees have been surplus for a short period. VRAB is working diligently with HR consultant to ensure that these employees are placed.
- As for the budget, VRAB is closing out the old year in a good financial position and is finalizing its budget allocations for the current fiscal year. The budget was reduced when the legislation was changed to reduce the permanent membership from 29 to 25 members. The budget will be closely monitored, especially discretionary items including travel.

D. Buell inquired on the six WFA situations and sought clarification regarding the two employees who have been surplus for a short period.

Action Item: Chair, VRAB to follow up and provide further information regarding the two employees who have been surplus for a short period.

Y. Thauvette commented that he was surprised when he was notified that VRAB would be reorganizing as there was no mention at the September 2013 NLMCC meeting of any cuts.

The Chair, VRAB responded that he was only made aware after he returned from the September 2013 meeting.

5. Transformation / Blueprint 2020

The DG of Strategic Coordination & Liaison (SCL) and Transformation provided the following update:

- Transformation is entering its fourth year. Of the 33 projects: 21 are now closed; 12 are still underway and will continue for this year and the next. Transformation is approximately 62% complete. VAC is analyzing the completed projects to ensure that they are delivering what was intended.

- Blueprint 2020:
 - The Deputy Minister provided an update to the Clerk of the Privy Council in February 2014, which is posted on the VAC Wiki and on GCpedia.
 - The theme is engagement. The Deputy Minister has participated in some employee engagement sessions which were very well-received, and she intends to do more sessions.
 - The Clerk will begin using the term “Destination 2020” and the Clerk’s report to the Prime Minister should be released soon.
 - In mid-May there will be another round of engagement with employees.
 - There will be a focus on innovative policy development and service delivery; layers of management and process; internal red tape reductions; new technology to support the modern workplace; training and development; and HR Streamlining.

Y. Thauvette inquired as to whether all Departments have the same perspective and approach, and whether or not Blueprint 2020 will lead to more cuts or more privatization.

The DG, SCL and Transformation responded that Departments are being asked to look for innovative ways to improve the workplace and new ways to serve Canadians. Although Departments are slightly different, there are similar high level themes in the reports.

M. Bradley commented that Blueprint 2020 does not sit well with her as she has not had time to become informed. It feels like another title for Transformation. She also inquired on whether or not there are statistics on the number of front line staff participating and coming up with suggestions and creative ideas.

The DG, SCL and Transformation responded that he has no precise answer as there are many different ways to participate. The working group is being restructured and will be bringing on some front line staff.

The Deputy Minister added that the front line staff often feels disenfranchised. VAC is looking into possibly reinvigorating the Field Operations Advisory Committee.

D. Buell inquired on the update to the Clerk and whether or not it is available on the Wiki.

The DG, SCL and Transformation responded that the report is on the VAC Wiki and on GCpedia; however, a copy can be provided since Y. Thauvette and K. Coles do not have access.

Action Item: DG of SCL and Transformation to provide UVAE with a copy of the February Blueprint 2020 report.

Y. Thauvette commented that while it is good to ask younger employees for new ideas, these employees do not have much experience and may not have foresight.

6. Departmental Budget Update

The ADM, HRCS advised that estimates for the Department have been tabled. The Department has spending of about \$3.6B, 90% of which goes directly to clients. Planned FTEs for the Department is 2,834, including Office of the Veterans Ombudsman and Ste. Anne's Hospital. Key priorities are honouring those who have served Canada; transferring the Ste. Anne's Hospital; modernizing the Department; and advancing the fair treatment of the Veterans community.

Y. Thauvette had a question related to when the government announces that it has increased the budget for Veterans by close to \$5B, where this money actually is and how it has been spent.

The Deputy Minister responded that if you take VAC's 2006 budget levels and you add up the increases each year, the actual number is now at \$5.2B.

M. Bradley questioned the use of overtime and its impact on the budget. Is it more cost-effective to have employees doing all kinds of overtime and risk burning out as opposed to hiring the correct amount of employees to do the job within the core work hours.

The Deputy Minister responded that the management of overtime depends on whether it is a temporary spike or whether it is a long term increase in workload that cannot be managed in another way.

The ADM, SD added that he has been looking at these numbers in detail.

K. Coles commented that two of the pockets in Head Office are Adjudication and Compensation. This has been going on for a while and some of those employees have come to rely on that extra income.

7. Report on Plans and Priorities 2014-2015

Y. Thauvette addressed the risk analysis portion of the Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP), specifically the sentence that "the modernization of VAC's service delivery model will not be achieved as expected, and will not meet the needs of Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, and their families."

The ADM, HRCS responded that when the corporate risk profile is created, the Department is asked to be very honest about the full range of risks that can possibly be identified. The Department is asked to put its highest risk into the RPP, and is finding ways to mitigate that risk.

The DGHR added that the risk profile is hypothetical, including all of the mitigations put in place to ensure that those risks do not happen.

M. Bradley commented that it is difficult to know whether or not the Department has crossed that line as it is no longer doing client satisfaction surveys.

The DGHR responded that the corporate risk profile also outlines performance indicators.

8. Canadian Armed Forces Priority Hiring

The ADM, PCC stated that the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced on November 7, 2013, that medically released Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), both Regular Force and Reserve Force, who are injured in service to Canada, will be given the top level of priority (Statutory priority) consideration for openings in the federal public service. Research has shown that most Veterans have a successful transition, unlike what is reported in the media. However, those who are having difficulty are those being medically released. This initiative is another tool in the toolbox for injured Veterans who are leaving the CAF due to a service-related injury. There is no accommodation in the military.

M. Bradley inquired as to who determines eligibility.

The ADM, PCC responded that VAC will determine eligibility.

9. Common Human Resources Business Process Update

The DGHR explained that Common Human Resources Business Process (CHRBP) is a government-wide initiative to ensure that HR practices across Departments are done consistently and appropriately. As of April 1, 2014, Departments were required to have identified their plan and to have in place all of the initiatives that they were undertaking to meet the CHRBP requirements. VAC has met all of those requirements. These practices will allow managers to be able to make decisions without going through a lot of bureaucracy and red tape.

M. Bradley inquired as to whether or not this would be like Shared Services, where there would be a shared HR Department across the country.

The DGHR responded that this is not the intent of CHRBP.

10. FHCCPS and Records Management Contracts

The ADM, SD explained that the new FHCCPS contract has been awarded to Medavie Blue Cross. The current contract will expire on July 31, 2015, and the new contract will take effect on August 1, 2015. The new contract will include what is in the current contract as well as more access points, increased innovation, reduced wait times, and more self-service options.

J. Auranen inquired on when the effect on staff will be known.

The ADM, SD responded that the Treatment Authorization Centre (TAC) employees have already been advised, work has been done to move TAC employees into other areas of operations and employees have been replaced by term employees.

J. Auranen commented that there is some work that the TACs do for the rehabilitation clients and questioned whether this work will be going to Medavie and if Medavie will be taking more work that is going to affect the CSAs when they are looking for authorizations.

The DG, FO commented that she has some of the same questions and is being briefed in more detail on April 11, 2014, on the details of the new contract.

M. Bradley had several detailed questions which she agreed to forward to Y. Thauvette and K. Coles who will forward to the DG, FO prior to the briefing on the contract.

Y. Thauvette inquired as to how long the contract will be in effect.

The Deputy Minister responded that the contract will last for approximately 12 years, depending on the option years.

The ADM, SD explained that VAC has contracted a private company, Iron Mountain Canada, to provide storage services, especially since Library and Archives Canada no longer provides this type of storage. VAC has been transitioning to Iron Mountain since November 2013. He mentioned that it has not been a smooth transition and that there have been some issues with timeliness and scanning.

Y. Thauvette questioned whether or not the contract is a transaction-based contract. He has a copy of the contract which shows a cost of \$5.9M over 7 years. Are there additional charges to the Department each time a file is requested or returned?

The DG, FO responded that the contract is a transaction-based contract.

The Deputy Minister added that the global amount indicated on the contract (\$5.9M) is the sum of all projected transactions.

J. Auranen commented that it is her understanding that when a file is called in from Iron Mountain, it then has to be stored in-house. She also had a question regarding PA paper and whether or not new files are being created for any PA paper that comes into the management centre. She had another question regarding retention period for files and whether or not there has been a decision on the retention period. Veterans files cannot be destroyed.

The DG, FO responded that there are two issues: dealing with the archived files, and dealing with the active files. The process for archived files should be very clear as per the policy and guidelines in place. As for the active files, interim processes had to be put in place due to the short timeframe for the transition. The processes are still being re-visited. VAC did not have a good grasp on the volumetric for how to handle PA papers. The plan is that PA papers should not be returned to Iron Mountain but will be digitized so that they are in electronic format and not in paper format. The intent is to move away from paper and more towards digital.

K. Coles commented that the former ADM, SD had stated that it would be up to individual Departments to decide whether they were going to contract out this function or provide it in-house. She inquired as to whether or not VAC is aware of any Departments that decided to put the capacity in-house as opposed to contracting it out.

The ADM, SD responded that he knows of several Departments using Iron Mountain, but is not aware of any Departments that are still storing paper in-house.

11. Flexible Work Arrangements

B. Heidt raised the issue of flexible work arrangements and work-life balance. As offices become smaller, more and more employees are being told that they must work core hours, there is less flexibility in what employees can work, and employees are having their compressed day held over their heads. The rule in Regina is that there has to be at least three people in office. The bigger offices are not affected. Employees are upset at the thought of losing their compressed day off or other flexible work arrangements.

The DGHR responded that there is a large number of employees in the organization (approximately 25%) who work compressed. There is a need to balance flexible work arrangements with the need to take vacation leave.

K. Coles added that the biggest challenges are at any locations providing direct client service as well as Communications. It would be interesting to see how many employees on compressed are in Charlottetown Head Office. VAC was previously known as the 11th Department to work for out of all the Departments and Agencies in the federal public service, but is now the Department with the highest level of sick leave.

The Deputy Minister commented that the sick leave statistics are affected by the fact that Ste. Anne's Hospital is included, where sick leave runs higher. VAC also has a

higher preponderance of women in our workforce than the average of the public service, and the workforce at VAC is older than the average of the public service. Compressed work weeks do not have to be eliminated, but must be managed in conjunction with vacation leave.

M. Bradley commented that one of the selling points of FCR was that smaller offices would have more flexibility.

The DG, FO explained that FCR has not yet been implemented nationally. Once this takes place, there will be more flexibility.

J. Auranen inquired as to how many employees are on regular compressed vs. half compressed (i.e. one day every four weeks).

Action Item: DGHR to provide UVAE with a breakdown of the number of employees on regular compressed vs. half compressed.

12. Classification Update

The DG, HR explained that within the month, VAC will be about approximately two thirds of the way through the generic work description process. VAC is currently moving through Centralized Operations, SDPM, HR, and Communications. There has been a very small number of reclassifications upward or downward and more lateral reclassifications. These four groups should be completed by May, leaving Field Operations, Commemoration and Policy. Once these areas are completed over the next 12-15 months, the generic work description process will be finished.

K. Coles commented that calls have been received from employees who received lateral reclassifications to the WP group. Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) has changed the definition of the WP group which will be going to an RP group (rehabilitation programs). Many WP employees will not fit in the new RP group, therefore these employees would have to be moved back in approximately 2017.

13. Service Canada/VAC Employees

Y. Thauvette commented that all along it was believed that all of the VAC positions located within Service Canada offices would be CSAs, not Case Managers or CSTMs. UVAE was quite surprised that it was a mix of different positions.

The DG, FO responded that VAC was aiming to have CSAs in those positions; however, it did not work out that way.

The ADM, SD added that in all locations except for one, these were affected employees.

B. Heidt provided an example of a CSA in Regina who went to Saskatoon on vacation, went in to the Service Canada office, and asked to see the Veterans Affairs representative. The individual was told, "Veterans Affairs is closed. They used to be on the 5th floor, but they're closed." The CSA replied that she was aware that they are closed, but that she would like to see the Veterans Affairs representative. Again, she was told, "Veterans Affairs is closed." She then explained that she is a Veterans Affairs employee from Regina and would like to see the CSA. She was then told that this was not a problem and she was brought in to see the CSA.

B. Heidt inquired as to whether statistics are being kept on who goes in to these offices and whether or not the statistics will be used to determine if the positions will be continued past October 31, 2014.

The ADM, SD responded that although he had not heard that particular example, he has heard other examples and this has been raised with Service Canada.

M. Bradley commented that after reviewing the document which outlines when a client is allowed to access the VAC employee, she found it quite restrictive and is concerned that clients will fall through the cracks.

The ADM, SD responded that it is supposed to be Veterans at the front of the line. Service Canada is not supposed to be determining eligibility.

Y. Thauvette asked if it is possible to get the indicators on the number of clients.

The ADM, SD responded that there have been 144 walk-ins in those 8 offices. However, the decision will not only be based on traffic. The VAC employees will remain in those locations as long as needed.

14. Forms Mailed by Canada Post

M. Bradley commented that it came to her attention that employees are getting telephone calls directly from Head Office asking them why they did not use the external mail-out option. They should not be getting calls directly from Head Office.

M. Bradley's second comment was that this project is another improvement that sounded great on paper, but when applied in reality actually makes things a bit more complex. There are currently only a few forms that have the external mail-out option. The prompt to select external mail-out, local print & mail out, or finalize without printing does not come up until after the form has been completed, saved and finalized to the system. In order to know whether or not the form qualifies for external mail-out, it must be created, saved, then finalized. Normal procedure is to print the form while it is still open. Now the form must be closed and finalized, then re-opened and printed if it does

not qualify for external mail-out. Many of the forms which qualify for external mail-out also require a cover letter to be attached.

The DG, FO noted that those issues have been brought to her attention and are being looked into. She agreed that the process must be streamlined as it is more complex than was intended.

15. Essential Services

Y. Thauvette indicated that there were changes to essential services through Bill C4 and inquired as to how the Department will decide in the future on essential services.

The DGHR responded that the definition of essential services has not changed. The Department is responsible for the identification of essential positions. The list will be created, including detailed rationales, and TBS will be responsible for consultation with unions.

Y. Thauvette asked if TBS would be consulting with each and every component.

Action Item: DGHR to find out whether TBS will be consulting with each component or with PSAC nationally.

K. Coles indicated that in the past, Corporate Labour Relations sat down with UVAE and reviewed each and every position proposed as essential, in detail, and came up with an agreement. She inquired as to whether VAC would be starting with that agreement or starting from scratch.

The DGHR responded that VAC will never start from scratch. VAC will review the most recent list of essential positions and add or subtract from it as needed.

K. Coles commented that the list will go directly to TBS and UVAE will not get a heads-up.

The DGHR responded that this is his understanding.

16. Employment Equity Committee

J. Auranen inquired as to the status of the employment equity committees since the National Employment Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee (NEEDAC) was disbanded. What is going to happen with the employment equity committee as a whole?

The DGHR responded that NEEDAC was disbanded as many of the members are no longer around. Kim Andrews, A/Director General of Audit and Evaluation, has assumed the role of Champion of Employment Equity and Diversity. She fully intends to

rejuvenate the committee. A proposal will be brought to SMC later in the month on how the structure will look.

Y. Thauvette asked whether or not UVAE will be consulted, and if the committee will be National or remain regional.

The DGHR responded that Kim Andrews will bring a proposal for a new structure for the National committee, and he fully expects that the unions will be consulted and included.

17. Other Items

K. Coles inquired on when the next face-to-face Field Operations LMCC will be held. If the meeting cannot be held in May, will it be held in the fall?

The DG, FO responded that the Travel Directive complicates things as employees are encouraged to have more teleconferences and/or videoconferences. She is looking to have the Field Operations LMCC back to back with the NCCN LMCC as some excluded directors must be brought in.

K. Coles offered that the UVAE members could travel to Montreal for the meeting, and the Area Directors can join by teleconference or videoconference. Ideally there is a meeting in the fall (September/October) and another in the spring (April/May).

18. Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of October 20, 2014.