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# **VOLUNTEER PATRICIA PROGRAM (VPP)**

*By John Hunter, VPP Facilitator*

The Volunteer Patricia Program is off and running. In addition to the brochure you have received with your newsletter today, you can visit the [ppcli.com](http://ppcli.com) website and get up to date information on the program and what it is doing to help our comrades. The brochure sums up the program in two short pages and the Handbook on the website in 60-odd longer ones. Please read the brochure to find out what we do. But in addition, I thought a few notes on who and how we do it might be useful.

So who does what? We are a very spread-out, old comrades organization. We consist of prewar, wartime, Korean, Cold War and recent peace-making vets. We place a great deal of importance on what our service has meant to us and we value our connections to our comrades and to our Regiment. The VP Program puts these sentiments into action. But how do you get a geographically spread out and demographically diverse organization such as ours to focus on a particular goal? Well, we have taken a leaf from our constitution.

There are national issues and there are local issues. Most local issues centre around communities and

individuals while national interests focus on policies and processes. Just as in Canada, some regions are better able to look after their members than others. So the structure we have settled on to start the program is something similar. Branches have a better hold on members living in their region, whether those members belong to the Association or not. They also have better insights into regional care agencies, including district offices of federal departments, in their area. They are best able to find local solutions that work. On the other hand, the Association needs a central policy and quality control capability to ensure we use our resources as effectively as we can. It must interact with many agencies at the national level as well. Finally, it must provide a backup of expertise to assist branches and cover areas of the country that have no branch representation. And that is what we have created: a branch level contact structure with a national backup that looks after matters such as policies, processes, finance, public affairs, liaison and monitors and improves our program.

How do we do it? We expect to receive referrals from all sorts of places: families, friends, units, other caregivers and not least, by direct contact with members who need our help. From whatever direction these contacts come, they will be directed to the nearest Branch Contact point, or where none exists, to the VPP Facilitator in Ottawa. These volunteers will deal with most calls or mail requesting information or implying a personal problem.

The immediate challenge facing the volunteer is to determine how severe a situation he or she is facing. This requires a simple screening process for receiving and responding to calls (emails and post being simpler by definition). The screening process ensures that the caller or writer who is simply requesting information is provided with prompt and effective service, and that callers or writers who may need Extended Services are identified and referred to the best professional able to help them. The screening process has three basic elements:

- **Listening:** Establishing communications with the member and hearing his or her story
- **Assessing:** Determining how best the member's problem should be handled and by whom
- **Referring:** Referring the member to the most appropriate program and caregiver

We are essentially in the referral business: getting the right professional and the right program our members need. But it is not just a simple phone number service. Problems may be hidden and hard to detect. The individual may already have tried and failed to get support, or the department or agency may lack the resources to help. This is where we come in to make things happen and we will soon be asking for volunteers to provide this kind of help as VP Mentors. When we expand into Extended Services, the risks we face will be higher, but the rewards will be greater.

The VPP is open to all who have ever served with the Regiment. Mention it to your friends who may not be Association members and ask them to pass the word along.

We need your help. Volunteers are needed at both the

branch and national levels. You will deal directly with members of the Regimental family, helping them find and implement solutions to their questions and problems. To find out more about volunteering, go to [www.ppcli.com](http://www.ppcli.com) and follow the VPP links to the Handbook. Look in Section 4, or contact your Branch President.

For more information contact your Branch President, Branch Contact, the Regimental Adjutant or the VPP Facilitator at [vppfacilitator@rogers.com](mailto:vppfacilitator@rogers.com) or telephone (613) 599-4763.

### **VPP Branch Contacts**

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