



Ministry of
Attorney General

OCTOBER 2018

Veteran's Licence Plate Eligibility – Final Report

VETERAN

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Executive Summary

Between July 23 and September 4, 2018, the Ministry of Attorney General (“the Ministry”) sought feedback from British Columbians about whether they believed the eligibility criteria for the Veteran’s Licence Plate (VLP) program should be expanded to include law enforcement – specifically Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers.

The issue of eligibility criteria was raised with the Ministry in 2017 by the Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) Dominion Command and RCMP Veterans’ Association, who requested that the program’s current definition of “veteran” be expanded to make regular-duty RCMP officers eligible for VLPs.

The British Columbia Veterans Commemorative Association (BCVCA), the organization that administers the VLP program, strongly opposed any changes to the current definition.

Over the course of the six-week engagement, 4,386 British Columbians from around the province submitted their feedback via an online survey, with an additional nine responses received via email.

Individuals from the police and the Armed Forces made up an equal proportion of all respondents who completed the survey, with approximately a quarter of respondents identifying as either being (or having previously been) a police officer with no Armed Forces background (26%), or as being (or having previously been) in the Armed Forces with no policing background (27%). An additional 6% of respondents have a background in both policing and the Armed Forces.

Overall, respondents strongly favoured (63% in favour, 36% oppose) keeping the eligibility criteria the same and not expanding it to include RCMP or other police officers. With the exception of respondents who indicated having a policing background, all other respondent groups opposed broadening the criteria.

Now that the results have been considered, and in line with feedback from respondents, government has announced there will not be any changes made to the eligibility criteria for the VLP program at this time.

Background

In 2004, the Province introduced VLPs to honour veterans and commemorate the 60th anniversary of D-Day. The BCVCA was a lead proponent for the creation of VLPs and worked with the Province and the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) on the initiative.

At inception, the eligibility criteria limited issuance of VLPs to veterans who had completed their military service and had been honourably discharged. In 2012, following input from the RCL and the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association (CPVA), the eligibility criteria were expanded to include active serving members of the Canadian Forces, including members of RCMP or municipal police who participated in United Nations (UN) or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations with the Canadian Armed Forces.

In 2017, the RCL expressed to government that the definition of a veteran used for B.C.'s VLP program differed from the definitions used by other provinces regarding inclusion of honourably discharged and currently serving RCMP officers, and requested that B.C. review the process for assessing who qualifies for VLPs.

The Province posted an engagement survey online from July 23 to September 4, 2018, to seek public feedback on whether the VLP program criteria should be expanded.



How the VLP Program Works

Since the creation of the VLP, applications have been managed by the BCVCA. This is unique to B.C., as in other Canadian jurisdictions the program is administered either by the provincial government or the RCL.

In B.C., drivers who are applying for a VLP must fill out an application form and send it, along with their appropriate proof of service documents and a \$10 application fee, to the BCVCA.

The BCVCA uses the fees it collects to fund commemorative work, such as constructing plaques, or for other dedications, such as handing out poppy seeds.

Once approved, VLPs are free for people who trade in their current licence plates. Applicants who are licensing a brand new vehicle for the first time are required to pay an \$18 fee to ICBC to receive their plates.

Definition of “Veteran”

Currently, there is no uniform definition of a “veteran” nationally shared by all provinces and territories, nor is there one agreed to by the stakeholder groups who represent people with military service. Various organizations offer their own definition, as below:

- ➔ **VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA** – Any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training and is honourably released.¹
- ➔ **RCL²** – Any person who is serving or who has honourably served in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Commonwealth or its wartime allies, or as a regular member of the RCMP, or as a Peace Officer in a special duty area or on a special duty operation, or who has served in the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command during wartime.

When it comes to issuing VLPs, there is also no current consensus within Canada on the definition of a veteran. The RCL has undertaken an initiative to attempt to standardize the definition of veterans for VLPs, as it currently varies greatly across Canada:

- ➔ Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Yukon, and the Northwest Territories require RCMP officers to have served in a UN or NATO operation to be eligible for a VLP; and
- ➔ Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador do not require service in a UN or NATO operation and will issue VLPs to all regular members of the RCMP.

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¹ <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-us/definition-veteran>

² <http://www.legion.ca/support-for-veterans/who-we-serve>

Current VLP Eligibility

In B.C., drivers are eligible to receive a VLP if they own or lease an eligible vehicle, and were honourably discharged from, or are currently serving in, one of the following:

- 1. SECOND WORLD WAR, KOREA, GULF WAR, THE BALKAN WARS, AFGHANISTAN, OR OTHER UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS AS A MEMBER OF:**
 - » *The Canadian Armed Forces, or*
 - » *An Allied Force, or*
 - » *The Canadian or Allied War Time Merchant Navy.*
- 2. A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES, REGULAR OR RESERVE, WHO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED BASIC TRAINING.**
- 3. UN OR NATO OPERATIONS AS A MEMBER OF:**
 - » *The Canadian Armed Forces, or*
 - » *A UN or NATO Alliance Force serving in an operation with the Canadian Armed Forces.*
- 4. UN OR NATO OPERATION UNDER COMMAND OF THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES AS A MEMBER OF THE RCMP, MUNICIPAL POLICE, OR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES OF CANADA.**
- 5. SIMILARLY QUALIFIED MEMBER OF A BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS ARMED FORCE (THOUGH THESE MEMBERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY SERVING ARE NOT ELIGIBLE).**

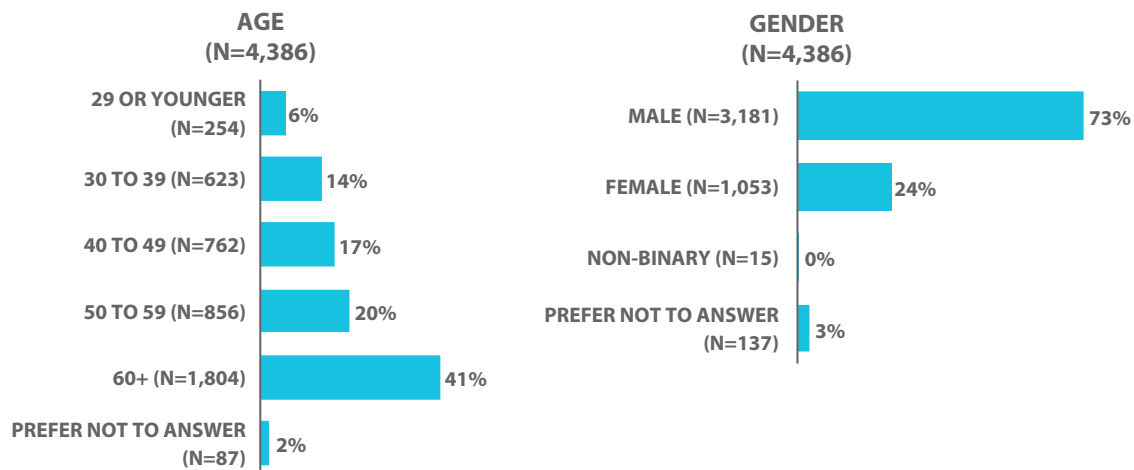
Public Engagement Results

To better understand the perspective of British Columbians on the issue of whether the VLP program criteria should be expanded, the Ministry posted an engagement survey online to solicit feedback to help guide any future program decisions. The survey was live from July 23 to September 4, 2018. In total, 4,386 responses were received.³

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

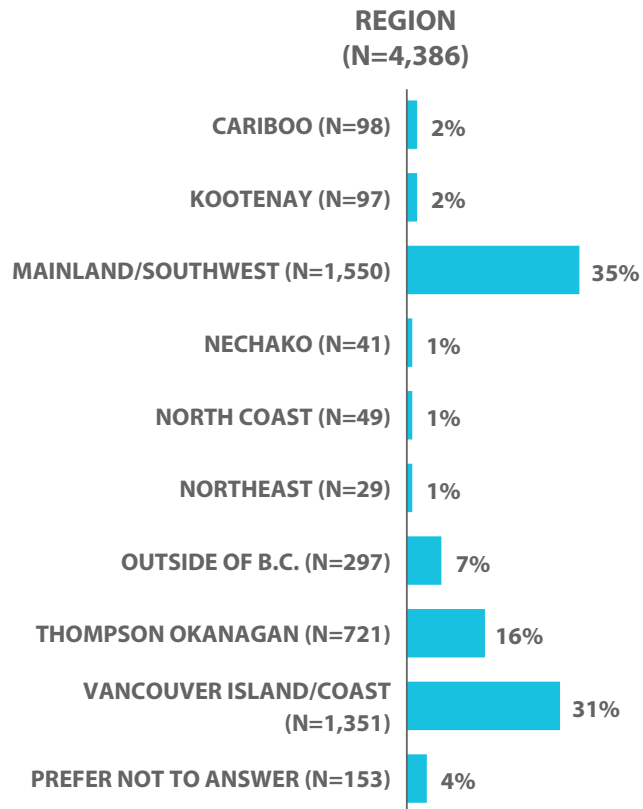
Over 60% of respondents were 50 years of age or older (n=2,560) (Figure 1) and almost three-quarters were male (73%, n=3,181) (Figure 2).

Figure 1 (Age) and Figure 2 (Gender)



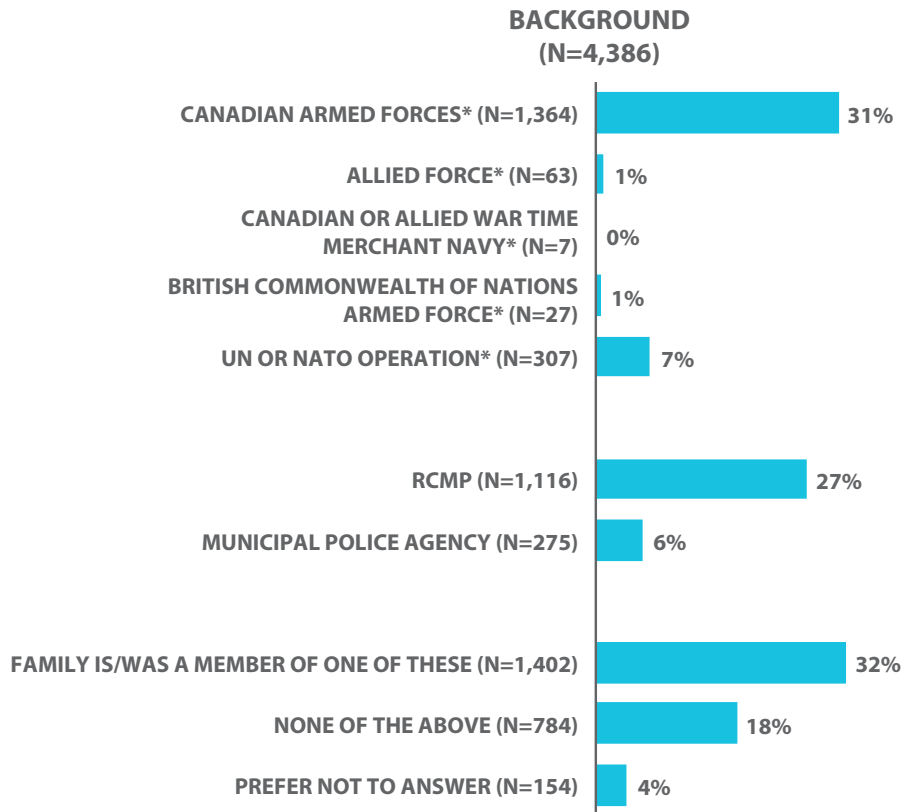
³ As survey respondents were anonymous and made up of those individuals with an interest in the VLP issue, the survey results cannot be extrapolated to be considered fully representative of B.C.'s population.

Figure 3



While two-thirds of respondents live in either the Lower Mainland (35%, n=1,550) or Vancouver Island/Coast (31%, n=1,351) regions, all regions in B.C. are represented in the survey results (Figure 3).

Figure 4⁴

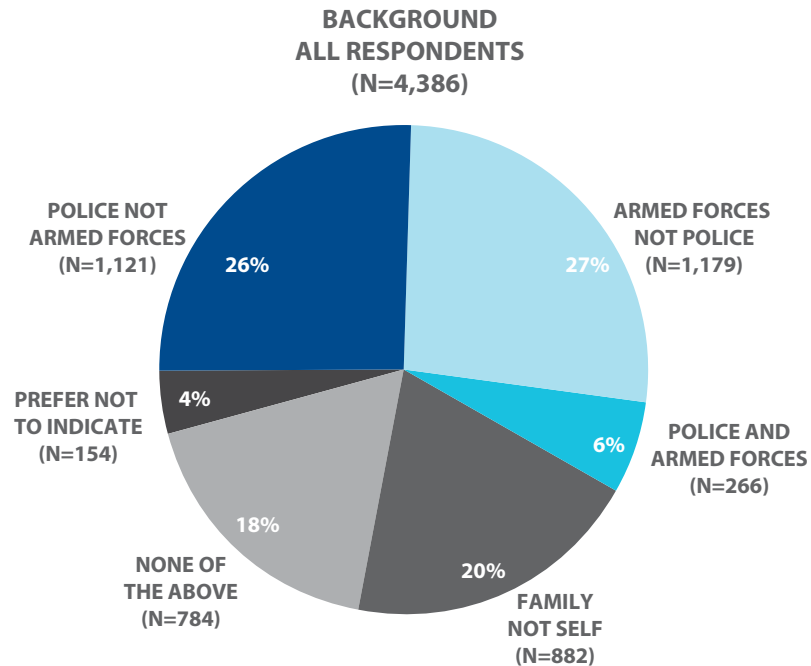


To help better determine and understand the perspective of respondents, British Columbians were asked to self-identify whether they were or had been a police officer or served in the Armed Forces, or if they had a family member who had been involved in these areas (Figure 4).

The main areas in which respondents identified their background were the Canadian Armed Forces (31%) and the RCMP (27%), or as having a family member who is or was a member of the police or the Armed Forces (32%).

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4 Percentages add up to more than 100%, as respondents were able to identify as having backgrounds in more than one area.

Figure 5



When analyzed further to break down the respondents who are either police or members of the Armed Forces, it is evident that these groups made up an equal proportion of all respondents who completed the survey (Figure 5). Approximately a quarter of respondents identified as being (or having previously been) a police officer with no Armed Forces background (26%), with almost that same amount indicating they were (or having previously been) in the Armed Forces with no policing background (27%). An additional 6% of respondents have a background in both policing and the Armed Forces.

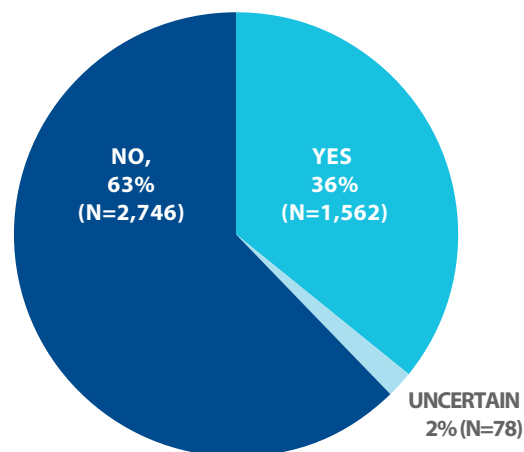
KEY FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC SURVEY

Overall, a vast majority of respondents (91%, n=3,980) indicated they had a previous awareness of the current requirements and eligibility criteria.

When asked about whether the eligibility criteria should be expanded to include law enforcement personnel, respondents strongly favoured (63%, n=2,746) retaining the existing criteria and not expanding it (Figure 6). Only one-third (36%, n=1,562) believed that law enforcement personnel should be eligible, with another 2% (n=78) indicating they were uncertain.

- ➔ Among the 36% of respondents who did support expanding the program, about half (51%, n=833) were in favour of opening it up to both active and retired RCMP and municipal police officers.
- ➔ Among the 63% of respondents who did not favour expansion, a large number (72%, n=1,972) went further and also provided a comment to expand on their position. The details of these comments are expanded on in the following section.

Figure 6



With the exception of respondents who indicated having a policing background, all other respondent groups opposed broadening the criteria. Further:

- ➔ Those with a background in the Armed Forces (and not policing) (n=1,179) are most likely to oppose the expansion (84%, n=990).
- ➔ Those with a policing background (and not the Armed Forces) (n=1,121) are much more likely to support it (76% support it [n=849], only 22% oppose [n=246]).
- ➔ Police respondents with RCMP background only (n=931) are more supportive (80%) compared to municipal officers, who are more divided (52% support, n=153)
- ➔ Among those with a background in both policing and the Armed Forces (n=266), 57% (n=151) oppose expanding the criteria.

SURVEY COMMENTS

More than half of respondents (52%, n=2,279) also left a written comment about their perspective on the issue.

Of those, 13.5% (n=307) provided comments either supportive or uncertain about expanding the VLP program. Themes include:

- ➔ Only retired officers should be included (not active) (25.1%, n=77)
- ➔ Police/RCMP serve the country too/make sacrifices/face risks (12.7%, n=39)
- ➔ Should be for individuals (including police officers) with military/UN/NATO peacekeeping service (11.7%, n=36)
- ➔ Police are veterans, they are recognized by Veterans Affairs and we need consistency in the definition (8.1%, n=25)
- ➔ Should include other police (federal/corrections/border/peace/auxiliary officers) (8.1%, n=25)
- ➔ Give police their own plates/First Responder plates (6.5%, n=20)

The remaining 86.5% of respondents (n=1,972) left comments not supporting or opposing the expansion of the VLP criteria. Themes include:

- ➔ Criteria should not be expanded (i.e., expansion to none/none of the above) (40.5%, n=798)
- ➔ For military service only/if the officer served in military/armed forces/UN/NATO/peacekeeping duties (19.7%, n=389)
- ➔ Give police their own plates/First Responder plates (17.3%, n=341)
- ➔ Police are not veterans/police and military are not the same (11.2%, n=220)
- ➔ Would be disrespectful to army/war veterans/it takes away from the honour of the plates/the plates lose meaning (3.6%, n=71)

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

In addition to the survey, the Ministry received nine written submissions via email. All responses expressed disapproval with expansion of the VLP eligibility requirements.

NEXT STEPS

Now that the results have been considered, and in line with feedback from respondents, government has announced there will not be any changes made to the eligibility criteria for the VLP program at this time.

APPENDIX A – Engagement Survey Questions

1. WHERE DO YOU LIVE:

- a. Cariboo
- b. Kootenay
- c. Mainland/Southwest
- d. Nechako
- e. Northeast
- f. North Coast
- g. Thompson Okanagan
- h. Vancouver Island/Coast
- i. Outside of B.C.
- j. Prefer not to answer

2. WHAT IS YOUR AGE:

- a. Under 19
- b. 20 to 29
- c. 30 to 39
- d. 40 to 49
- e. 50 to 59
- f. 60+
- g. Prefer not to answer

3. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER:

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Non-binary
- d. Prefer not to answer

4. ARE YOU CURRENTLY OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MEMBER OF (PLEASE CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY):

- a. the Canadian Armed Forces
- b. the Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- c. a municipal police agency
- d. an Allied Force
- e. the Canadian or Allied War Time Merchant Navy
- f. the British Commonwealth of Nations Armed Force
- g. a United Nations (UN) or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation
- h. None of the above
- i. Other

5. ARE YOU AWARE OF THE CURRENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR A VETERAN'S LICENCE PLATE IN B.C.?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Uncertain

APPENDIX A – ENGAGEMENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

6. TO REVIEW THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR A VETERAN'S LICENCE PLATE, CLICK HERE⁵. DO YOU THINK THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL?

- a. Yes, it should be expanded
- b. No, it should not be expanded
- c. Uncertain

7. IF A DECISION WAS MADE TO EXPAND THE CRITERIA, SHOULD IT INCLUDE:

- a. Active and retired RCMP officers
- b. Active and retired municipal police officers
- c. All of the above
- d. Other: [100-character text box]

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5 This linked to a web page with background on the program. For the text of that web page, see Appendix B.

Appendix B – Veteran’s Licence Plate Eligibility Survey web page

Note – the following web page text was live at www.gov.bc.ca/veterans-licence-plate throughout the engagement term and while results were being analyzed.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2004, military veterans have been eligible to apply for a special Veteran’s Licence Plate (VLP) to recognize and honour their service. The BC Veterans Commemorative Association’s (BCVCA) volunteer Second World War and Korean War Veteran members administer the program on behalf of the provincial government.

Since the program’s inception, government has received requests to expand the eligibility criteria to allow for other groups of drivers to be able to receive a VLP.

Most recently, the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans’ Association and others have requested the Province and ICBC consider making the plates available to police officers – specifically RCMP members.

For the purposes of issuing VLPs, there is no current consensus within Canada on the definition of a veteran. There is much context and a variety of perspectives that must be considered before any decision can be made on whether changes to this program would be appropriate.

To better understand where British Columbians stand on this issue, the Province sought public feedback to help guide any future program decisions.

The engagement ran from July 23, 2018 until 4 pm on September 4, 2018.

WHAT A VLP LOOKS LIKE

The plate depicts the National War Memorial in Ottawa and the red poppy that is synonymous with remembrance across Canada.



WHO IS CURRENTLY ELIGIBLE

Drivers are eligible to apply for a VLP if they own or lease an eligible vehicle, and were honourably discharged from, or are currently serving in one of the following:

1. Second World War, Korea, Gulf War, the Balkan Wars, Afghanistan, or other UN Peacekeeping Missions as a member of:
 - » *The Canadian Armed Forces, or*
 - » *An Allied Force, or*
 - » *The Canadian or Allied War Time Merchant Navy*
2. A member of the Canadian Armed Forces, Regular or Reserve, who successfully completed basic training.
3. United Nations (UN) or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations as a member of:
 - » *The Canadian Armed Forces, or*
 - » *A UN or NATO Alliance Force serving in an operation with the Canadian Armed Forces*
4. UN or NATO operation under command of the Canadian Armed Forces as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Municipal Police, or Correctional Services of Canada.
5. Similarly qualified member of a British Commonwealth of Nations Armed Force (though these members who are currently serving are not eligible).

The plate is available for most passenger vehicles, motorhomes, most trucks/vans/buses (under 5,500 kg), motorcycles and other kinds of eligible vehicles.

Since the program was created in 2004, an estimated 57,000 VLPs have been issued.

HOW IT WORKS

Since the creation of the plate, applications have been managed by the BCVCA. Drivers who are applying for a plate must fill out an application form and send it, along with their appropriate proof of service documents and a \$10 payment to the BCVCA.

The BCVCA uses the fees it collects to fund commemorative work, such as constructing plaques, or for other dedications, such as handing out poppy seeds.

Once approved, veteran plates are free for people who trade in their current licence plates. Applicants who are licensing a brand new vehicle for the first time are required to pay an \$18 fee to ICBC to receive their plates.

WHAT HAPPENS IN OTHER PROVINCES/TERRITORIES

To be eligible for a VLP:

- ➔ Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Yukon and the Northwest Territories all require RCMP officers to have served in a UN or NATO operation.
- ➔ Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland do not require UN/NATO service and will issue VLPs to all regular members of the RCMP.

Currently, there is no uniform definition of a ‘veteran’ nationally that is also shared by all the provinces and territories, nor is there one agreed to by all the stakeholder groups who represent those people with military service. Listed below are some examples of the differing definitions.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION – a veteran is any person who is serving or who has honourably served in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Commonwealth or its wartime allies, or as a regular member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or as a Peace Officer in a special duty area or on a special duty operation, or who has served in the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command during wartime.

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA – a veteran is any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

APPENDIX C – Further VLP program resources

RESOURCES:

- ➔ *ICBC program page – Veteran’s Plates*
- ➔ *BC Veterans Commemorative Association – Veteran Licence Plates Program*

NEWS RELEASES:

- ➔ *Have your say on extending veteran licence plates to police (July 23, 2018)*
- ➔ *Veteran licence plates available to serving members (August 31, 2012)*
- ➔ *Expanded licence plate program honours Canadian Forces (June 29, 2012)*
- ➔ *Veterans licence plate program expanded (November 5, 2004)*
- ➔ *New licence plates honour B.C. veterans (June 1, 2004)*

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