Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission
Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2
Friday, October 30, 2026 at 12 p.m.
Maine State House, Room 437 (VLA) and via Zoom
Streaming: https://legislature.maine.gov/Audio/#437

Meeting Agenda

1. **Introductions**
   Chairs, Senator Craig Hickman and Representative Sam Zager

2. **Presentation from Acting State Toxicologist**
   Tom Simones, Ph.D., Maine Department of Health and Human Services

3. **Discussion: Draft report**
   Office of Policy and Legal Analysis staff

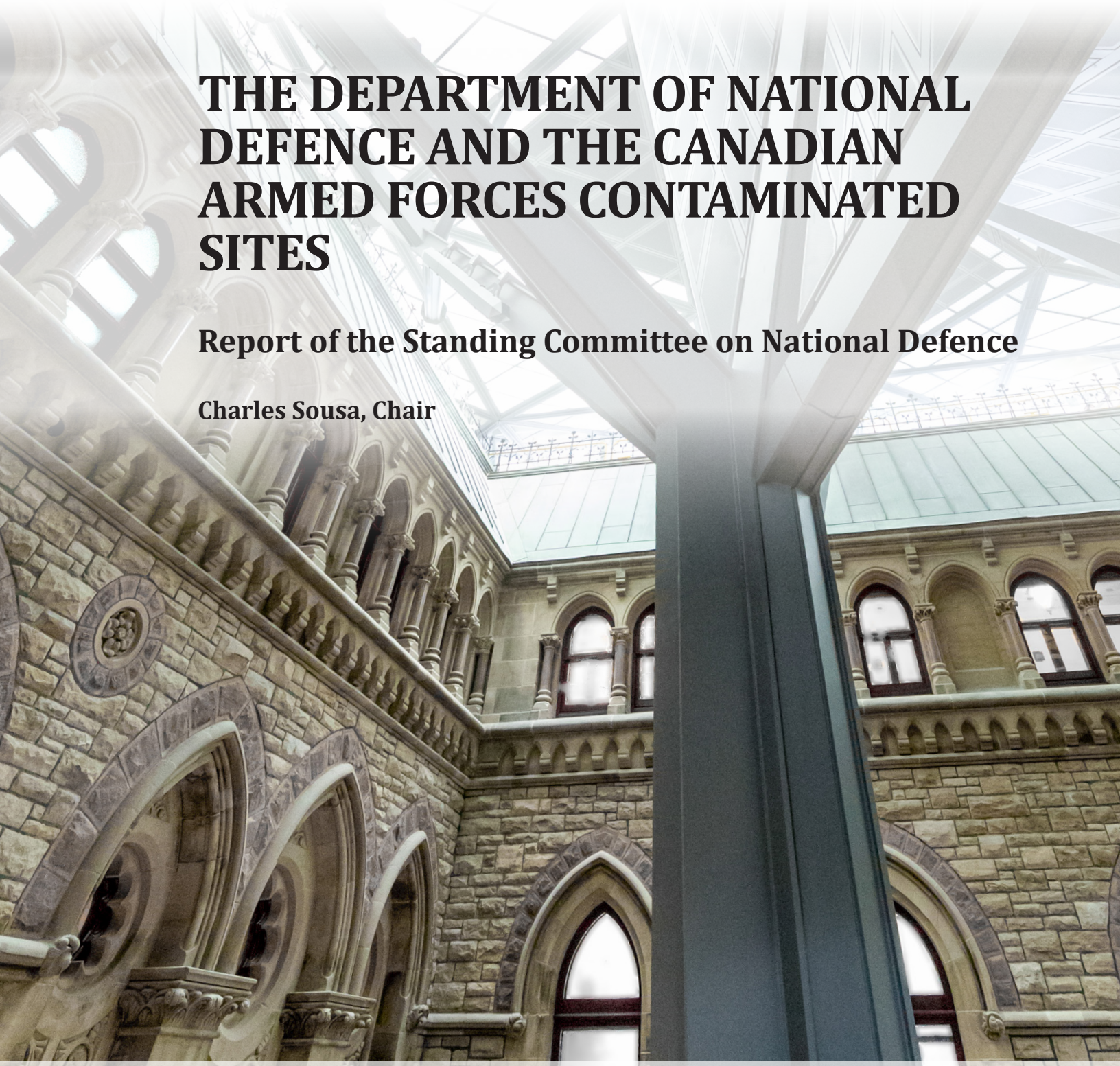
4. **Next steps**
   Chairs, Senator Craig Hickman and Representative Sam Zager

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES CONTAMINATED SITES

Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence

Charles Sousa, Chair



OCTOBER 2026
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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Chair

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

To assist the reader:
A list of abbreviations used in this report is available on page xi

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces contaminated sites and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS XI

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS 1

THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES CONTAMINATED SITES 3

- Introduction 3
- Contaminants and Associated Risks 5
  - Identifying Past Contaminant Use and Associated Risks 5
  - Detecting Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in the Drinking Water of the City of Saguenay, Quebec 8
  - Assessing Risks Relating to Agent Orange and Other Toxic Defoliants at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown 9
  - Finding Trichloroethylene in the Groundwater of the City of Shannon, Quebec 11
  - Discovering Unexploded Explosive Ordnances in or near the Cities of Terrebonne and Shannon, Quebec 12
  - Detecting Contaminants in Canada's Arctic and North 13
- Existing Federal Measures Relating to Contaminants 14
  - Protecting Human Health or the Natural Environment 14
  - Identifying, Classifying and Reporting on Federal Contaminated Sites 15
  - Managing and Remediating Certain Contaminated Sites 18
  - Supporting Affected Canadian Armed Forces Members and Veterans 22
- Proposed Federal Actions Relating to Federal Contaminated Sites, Diagnoses and Toxic Defoliants 24
  - Recognizing Presumptive Conditions and Occupational Illnesses 25
  - Launching An Inquiry, Providing Compensation and Conducting a Study Relating to Canadian Forces Base Gagetown 26
  - Reviewing Contaminated Sites 26

Centralizing and Coordinating Processes for Managing and Remediating Contaminated Sites 27
Enhancing Transparency in Relation to Contaminated Sites 28
Decontaminating Former Military Installations and Supporting Affected Communities 28
Establishing a Registry Concerning Exposure to Contaminants 29
Using Artificial Intelligence 29
The Committee's Conclusions and recommendations 30

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES 33

APPENDIX B: LIST OF WITNESSES 35

APPENDIX C: LIST OF BRIEFS 37

APPENDIX D: LIST OF BRIEFS 39

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE 41

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CFB	Canadian Forces Base
DND	Department of National Defence
PFAS	Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
TBS	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
TCE	Trichloroethylene
VAC	Veterans Affairs Canada
U.S.	United States

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada recognize that occupational illnesses relating to military service may develop long after service has ended, and assess medical evidence to establish if appropriate presumptive diagnoses exist for veterans who served in known hazardous or contaminated environments, strengthening the timely access for veterans to health care benefits and support. **30**

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada strengthen proactive transparency and information sharing among the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces and relevant authorities to ensure timely access to information and data. **30**

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada proactively inform personnel and families currently and previously living and/or working on Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces sites, bases and wings of environmental risks and assessment results. **31**

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada expand proactive monitoring, sampling and early detection efforts for contaminated sites, including in communities on or near current and former military installations, and expedite current decontamination measures in relation to chemical agents and dioxins. **31**

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada invest in research, development and advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, to improve contaminant detection, risk analysis and remediation planning. **31**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada engage more closely with municipalities to address the social and environmental impacts arising from its contaminated sites. **31**

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada adopt a standardized list of illnesses resulting from exposure to chemicals. **31**

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada establish a unified federal coordination body comprising the Department of National Defence, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Transport Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to streamline the identification, assessment and remediation of military legacy sites across Arctic communities. **31**

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada ensure that all future Arctic defence infrastructure investments include dedicated funding lines specifically allocated for both the remediation of historical military contamination at the proposed project site and the prevention of new environmental liabilities. **31**

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, in direct partnership with Northern municipalities and Indigenous governments, conduct a comprehensive inventory audit of unlisted military legacy sites, including historical dumpsites, fuel drum caches and scrap metal, for full inclusion in the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory. **32**

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada prioritize immediate containment and remediation for Northern military legacy sites where climate change and permafrost thaw accelerate the active migration of hazardous chemicals and heavy metals into municipal lands and water sources. **32**

THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES CONTAMINATED SITES

INTRODUCTION

According to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's (TBS's) Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory, as of 30 June 2026, Canada had about 24,400 federal sites where contaminants are present that pose, or could pose, an immediate or long-term risk to human health or the natural environment, or both. The concentrations of the contaminants at these sites may exceed recommended concentrations specified in relevant federal policies and regulations. Moreover, Environment and Climate Change Canada notes that federal contaminated sites are located either on land that is federally owned or leased, or on land "where the federal government has accepted responsibility for the contamination." The Department of National Defence (DND) or the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) manage some of these contaminated sites (hereafter, DND/CAF contaminated sites), which are located on current and former bases, wings and other military installations (hereafter, military installations). As of 30 June 2026, there were 2,750 DND/CAF contaminated sites in Canada.[1]

In recent decades, individuals exposed to contaminants, advocacy organizations, academics, researchers and others have expressed concerns about the risks that past and ongoing exposure to contaminants at DND/CAF contaminated sites pose, or could pose, to human health or the natural environment. The contaminants that are, or may be, on such sites include toxic metals, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, petroleum hydrocarbons, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), radioactive waste and trichloroethylene (TCE). As well, some sites may have unexploded explosive ordnances and other materials, including those that Canada's military and foreign militaries have used for military training purposes.

During the 44th Parliament, the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (hereafter, the Committee) adopted a motion to undertake a study of: the long-term human health risks associated with exposure to contaminants at DND/CAF contaminated sites; the federal decision-making framework for identifying, assessing

1 In September 2025, the Canadian Coast Guard became a civilian special operating agency within the Department of National Defence (DND) following its transfer from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. DND now manages federal contaminated sites associated with the Canadian Coast Guard.

and classifying a health risk to CAF members and families, DND employees and individuals in nearby communities in relation to such exposure; DND's and Veterans Affairs Canada's (VAC's) approaches to attributing occupational illnesses caused by exposure to contaminants at these sites; DND's and the CAF's efforts to remediate these sites; DND's responsibilities under the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan; and actions that Canada's allies are taking to address contaminated sites. Furthermore, during the 45th Parliament, the Committee adopted a motion to complete the study by holding a meeting with municipalities located near DND/CAF contaminated sites.

Between 26 November 2024 and 29 April 2026, the Committee held five meetings on the study and heard from 21 witnesses. Those appearing during a meeting comprised officials from five federal departments and two municipalities, three veterans, two CAF family members and three academics.[2] Moreover, the Committee received seven briefs.[3] As well, in July 2026, DND submitted a written response to the Committee that provided updated statistics and other information relating to DND/CAF contaminated sites, as well as DND's contribution agreements with some provinces and municipalities.[4]

This report summarizes witnesses' comments made when appearing before the Committee or in a brief, as well as publicly available information. The first section focuses on the types of contaminants that are, or may be, at DND/CAF contaminated sites in Canada, as well as associated risks to human health or the natural environment. The second section outlines existing federal measures concerning contaminant-related protections, obligations and supports. The third section proposes federal actions designed to recognize health conditions, provide compensation and establish a registry to support individuals and communities affected by contaminants at or near DND/CAF contaminated sites, launch various reviews and inquiries regarding such sites, and create, use or improve processes and tools relating to the management and remediation of these sites The report's final section contains the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

2 This report uses the title and organizational affiliation that a witness had when appearing before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence or when submitting a brief.

3 Briefs were received from Eileen Beauchamp, Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc., the City of Iqaluit, Major (Retired) Michel Tremblay and Erin Zimmerman. Eileen Beauchamp, as well as Gary Goode as Chair of Brats in the Battlefield Inc., submitted a brief during the 44th Parliament and another during the 45th Parliament. Eileen Beauchamp, Gary Goode and Erin Zimmerman also appeared as witnesses.

4 In May 2026, the Committee asked DND to provide updated information relating to DND's and the Canadian Armed Forces' contaminated sites, as well as DND's contribution agreements with some provinces and municipalities. On 30 July 2026, the Committee received the information in a document entitled *Request for Information (RFI)*.

CONTAMINANTS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS

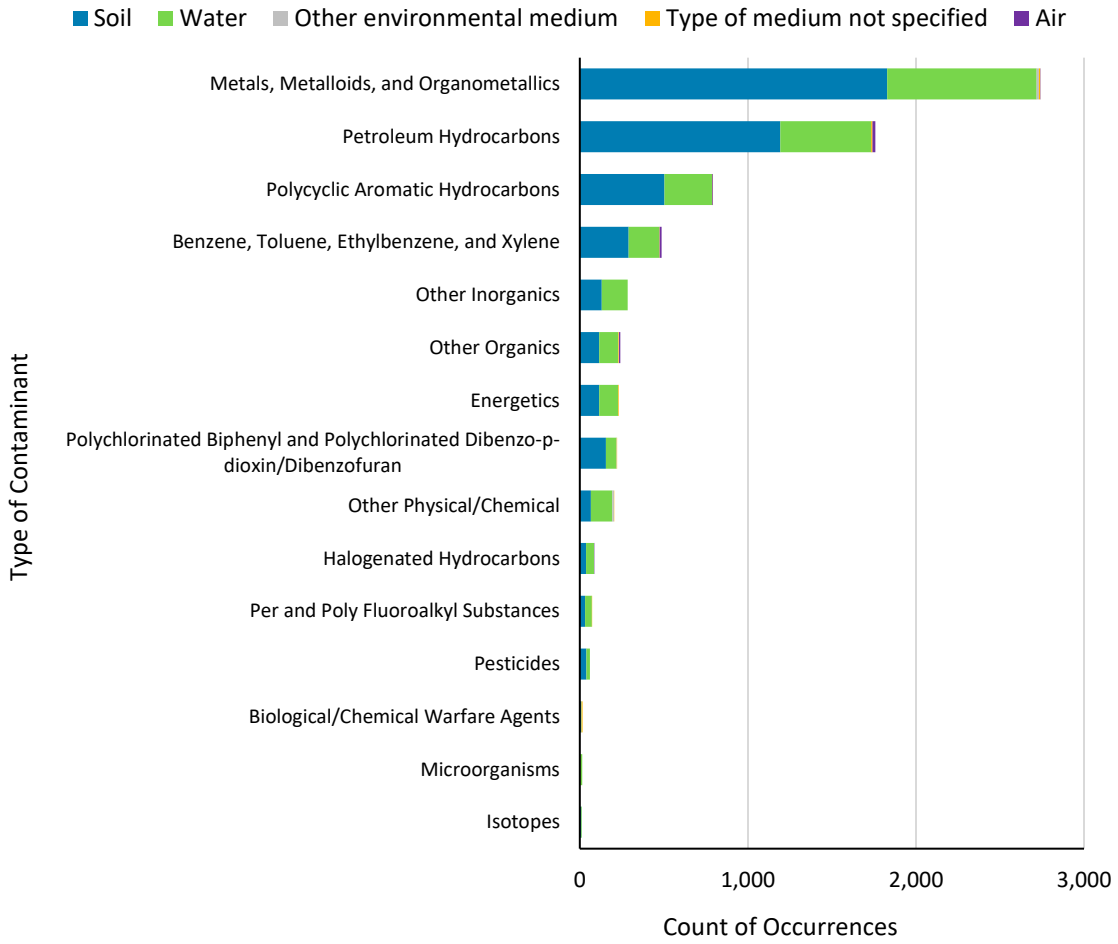
Witnesses drew attention to selected contaminants that are, or may be, at DND/CAF contaminated sites in Canada, as well as related risks to human health or the natural environment. They also identified specific locations where specific contaminants have been discovered.

Identifying Past Contaminant Use and Associated Risks

Witnesses noted that certain contaminants at federal contaminated sites are the result of past activities. Greg Carreau, Director General of Health Canada's Safe Environments Directorate, commented that, in the 20th century, a high number of contaminants were used across Canada, which "introduced risks" to human health or the natural environment. According to Greg Carreau, the types and concentrations of contaminants vary across these sites. Peter Hammerschmidt, DND's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Environment, stated that DND acknowledges that "past practices" have "left a legacy of contamination on military bases and other sites where the Canadian Armed Forces have trained or operated."

Figure 1 shows the types of contaminants, by number of occurrences and by environmental medium, that were at DND/CAF contaminated sites as of 30 June 2026.

Figure 1—Types of Contaminants, by Number of Occurrences and by Environmental Medium, at Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Contaminated Sites (as 30 June 2026)



Notes: In September 2025, the Canadian Coast Guard became a civilian special operating agency within the Department of National Defence (DND) following its transfer from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. DND now manages federal contaminated sites associated with the Canadian Coast Guard.

"Environmental medium" refers to the various components of the natural environment, such as air, soil and water.

"Soil" comprises "sediment," "soil" and "surface soil."

"Water" comprises "groundwater" and "surface water."

"Other environmental medium" refers to environmental mediums other than air, soil and water, such as plants and fish.

"Type of medium not specified" refers to contaminant samples for which the type of environmental medium is not identified.

Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, "Find Contaminated Sites by Reporting Organization," *Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory*, Database, accessed 30 June 2026.

Witnesses also outlined factors that influence whether exposure to a contaminant is a human health risk. Greg Carreau said that such factors include the duration and frequency of exposure, as well as the exposed individual's age and overall health status. As well, Brigadier-General Colleen Forestier, Director General of Clinical Services at the CAF's Canadian Forces Health Group, indicated that the risk depends on whether the contaminant is "a chemical, a physical, a biological or a radiological hazard." Brigadier-General Forestier also pointed out that being close to a contaminant does not necessarily constitute an exposure, adding that exposure to a contaminant "does not necessarily constitute having any ill health effects, even if it's a known hazard."

Moreover, witnesses identified various sources of exposure to contaminants during CAF members' military service, as well as the timeline for experiencing health conditions associated with such exposure. Colonel (Retired) David Salisbury, a medical doctor and veteran who appeared as an individual, remarked that the sources include: modern weapon systems and vehicles that contain certain toxic metals and composites, as well as hazardous fuels and solvents; old buildings that release asbestos, benzene and other toxic chemicals when they are destroyed; and waste-disposal burn pits that emit carcinogenic toxins. As well, Colonel (Retired) Salisbury referred to military installations as "miniature industrial sites" where exposure is "often poorly documented" and poses "new and complex health challenges." Steven Harris, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of VAC's Service Delivery Branch, underscored that some CAF members and veterans exposed to contaminants during their military service may experience "immediate" health-related effects or develop illnesses years after the exposure.

Witnesses also described medical conditions that have followed exposure to contaminants at 15 Wing Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan. Referencing "personal investigation, discussions and interviews" with affected individuals, Shaunna Plourde, a DND health services clerk and CAF spouse who appeared as an individual, emphasized that "devastating patterns" were found to exist among individuals exposed to contaminants in seven buildings located at 15 Wing Moose Jaw: more than 50 deaths and approximately 200 illnesses. Shaunna Plourde also characterized "Building 143" at 15 Wing Moose Jaw as contaminated, and noted diagnoses of cancers, neurological disorders, thyroid issues or other conditions among those who worked there. Furthermore, Dave Hovington, a DND chief fire inspector and veteran who appeared as an individual, highlighted the "personal cost" of exposure to chemicals in firefighting foams when serving as a CAF firefighter at 15 Wing Moose Jaw

and other military sites, and highlighted a diagnosis of cardiac amyloidosis and multiple myeloma following such exposure.

Witnesses underscored health conditions associated with exposure to contaminants that are, or may be, at certain military housing units located at or near 4 Wing Cold Lake in Alberta. In a brief submitted to the Committee, Major (Retired) Michel Tremblay, a First Nations veteran, suggested that the water systems for those housing units may be contaminated with PFAS or TCE. According to the brief, some CAF members, veterans and other possibly exposed individuals are experiencing health conditions that include diabetes, thyroid issues, and skin and other cancers.

Detecting Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in the Drinking Water of the City of Saguenay, Quebec

Witnesses discussed PFAS at federal contaminated sites that are the result of firefighting foams, and drew attention to associated human health risks. Noting that PFAS are found in a wide range of commercial and household products, Peter Hammerschmidt said that their use in firefighting foams has had impacts both on and off military installations. Greg Carreau attributed the presence of PFAS at certain DND/CAF contaminated sites to the "legacy use of aqueous film-forming foams" to contain fires or train firefighters. As well, Greg Carreau underlined that individuals exposed to PFAs and other chemicals in firefighting foams have a risk for developing cancers or other diseases that exceeds the risk among the general population.

Furthermore, witnesses commented on PFAS at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Bagotville in Quebec and in the drinking water of the nearby community of La Baie in the City of Saguenay, Quebec. Peter Hammerschmidt remarked that regular tests for PFAS at all DND/CAF sites, which have been conducted since 2010, led to these contaminants being detected at CFB Bagotville, where firefighting foams were frequently used for firefighting training and other activities. Dr. Sébastien Sauvé, Professor of Environmental Chemistry at the Université de Montréal, observed that, in 2022, analyses of drinking water samples from La Baie revealed concentrations of PFAS between 100 and 300 nanograms per litre, which exceeds Health Canada's recommended concentrations of 30 nanograms per litre. As well, Dr. Sauvé asserted that, in summer 2022, the Université de Montréal's environmental chemistry laboratory informed DND, Health Canada, the Government of Quebec and the City of Saguenay about PFAS in La Baie's drinking water. According to Dr. Sauvé, the information was not made public until early winter 2023.

Witnesses mentioned ongoing efforts to address the PFAS in La Baie's drinking water. Peter Hammerschmidt referenced collaboration between DND and the City of Saguenay,

including through a contribution agreement under which, in 2023, the Government of Canada committed to allocate a maximum of $15.5 million to fund a short-term water treatment solution to the contamination of the drinking water. In December 2025, DND announced that it had amended the contribution agreement with the city to provide an additional $29.9 million, "for a total of approximately $45.4 million, to continue funding" the short-term water treatment solution over a 10-year period. According to DND's July 2026 written response, $11.7 million in federal funding had been allocated as of 31 March 2026 to this short-term water treatment solution.[5]

Assessing Risks Relating to Agent Orange and Other Toxic Defoliants at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown

Witnesses made comments about the past spraying of Agent Orange and other toxic defoliants[6] (hereafter, defoliants) at CFB Gagetown in New Brunswick. Eileen Beauchamp, a veteran's family member who lived at CFB Gagetown and who appeared as an individual, contended that, between 1956 and 1984, more than 6,500 barrels of defoliants and other herbicides were sprayed on about 181,000 acres at CFB Gagetown.[7] Gary Goode, a veteran who appeared as Chair of Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc., pointed out that members of the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada who served at CFB Gagetown "spent weeks" training in areas that were contaminated with dioxins and other contaminants because of repeated sprayings of defoliants and other herbicides.

Moreover, witnesses discussed the United States (U.S.) military's spraying of defoliants at CFB Gagetown in 1966 and 1967, and the Government of Canada's 2007 announcement of a one-time, tax-free ex gratia payment of $20,000 for eligible individuals potentially affected by the spraying. Gary Goode identified several sites at CFB Gagetown that have high concentrations of dioxins because of the spraying. According to DND's *The Use of*

5 DND, *Request for Information (RFI)*, 30 July 2026, p. 2.

6 "Defoliant" refers to a chemical, including an herbicide, that is used on trees and plants to make all of their leaves fall off. Agent Orange is a toxic defoliant that comprises a mixture of herbicides and highly toxic dioxins. See Government of Canada, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, *Pesticides – General*.

7 During the 44th Parliament, the Committee received a copy of a DND document entitled A-2004-00207 relating to the spraying of defoliants and other herbicides at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Gagetown. Pages 83 and 84 in that document indicate that 6,504 barrels of defoliants and other herbicides were sprayed on approximately 181,000 acres at CFB Gagetown between 1956 and 1984 as part of CFB Gagetown's annual "Herbicide Spray Programme." A copy of those two pages is included in a brief that Eileen Beauchamp submitted to the Committee in 2024. See DND, *Access to Information Request: A-2004-00207*, 2004, pp. 83–84; and Eileen Beauchamp, *Brief to the Standing Committee of NDDN on the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) approach to addressing current and legacy contamination sites*, 2024, pp. 9–10.

Herbicides at CFB Gagetown from 1952 to Present Day, concentrations "above Canadian guidelines of dioxins in soil were found" at several CFB Gagetown sites, including the Clones bivouac site, the Murphy bivouac site and the Enniskillen range.[8] Concerning the payment, Eileen Beauchamp mentioned that the payment's "sunset clause ended claims in December 2011, excluding individuals who developed illnesses later."

Witnesses also described potential human health conditions associated with exposure to defoliants. In a 2025 brief submitted to the Committee, Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc. stated that defoliants can be a risk if inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin. With a focus on CFB Gagetown, Eileen Beauchamp noted personal experiences with "multiple cancers and other illnesses" following exposure to defoliants, and suggested that "countless" others with ties to CFB Gagetown have experienced similar health conditions. Furthermore, in a 2026 brief submitted to the Committee, Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc. maintained that a DND document entitled A-2004-00207 indicates that, as early as 1964, the Government of Canada and the Government of New Brunswick were aware of the risks to human health and the natural environment associated with the spraying of defoliants at CFB Gagetown.

As well, witnesses questioned the methodology and conclusions of a Government of Canada fact-finding project undertaken between 2005 and 2007 to investigate the spraying of defoliants and other herbicides at CFB Gagetown. In Eileen Beauchamp's opinion, the resulting report[9] has "significant gaps" because the project's scope was mainly "Agent Orange applications in 1966 and 1967, [but] ... spraying [also] occurr[ed] before and after these years." Eileen Beauchamp also cited concerns about the sampling methods used to test fish found near CFB Gagetown for dioxins, contending that the removal of the skin before other body parts were tested for dioxins may have affected the results' validity because dioxins tend to accumulate in the skin's fat cells. As well, Eileen Beauchamp asserted that the project's investigators did not consider the potential long-term health effects associated with exposure to dioxins.

Witnesses also referenced a 2023 study by the State of Maine Legislature's Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission. In a 2026 brief submitted to the Committee,

8 DND's *The Use of Herbicides at CFB Gagetown from 1952 to Present Day* provides an overview of the findings related to the Government of Canada's fact-finding project undertaken between 2005 and 2007 to investigate the spraying of defoliants and other herbicides at CFB Gagetown . As well, the document mentions the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's "soil quality guideline" for dioxins: 4 parts per trillion.

9 In 2007, Dr. Dennis Furlong, Independent Fact-Finding and Outreach Coordinator, published a report entitled *CFB Gagetown Herbicide Spray Programs 1952–2004 Fact-Finders' Report*. That report outlines the methodology and conclusions of a Government of Canada fact-finding project undertaken between 2005 and 2007 concerning the spraying of defoliants and other herbicides at CFB Gagetown.

Eileen Beauchamp mentioned that the study's focus included the identification of barriers to recognizing the short- and long-term health effects that U.S. Maine National Guard veterans may have experienced from potential exposure to defoliants at CFB Gagetown. In January 2024, the Commission published a report that calls for a new investigation of the spraying of defoliants at CFB Gagetown to reassess the effects on the health of potentially exposed individuals. The Commission's report also asserts that the report resulting from the Government of Canada's 2005–2007 fact-finding project contains data and analysis that are "incorrect," "biased" or "incomplete."

Finding Trichloroethylene in the Groundwater of the City of Shannon, Quebec

Witnesses drew attention to TCE's presence at some DND/CAF contaminated sites and its spread to nearby communities. Describing defence as a "business that requires the use of a number of different types of chemicals," Peter Hammerschmidt noted that certain DND/CAF contaminated sites have TCE, which is "used to degrease metal parts" or assemble military vehicles. Greg Carreau pointed out that individuals living near those sites may be exposed to TCE through the air, or in their food or water. Moreover, Mayor Sarah Perreault, who appeared on behalf of the City of Shannon, Quebec, commented on the TCE found at CFB Valcartier in Quebec, as well as in the groundwater of the nearby City of Shannon, between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. With a focus on the land where about 1,100 military housing units will be built at CFB Valcartier and in the city, Mayor Perreault stated that "[i]t's possible that the land is contaminated, but [that] it will not pose a safety risk."

Furthermore, witnesses outlined several actions that the Government of Canada, the Government of Quebec, the City of Shannon and others have taken to address TCE in the city's groundwater. According to Mayor Perreault, these actions have included: ensuring that all residents have stopped drinking contaminated water; sealing contaminated residential wells; installing a new water system; establishing wells to monitor TCE in the groundwater; and creating a monitoring committee comprising representatives from DND, the CAF, Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Government of Quebec, the City of Shannon and others. Mayor Perreault mentioned that, between 2004 and 2010, the Government of Canada allocated approximately $35.0 million to install a system to supply drinking water to the residences affected by the contaminated water.

Witnesses also discussed human health risks associated with exposure to TCE. Greg Carreau underlined that TCE is a "well-studied chemical solvent that can cause cancer." Concerning the City of Shannon's residents, Mayor Perreault indicated that the Regroupement des Citoyens de Shannon filed a class action lawsuit against the

Government of Canada concerning TCE in the city's groundwater, including with the goal of having the Government recognize the causal link between drinking water contaminated with TCE and cancer among the city's residents. However, Mayor Perreault asserted that the water samples from the groundwater were "too small to prove" such a link. Mayor Perreault also said that, between 2023 and 2025, the Government provided financial compensation to affected individuals after the Quebec Court of Appeal "recognized the federal government's responsibility … for the [TCE] contamination" of the city's groundwater.[10]

Witnesses emphasized that the contamination of the City of Shannon's groundwater with TCE has had both a psychological impact on the city's residents and a negative impact on its relationship with DND. Mayor Perreault explained that, because certain homes were "extremely contaminated" with TCE, a "negative experience has stayed" with some city residents. As well, Mayor Perreault pointed out that the contamination of the groundwater "fuelled concerns and shattered relationships [between DND and the city] that were already weak." In Mayor Perreault's opinion, DND's "extensive" hierarchy, lack of "agility" and inadequate communication with the public affect the city's ability to collaborate with DND in addressing TCE contamination, and in constructing military housing units and related infrastructure.

Discovering Unexploded Explosive Ordnances in or near the Cities of Terrebonne and Shannon, Quebec

Witnesses focused on unexploded explosive ordnances discovered at former military training sites located in the City of Terrebonne, Quebec. Serge Villandré, the City of Terrebonne's Chief Administrative Officer who appeared on behalf of the city, discussed the former Saint-Maurice Firing Range, which DND and Canada's military used during the Second World War and until 1967 for ammunition testing and military training. According to Serge Villandré, the degradation of unexploded explosive ordnances and other military materials that are, or may be, present at the former Saint-Maurice Firing Range, which was classified as "surplus" in 2014, pose a risk to nearby "wetlands, peatlands and mature forests" that host "nearly two dozen special-status flora and fauna species."

As well, witnesses underlined the discovery of unexploded ammunition on a parcel of land that DND transferred to the City of Terrebonne in 2014 for the Urbanova Interchange Project. Serge Villandré suggested that, although DND assessed the

10 For more information about the Government of Canada's compensation relating to trichloroethylene contamination of the City of Shannon's groundwater, see Proactiō, *TCE contamination of groundwater in Shannon: Spieser v. Attorney General of Canada*.

contamination risk for that land as “very low,” unexploded ammunition was discovered during the project’s preliminary construction phase, which led to a two-year delay because of the need for “safe excavation and disposal of these historic ammunitions.”

Witnesses drew attention to unexploded ammunition at former military training sites in or near the City of Shannon, Quebec. Mayor Perreault said that such ammunition has been discovered near some residences and “where people used to walk 15 or 20 years ago.” Furthermore, Mayor Perreault noted that residents continue to use, for recreational activities, areas that DND has “closed off” to the public but is unable to “complete[ly] clos[e]” because their closure is “too complicated to supervise.”

Detecting Contaminants in Canada’s Arctic and North

Witnesses discussed contaminants in Canada’s Arctic and North. Dr. Feiyue Wang, Professor and Canada Research Chair at the University of Manitoba, commented that some contaminants found there are “either transported from the south or [are] from local sources such as mining and, in this case, military operations.” Providing an example, Dr. Wang referenced the “extensive rocket-launching activities” that the Government of Canada and the U.S. military conducted between the 1950s and the 1980s in Churchill, Manitoba. Dr. Wang also observed that some contaminants are at sites that “tend to be forgotten” and that are “poorly documented and …. monitored” for contaminants. Furthermore, Dr. Wang mentioned that, because Canada’s Arctic and North are mostly covered with snow and ice, some sites in those regions have contaminants that are “more persistent” when compared to their persistence in Canada’s southern regions.

Witnesses focused on federal contaminated sites in the City of Iqaluit, Nunavut. In a brief submitted to the Committee, the City of Iqaluit highlighted that many of these sites “are connected to historical military, defence, and sovereignty-related activities in [Canada’s Arctic and] North.” According to the brief, some sites, including the Iqaluit Upper Base, were used for military activities during the Cold War. As well, the brief stated that the City of Iqaluit collaborates with DND and other federal entities to remediate current and legacy federal contaminated sites located in the city, noting that, as of 14 May 2026, many of the “active” and “suspected” federal contaminated sites were managed by Transport Canada or by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. In relation to that collaboration, the brief added that “[t]he City sees an opportunity to continue this collaborative work: to address contamination in a coordinated way, and to ensure that new defence-related development does not create new contaminated sites for future generations.”

EXISTING FEDERAL MEASURES RELATING TO CONTAMINANTS

Providing the Committee with observations about existing federal measures relating to contaminants, witnesses drew attention to: legislative and related measures designed to protect against contaminant-related risks to human health or the natural environment, the methods used to identify, classify and report on federal contaminated sites; measures relating to the management and remediation of such sites; and the health care services and disability benefits available to CAF members and veterans, respectively, experiencing health conditions because of their exposure to contaminants during their military service.

Protecting Human Health or the Natural Environment

Witnesses outlined several federal legislative measures designed to protect human health or the natural environment from contaminants, including the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*.[11] Greg Carreau commented that the statute contains provisions designed to protect human health and the natural environment from contaminants. Moreover, Greg Carreau said that the Domestic Substances List established under the statute outlines the chemicals that are authorized for use in Canada, and stated that federal entities and private-sector entities must notify Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada if they plan to use, in Canada, a chemical that is not on that list.

Furthermore, witnesses described the Chemicals Management Plan and the *New Substances Notification Regulations (Chemicals and Polymers)*, which are focused on the risks that chemicals pose, or could pose, to human health or the natural environment. Characterizing the Chemicals Management Plan as a "long-standing program that's been working through the many industrial chemicals that have been developed over the last 100 years," Seth Cain, Director of Environment and Climate Change Canada's Contaminated Sites Division, observed that the plan aims to address such risks. From a regulatory perspective, Colonel (Retired) Salisbury pointed out that, of the more than 10 million chemicals "introduced into the [natural] environment each year," the Government of Canada assesses about 450 new chemicals annually under the *New Substances Notification Regulations (Chemicals and Polymers)*.

Witnesses also mentioned federal regulation of PFAS. Greg Carreau remarked that some PFAS are regulated under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, and

11 In addition to the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, federal measures aimed at protecting human health or the natural environment from designated contaminants include the *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act*, the *Fisheries Act* and the *Impact Assessment Act*.

indicated that the Government of Canada's 2024 report about PFAS provides an assessment of the possible impacts on human health or the natural environment of unregulated PFAS. As well, Greg Carreau underscored the report's finding that a "certain amount of uncertainty" exists about these impacts, and noted that, as of 26 November 2024, the Government of Canada had committed to undertaking further assessments of their potential impacts.

Moreover, witnesses drew attention to DND's human health and ecological risk assessments designed to evaluate possible risks to human health or the natural environment arising from exposure to contaminants. Saleem Sattar, Director General of Environment and Sustainable Management at DND, stated that DND's human health risk assessments focus on identifying risks to the health of individuals exposed to contaminants, adding that its ecological risk assessments involve analyzing the effects of contaminants on potentially affected animals and plants.

Witnesses also discussed measures aimed at protecting CAF members from exposure to contaminants. Major-General Erick Simoneau, Deputy Commander of the CAF's Military Personnel Command, stressed that CAF commanders must ensure adherence to all relevant policies and regulations designed to protect members' health, including from exposure to contaminants. Furthermore, Major-General Simoneau said that DND, the CAF, VAC, Statistics Canada, and the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research jointly "conduct multi-year population level comparisons" of members' health, which allow DND and the CAF to "identify potential hazards, mitigate risk[s] and provide the highest level of support."

Identifying, Classifying and Reporting on Federal Contaminated Sites

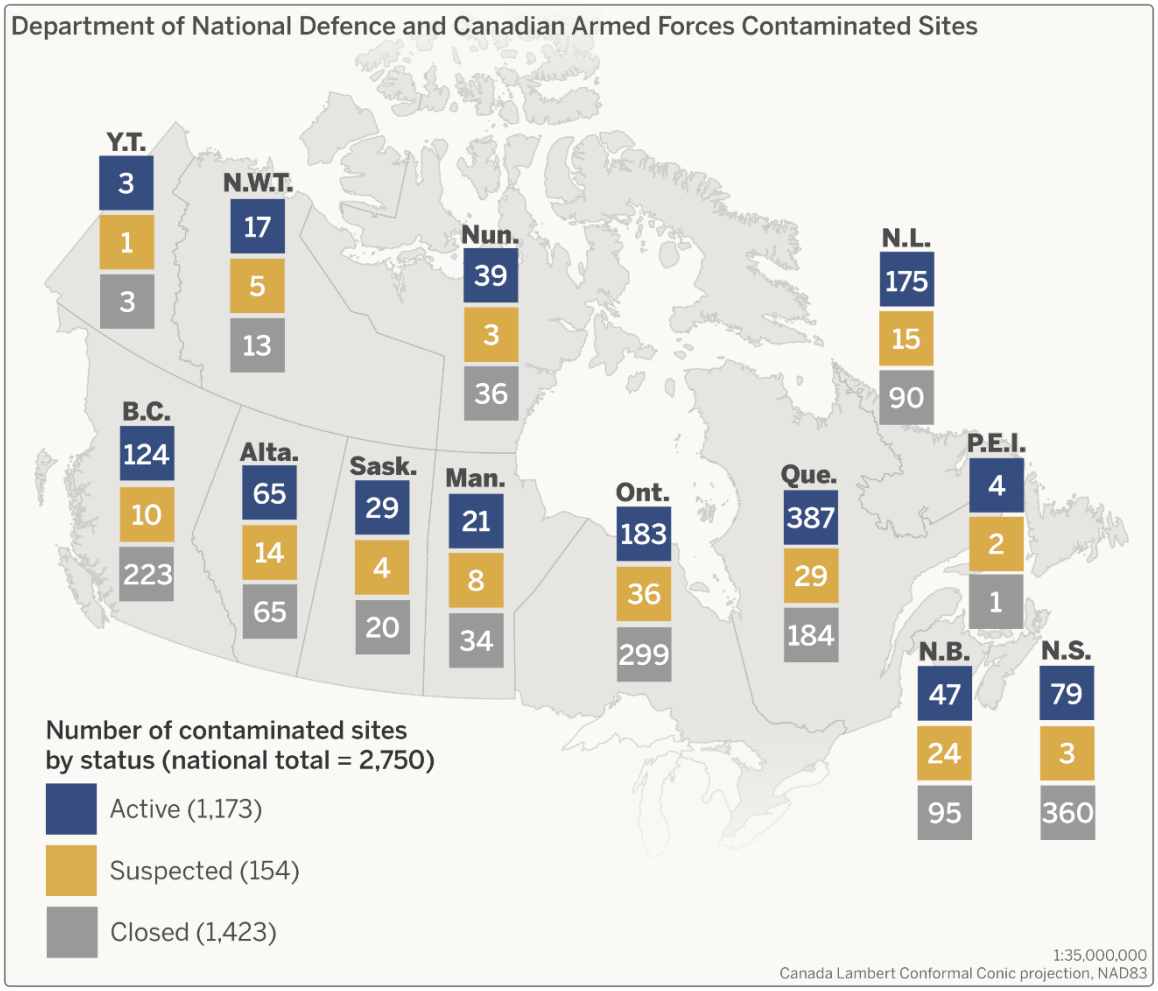
Witnesses described the steps that DND, the CAF and other federal custodian organizations[12] (hereafter, federal custodians) must take to identify, classify and report on a federal contaminated site in accordance with TBS's *Directive on the Management of Real Property*, as well as for the purposes of the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory. According to Peter Hammerschmidt, these steps include: using previous knowledge of contaminants to identify sites that are potentially contaminated; reviewing documentation to determine possible sources of contamination, as well as past military and non-military

12 "Federal custodian organizations" are federal entities that are responsible for managing their respective contaminated sites in accordance with the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan and other measures relating to the management of those sites. See Government of Canada, *Partners of the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan*.

activities on the site; testing samples to identify contaminants that could pose a risk to human health or the natural environment; assessing the types and concentrations of contaminants at the site; classifying the site as “active,” “suspected” or “closed”; and reporting on the site’s classification for purposes of the inventory.

Figure 2 shows, as of 30 June 2026, the total number of DND/CAF contaminated sites in each province and territory, as well as the number of those sites that were classified as “active,” “suspected” or “closed.”

Figure 2—Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Contaminated Sites, by Classification and by Province/Territory (as of 30 June 2026)



Notes: "DND/CAF Contaminated Sites" refers to contaminated sites managed by the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces.

In September 2025, the Canadian Coast Guard became a civilian special operating agency within the Department of National Defence (DND) following its transfer from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. DND now manages federal contaminated sites associated with the Canadian Coast Guard.

"Active" sites are confirmed to be contaminated and require remediation efforts to be undertaken.

"Suspected" sites require an assessment to be undertaken to determine whether they are contaminated.

"Closed" sites require no further actions to address contamination.

Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, "Find Contaminated Sites by Reporting Organization," *Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory*, Database, accessed 30 June 2026; and Statistics Canada, *Table 1.8 – Abbreviations and codes for provinces and territories, 2021 Census*.

Witnesses identified some possible challenges encountered when identifying, classifying and reporting on certain DND/CAF contaminated sites. Shaunna Plourde contended that some test results relating to air, soil and water samples collected from these sites are either "hidden" or modified to indicate that "there's nothing wrong." According to Dave Hovington, test samples relating to certain sites "sometimes disappear from records after buildings are demolished or hazards are moved to less visible locations." Providing an example from 2024, Dave Hovington asserted that soil and water samples from 15 Wing Moose Jaw's Hangar 6 were tested for contaminants after repair workers "unearthed soil with an extremely strong smell of fuel" at a hydrant located near that hangar. According to Dave Hovington, as of 5 December 2024, "no one seem[ed] to know where these samples went and what the results [were]."

Moreover, witnesses commented on the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory, which includes information about PFAS and other emerging contaminants. Sarah Evans, Executive Director at TBS's Office of the Comptroller General, underlined that Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada work with "relevant regulators" to ensure that the inventory has such information, adding that, beginning in 2024–2025, the inventory provides information about PFAS at some "active" federal contaminated sites. As well, Sarah Evans observed that the inventory contains each federal custodian's contact information so that "Canadians can request additional information regarding specific contaminated sites."

Witnesses also identified possible limitations with the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory. Eileen Beauchamp suggested that the data and other information in the inventory do not "fully capture" the risks to human health or the natural environment associated with the "scope of legacy contamination at CFB Gagetown" and other military installations. In Eileen Beauchamp's opinion, the inventory's limitations prevent "effective tracking of exposure-related health outcomes," which "undermin[es] efforts to study long-term impacts" and to provide supports to affected individuals, including CAF members and veterans.

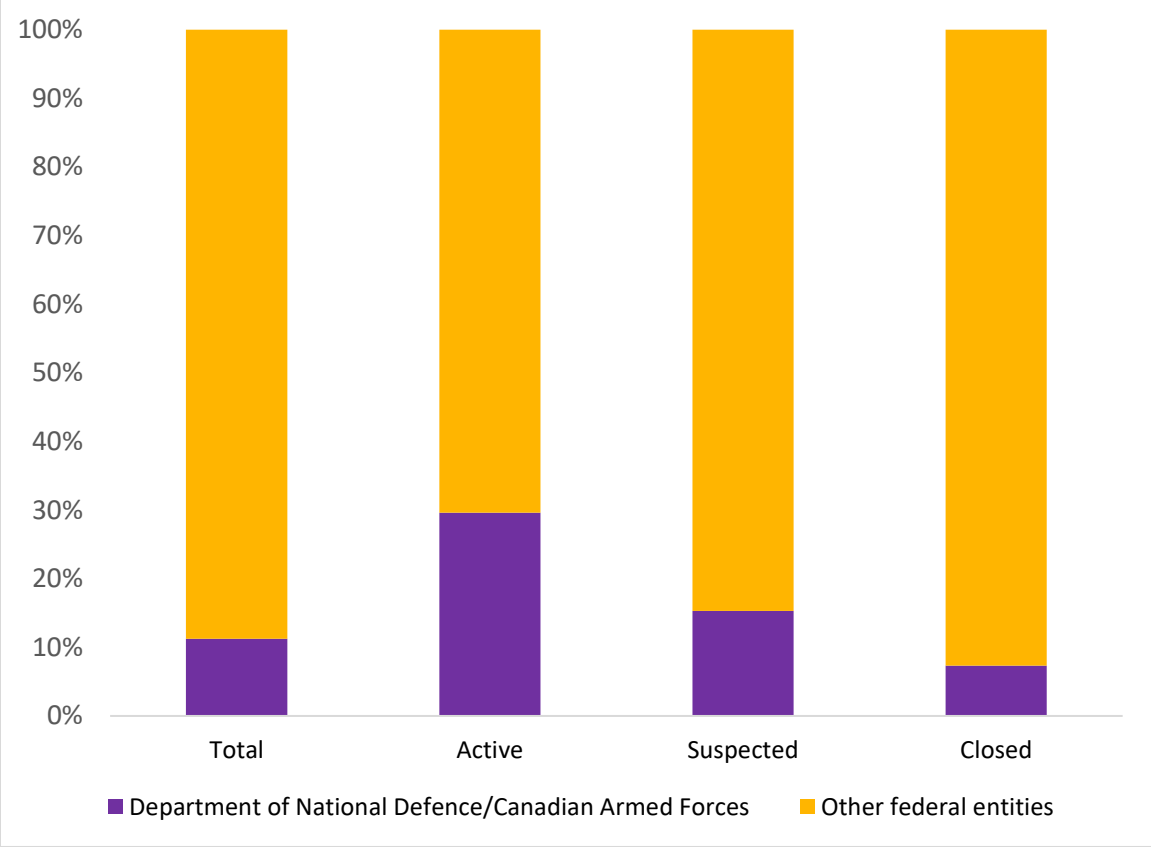
Managing and Remediating Certain Contaminated Sites

Witnesses provided an overview of federal measures relating to the management and remediation of federal contaminated sites, including the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan. Seth Cain explained that, in 2005, the Government of Canada established the plan as a "15-year program" to provide funding and technical support to help federal

custodians manage and remediate their contaminated sites. According to Seth Cain, the plan was renewed in 2019, for another 15 years, with the overall objective of reducing both the risks to human health and the natural environment arising from these sites and associated federal liabilities.

Figure 3 shows, as of 30 June 2026, the proportions of the total number of federal contaminated sites in Canada, and of the number of "active," "suspected" and "closed" sites, that were managed by two groups: DND and the CAF, and other federal entities.

Figure 3—Status of Federal Contaminated Sites that are Managed by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, and by Other Federal Entities (as of 30 June 2026) (%)



Notes: "Other federal entities" are federal entities other than the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces that, as of 30 June 2026, were managing federal contaminated sites. As of that date, there were 31 "other federal entities."

In September 2025, the Canadian Coast Guard became a civilian special operating agency within the Department of National Defence (DND) following its transfer from Fisheries and Oceans

Canada. DND now manages federal contaminated sites associated with the Canadian Coast Guard.

"Total" comprises all "active," "suspected" and "closed" federal contaminated sites.

"Active" refers to sites that are confirmed to be contaminated and that require remediation efforts to be undertaken.

"Suspected" refers to sites that require an assessment to be undertaken to determine whether they are contaminated.

"Closed" refers to sites that require no further actions to address contamination.

Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, "Find Contaminated Sites by Reporting Organization," *Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory*, Database, accessed 30 June 2026.

Witnesses also pointed out that federal custodians report annually on the liabilities associated with their contaminated sites.[13] Sarah Evans said that these liabilities are "rolled up as part of the [P]ublic [A]ccounts [of Canada] and reported as a liability of the Crown." With a focus on the liabilities relating to DND/CAF contaminated sites, DND's July 2026 written response estimated that, as of 31 March 2025, the "estimated cost of addressing known contamination" at those sites was about $754.0 million.[14] DND's *Defence Climate and Sustainability Strategy 2023–2027* indicates that, for the 2023–2027 period, the annual reduction target for liabilities relating to DND/CAF contaminated sites is 10.0%. In 2022–2023, 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, the liabilities associated with those sites were reduced by 11.0%, 10.3% and 11.0%, respectively.[15]

Moreover, witnesses mentioned federal funding in relation to the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan. Sarah Evans highlighted that activities funded through the plan include assessments of federal contaminated sites to determine their types of contamination and related concentrations, as well as efforts needed to remediate those sites. Peter Hammerschmidt estimated that, since 2005 and as of 26 November 2024, DND and the CAF had received roughly $1.2 billion in funding to manage and remediate DND/CAF contaminated sites in Canada, and had spent about 90% of that amount. Providing examples of their efforts, Peter Hammerschmidt drew attention to: approximately $575.0 million to decontaminate 21 former Distant Early Warning Line sites; about $143.0 million to undertake a decontamination project at 5 Wing Goose Bay in Labrador;

13 The liabilities for contaminated sites refers to the financial costs incurred by federal custodians to assess, monitor and address the types and concentrations of contaminants at their respective contaminated sites. For more information, see Government of Canada, *Directive on Accounting Standards: GC 3260 Liability for Contaminated Sites*.

14 DND, *Request for Information (RFI)*, 30 July 2026, p. 2.

15 See DND, "Table 6.3: Defence activities are carried out in a safe and environmentally responsible manner," *Departmental Results Report 2024–25*.

and roughly $273.0 million to remediate a number of DND/CAF contaminated sites, which contributed to more than 250 sites becoming classified as "closed."

Witnesses also described the support that federal departments, including Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada, provide to federal custodians through the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan. Regarding Environment and Climate Change Canada, Seth Cain noted that federal custodians receive administrative support, guidance, training and scientific advice concerning the risks that their contaminated sites pose to the natural environment. Greg Carreau commented that Health Canada provides federal custodians with guidance, training and scientific advice about the human health risks associated with contaminants at their sites, adding that specific guidance exists for assessing and addressing the risks of such contaminants as PFAS, TCE and dioxins, all of which have been linked to past military activities.

As well, witnesses discussed the TBS's *Directive on the Management of Real Property*. Sarah Evans underlined that the directive establishes the "administrative policy framework for the management of federal real property," including federal contaminated sites, and outlines federal custodians' responsibilities, such as a requirement to follow the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's guidelines and standards concerning the management of such sites. Moreover, Peter Hammerschmidt stated that the directive requires federal custodians to prioritize the management and remediation of federal contaminated sites that pose the "highest risk" to human health or the natural environment, and, for the purposes of the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory, to "certify annually" that they are providing "complete and accurate" information concerning the status of their sites.

Witnesses also focused on transparency in relation to managing federal contaminated sites. Sarah Evans emphasized that TBS's *Directive on the Management of Real Property* requires federal custodians to be "transparent about whatever information they have," including with respect to contaminants at sites they manage or intend to sell for public or private use. Concerning DND/CAF contaminated sites, Peter Hammerschmidt noted recent DND and CAF actions designed to enhance transparency concerning management of their sites, such as protocols introduced in 2019 that require them to provide timely notifications to relevant parties when contaminants have been identified at military installations or have spread from those sites to nearby communities.

Furthermore, witnesses highlighted that, as required by TBS's *Directive on the Management of Real Property* and other measures relating to the management of federal contaminated sites, federal custodians audit their processes to assess risks, ensure compliance with requirements and identify areas for improvement. Sarah Evans

said that DND and the CAF have their "own internal audit function," with audits conducted by a third-party auditor. Moreover, Sarah Evans commented that the Office of the Auditor General may audit the management of federal contaminated sites, as the Office's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development did prior to an April 2024 report about federal contaminated sites in Canada's North.

Witnesses also mentioned DND's and the CAF's approaches to informing CAF members and family members, DND employees and others about the human health risks associated with exposure to contaminants at DND/CAF contaminated sites. Erin Zimmerman, a DND employee and veteran who appeared as an individual, asserted that DND and the CAF do not regularly inform these individuals about potential contaminants at some sites where they live or work. As well, Erin Zimmerman suggested that a "lack of transparency and communication" concerning these sites "has left and will continue to leave irreversible impacts for these communities." Focusing on a specific location, Shaunna Plourde said that, prior to relocating to 15 Wing Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan, neither DND nor the CAF provided information about contaminants found on or near multiple sites, including hangars, fire halls and certain military housing units. As well, Shaunna Plourde contended that some CAF members have "witnessed unsafe practices such as chemicals being disposed of improperly and without protective equipment."

Witnesses commented on DND's contribution agreements with some provinces and municipalities through which federal funding is allocated to support the implementation of projects designed to manage or remediate non-federal sites contaminated as result of defence- or military-related activities. According to DND's July 2026 written response, as of 30 July 2026, DND had four contribution agreements: with the City of Saguenay, Quebec, to allocate up to $45.4 million over 10 years to install and operate temporary water treatment units in the community of La Baie; with the Government of Quebec to provide a maximum of $48.2 million over seven years to remediate former Mid-Canada Line radar sites in Quebec; and with the City of North Bay, Ontario, to allocate up to $119.0 million over 16 years to remediate PFAS contamination at the North Bay Jack Garland Airport, and a maximum of $8.0 million over two years to establish a PFAS treatment facility at the North Bay Water Treatment Plant.[16]

Supporting Affected Canadian Armed Forces Members and Veterans

Witnesses provided views about the health care services available to CAF members, including those potentially exposed to contaminants during their military service.

16 DND, *Request for Information (RFI)*, 30 July 2026, p. 2.

Major-General Simoneau stated that service providers within the CAF's health care system can access "comprehensive records" concerning a member's health, such as clinical assessments, treatments and "any potential risk and exposure to hazards," with these records shared with VAC during a releasing member's transition to civilian life. Brigadier-General Forestier pointed out that CAF base and wing commanders are responsible for protecting the health of CAF members, DND employees and others at military installations, adding that the Canadian Forces Health Group provides guidance and "professional expertise" to these commanders regarding "occupational and environmental health hazards," as well as available health care services.

Furthermore, witnesses focused on federal efforts to assess and monitor the health of releasing CAF members and veterans, including those potentially exposed to contaminants during their military service. Major-General Simoneau indicated that DND and the CAF "document everything" relating to an exposure and "take appropriate mitigation actions," and stressed that they communicate with VAC if a releasing member is suspected to have developed an illness or other health condition due to exposure to contaminants during military service, with VAC then determining entitlements to benefits or other supports. Steven Harris highlighted actions designed to improve VAC's "understanding of the long-term health effects and impacts of military service on veterans," including research projects with DND, Statistics Canada, university-based researchers and others, as well as efforts to collect "data and new research on Canadian veteran populations" to understand better the "links between military service–including exposures [to contaminants]–and certain medical conditions."

Witnesses also outlined some challenges that VAC encounters in accessing the medical records of veterans potentially exposed to contaminants during their military service. Providing an example, Nathan Svenson, VAC's Acting Senior Director of Disability and Healthcare Policy, remarked that VAC lacks the authority to request access to a veteran's medical records in a civilian health care system and cannot "proactively go out and get current health outcome information from … the general public, which includes all veterans." However, Nathan Svenson noted that VAC can access information about health status when veterans include such information in their applications for disability benefits.

As well, witnesses discussed VAC's approach to assessing applications for disability benefits. Steven Harris said that, when assessing applications regarding medical conditions that may be linked to military service, VAC consults health care service providers and "reviews each application, as well as the applicant's service and medical records," to confirm such a link. Shawn MacDougall, VAC's Senior Director of Strategic Planning and Oversight, mentioned that VAC uses internal eligibility guidelines concerning medical conditions to assess the applications, and indicated that VAC's

internal database, which contains information about DND/CAF sites where exposure to contaminants may have occurred, is used when applications are assessed. Furthermore, Steven Harris stated that VAC may reassess "denied" applications if applicants seek a reassessment because either "their health has deteriorated" or "new developments, new research or discoveries" relating to their medical condition have occurred.

Witnesses also commented on the number of applications for disability benefits that VAC usually receives from releasing CAF members and veterans in relation to exposure to contaminants during their military service, as well as the timeline for approval. According to Steven Harris, applications involving medical conditions linked to such exposure are "rare." He also underscored that, although the intended timeline for a decision to be made about an application is 16 weeks, the "average time" is 19 weeks.

Witnesses drew attention to the experiences of some releasing CAF members and veterans who have medical conditions presumed to be associated with exposure to contaminants during their military service, but who are ineligible for VAC's disability benefits. Erin Zimmerman described having used "personal savings" to access medical treatments for "visual impairment and neurological conditions" presumably linked to such exposure at 15 Wing Moose Jaw. Dave Hovington stated that, notwithstanding timely payments from the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board for medications and time off for treatments and oncologist appointments, VAC had not, as of 5 December 2024, provided disability benefits for the diagnoses of cardiac amyloidosis and multiple myeloma presumably associated with exposure to PFAS and other contaminants that occurred during service as a CAF firefighter.

PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTIONS RELATING TO FEDERAL CONTAMINATED SITES, DIAGNOSES AND TOXIC DEFOLIANTS

Witnesses provided the Committee with proposed federal actions in eight areas: presumptive conditions and occupational illnesses among CAF members, veterans, and current and former DND employees; an inquiry, compensation and a study regarding the spraying of defoliants at CFB Gagetown; a review of DND/CAF contaminated sites; centralization and coordination of processes for managing and remediating such sites; transparency concerning the management and remediation of DND/CAF contaminated sites; the decontamination of former military installations, and supports for nearby communities; a registry relating to CAF members' and veterans' exposure to contaminants during their military service; and artificial intelligence's (AI's) potential role in identifying new contaminants and related exposure risks.

Recognizing Presumptive Conditions and Occupational Illnesses

Witnesses requested that VAC recognize presumptive diagnoses of the medical conditions experienced by releasing CAF members and veterans who were, or may have been, exposed to contaminants during their military service. Colonel (Retired) Salisbury encouraged VAC to acknowledge a causal link between such exposures and resulting presumptive conditions. Erin Zimmerman urged VAC either to use the International Labour Organization's List of Occupational Diseases or to follow relevant recommendations from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety when assessing applications for VAC's disability benefits, including those regarding medical conditions presumed to be associated with exposure to contaminants during military service. Furthermore, Eileen Beauchamp's 2026 brief suggested that DND and VAC should "adopt a unified and regularly updated list of presumptive illnesses associated with toxic chemical exposure" at DND/CAF contaminated sites.

As well, witnesses called for the Government of Canada to enact legislation similar to the United States' *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022* (the PACT Act), which extends the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' health care services and disability benefits to U.S. veterans with presumptive conditions[17] who were exposed to Agent Orange or other contaminants during their military service. Eileen Beauchamp advocated the enactment of similar legislation in Canada to improve "support systems" for releasing CAF members and veterans who were, or may have been, exposed to contaminants during their military service.

Witnesses proposed that occupational illnesses experienced by DND employees and other civilians be recognized when those illnesses may be linked to exposure to contaminants at military installations. Eileen Beauchamp asked for a mechanism to recognize occupational illnesses among DND employees and other civilians, and encouraged DND to adopt a "cohesive list of illnesses and diseases" related to such exposure.

17 The United States' *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022* defines "presumptive conditions" as medical conditions considered to be automatically linked to military service. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, these presumptive conditions include medical conditions associated with exposure to contaminants, such asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lymphoma, melanoma, pulmonary fibrosis, reproductive cancers and respiratory cancers. See United States, Department of Veterans Affairs, *The PACT Act and your VA benefits*.

Launching An Inquiry, Providing Compensation and Conducting a Study Relating to Canadian Forces Base Gagetown

Witnesses urged the Government of Canada to launch an independent public inquiry, with participation from all relevant parties, to assess the risks to human health or the natural environment arising from the spraying of defoliants at CFB Gagetown. Gary Goode requested such an inquiry into "CFB Gagetown's harmful chemical use" and the conclusions of the Government of Canada's 2005–2007 fact-finding project to investigate the spraying of defoliants and other herbicides at CFB Gagetown, with CFB Gagetown "thoroughly investigated again and tested" for dioxins and other contaminants linked to the spraying. Similarly, Eileen Beauchamp's 2024 brief called for an independent public inquiry "to address discrepancies and inconsistencies between the peer review documents and the final report" relating to the 2005–2007 fact-finding project.

As well, witnesses advocated compensation for individuals affected by the spraying of defoliants at CFB Gagetown. Concerning the one-time, tax-free ex gratia payment announced in 2007, Eileen Beauchamp's 2024 brief encouraged the Government of Canada to remove the payment's "sunset clause" and to "establish a compensation framework for [those experiencing] long-term and late-onset illnesses." Gary Goode asked that individuals affected by exposure to defoliants at CFB Gagetown receive "full compensation" for the harm caused by the spraying of those "carcinogenic defoliants," and that the Government "full[y] acknowledg[e]" that "millions of litres and kilograms" of defoliants were sprayed at CFB Gagetown.

Witnesses suggested that a study be conducted among veterans exposed to defoliants to assess the long-term human health risks associated with the exposure. Referencing a study of New Zealand veterans exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War that raised questions about such risks, Eileen Beauchamp's 2026 brief requested a similar study of Canadian veterans exposed to defoliants during their military service.[18]

Reviewing Contaminated Sites

Witnesses urged the Government of Canada to launch an independent and comprehensive review of all current and legacy DND/CAF contaminated sites. Erin Zimmerman asked that the proposed review be "directed" by the President of the Treasury Board, with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's and

18 For more information, see R.E. Rowland, L.A. Edwards and J.V. Podd, "Elevated sister chromatid exchange frequencies in New Zealand Vietnam War veterans," *Cytogenetic and Genome Research*, Vol. 116, No. 4, April 2007, pp. 248–251.

Health Canada's "oversight and involvement" to "ensure impartiality and effectiveness in moving forward." As well, Erin Zimmerman encouraged the Government to have "a dedicated budget line item in the next [federal] budget" to fund the proposed review.

Witnesses advocated a review of DND/CAF contaminated sites at 4 Wing Cold Lake and in the City of Iqaluit, Nunavut. Regarding 4 Wing Cold Lake, Major (Retired) Tremblay's brief proposed that DND and the CAF should conduct "a base-wide contamination audit" or review all actions taken to address contaminants there and in nearby residential areas. The brief called for the review's scope to include "pilot projects, remediation trials, and infrastructure work that may have affected [the] health" of CAF members and their families living at 4 Wing Cold Lake or in the City of Cold Lake. The City of Iqaluit's brief requested DND, the CAF and other federal entities to collaborate with the City of Iqaluit to identify all defence- and military-related contaminants that are, or may be, on current and legacy federal contaminated sites located in the city.

Centralizing and Coordinating Processes for Managing and Remediating Contaminated Sites

Witnesses proposed centralizing the processes for managing and remediating DND/CAF contaminated sites, as well as for assessing associated risks to human health or the natural environment. Describing the current processes as "fragmented" and perhaps contributing to "delayed recognition of occupational-health concerns," Erin Zimmerman's brief called for the creation of a "centralized environmental-health coordination structure" that would: integrate all human health– and natural environment–related data concerning DND/CAF contaminated sites; support occupational health reviews; "improve historical continuity"; identify "exposure pathways" for contaminants that are, or may be, at those sites; and coordinate communication among DND, the CAF, VAC, provincial and territorial governments, public health authorities and others regarding the management and remediation of DND/CAF contaminated sites and risks to human health or the natural environment associated with those sites.

Witnesses suggested the creation of a federal entity to coordinate federal efforts to manage and remediate current and legacy DND/CAF contaminated sites in the City of Iqaluit, Nunavut. The City of Iqaluit's brief requested a federal entity that would coordinate a "unified" federal approach involving Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, DND, the CAF, TBS and Transport Canada to manage and remediate those sites.

Enhancing Transparency in Relation to Contaminated Sites

Witnesses encouraged DND and the CAF to enhance transparency in relation to their management and remediation of DND/CAF contaminated sites. Erin Zimmerman's brief requested that federal custodians, including DND and the CAF, use "transparent, accessible, and publicly [accessible] systems" to communicate "[e]nvironmental warnings, contamination notices, remediation activities, and significant occupational-health concerns" to relevant parties, including CAF members and family members affected by exposure to contaminants at such sites. Similarly, Eileen Beauchamp's 2026 brief suggested that the Government of Canada should implement a "more transparent, accountable, and compassionate approach" to managing and remediating these sites, and should provide enhanced supports to affected individuals. Mayor Perreault asked DND and the CAF to maintain public trust in the Government of Canada by being "more responsive when it comes to communicating and being transparent" with the public about the spread of contaminants from DND/CAF contaminated sites to nearby communities.

Witnesses called for transparent communication between the Government of Canada and others level of government regarding the management and remediation of DND/CAF contaminated sites. Serge Villandré urged all relevant parties to be aware of the economic, environmental and social impacts associated with managing and remediating such sites, and particularly mentioned the former Saint-Maurice Firing Range located in the City of Terrebonne, Quebec.

Decontaminating Former Military Installations and Supporting Affected Communities

Witnesses requested the decontamination of former military training sites located in or near certain communities, as well as compensation for the costs that communities incurred to decontaminate legacy DND/CAF contaminated sites. Serge Villandré encouraged DND to decontaminate the former Saint-Maurice Firing Range, including to facilitate the decontaminated land's use to construct housing units, schools, an industrial park and other infrastructure in the City of Terrebonne, Quebec. Moreover, Serge Villandré urged the Government of Canada to compensate the city for the $1.7 million contract that it awarded for decontamination of the parcel of land that DND transferred in 2014 for the Urbanova Interchange Project. That said, during a study on the National Defence portfolio's *Supplementary Estimates (C) 2025–2026*, DND submitted a document to the Committee that indicates that the "sales conditions" associated with the land required the

City of Terrebonne to "undertake all costs" relating to identifying and removing unexploded explosive ordnances, with DND being responsible for their disposal.[19]

Finally, witnesses advocated actions that would address current and legacy DND/CAF contaminated sites in the City of Iqaluit, Nunavut, as well as prevent the spread of defence- and military-related contaminants in Canada's Arctic and North. The City of Iqaluit's brief proposed enhanced collaboration among the City of Iqaluit, DND, the CAF and others to achieve two objectives: manage and remediate such sites; and ensure that "new defence-related development does not create new contaminated sites for future generations." As well, the brief suggested that DND, the CAF and others should implement measures designed to protect the inhabitants and natural environment of Canada's Arctic and North from exposure to such contaminants. The brief also called for federal funding to be allocated to prevent future contamination that could result from constructing new, and modernizing existing, military and dual-use installations in the City of Iqaluit.

Establishing a Registry Concerning Exposure to Contaminants

Witnesses requested that releasing CAF members and veterans who have occupational illnesses, especially those applying for VAC's disability benefits, have access to a registry with information on the sites where DND or the CAF used or stored contaminants, and on medical conditions presumed to be associated with exposure to those contaminants. Eileen Beauchamp's 2024 brief urged DND, the CAF and VAC to establish such a registry in order to: inform "future health outcome studies or analyses" relating to CAF members' exposure to contaminants during their military service; and enhance VAC's "record collection and verification process" for assessing disability benefit applications. The brief also asked for an annual report regarding the proposed registry, to be submitted to TBS and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, containing information about the "status of the registry, emerging trends and patterns," as well as "obstacles to data collection or verification" and proposed "next steps" for the registry.

Using Artificial Intelligence

Witnesses suggested the use of AI to analyze data relating to contaminants at federal contaminated sites, and to assess the risks that these contaminants pose, or could pose, to human health or the natural environment. Dr. Wang advocated using AI to collect and analyze data relating to such sites, which would help scientists and researchers both to

19 See House of Commons, Standing Committee on National Defence, *Evidence*, 25 March 2026 (Christiane Fox, Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence); and DND, "Question Taken on Notice," 5 May 2026.

identify “compounds” of contaminants from air, soil and water samples and to assess possible human health risks associated with exposure to those contaminants. Similarly, Dr. Phil Ferguson, Associate Professor and the Magellan Industrial Research Chair at the University of Manitoba, proposed using AI “appropriately” to collect data relating to contaminated sites and to “look for patterns” in those data. Moreover, Dr. Sauvé encouraged the use of AI to assist in “finding the most cost-efficient solutions” for remediating DND/CAF and other contaminated sites.

THE COMMITTEE’S CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada has tens of thousands of current and legacy federal contaminated sites, some of which are managed by DND or the CAF and are contaminated because of past military or non-military activities. Certain contaminants at these sites may pose an immediate or longer-term risk to human health or the natural environment. DND and the CAF are currently taking a range of actions to identify, classify, manage and remediate the sites, as well as protect the health of individuals at or near the sites. However, some CAF members, veterans, current and former DND employees, and civilians continue to experience challenges relating to exposures to contaminants during their military service or professional careers, with implications for timely access to health care and financial supports.

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada recognize that occupational illnesses relating to military service may develop long after service has ended, and assess medical evidence to establish if appropriate presumptive diagnoses exist for veterans who served in known hazardous or contaminated environments, strengthening the timely access for veterans to health care benefits and support.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada strengthen proactive transparency and information sharing among the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces and relevant authorities to ensure timely access to information and data.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada proactively inform personnel and families currently and previously living and/or working on Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces sites, bases and wings of environmental risks and assessment results.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada expand proactive monitoring, sampling and early detection efforts for contaminated sites, including in communities on or near current and former military installations, and expedite current decontamination measures in relation to chemical agents and dioxins.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada invest in research, development and advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, to improve contaminant detection, risk analysis and remediation planning.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada engage more closely with municipalities to address the social and environmental impacts arising from its contaminated sites.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada adopt a standardized list of illnesses resulting from exposure to chemicals.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada establish a unified federal coordination body comprising the Department of National Defence, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Transport Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to streamline the identification, assessment and remediation of military legacy sites across Arctic communities.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada ensure that all future Arctic defence infrastructure investments include dedicated funding lines specifically allocated for both the

remediation of historical military contamination at the proposed project site and the prevention of new environmental liabilities.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, in direct partnership with Northern municipalities and Indigenous governments, conduct a comprehensive inventory audit of unlisted military legacy sites, including historical dumpsites, fuel drum caches and scrap metal, for full inclusion in the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory.

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada prioritize immediate containment and remediation for Northern military legacy sites where climate change and permafrost thaw accelerate the active migration of hazardous chemicals and heavy metals into municipal lands and water sources.

APPENDIX A:
LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee's webpage for this study.

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
City of Shannon	2026/04/29	34
Sarah Perreault, Mayoress		
City of Terrebonne	2026/04/29	34
Serge Villandré, Chief Administrative Officer		

APPENDIX B: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee's webpage for this study.

44th Parliament – 1st Session

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Health	2024/11/26	127
Greg Carreau, Director General, Safe Environments Directorate		
Department of the Environment	2024/11/26	127
Seth Cain, Director, Contaminated Sites Division		
Treasury Board Secretariat	2024/11/26	127
Sarah Evans, Executive Director, Investment Management Directorate, Office of the Comptroller General		
Department of National Defence	2024/12/03	129
BGen Colleen Forestier, Director General, Health Services, Clinical		
Peter Hammerschmidt, Assistant Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Environment		
Saleem Sattar, Director General, Environment and Sustainable Management		
MGen Erick Simoneau, Deputy Commander, Military Personnel Command		
Department of Veterans Affairs	2024/12/03	129
Steven Harris, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery		
Shawn MacDougall, Senior Director, Strategic Planning and Oversight		
Nathan Svenson, Acting Senior Director, Disability and Healthcare Policy		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As an individual	2024/12/05	130
Philip Ferguson, Associate Professor		
Dave Hovington, Chief Fire Inspector		
Shaunna Plourde, Health Services Clerk		
Sébastien Sauvé, Full Professor		
Feiyue Wang, Professor		
Erin Zimmerman		
As an individual	2024/12/10	131
Eileen Beauchamp		
Col (Ret'd) David Salisbury, Medical Doctor		
Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc.	2024/12/10	131
Gary Goode, Chairman		

APPENDIX C:
LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's webpage for this study.

Beauchamp, Eileen

Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc.

City of Iqaluit

Tremblay, Michel

Zimmerman, Erin

APPENDIX D:
LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's webpage for this study.

44th Parliament – 1st Session

Beauchamp, Eileen

Brats in the Battlefield Association Inc.

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos. 34 and 43 to 44) from the 45th Parliament, 1st Session and (Meetings Nos. 127 and 129 to 131) from the 44th Parliament, 1st Session is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Sousa
Chair

All Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards during military service – at home or abroad – will be eligible for VA health care beginning March 5

PRESS RELEASE

March 4, 2024

Print

Loma Linda, CA - WASHINGTON — Today, VA announced that all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military – at home or abroad – will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care beginning March 5, 2024.

This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

As directed by President Biden (https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/11/11/remarks-by-president-biden-at-a-veterans-day-wreath-laying-ceremony-arlington-va/), this expansion of VA health care eliminates the phased-in approach

called for by the PACT Act – meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law. This is a critical step forward because Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings (https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-outperform-non-va-facilities-cms-ratings/) and patient satisfaction ratings (https://news.va.gov/press-room/nationwide-patient-survey-shows-va-hospitals-outperform-non-va-hospitals/). Additionally, VA health care is often more affordable (https://www.va.gov/health-care/copay-rates/) than non-VA health care for Veterans.

VA encourages all eligible Veterans to visit VA.gov/PACT or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care beginning March 5. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on August 10, 2022, more than 500,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

“If you’re a Veteran who may have been exposed to toxins or hazards while serving our country, at home or abroad, we want you to come to us for the health care you deserve,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough.** “VA is proven to be the best, most affordable health care in America for Veterans – and once you’re in, you have access for life. So don’t wait, enroll starting March 5th.”

"Beginning March 5, we’re making millions of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act,” said VA **Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D.** “With this expansion, VA can care for all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11. We can also care for Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more. We want to bring all of these Veterans to VA for the care they’ve earned and deserve.”

In addition to expanding access to VA care, this decision makes it quicker and easier for millions of Veterans to enroll. Many Veterans believe they must apply to receive VA disability compensation benefits (https://www.va.gov/disability/) to become eligible for VA health care, but this is not correct. With this expansion and other authorities, millions of eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA care – without any need to first apply for VA benefits.

This expansion of care covers Vietnam Veterans, Gulf War Veterans, Iraq War Veterans, Afghanistan War Veterans, Veterans who deployed in support of contingency operations for the Global War on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel,

Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission), and more (https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/).

This expansion also covers many Veterans who never deployed as a part of a conflict but were exposed to toxins or hazards while serving in the U.S. Specifically, under this expansion of care, any Veteran who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) – at home or abroad – is eligible for VA health care. VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA: air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires); chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water); occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams); radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure); warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons); and more (https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/). VA will use all available information to determine if Veterans participated in a TERA, including military records and service connection.

VA is executing a nationwide campaign to ensure that as many Veterans as possible enroll. To date, VA's PACT Act outreach campaign has included more than 2,500 events nationwide, $13 million in paid advertising (https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-launches-advertising-campaign-to-encourage-new-veterans-to-sign-up-for-health-care-and-benefits/), 88,000 earned media clips, more than 400 million emails and letters to Veterans, VA's first-ever text messaging campaign, the creation of a one-stop-shop PACT Act website (https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/), and more. This is the largest outreach campaign in VA history, which has one goal in mind: ensure that all Veterans – and their survivors – get the health care and benefits they deserve under the PACT Act.

For more information about how the PACT Act is helping Veterans and their survivors, visit VA's PACT Act Dashboard (https://department.va.gov/pactdata/). To apply for care or benefits today, visit VA.gov/PACT (https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/) or call 1-800-MYVA411. More information on eligibility can be found at VA.gov/PACT (https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/).

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Contents

Executive Summary 2
I. INTRODUCTION 4
II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION 5
A. Tactical Herbicide Testing at Base Gagetown 5
B. Health Effects of Exposure to Agent Orange 5
C. Government-Directed Studies on the Effect of Agent Orange Exposure at Base Gagetown 6
D. Compensation and Benefits Available to U.S. Veterans for Exposure to Agent Orange 7
E. The State of Maine's Previous Responses to Effects of Exposure to Agent Orange from Training at Base Gagetown 8
III. UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED IN THE 2023 GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION REPORT 9
A. Recommendation 1 9
B. Recommendation 2 10
C. Recommendation 3 10
D. Recommendation 4 12
IV. COMMISSION PROCESS 12
V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 18
A. Finding 18
B. Recommendations 19
VI. CONCLUSION 21

Appendices

A. Authorizing Legislation: Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2
B. Membership List: Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission
C. Commission Correspondence
    a. Letter to Maine's Federal Congressional Delegation
    b. Letter to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, United States Department of Veterans Affairs
    c. Letter to the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services
    d. Letter to the Government of Canada

DRAFT

Executive Summary

Through Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2, the Legislature reestablished the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission ("the Commission"). The Legislature charged the Commission to "study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada ["Base Gagetown"] as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state." The Commission was comprised of 12 members, including four legislators and the eight following individuals with experience relevant to the Commission's work: two members who represent veterans' advocacy organizations; a member who is a family member of a veteran who served at Base Gagetown; a member with expertise processing veterans' claims for benefits related to military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals; two members who served at Base Gagetown and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military service; and two members with expertise in chemical engineering who have experience in those fields related to the effects of hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health.

The Commission held four public meetings in the fall of 2026. During these meetings, members explored the following topics:

- Health effects of exposure to harmful chemicals, including but not limited to Agent Orange; tactical herbicide testing at Base Gagetown; and compensation and benefits offered to certain U.S. veterans exposed to Agent Orange;
- The previous and current responses, by the United States government and the State of Maine, to the effects of exposure to Agent Orange and other harmful chemicals due to training at Base Gagetown; and
- The effect of harmful chemical exposure, including but limited to Agent Orange exposure, at Base Gagetown through review of previous scientific studies and anecdotal evidence.

The Commission also acted to elevate the issue of harmful chemical exposure at both the state and federal level. At the state level, the Commission brainstormed outreach methods for the Maine Bureau of Veteran's Services to employ regarding the Base Gagetown Training Registry in accordance with 37-B MRSA §518(3). In addition, because the Commission recognizes this is ultimately an issue that needs to be addressed by the federal government, the Commission encouraged action from the United States government. Through letters, the Commission:

1. Requested Maine's federal delegation to direct the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with post-exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying program at Base Gagetown.

DRAFT

2. Encouraged the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with post-exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying programs at Base Gagetown

After carefully considering this information, the Commission makes the following finding and recommendations.

Finding:

1. The Canadian Fact-Finders' report used flawed assumptions to assess toxic and hazardous risk of exospore to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown; therefore, new scientific studies, with at least updated assumptions, are necessary to reevaluate the risk of exposure of Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown. (Vote: #-#)

Recommendations:

1. The Legislature should direct Maine's congressional delegation to request that U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data on harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown and an assessment of the potential health risks of indirect exposure to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown. (Vote: #-#)
2. The Legislature should direct the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans' Services to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data on harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown and an assessment of the potential health risks of indirect exposure to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown. (Vote: #-#)
3. The Legislature should establish a commission for the continued study into the effects of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown. (Vote: #-#)

Comment for Consideration on Recommendation 1:

The Commission will be sending letters to the congressional delegation and the U.S. Dept. of VA. This is reflected in the "Commission Process" > "Encourage Action by the Federal Government." If the Commission is satisfied with this only be an action of the Commission, not wanting to ask the Legislature to take a similar action, the Commission can consider removing this recommendation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Maine State Legislature reestablished the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission ("the Commission" or "the 2026 Commission") "to study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada ["Base Gagetown"] as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state." (A copy of Public Law, chapter 763, section 2, the Commission's authorizing legislation, is included in Appendix A.) The Commission was comprised of 12 members, including four legislators and the eight individuals with experience relevant to the Commission's work: two members who represent veterans' advocacy organizations; a member who is a family member of a veteran who served at Base Gagetown; a member with expertise processing veterans' claims for benefits related to military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals; two members who served at Base Gagetown and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military service; and two members with expertise in chemical engineering who have experience in the field related to the effects of hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health. (A list of commission members is included in Appendix B.)

The Commission is a continuation of the 2023 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission ("the 2023 Commission").[1] The 2023 Commission recommended that the Legislature reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission to allow more time to review the necessary information, such as information from experts. The Commission was reestablished with many of the same members from the 2023 Commission to ensure continuity of purpose and action. The Commission held four public meetings at the Maine State House in the fall of 2026.

At its first meeting, the Commission articulated an overarching goal of continuing to raise awareness about the health effects of exposure to tactical herbicides, like Agent Orange and Agent Purple, specifically to members of the Maine National Guard who trained at Base Gagetown. The Commission discussed doing this in two ways:

1. Reviewing and clearly articulating the limitations of the existing studies on harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown (i.e., the 2007 "CFB Gagetown Herbicide Spraying Programs 1952-2004 Fact Finders' Report," herein referred to as "the Canadian Fact-Finders' report"); and
2. Continuing to advocate for recognition—and by extension, compensation—for the members of the Maine National Guard who trained at Base Gagetown and are experiencing illness(es) associated with 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD) exposure.

[1] Information from the work of 2023 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/gagetown-harmful-chemical-study-commission

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II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION[2]

Agent Orange[3] is a blend of tactical herbicides sprayed by the U.S. military from 1962 to 1971 during the Vietnam War to remove trees and dense tropical foliage that provided enemy cover. These tactical herbicides were also used, tested and stored in areas outside of Vietnam, including in the United States and Canada.[4] Agent Orange was the most used tactical herbicide combination of the so-called "rainbow" herbicide combinations which included pink, blue, white, green and purple. The Agent Orange herbicide combination included equal amounts of two active ingredients, 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T). These active ingredients contain traces of 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD), an unwanted byproduct of herbicide production.

Tactical Herbicide Testing at Base Gagetown

With the permission of the Canadian government, the U.S. military conducted small-scale effectiveness testing of tactical herbicides, including Agent Orange and Agent Purple, at Base Gagetown, in New Brunswick, Canada, on June 14-16, 1966 and June 21-24, 1967.[5] According to the Canadian Department of Defence and the Canadian Forces ("the Canadian National Defence"), the testing area consisted of two small areas covering approximately 83 of the roughly 180,000 acres of Base Gagetown.[6] [7]

Health Effects of Exposure to Agent Orange

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services classify TCDD as a human carcinogen.[8] The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs also recognizes "certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service."[9] These include:

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[2] This is an abbreviated summary of the background provided in the 2023 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Commission report, available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10717 (pp. 5-9)

[3] The name "Agent Orange" came from the orange stripe on the 55-gallon drums in which it was stored.

[4] *See* https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/basics.asp (last visited on Sept. 1, 2026)

[5] Commission members highlighted that over 40 different herbicides, beyond Agent Orange and Agent Purple, have been tested at Base Gagetown since 1956. These herbicides are made up of 24 active ingredients that have two known manufacturing impurities: TCDD (dioxin) and hexachlorobenzene. TCCD is "known to be a human carcinogen" by the U.S. government. Information on TCDD from the 15th Edition on the *Report of Carcinogens* is available at https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/sites/default/files/ntp/roc/content/profiles/tetrachlorodibenzodioxin.pdf (last visited on October 7, 2026). Hexachlorobenzene is "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen" by the U.S. government. Information on hexachlorobenzene from the 15th Edition on the *Report of Carcinogens* is available at https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/sites/default/files/ntp/roc/content/profiles/hexachlorobenzene.pdf (last visited October 7, 2026).

[6] *See* https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/agent-orange.html (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).

[7] *See* https://www.maine.gov/veterans/docs/CFB%20Gagetown%20Agent%20Orange%20Information%20Paper.pdf (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).

[8] *See supra* note 5

[9] *See* https://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/conditions/index.asp (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).

- ***Cancers***[10] (i.e., bladder cancer, chronic B-cell leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma; non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; prostate cancer; respiratory cancers, including lung cancer; some soft tissue sarcomas); and
- ***Other illnesses*** (i.e., AL amyloidosis; chloracne or other similar types of acneiform disease; [11] diabetes mellitus type 2; hypertension; hypothyroidism; ischemic heart disease; monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS); Parkinsonism; Parkinson's disease; peripheral neuropathy[12]; porphyria cutanea tarda[13]).

Government-Directed Studies on the Effect of Agent Orange Exposure at Base Gagetown

Since the initial use of Agent Orange, Canada and the United States have studies the impact of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown.

"CFB Gagetown Herbicide Spray Programs 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report" (2007). Led by Dr. Dennis Furlong, the Canadian Fact-Finders' Report concluded only specific populations, including those directly involved with herbicide applications and brush clearings soon after application, were at a greater risk for developing adverse health outcomes. Most people who lived near or worked at Base Gagetown were determined to not be at risk of long-term health effects from the herbicides applied there. In addition, field testing showed limited, if any, non-hazardous amounts of herbicide remained in the soil at Base Gagetown, implying training at Base Gagetown after herbicide application likely did not pose a health risk.[14]

"ATSDR Review of Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program," conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (2013). On June 6, 2012, Senator Collins requested the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to review the Canadian Fact-Finders' report to "evaluate whether the concentrations of contaminants of [Base Gagetown] could be considered a past public health hazard, according to Environmental Protection Agency guidelines."[15] The review concluded that the methodology used in the Canadian Fact-Finders' report was consistent with ATSDR approaches for evaluating the public health implications of human exposure, and there appeared, assuming that the data are reasonably accurate, to be no

[10] Ibid.
[11] According to the VA, the condition "must be at least 10% disabling within one year of herbicide exposure." *See supra* note 9.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] The "CFB Gagetown Herbicide Spray Programs 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report" (2007) is available at https://preventcancernow.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FFOCFinalReport-2007Aug27.pdf (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).
[15] The U.S. Center for Disease Control's response to Senator Susan Collins' letter on June 6, 2012 is available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown_Letter%20CDC%20Director%20to%20Senator%20Susan%20Collins_2012JUL.pdf (last visited Oct. 20, 2026).

evidence long-term effects. However, ATSDR noted the limitations of its own conclusions relied on the assumptions and uncertainties included in the Canadian Fact-Finders' report.[16] [17]

Compensation and Benefits Available to U.S. Veterans for Exposure to Agent Orange

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has statutory authority to presumptively recognize several diseases for Vietnam War veterans as connected to exposure to herbicides used in the Vietnam War. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs currently maintains an active Agent Orange Registry and provides medical treatment or disability compensation to Vietnam War veterans. For Agent Orange exposure, presumption only applies to veterans who were on active duty in Vietnam during the war[18] or in limited other locations during specific time periods as determined by Veterans Affairs.[19]

In 2022, the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act expanded presumptive exposure to harmful chemicals or hazardous materials, opening service-connected benefits for harmful chemical exposure to more veterans. Maine National Guard members were not part of this expanded recognition.[20] As a result, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs remains unable to provide assistance to Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown and who have an illness or condition attributable to exposure to harmful chemicals. Instead, Maine National Guard members must prove their illness was connected to training at Base Gagetown.

Unlike Vietnam War veterans, members of the Maine National Guard who trained at Base Gagetown do not have the same presumption of exposure because: a) the use of Base Gagetown as an official training site for the Maine National Guard did not begin until 1971, four years after the last documented instance of tactical herbicide spraying; and b) National Guard members conducting training and who have not served on active duty are not considered veterans. When

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[16] The "ATSDR Review of Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program" (2013) is available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown_Report%202013JAN30.pdf (last visited Sept. 1).

[17] Following the ATSDR review, on March 29, 2013, Senator Susan Collins requested the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs to "commission an independent study to examine potential health risks to veterans, including Maine National Guardsmen, who may have been exposed to harmful toxins while training at CFB Gagetown" and "establish a registry within the Department of Veterans Affairs to track individuals who may have been exposed to harmful substances at CFB Gagetown and who have previously or subsequently: filed for Veterans Affairs healthcare services, filed claims for compensation on the basis of any disability which may be associated with such service, had claims filed by survivors of such veterans, or requested a health examination for inclusion in the Registry." The letter is available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown_Letter%20Senator%20Susan%20Collins%20to%20Honorable%20Eric%20K%20Shinseki%20Secretary%20US%20Department%20of%20Veterans%20Affairs_2012AUG_0.pdf (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).

[18] *See* "CFB Gagetown Agent Orange Update #3" (2007), available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown%20Agent%20Orange%20Information%20Paper%20Update%203.pdf (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).

[19] *See* "https://www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/agentorange/locations/index.asp and https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/ (last visited on Sept. 1, 2026)

[20] *See* United States Department of Veterans Affairs, "Camp Lejeune water contamination health issues," available at https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/camp-lejeune-water-contamination/.

Maine National Guard members train at Base Gagetown,[21] they are under Title 32 orders rather than Title 10 orders,[22] and during training, National Guard members are on "inactive duty for training."[23] Because of their inactive status, National Guard members face difficulty making a service-connected benefits claim with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs due to the narrowness of its current recognition of presumption of exposure to Agent Orange.[24]

The State of Maine's Previous Responses to Effects of Exposure to Agent Orange from Training at Base Gagetown

Maine Collection of Data: Service at Base Gagetown (2005 to present). In July 2005, the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM) and Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services (MBVS or "the bureau") established an informational page on the MBVS website with updates and reports concerning potential exposure at Base Gagetown.[25] In July 2005, MBVS also began a registry of self-reported individuals who served at Base Gagetown, which totaled 413, and published a questionnaire that individuals who trained at Base Gagetown could submit, for which MBVS received 108 responses.[26] The goal of this first registry was to track continued exposure to the herbicides used at Base Gagetown since 1956.[27] [28]

Legislative Action in the 126th Legislature, Second Session (2014). The 126th Legislature enacted two bills related to the potential health risks and disabilities connected to members of the Maine National Guard who trained at Base Gagetown.

- *Public Law 2013, chapter 569 (LD 1612), "An Act to Amend the Veterans' Services Laws,"* added a requirement to include information on the status of communications with Veterans Affairs regarding the potential health risks to and the potential disabilities of

[21] Maine National Guard members began training at Base Gagetown in 1971.
[22] Title 10 orders refer to "active duty," or "full-time active military service" under the authority of the federal government (the President). Title 32 orders pertain exclusively to National Guard members who can be activated by the federal government or the Guard's state government (the governor) "for homeland defense during emergencies and natural disasters with the approval of the president or secretary of defense. National Guardsmen also perform their drill training, annual training and temporary duty assignments (TDYs) on Title 32 orders." *See* the Council of State Governments, "Military 101: Orders" (September 24, 2024), available at https://www.csg.org/2024/09/25/military-101-orders/ (last visited Sept. 22, 2026).
[23] *See* George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School's Masons Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic, "Title 32 and Title 10 Stateside Deployments for Army National Guard Servicemembers" (May 16, 2022), available at https://mvets.law.gmu.edu/2022/05/16/title-32-and-title-10-stateside-deployments-for-army-national-guard-servicemembers/ (last visited Sept. 22, 2026).
[24] The service requirements for presumption of exposure of available at https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/.
[25] *See* https://www.maine.gov/veterans/benefits/healthcare/agent-orange-purple.
[26] This information came from the report of the 2023 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Commission (p. 3), available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/107.
[27] *See supra* note 5.
[28] *See* "CFB Gagetown Agent Orange Update #2"(2006), available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown%20Agent%20Orange%20Information%20Paper%20Update%202.pdf (last visited Sept. 1, 2026).

veterans who, as members of the Maine National Guard, were exposed to environmental hazards at the Base Gagetown.[29]

- *Resolve 2013, chapter 100 (LD 1632), "Resolve, Directing the Commissioner of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management to Request the Federal Government to Recognize Environmental Hazards at the Military Training Center in Gagetown, New Brunswick and the Resulting Health Risks and Disabilities Suffered by Certain Members of the Maine National Guard,"* directed the Commissioner of DVEM to request that Veterans Affairs recognize the environmental hazards present at Base Gagetown and the potential health risks and disabilities to veterans who, as members of the Maine National Guard, trained at the base. It also directed the Commissioner of DVEM to report no later than January 10, 2015 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans and legal affairs on the status of that request and to include a summary of any correspondence regarding these issues to and from the Maine's congressional delegation.[30]

Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission (2023). The 131st Legislature enacted Resolve 2023, chapter 95 (LD 1597), "Resolve, to Establish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission."[31] [32]

III. UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED IN THE 2023 GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION REPORT

The 131st Legislature established the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission ("the 2023 Commission") to study the impacts of exposure to harmful chemicals on veterans who served at Base Gagetown. Over four meetings, the 2023 Commission developed four recommendations. [33]

Recommendation 1

Recommendation. The 2023 Commission recommended that Maine's congressional delegation request that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provide access to medical care and assistance to members of the National Guard who have trained at Base Gagetown and who have been diagnosed with a condition or illness associated with exposure to tactical herbicides or exposure to other dioxins. The 2023 Commission sent a letter to each member of the

[29] P.L. 2013, c. 569 is available at: https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1184&item=5&snum=126.
[30] Resolve 2013, c. 100 is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0623&item=3&snum=126.
[31] Resolve 2023, c. 95 is available at https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0628&item=3&snum=131
[32] The 2023 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission report is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10717.
[33] The Commission reviewed the updates from the 2023 Commission at its first meeting on September 18, 2026. The material is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/12693 (pp. 11-23).

congressional delegation, urging them to request the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recognize the harm of the use of tactical herbicides or other chemicals to Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown and now are diagnosed with illness(es) associated with harmful chemical exposure. The 2023 Commission also sent a letter to the then U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Denis Richard McDonough.

Update. The 2023 Commission did not receive a response from any member of Maine's congressional delegation nor the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. On October 16, the 2026 Commission received an update from two members of the congressional delegation. *See* the "Commission Process" section for more information.

Recommendation 2

Recommendation. The 2023 Commission recommended that the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs invite individuals with relevant expertise to review and discuss the existing reports and underlying data that comprise the Canadian Fact-Finders' report, as well as other related content, to 1) evaluate the reports' processes, methods, data and analysis and to 2) determine what steps and resources would be required in order to either reanalyze the existing data or to conduct new studies.

Update. The 132nd Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, given the demands of its legislative committee work, was unable to dedicate time to this evaluation.

Recommendation 3

Recommendation. The 2023 Commission recommended that MBVS reestablish and expand the registry of individuals who serve(d) in the Maine National Guard and who have trained Base Gagetown.

Update. The 132nd Legislature enacted LD 1640, "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission and to Reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission. The bill was signed into law on April 16, 2026, is chaptered in Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 1[34] and is codified in Title 37-B, section 518.

37-B MRSA §518 requires MBVS to establish the Base Gagetown Training Registry ("the registry") "to collect and maintain data related to military service and health conditions from individuals who voluntarily provide such data and who trained at Base Gagetown as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state and who are residents of this State or were residents of this State at the time of training" (sub-§1). All data within the registry are confidential and may only be disclosed with the written consent of the individual who is the subject of the data, or if that individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin. The data are also only allowed to be disclosed only to a

[34] Public Law 2025, chapter 763 is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/backend/App/services/getDocument.aspx?documentId=124338.

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public or private entity, including MBVS, engaged in research related to the effects of chemical exposure on human health (sub-§4). MBVS is required to collect the following data in the registry (sub-§2):

- Complete name used while in military service;
- Date of birth;
- Dates of military service;
- Branch of service and all unit assignments;
- Military occupational specialty;
- Dates during military service when the individual trained at Base Gagetown;
- Self-reported health conditions or diagnoses;
- Cause of death, if applicable; and
- Any additional information as determined by the bureau to support the goals of the registry.

Using the collected information, MBVS is required to support education and outreach efforts for issues directly related to those individuals who voluntarily provide such data and who trained at Base Gagetown as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state and who are residents of or were residents of Maine at the time of training (sub-§3). For education and outreach, MBVS is required to (sub-§3):

- Make all reasonable efforts to identify eligible individuals for inclusion in the registry, including contacting any individual who previously provided information to MBVS related to the individual's military training at Base Gagetown;
- Inform identified individuals about the registry and offer the opportunity for these individuals to provide new or additional information to MBVS for inclusion in the registry;
- Work with existing veterans' service organizations, local medical centers operated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Maine Veterans' Homes and other veterans' programs or organizations in Maine to increase awareness of the registry and the MVBS's work, including information on how to submit data for inclusion in the registry; and
- Work with the Maine National Guard to identify and share information regarding the registry with individuals who are current members of the Maine National Guard and who may have trained at or will train in the future at Base Gagetown;

By February 15 of each year, the MBVS director is required to submit to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs a report regarding the status of the registry and information related to education and outreach efforts (sub-§5).

On October 2, 2026, the Commission received an update from MBVS on the status of the Base Gagetown Training Registry. *See* the "Commission Process" section for more information.

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Recommendation 4

Recommendation. The 2023 Commission recommended that the Legislature reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission due to the abbreviated timeframe for authorized legislative studies to complete their work. The 2023 Commission expressed that the reestablished commission should examine the information collected by MBVS and the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs and determine the proper next steps. Furthermore, the 2023 Commission recommended the Legislature consider expanding commission membership by two members to include individuals with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science, or human health as they relate to exposure to hazardous chemicals.

Update. The 132nd Legislature enacted LD 1640, "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission and to Reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission." The bill was signed into law on April 16, 2026 and is chaptered in Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2.[35] In addition to the ten members who served in the 2023 Commission, Public Law 2025, c. 763, section 2 included two additional members with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science, or human health as they relate to exposure to hazardous chemicals as recommended by the 2023 Commission. The 2026 Commission's membership is included in Appendix B.

IV. COMMISSION PROCESS

Over the course of its meetings on October 2, October 16 and October 30, the Commission worked toward its goals of 1) reviewing and clearly articulating the limitations of the existing studies on harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown and 2) continuing to advocate for recognition of—and by extension, compensation for—the members of the Maine National Guard who trained at Base Gagetown and are experiencing illness(es) associated with harmful chemical exposure. At its third meeting on October 16, the Commission began a discussion of findings and recommendations to be submitted as part of this report to the Maine Legislature.

Meeting materials, background materials, documents from the public and commission members and links to the archived recordings of each meeting, which were posted after each meeting, are archived on the following website: https://legislature.maine.gov/2026-gagetown-harmful-chemical-study-commission.

A. Reviewing and clearly articulating the limitations of the existing studies on harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown (i.e., the 2007 Canadian Fact-Finders' Report).

Since the 2023 Commission, the Commission has understood that the basis of presumptive exposure, especially in Canada, comes from the 2007 Canadian Fact-Finder's report. The

[35] Public Law 2025, chapter 763 is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/backend/App/services/getDocument.aspx?documentId=124338.

Commission expressed concern with the reliance on the Canadian Fact-Finders' report for determining the effects of exposure to harmful chemical due to training at Base Gagetown. In addition to the age of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report and the likely advances in the field, the Commission believes the report's findings are subject to debate—and therefore, should not be used to determine veterans' benefits claims. The Commission largely believes this because of a review of the limitations in the Canadian Fact-Finders' report, many of which were highlighted in the report's peer review.

[TO ADD (either through a reorganization of this section or as a new section): *Information from the Maine State Toxicologist]*

Background Presentation: Effects of Exposure to Agent Orange

On October 2, commission members Thomas Schwartz and Sampath Gunukula presented on the lingering toxicity of the tactical herbicides sprayed at Base Gagetown. The purpose of the presentation was to provide background information on the relevant chemistry and potential routes of exposure, to help identify questions about existing materials and potential avenues for more information and to translate, as need, any technical information.[36] The presentation covered the relevant chemical makeup of Agent Orange and Agent Purple, a timeline of the herbicides sprayed at Base Gagetown and an exploration of the ways in which an individual could be exposed to these chemicals even when they were not present during the actual spraying.[37] The presentation largely provided technical background information related to the Canadian Fact-Finders' report to allow the Commission to better understand the Canadian Fact-Finders' limitations.

By way of background, commission members Schwartz and Gunukula covered the fate and transport of tactical herbicides during and following spraying. Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula explained that chemical exposure happens in multiple steps. After a harmful chemical is released, the chemical will degrade, bind, move or persist. A person can then encounter contaminated media through dermal exposure through soil and vegetation; ingestion (e.g., through soil or consuming berries or other food), inhalation of spray, smoke or dust; or water contamination (i.e., consumption of water or, primarily, fish). During this point, the chemical enters the body and may pose risk to human health. While the impact of exposure to harmful chemicals depends on the dose (which can originate from many sources), the presentation highlighted the many ways in which a person may be exposed to TCDD, known to be environmentally persistent, and other harmful chemicals even if that person was not present when the chemicals were sprayed.

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[36] Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula are chemical engineers, not toxicologists or environmental scientists; therefore, they cannot provide any medical opinions. The analysis in the presentation was based on only on literacy in chemistry, engineering, and broad science, not expertise in toxicology.

[37] The presentation is included in the October 2, 2026 "Meetings Materials," available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/12720 (pp. 2-7).

Although the science surrounding the fate and transport of harmful chemicals has been studied, Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula highlighted some gaps in current scientific research on TCDD exposure. The Commission was unable to identify research that estimates the level of exposure to TCDD over time at a spraying site that had been previously sprayed with Agent Orange (e.g., what is the level of TCDD at a certain year after spraying?). Furthermore, the Commission was unable to identity research that estimates the amount of time TCDD exposure remains a risk for human health at a site sprayed with Agent Orange (e.g., how long after deployment of Agent Orange does TCDD exposure remain a human health risk?).

Related to the spraying programs at Base Gagetown, the Canadian Fact-Finders' report centers around the seven days of testing over two years at Base Gagetown (3 days in 1966 and 4 days in 1967). Of concern to Maine service members who train at Base Gagetown, the Canadian Fact-Finders' report found there is minimal risk posed by herbicide use at Base Gagetown after 1967 because there were non-hazardous amounts of the herbicide found in the soil and fish testing. Additionally, the report declares that all herbicides used were approved in Canada when deployed. The Commission is particularly concerned with the impact of this finding because the Canadian Fact-Finders' report, among other studies on Agent Orange and Agent Purple exposure, is commonly used to define the threshold for which a veteran, including a National Guard member, has presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.[38]

With an explicit interest the limitations of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report, the Commission discussed that the parts, not just the whole of Agent Orange and Agent Purple, which may pose a risk to human health. Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula reemphasized the production of Agent Orange and Agent Purple lead to impurities, specifically TCDD. The Commission remains worried about TCDD exposure of Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown because the dioxin is environmentally persistent and highly carcinogenic. At the same time, the herbicides sprayed at Base Gagetown after 1967 have a chemical makeup like Agent Orange and Agent Purple (i.e., contain 2,4-D[39]). For example, Agent White, a combination of the chemicals 2,4-D and picloram also known as Tordon 101, was used at Base Gagetown from 1965 to 1975; Tordon 10k (picloram) was used at Base Gagetown from 1975 to 1983; and 2,4-D and other chemicals were used at Base Gagetown through 2000.

While production for both TCDD and 2,4,5-T ceased by the mid-1980s due to known toxicity,[40] 2,4-D remains in production and can be found in commercial lawn weed killers. This is concerning because of the possible carcinogenic effects of 2,4-D exposure. The International

[38] *See* the summary of TCDD from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, available at https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-09/documents/2-3-7-8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin.pdf (last visited on October 26, 2026).
[39] *See* https://monographs.iarc.who.int/list-of-classifications (last visited on October 26, 2026).
[40] 2,4,5-T use ended in 1985 in both the United States and Canada, largely because of the risk of TCDD contamination. *See* https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/sites/default/files/ntp/roc/content/profiles/tetrachlorodibenzodioxin.pdf (last visited on October 26, 2026).

Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), recognizes 2,4-D as possibly carcinogenic.[41] In addition, recent studies on the effects of picloram suggest this chemical may also have carcinogenic effects. Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula noted, however, additional studies are needed to explore the effects of exposure to these additional chemicals (i.e., picloram).[42] While Agent Orange and Agent Purple ceased to be used after the testing, 2,4-D, a component of these tactical herbicides may itself be carcinogenic, contingent on additional scientific study. In short, the Commission discovered more research is needed on both indirect TCDD exposure and other harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown.

Appendix H: Peer Review of Canadian Fact-Finders' Report

The Commission reviewed Appendix H of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report to understand the concerns with using the report to define presumptive exposure. [43] Appendix H contained the peer review conducted by Dr. Joel Michalek, Dr. Claude Emond and Ross Wilson of the analyses developed by Cantox Environmental and contained in the Canadian Fact-Finders' report. Michalek et al. identified six major issues with the Canadian Fact-Finders' report, most of which related to concerns with how the models were calculated. This included the calculation of the models on the exposure estimate, which Michalek et al. noted the results could not be replicated; background exposure estimate (i.e., inclusion of dioxin-like chemicals in the background exposure estimates); and risk calculation which the reviewers believed drew an inaccurate comparison of the risk estimates for those who served at Base Gagetown with members of Operation Ranch Hand in Vietnam. Appendix H also contains Cantox Environmental's response Michalek et al.'s concerns. [44] In summary, Michalek et al. determined the methodology in the Canadian Fact-Finders' report was sound, but they felt the assumptions made in the models could be reexamined.

B. Continuing to advocate for recognition of—and by extension, compensation for—the members of the Maine National Guard who trained at Base Gagetown and are experiencing illness(es) associated with harmful chemical exposure.

In addition to identifying ways to gain federal recognition of presumptive exposure to Agent Orange for Maine National Guard members, the Commission saw its purpose was to elevate the

[41] The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not recognize 2,4-D nor picloram as a human carcinogen. *See* https://wwwn.cdc.gov/tsp/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsDetails.aspx?faqid=1501&toxid=288 (last visited on October 26, 2026).

[42] Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula shared a 2026 article, "Epigenetic fingerprints link early-onset colon and rectal cancer to pesticide exposure" published in *Nature Medicine* which explored the correlation between picloram exposure and colon cancer. Commission members Schwartz and Gunukula note more study is needed on this association. The Maas et al. (2026) article, published in *Nature Medicine, 32*, is available at https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-026-04342-5 (last visited on October 26, 2026).

[43] Appendix H of the Canadian Fact-Finders' is available at https://preventcancernow.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/3a-1-Appendix_H-Tier_1_Final_July06-Peer_Review.pdf (last visited October 26, 2026).

[44] Cantox Environmental, the entity that conducted the analysis in the Canadian Fact-Finders' report, responded to the peer review. *See* pages 57-59 of Appendix H, available at https://preventcancernow.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/3a-1-Appendix_H-Tier_1_Final_July06-Peer_Review.pdf.

effects of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown, specifically for Maine veterans. The Commission did this in several ways: 1) inviting MBVS to update the Commission on the status of the Base Gagetown Training Registry developed pursuant to 37-B MRSA §518 (P.L. 2025, c. 763, section 1); 2) offering a public comment period; and 3) seeking participation and support from Maine's congressional delegation.

The Base Gagetown Training Registry

On October 2, MBVS Director Richmond updated the Commission on the status of the Base Gagetown Training Registry (37-B MRSA §518) that went into effect on July 29, 2026. Director Richmond walked through the online registry form[45] and explained how either the Maine veteran who trained at Base Gagetown or the veteran's kin could complete the form. Director Richmond also shared that a Maine veteran or the veteran's kin can call MBVS to submit information into the registry, with a MBVS employee filling out the form on the veteran's behalf.

Following the presentation, the Commission discussed the importance of the Base Gagetown Training Registry for the study into the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals due to training at Base Gagetown. Commission members agree that the more Maine National Guard members added to the registry, the more data points will be available to analyze any connection between training at Base Gagetown and illness(es) commonly associated with Agent Orange exposure. As such, the Commission provided suggestions for MBVS to consider as it continues collecting data as part the Base Gagetown Training Registry pursuant to 37-B MRSA §518. These suggestions are as follows:

1. Pursuant to 37-B MRSA §518(3), MBVS should "work with existing veterans' service organizations, local medical centers operated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Maine Veterans' Homes and other veterans' programs or organizations in the State in order to increase awareness of the registry and the bureau's work, including information on how to submit data for inclusion in the registry." The Commission specifically suggested that MBVS make posters to hang up at these sites and recommended having an officer at veterans' organizations available to help impacted servicemembers fill out the registry; and
2. Pursuant to 37-B MRSA §518(3), MBVS should "work with the Maine National Guard to identify and share information regarding the registry with individuals who are current members of the Maine National Guard and who may have trained at or will train in the future at Base Gagetown." The Commission discussed that the Maine National Guard may have access to training orders for Maine units that trained at Base Gagetown. The Commission also noted that the Range Control at Base Gagetown may have also historical records that identify Maine units that trained at Base Gagetown.

[45] The Base Gagetown Training Registry form is available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/gagetown.

★ (Appendix C includes a copy of the letter sent by the commission co-chairs to the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services with these suggestions.)

Director Richmond also informed the Commission of the bureau's plans to send out a Request for Proposal (RFP) by January 2027 for a consultant pursuant to Public Law 2025, chapter 763. The selected consultant will aid MBVS in data collection, including identifying how best to reach veterans who trained at Base Gagetown.

Public Comment

On October 2, the Commission received comment from four members of the public, all Canadian citizens, who had direct experience with the effects of the spraying of harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown. All individuals who provided comment either at one time lived within 5 kilometers of Base Gagetown or had a spouse who served at Base Gagetown. Of note, some of the individuals who provided public comment explained the process Canadian veterans must use to apply for service-related benefits claims, as well as the various experiences with having their benefits claims applications rejected by the Canadian government.[46] [47]

Update from Maine's Congressional Delegation

On October 16, staff from Representative Chellie Pingree's and Representative Jared Golden's offices updated the Commission regarding actions at the federal level in response to letters sent by the 2023 Commission.[48] [49] Both offices indicated that they had not received any update from the U.D. Department of Veterans Affairs and requested more guidance from the Commission on how the delegation should proceed at the federal level. In response, the Commission suggested the congressional delegation identify, and then work with, other states who send or have sent their servicemembers to train at Base Gagetown. Representative Pingree's office indicated that the office would be willing to reach out to other state representatives and build a coalition; however, Representative Pingree's office requested direction from the Commission as to whom the office should reach out and data. Commission members emphasized the Commission's report will serve as a good starting point for the congressional delegation on the status and obstacles of in the way of solving this problem. Representative Golden's office, given the fact that he was not running for reelection, indicated that the office would provide any information to Representative Golden's successor.

[46] Written statements submitted to the Commission is available in the October 2, 2026 "Meeting Materials," available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/12720 (pp. 36-39).
[47] All sharable materials submitted by the public to the Commission is available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/12726.
[48] The letter from the 2023 Commission to Senator Collins, Senator King, Representative Golden and Representative Pingree is in the 2023 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission report, Appendix C, available at https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10717.
[49] The Commission invited all members of the federal delegation to provide an updated at this meeting. Senator King's office responded to the inquiry that the senator was not available at the date and time of the meeting.

Encourage Action by the Federal Government

Because the Commission recognizes this is ultimately an issue that needs to be addressed by the federal government, the Commission encouraged action from the U.S. government.[50] Through letters, the Commission:

1. Requested Maine's congressional delegation to direct the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with post-exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying programs at Base Gagetown.
2. Encouraged the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with post-exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying programs at Base Gagetown

★ (Appendix C includes a copy of the letter sent by the commission co-chairs to Maine's federal congressional delegation and to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs).

★ If the Commission wants to send these letters, the Commission can consider whether to vote on sending these letters. (Not required).

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After lengthy discussions, the Commission focused on identifying logical next steps to continue advocating for the recognition of harmful impacts of chemical exposure for National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown. Like the 2023 Commission, the 2026 Commission is mindful that recognition must ultimately come from the federal government through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Therefore, the Commission offers the following findings and recommendations as necessary steps toward achieving that recognition.

A. Finding

1. **The Canadian Fact-Finders' report used flawed assumptions to assess toxic and hazardous risk of exposure to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown; therefore, new scientific studies, with at least updated assumptions, are necessary to reevaluate the risk of exposure of Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown.** (Vote: #-#)

The Canadian Fact-Finder's report concluded only specific populations, including those directly involved with herbicide applications and brush clearing soon after application, were at a greater risk for developing adverse health outcomes. Most people who lived near or worked at Base

[50] The Commission recognizes that it is limited in directing another sovereign nation from acting. However, because Base Gagetown is on Candain soil, the Commission felt the Government of Canada should be updated about the Commission's work. Appendix C includes a letter sent by the commission co-chairs to Canadian Prime Minister Paul Carney.

Gagetown were not at risk of long-term health effects from the herbicides applied there. In addition, field testing showed limited, if any, and non-hazardous amounts of herbicide remained in the soil at Base Gagetown, implying training at Base Gagetown after application did not pose a health risk. Conversely, through discussion of Appendix H of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report[51] and the 2013 ATSDR evaluation of the report,[52] the Commission learned the underlying assumptions of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report have been called into question. The Commission believes this undermines the certainty of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report despite the report being the predominate supporting evidence into harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown.

To this day, the Canadian National Defence cites the Canadian Fact-Finders' report as the basis of its response to harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown. For example, Petition 451-00899 (2026), which called for an independent inquiry into the spraying program at Base Gagetown by the Government of Canada. In response, the Minister of National Defence stated, "Given the extensive research and Investigations National Defence has already conducted on the use and testing of herbicides at [Base Gagetown], National Defence does not have any plans to conduct further inquiries at this time."[53] the Commission learned that the Canadian Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) no longer uses the Canadian Fact-Finders' report "as a vehicle to deny entitlement to disability pensions" to Canadian veterans stationed at Base Gagetown. Given the various weight applied to the Canadian Fact-Finders' report in Canada, the Commission believes that a reexamination of the data with updated assumptions and new studies on the effects of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown is necessary to support presumptive exposure of Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown.

B. Recommendations

1. **The Legislature should direct Maine's congressional delegation to request that the United States Department of Veterans Affairs should conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data on exposure to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown and an assessment of the potential health risks of exposure, including indirect exposure, to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown.** (Vote: #-#)

Many studies have been conducted on direct exposure to Agent Orange, studies that examine health effects of veterans who were *present when Agent Orange was sprayed*. However, the Commission was unable to identify any scientific studies that examined the risk of exposure to harmful chemicals due to training at site previously sprayed with harmful chemicals, such as Agent Orange and other herbicides. In fact, the Commission's discussion of Appendix H of the

[51] *See* the "Commission Process" section (p. 15).
[52] *See* the "Background" section (pp. 6-7). https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown_Letter%20CDC%20Director%20to%20Senator%20Susan%20Collins_2012JUL.pdf
[53] Petition 451-0089 is available at https://www.ourcommons.ca/petitions/en/Petition/Details?Petition=451-00899 (last visited on October 27, 2026).

Canadian Fact-Finders' report and the 2013 ATSDR evaluation of the Canadian Fact-Finders' report highlighted the lack of scientific study for this situation: "indirect exposure" to harmful chemicals, a situation where a servicemember was at a site that had *previously* been sprayed by Agent Orange or another herbicide.

The Commission believes this absence of scientific study into indirect exposure is important to address for two reasons. First, the Commission recognizes there have been 20 years of advances in the understanding of the fate, transport and toxicity of herbicides used in the spraying programs at Base Gagetown. The Commission believes advancements in the field may have an impact on the study design. Second, based on the data of the Base Gagetown Training Registry and anecdotal evidence from Maine servicemembers who trained at Base Gagetown, the Commission finds that the illnesses Maine National Guard members are experiencing mirror the illnesses commonly associated with Agent Orange exposure. The Commission recognizes the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs cannot provide benefits to National Guard members who do not have presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. Because this question has yet to be studied, though, governmental bodies, like the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, are unable to support whether there is any association between exposure to harmful chemicals due to training at Base Gagetown and human health.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Legislature should direct Maine's congressional delegation to request that Veterans Affairs conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with indirect exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying programs at Base Gagetown. The Commission is confident that this analysis would help determine whether there is connection between the harmful chemicals applied and negative health outcomes of Maine National Guard members, signifying the necessity for the U.S. government to grant presumptive exposure to these individuals.

2. **The Legislature should direct the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans' Services should conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data on harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown and an assessment of the potential health risks of exposure, including indirect exposure, to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown.** (Vote: #-#)

While the Commission understands that recognition must come from Veterans Affairs, the Commission still believes the State of Maine, to the extent possible, should also tackle this issue. Beyond funding limitations for scientific studies, nothing prevents the State of Maine from studying the effects of indirect exposure to Agent Orange. The Commission, thus, recommends that the Legislature directs MBVS to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and assessment of indirect exposure to Agent Orange and associated health risks. The Commission believes this two-prong approach—requesting both the State of Maine and the federal government to study this issue—may increase the likelihood that new studies will come to fruition.

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3. **The Legislature should establish a commission for the continued study into the effects of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown.** (Vote: #-#)

The 2026 Commission is the second iteration of a legislative study seeking to determine a path forward for Maine veterans who trained at Base Gagetown. The Commission recognizes this is an urgent matter given the amount of time that has lapsed since the exposure to chemicals took place. The Commission is also bound by the limitations of a legislative study, including the time of year and number of meetings authorized. Therefore, the Commission recommends the Legislature examine establishing a permanent commission within MBVS, or in lieu of that, to reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission. Regardless of its form, the Commission recommends adding members to the next iteration of the commission to ensure the inclusion of all relevant perspectives and expertise. In addition to the members present in the 2026 Commission, the commission should include a member who works for MBVS and a member who is a family member of a Maine veteran who served at Base Gagetown. The Commission also recommends having a member for each of the relevant scientific fields (chemical engineering, toxicology and epidemiology), rather than two members who may have expertise in any of these areas. The Commission, in summary, recommends a 15-member commission for the continued study into the effects of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Commission believes there is a risk of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown; however, the Commission only has case studies of this effect. Anecdotal evidence alone has not been not sufficient to suggest adverse health impacts due to exposure to harmful chemicals. Therefore, the Commission knows broader data collection is necessary to adequately study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals due to training at Base Gagetown. With new studies into the impact of harmful chemical exposure at Base Gagetown, the Commission hopes Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown will be granted presumptive exposure under the PACT Act, as was done in 2022 for other servicemembers. Ultimately, the Commission's work is rooted in the goal to gain, for Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown, recognition of presumptive exposure, allowing these individuals to receive compensation from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for service-connected illness.

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APPENDIX A

Authorizing Legislation: Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2

APPROVED
APRIL 16, 2026
BY GOVERNOR

CHAPTER
763
PUBLIC LAW

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX

S.P. 648 - L.D. 1640

An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission and to Reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 37-B MRSA §518 is enacted to read:

§518. Base Gagetown Training Registry

1. Registry. The bureau shall establish the Base Gagetown Training Registry, referred to in this section as "the registry," to collect and maintain data related to military service and health conditions from individuals who voluntarily provide such data and who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, referred to in this section as "Base Gagetown," as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state and who are residents of this State or were residents of this State at the time of training.

The bureau shall use the registry to support education and outreach efforts as described in subsection 3 for issues directly related to the individuals described in this subsection and may use the data collected and maintained pursuant to this subsection to conduct, either within the bureau or through a contract with a public or private entity, research related to the effects of chemical exposure on human health.

2. Data collection. To the extent possible, the bureau shall include in the registry the following types of data for individuals described in subsection 1:

A. Complete name used while in military service;

B. Date of birth;

C. Dates of military service;

D. Branch of service and all unit assignments;

E. Military occupational specialty;

F. Dates during military service when the individual trained at Base Gagetown;

G. Self-reported health conditions or diagnoses;

H. Cause of death, if applicable; and

I. Any additional information as determined by the bureau to support the goals of the registry.

In the event that an individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin may provide the data for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also include any information in any existing data source created within the bureau related to Base Gagetown in the registry and in conducting education and outreach as described in subsection 3.

3. Education and outreach. The bureau shall make all reasonable efforts to identify eligible individuals for inclusion in the registry. These efforts must include the bureau's contacting any individual who previously provided information to the bureau related to the individual's military training at Base Gagetown regarding the registry under subsection 1 and offering the individual the opportunity to provide new or additional information to the bureau for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also work with existing veterans' service organizations, local medical centers operated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Maine Veterans' Homes and other veterans' programs or organizations in the State in order to increase awareness of the registry and the bureau's work, including information on how to submit data for inclusion in the registry. The bureau shall also work with the Maine National Guard in order to identify and share information regarding the registry with individuals who are current members of the Maine National Guard and who may have trained at or will train in the future at Base Gagetown.

The bureau may also contact another state's bureau of veterans' services or National Guard in order to identify other National Guard units that may have members who are affected by exposure to chemicals at Base Gagetown.

4. Confidentiality. All data within the registry under this section is confidential. Disclosure of the data may be made only with the written consent of the individual who is the subject of the data, or if that individual is deceased, the individual's next of kin and only to a public or private entity, including the bureau, engaged in research related to the effects of chemical exposure on human health.

5. Report. The director shall submit annually by February 15th to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs a report regarding the status of the registry and information related to education and outreach efforts pursuant to subsection 3, including outreach efforts with other states; any obstacles to data collection or data verification; and any recommended next steps regarding the registry or the use of data collected as a part of the registry. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs may report out a bill related to the report during the legislative session in which the report is received.

Sec. 2. Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission reestablished. The Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission, referred to in this section as "the study commission," is established.

1. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the study commission consists of 12 members appointed as follows:

A. Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

B. Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

C. Two members who represent veterans' advocacy organizations, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House;

D. One member who is a family member of a veteran who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, appointed by the President of the Senate;

E. One member with expertise processing veterans' claims for benefits related to military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

F. Two members who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military service, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

G. Two members with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science or human health and who have experience in those fields related to the effects of hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health, one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House.

2. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the study commission.

3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this Act. To the extent possible, members appointed to the study commission must be the same as members appointed to the study commission pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter 95. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the study commission. If 30 days or more after the effective date of this Act a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the study commission to meet and conduct its business.

4. The study commission shall study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state.

5. The study commission may request information it determines necessary to complete the study under subsection 4 from the United States Department of Defense and other federal agencies.

6. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the study commission, except that Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

7. No later than November 4, 2026, the study commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs. The committee may report out a bill based on the recommendations to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

Sec. 3. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

DEFENSE, VETERANS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF

Veterans Services 0110

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for consulting costs to create the Base Gagetown Training Registry, which will collect and maintain data related to military service and health conditions from individuals who report this data and trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada. The fund does not lapse but must be carried forward to be used for the purpose for which the fund was appropriated.

GENERAL FUND	**2025-26**	**2026-27**
All Other	$0	$250,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	$0	$250,000

APPENDIX B

Membership List: Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

Established by Public Law 2025, Chapter 763

Membership List - 2026

Name	Representation
Members appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House	
Senator Craig Hickman	Senate Chair
Representative Sam Zager	House Chair
Senator Brad Farrin	Member of the Senate
Representative Mark Babin	Member of the House
Jerry DeWitt	Representative of veterans' advocacy organizations
Karen St. Peter	Representative of veterans' advocacy organizations
Jan McColm	Individual who is a family member of a veteran who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada
Jim Gehring	Individual with expertise processing veterans’ claims for benefits related to military service-related exposure to harmful chemicals
Peter Ogden	Individual who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military service
Dana Michaud	Individual who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their military service
Sampath Gunukula, Ph.D.	Individual with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science or human health and who have experience in those fields related to the effects of hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health
Thomas Schwartz, Ph.D.	Individual with expertise in chemical engineering, environmental science or human health and who have experience in those fields related to the effects of hazardous chemicals on the environment or on human health

APPENDIX C

Commission Correspondence:

- Letter to Maine's Federal Congressional Delegation
- Letter to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, United States Department of Veterans Affairs
- Letter to the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services
- Letter to the Government of Canada

STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION

October 30, 2026

Senator Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Senator Angus King
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Representative Jared Golden
1107 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Chellie Pingree
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Senator Collins, Senator King, Representative Pingree and Representative Golden:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission (the "Commission"), which was established by the 132nd Maine Legislature through Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2 "to study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada [Base Gagetown] as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state."

The Commission was formed to continue the work of the previous iteration of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission established by Resolve 2023, chapter 95 (the "2023 Commission"). One of the recommendations of the 2023 Commission was "to request that the United States Department of Veterans Affairs provide access to medical care and assistance to members of the National Guard who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and who have been diagnosed with a condition or illness associated with exposure to tactical herbicides or exposure to other dioxins." On September 28, 2026, the Commission sent you a letter, inviting you to provide an update at the Commission's meeting on October 16, 2026. The Commission is appreciative of the insights from Representative Pingree's and Representative Golden's offices, illuminating the federal delegation's equal need for more information to advocate for Maine National Guard members who are facing illness(es) associated with dioxin exposure due to training at Base Gagetown.

The Commission faces the same obstacle as the 2023 Commission: the United States Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible providing the requested care and assistance to service members who are effected by exposure to harmful chemicals; however, the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot provide benefits to National Guard members who do not have presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown are still not recognized as having presumptive exposure to Agent Orange, even after the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 expanded presumptive exposure to Agent Orange to other service members.

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Additionally, the Commission found that there is a lack of updated scientific study into the effect of indirect harmful chemical exposure from training at Base Gagetown. The Commission discussed limitations of the 2007 "CFB Gagetown Herbicide Spray Programs 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report," the predominate scientific study into harmful chemical exposure from the use of tactical herbicides at Base Gagetown, in both the peer review of the report (available at https://preventcancernow.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/3a-1-Appendix_H-Tier_1_Final_July06-Peer_Review.pdf) and the 2013 U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's evaluation of the report (available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown_Letter%20CDC%20Director%20to%20Senator%20Susan%20Collins_2012JUL.pdf). The Commission learned the underlying assumptions of the 2007 study are debated, calling for the need to re-examine the data with updated assumptions. Furthermore, the Commission recognizes there have been scientific advances over the past 20 years in the understanding of the fate, transport and toxicity of herbicides used in the spraying programs at Base Gagetown. The Commission believes a lack of further inquiry into this matter is preventing National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown from receiving recognition of presumptive exposure.

Given the information the Commission has gathered throughout its meetings, the Commission encourages you to request the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with post-exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying programs at Base Gagetown. We are confident that such a review would help determine whether there is connection between the harmful chemicals applied and negative health outcomes of National Guard members, signifying the necessity for the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide access to medical care and assistance for these individuals.

In addition to requesting additional study, the Commission also encourages you to ask the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs how the department determines claims benefits for line of duty claims, like National Guard training. The Commission hopes this additional information will help identify where in the process Maine National Guard members are facing denial of claims benefits. The Commission views this request as another vital form of information gathering to advocate for the recognition of presumptive exposure to Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown.

We acknowledge that your offices have been involved in some of the work that has been done to address this issue over the past decade and more, but nothing has come of it yet, and time is running out for many of those affected. We thank you in advance for using all your resources to address this issue and to champion the unanimous recommendation of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Senator Craig Hickman
Senate Chair

Representative Sam Zager
House Chair

cc *(via email):* Members, Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION

October 30, 2026

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Collins:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission (the "Commission"), which was established by the 132nd Maine Legislature through Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2 "to study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state."

The Commission was formed to continue the work of the previous iteration of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission established by Resolve 2023, chapter 95 (the "2023 Commission"). One of the recommendations of the 2023 Commission was "to request that the United States Department of Veterans Affairs provide access to medical care and assistance to members of the National Guard who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and who have been diagnosed with a condition or illness associated with exposure to tactical herbicides or exposure to other dioxins." The 2023 Commission sent the then Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis Richard McDonough a letter, urging the department to take any other steps necessary to recognize the harm they have caused.

With many of the conditions remaining the same since 2023, the Commission faces the same obstacle as the 2023 Commission: the United States Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible providing the requested care and assistance to service members who are effected by exposure to harmful chemicals; however, the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot provide benefits to National Guard members who do not have presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. Maine National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown are still not recognized as having presumptive exposure to Agent Orange, even after the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 expanded presumptive exposure to Agent Orange for other service members.

Additionally, the Commission found that there is a lack of updated scientific study into the effect of indirect harmful chemical exposure from training at Base Gagetown. The Commission identified limitations of the 2007 "CFB Gagetown Herbicide Spray Programs 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report," the predominate study into harmful chemical exposure from the use of tactical herbicides at Base Gagetown,

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in both the peer review of the report (available at https://preventcancernow.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/3a-1-Appendix_H-Tier_1_Final_July06-Peer_Review.pdf) and the 2013 U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's evaluation of the report (available at https://www.maine.gov/veterans/sites/maine.gov.veterans/files/CFB%20Gagetown_Letter%20CDC%20Director%20to%20Senator%20Susan%20Collins_2012JUL.pdf). The Commission learned the underlying assumptions of the 2007 study are debated, calling for the need to re-examine the data with updated assumptions. Furthermore, the Commission recognizes the scientific advances in the understanding of the fate, transport and toxicity of herbicides used in the spraying programs at Base Gagetown over the past 20 years. The Commission believes a lack of further inquiry into this matter is preventing National Guard members who trained at Base Gagetown from receiving recognition of presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.

Therefore, the Commission is encouraging you to conduct an independent, targeted reanalysis of existing data and a reassessment of any health risks associated with post-exposure to the herbicides used during the spraying programs at Base Gagetown. We are confident that such a review would demonstrate a connection between the harmful chemicals applied and negative health outcomes of National Guard members, signifying the necessity for the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide access to medical care and assistance for these individuals.

Given the impact of harmful chemical exposure, we thank you in advance for using all your resources to address this issue in an expeditious manner.

Sincerely,

Senator Craig Hickman
Senate Chair

Representative Sam Zager
House Chair

cc *(via email):* Members, Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION

October 30, 2026

Director David A. Richmond
Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services
117 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0117

Dear Director Richmond:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission (the "Commission"), which was established by the 132nd Maine Legislature through Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2 "to study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state." The Commission was formed to continue the work of the previous iteration of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission established by Resolve 2023, chapter 95 (the "2023 Commission").

As you are aware, the 2023 Commission recommended that the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans' Services (MBVS) reestablish and expand the registry of individuals who served/serve in the Maine National Guard who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada. The Maine State Legislature enacted this recommendation in Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 1, now codified in Title 37-B, section 518 of the Maine Revised Statutes.

The Commission appreciated your update and presentation of the Base Gagetown Training Registry at its second meeting on October 2, 2026. As a result of your presentation, commission members brainstormed on how best to reach Maine veterans who trained at Base Gagetown. The Commission recognizes that MBVS plans to submit a Request for Proposal by early 2027 to hire a consultant who can help identify outreach mechanisms. The Commission also recognizes these recommendations fall within the scope of the law. However, the Commission provides you with these recommendations to reemphasize aspects of the law.

Pursuant to the 37-B MRSA §518(3), the Commission recommends:

1. MBVS work with "existing veterans' service organizations, local medical centers operated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Maine Veterans' Homes and other veterans' programs or organizations in the State in order to increase awareness of the registry and the bureau's work, including information on how to submit data for inclusion in the registry."

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Commission member Peter Ogden specifically suggested that MBVS make posters to hang up at these sites and Commission member Jerry DeWitt recommended having an officer at veterans' organization available to help National Guard members fill out the registry; and

2. MBVS work with "The Maine National Guard in order to identify and share information regarding the registry with individuals who are current members of the Maine National Guard and who may have trained at or will train in the future at Base Gagetown." Commission member Peter Ogden offered that the Maine National Guard may have access to training orders for Maine units that trained at Base Gagetown. Commission member Ogden also noted that the Range Control at Base Gagetown may have also historical records that identify Maine units that trained at Base Gagetown.

The Commission is grateful for your efforts in collecting and maintaining data of Maine veterans who trained at Base Gagetown. The Commission knows this continued data collection will allow for study into the effects of indirect exposure to harmful chemicals at Base Gagetown. The Commission hopes this analysis will help advocate for the recognition of presumptive exposure for Maine veterans who trained at Base Gagetown, just as those Maine veterans who served in the Vietnam War.

Given the impact of harmful chemical exposure, we thank you in advance for using all your resources to address this issue in an expeditious manner.

Sincerely,

Senator Craig Hickman
Senate Chair

Representative Sam Zager
House Chair

cc *(via email):* Members, Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION

October 30, 2026

Prime Minister Mark Carney
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Carney:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission (the "Commission"), which was established by the 132nd Maine Legislature through Public Law 2025, chapter 763, section 2 "to study the effects of exposure to harmful chemicals on individuals who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada as a member of the United States Armed Forces, as a member of the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard of any state."

The Commission was formed to continue the work of the previous iteration of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission established by Resolve 2023, chapter 95 (the "2023 Commission"). One of the recommendations of the 2023 Commission was "to request that the United States Department of Veterans Affairs provide access to medical care and assistance to members of the National Guard who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and who have been diagnosed with a condition or illness associated with exposure to tactical herbicides or exposure to other dioxins."

Over the course of its work, the Commission learned more about the history of the spraying program at CFB Gagetown (i.e., through the 2007 "Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report") and the evolution in the recognition and compensation to those service members affected by harmful chemical exposure at CFB Gagetown. The Commission heard compelling anecdotal evidence, specifically from Canadian citizens, about the effects of exposure to the harmful chemicals by living near or on the base. After reviewing the limitations of the 2007 "Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report" the Commission grew even more concerned about the Canadian National Defence's plan to build more base housing at CFB Gagetown. The Commission believes further examination into the potential risk of harmful chemical exposure at CFB Gagetown due to lasting effects of harmful chemical use is necessary. In this regard the Commission was encouraged to review the House of Commons, Standing Committee on National Defence's report that indicated a proposal to "[launch] an independent inquiry, providing compensation[,] and [to conduct] a study relating to the [CFB] Gagetown."

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The Commission is also aware that the Government of Canada has acknowledged the existence of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission, both the 2023 iteration and this most recent iteration. Therefore, the Commission has included a copy of its report from the 2026 Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission. The Commission hopes the information the Commission gathered throughout the fall of 2026 is beneficial for your government's consideration.

Given the impact of harmful chemical exposure, we thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Senator Craig Hickamn
Senate Chair

Representative Sam Zager
House Chair

cc *(via email):* Members, Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission

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