

Legion members steer clear of Vietnam veteran ceremony

Royal Canadian Legion members won't officially participate in a special ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall model Wednesday when Canadians who served in Vietnam remember their fallen comrades.

"They're in effect on their own," said Derek Eyles, president of the legion's Pacific Command division.

"We feel they're closely aligned to the Americans — and really, that is where they should be."

But Eyles said that although the legion won't officially support the veterans when they hold their 1 p.m. ceremony, it doesn't have "an argument" with the moving wall coming to Canada.

"I don't think we would be upset as long as they don't attempt to do ceremonies at existing cenotaphs. They've been dedicated to those who have paid the supreme sacrifice to Canada.

"Because the Vietnam War was not a war Canada was officially involved in, we — with some reluc-

tance — do not recognize Vietnam veterans as veterans in Canada because they did not serve Canada or the Crown. This is following the thinking of the department of veterans affairs."

Eyles believes that despite "aggressive" lobbying by Canadian Vietnam veterans to gain recognition in Canada, the legion won't change its national policy towards them. But he admitted that not all legionnaires support the policy.

Eyles declined to give his personal view on Canadians who fought in Vietnam, but he admitted the legion is currently at "loggerheads" with them.

"We have trouble sometimes with Vietnam veterans, who in their own way are somewhat aggressive in pursuing their own way of thinking, and we have to stand our ground," he said.

"Undoubtedly it (the wall model) is the way of the Vietnam vet making a point."