

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
13 February 2019, 1400 – 1500
Record of Discussion**

File: 65-1

IN ATTENDANCE:

Tom Irvine	-	Chairman
Ronn Anderson	-	Member
Dave Gordon	-	Homeless Veterans
George O'Dair	-	Seniors Advisor
Chris Richardson	-	BSO Legion OSI Special Section

ABSENT:

Bruce Julian	-	Vice-Chairman
John Mahon	-	Member
Larry Murray	-	Ex-Officio

DOMINION COMMAND STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Raymond McInnis	-	Secretary
Dwayne McCarthy	-	Assistant Secretary

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to our first VSS meeting in 2019. He stated that it was exciting times, we had a new Minister of Veterans Affairs, Jody Wilson-Raybould until yesterday, Minister Sajjan is the Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs. He advised the Committee that we released a statement with our concern about the revolving door of Ministers for this important department.

He advised that the Legion House team are busy preparing an advocacy paper for the 2019 election paper and after approval, it will be promulgated.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The previous minutes of 24 November 2018 were reviewed.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the members approve the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 24 November 2018.

CARRIED

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

The Chair advised that we did not receive any amendments to the VSS TORs; the due date was 18 January 2019. He gave the Committee until end February to review and return amendments to the Secretary. If none received, the TORs will be promulgated with minor grammatical and terminology changes.

ACTION: Members/Secretary

4. OUTREACH AND VISITATION INITIATIVE

The contract was renewed on 1 October 2018 for the next two years, to visit 5,000 Veterans each year. Since the start of the new contract on 1 October 2018, we received 122 taskings to see 2,642 Veterans, completing 1,548 visits to date.

We have 116 trained volunteers with 13 on the waiting list for training, albeit most are not in areas of need. We will not schedule a course in 2019 unless we get volunteers for the areas in need. The updated areas of need are:

- Winnipeg (Manitoba)
- Swift Current, Maple Creek and Shaunavon (Saskatchewan)
- Mississauga, Scarborough, Toronto and Sault Ste Marie (Ontario)
- Sydney and Yarmouth (Nova Scotia)

Comrade Ronn asked how many volunteers are needed in Winnipeg, as he is aware that there is one currently. Comrade Ray advised that one additional volunteer is required.

ACTION: Secretary

5. HOMELESS VETERANS GUIDELINES - UPDATE

Comrade Dave briefed the Committee on the draft Homeless Veterans Guidelines. He requested that the Committee review and provide comments to the Secretary no later than end-February. After review, the Committee will obtain DEC approval to send to all Commands for their information and implementation if they choose to do so, it is a Guideline, it is not mandatory.

Comrade Dave advised that the apartment kit list costs approximately \$250 and the backpack costs approximately \$75.

Comrade George O'Dair mentioned that branches could donate to the National Foundation for homeless veterans. Comrade Dave asked if an external organization wanted to donate specifically to the Foundation for Homeless Veterans, would they receive a charitable tax receipt from the Foundation. Comrade George advised that all donations to the Foundation from organizations would receive a charitable tax receipt and specify that the donation would be used specifically for Homeless Veterans.

ACTION: Members/Homeless Veterans Rep/Secretary

6. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS

Comrade Dave advised that he is working on a Legion Veterans Homelessness Strategy for Dominion Command, in draft format, which will include a Five-Year Action Plan. He is also looking at the Criminal Justice system, after speaking with the Minister of VAC, Nova Scotia is the trial province and Alberta will be looking at it, as their justice systems are similar. He briefed on what Ontario Command is doing with Indigenous Veterans, more to follow on implementation.

Comrade Ray mentioned for Veterans Services, a Veteran is a Veteran is a Veteran when it comes to application for disability benefits. VAC policy is the same. Comrade Dave advised that the Command Service Officers are handling applications and doing presentations to the Indigenous Veteran community.

ACTION: Homeless Veterans Member/Secretary

7. SENIORS

Comrade George thanked Comrade Ray for making the Home Away Initiative Guide more accessible on the website. He then advised the Committee to visit the site and view the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal and the link to Cogniciti.

A discussion ensued on what local branches are doing to attract seniors into the Legion. In some communities, the municipality is paying for bus services to transport seniors to events.

8. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION

Comrade Chris advised that the Section is finding their way, balancing referrals, giving personal direction and trying not to be seen as infringing on service officer responsibilities. Comrade Chair asked how many referrals they have completed. Comrade Chris advised that they do not keep those statistics, primarily for privacy concerns. He provided information that their Executive have worked with many personnel. Membership is status quo, around 170 members. He is working on a recruitment initiative for the Section to attract new members.

Comrade Ray mentioned that with the number of MHFA serials being conducted, it would be an opportunity for the Section to make available their brochures, if attendees do not want to join the Section, they may have friends, family, or colleagues who would be interested; it is a very easy way to outreach to attract new members.

Comrade Chris advised that VAC has approved funding for 50 serials of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). He advised the Committee of a new initiative started by Craig Hood, one of their founders; it is the Model Building Program. Veterans get together, socialize and build models. The response has been incredible, donations of 125 starter kits in Toronto, 105+ kits in Nova Scotia.

9. BENEVOLENT FUND PROPOSAL – PROJECT TRAUMA SUPPORT

The Committee reviewed a proposal from the Project Trauma Support, which was sent electronically to the members for review. The proposal being reviewed is the second version as the first one included provincial command requests. Comrade Ray also sent PTS some questions on the proposal. As far as the research goes, it has not been completed so therefore the PTS program has not been peer reviewed yet. This will obviously take time. Some of the research is of course dependent on having enough participants to generate statistically relevant results. In addition, of course, that requires funding for participants - a bit of a Catch-22.

PTS was advised that the Poppy Fund does not pay in arrears and any funding provided must be tied to future Veteran co-hort serials. The Committee reviewed the proposal, the testimonials and the bios of the doctors running the clinic. Comrades John and Bruce have reviewed and provided their support in advance of the meeting. Both support, but support funding for one year only and review after receiving evaluation reports on the project before committing to a second year. The Poppy and Remembrance Committee will be meeting later today and will review the proposal based on our recommendation.

MOTION: Recommend to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee and DEC to fund Project Trauma Support for \$100,000.00 on an annual basis for three years – total of \$300,000.00 from the Dominion Command Poppy Trust Fund.

The Committee amended the motion to read:

MOTION: Recommend to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee and DEC to fund Project Trauma Support for \$100,000.00 on an annual basis for three years – total of \$300,000.00 from the Dominion Command Poppy Trust Fund. Funding for Years II and III will be contingent upon receiving an annual accounting and report of expenditures from Project Trauma Support prior to requesting ratification from DEC for Years II and III.

CARRIED

ACTION: Secretary

Secretarial Note: The Secretary via e-mail sent the VSS Committee recommendation to the Secretary Poppy and Remembrance Committee on 13 February 2019 prior to the commencement of their meeting at 1800 hrs.

10. BENEVOLENT FUND APPLICATIONS - UPDATE

Comrade Ray advised the Committee that the four previous requests for benevolent funding from the Quinism Foundation, Project Healing Waters, Soldier On and RCL

Masters Scholarship were forwarded to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee for consideration for their meeting on 13 February 2019.

11. VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER TRAINING – UPDATE

Alta-NWT Command will be hosting the Western Region Command Service Officer course 12-13 March in Calgary Alberta. Quebec Command will host the Eastern Region Command Service Officer course 10-11 September in Montreal, Quebec. Thank-you to both Commands for hosting the training seminars.

Command Service Officers were very busy in 2018, completing 3,119 first applications and 552 Departmental Reviews to Veterans Affairs Canada. This is a huge increase from 2017 when they completed 2,815 first applications and 151 Departmental Reviews. They also counselled out 1,153 applicants, an increase of 300 from 2017. Extremely busy folks.

12. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS / ROUNDTABLE

Comrade Chris mentioned that there is confusion in the veteran community regarding the Education and Training Benefit (ETB) from VAC. Members that served for two successive three-year Basic Engagements (BE) with Leave without Pay (LWOP) do not qualify for the ETB as they are short a few days for the six-year continuous service mark. VAC apparently was looking into the LWOP issue but there has been no public communication on the issue. Comrade Ray will look into the process.

Comrade Chris advised that Veterans receiving Earnings Loss Benefit (ELB) would have their ELB clawed back if receiving ETB. Comrade Ray confirmed this as ETB is considered tuition and tuition is taxable and considered an income. He mentioned that with the introduction of PFL Income Replacement Benefit (IRB) on 1 April 2019, Veterans would be able to make up to \$20,000.00 before any claw back occurs and the maximum ETB provided in an annual year is \$20,400.00 so only \$400.00 should be clawed back after 1 April 2019. Comrade Ray will confirm that this is correct with VAC.

Comrade Chair requested that the information be available for the next meeting.

ACTION: Secretary

Comrade Dave advised Comrade Ronn that he discussed the Homeless Veterans Program with Comrade Rob Cutbush from MAN/NWO Command.

He also advised that Ontario is reviewing the number of vacant Priority Access Beds (PAB) in the province. Comrade Dave will provide the Ontario Command report that is being compiled by Comrade Earl Kish. He advised that the provincial government might close the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) so not sure, who will be looking after our Veterans applying for LTC as they previously did this through the LHINs. Ontario Command will work with both VAC and the province to determine the way ahead if the LHINs are closed.

ACTION: Homeless Veterans Rep

Comrade George asked if there was an equivalent to the LHINs in other provinces. Comrade Ronn advised that in Manitoba, Veterans apply directly to Deer Lodge. Comrade Ray advised that VAC was contracting to the provincial health care system in most provinces for the preferred access beds for veteran's contract. The Committee is not aware of any equivalency to the LHINs in other provinces.

13. NEXT MEETING

The next teleconference for the VSS Committee will be on 22 May 2019 at 1330 EST.

14. ADJOURNMENT

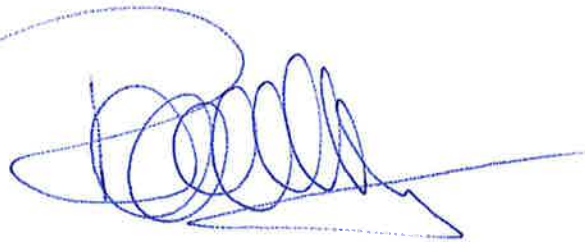
The Chair thanked all for joining the teleconference, your knowledge and experience is invaluable to the Committee and to the Legion.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

CARRIED



Tom Irvine
CHAIRMAN



Raymond McInnis
SECRETARY

Dated 20 February 2019