

**Dominion Command  
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee  
VIA ZOOM  
23 September 2021, 1330 – 1530  
Record of Discussion**

**File: 65-1**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

<b>Bruce Julian</b>	-	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Owen Parkhouse</b>	-	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
<b>Bill Chafe</b>	-	<b>Member</b>
<b>John Mahon</b>	-	<b>Member</b>
<b>Dave Gordon</b>	-	<b>Homeless Veterans</b>
<b>George O'Dair</b>	-	<b>Seniors Advisor</b>
<b>Trevor Jenvenne</b>	-	<b>BSO Legion OSI Special Section</b>

**ABSENT:**      **Larry Murray**      -      **Ex-Officio**

**DOMINION COMMAND STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:**

<b>Raymond McInnis</b>	-	<b>Coordinator</b>
<b>Dwayne McCarthy</b>	-	<b>Assistant Coordinator</b>

**1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Comrade Chair welcomed everyone to our first meeting as a new Committee, and he is looking forward to working with the Committee for the next three years.

Each Committee member provided a self-introduction including their experience with VSS at a branch, provincial and Dominion Command level.

The Chair advised that the VSS Committee mandate is to provide dedicated advocacy, support and compassionate assistance to all Veterans including serving Canadian Forces members, RCMP, Veterans and their families.

Of all the committees this is the most complex program, and it is essential that we focus our efforts, provide knowledgeable advice and direction.

We are the experts, and we need to communicate internally and externally. He encouraged all to ask questions, provide input and offer suggestions for action.

As soon as the next cabinet is announced, we will have to be prepared to advocate more vocally on our advocacy, including Budget 2021, the commitment to Long Term Care, the Stay-At-Home-Wellness Program, the pilot program aimed at reducing Veteran homelessness, new program for mental health treatment costs to name a few and continue with our other advocacy issues that have not come to fruition. Additional Preferred Admission Beds, elimination of the Marriage Over 60 clause, the details of the Veterans Survivor Fund, national standards for psychiatric service dogs, changes to the Veterans Independence Program.

Comrade Chair mentioned that during his recent visit to a provincial convention, it appears our advocacy is not getting down to the branch level. After he provided an update on our Advocacy efforts, they were pleased with our advocacy efforts. Over the next three years we will work extremely hard to keep the pressure on the government to see some positive policy changes and to ensure our communication is loud, clear and respectful.

The Chair advised the new members of the Committee that all correspondence that is forwarded to you as a Committee member should not be forwarded outside of our Committee to your Command until it is discussed at a VSS meeting and the Record of Discussion is promulgated. After distribution, it is expected that correspondence is forwarded throughout the Commands for information.

## **2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes from 19 May 2021 were distributed on 21 May 2021 and forwarded as an attachment with the agenda on 7 September 2021. The minutes were reviewed by the Committee with no observations. The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the members approve the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 19 May 2021.

**CARRIED**

## **3. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS REPORT**

Comrade Dave presented the Veterans Homelessness Report, the report is attached to the minutes. The Chair advised that as this report is an update, there is no requirement for a motion to approve.

Comrade Dave received an invitation to the CAEH National Symposium, and he will present the RCL Leave the Streets Behind program at the Symposium. He advised that Sunnybrook Hospital will begin to see homeless veterans for in-patient psychiatric assessments. As he receives more information on this initiative, he will brief the Committee.

There were many questions during Convention on whether the Poppy Fund can be used to assist homeless veterans. The Poppy Fund can be used to assist homeless veterans on an individual basis and the Poppy Fund can be used to provide funding to a homeless veteran's program in a Command. No Provincial Command or Dominion Command approvals required.

All Qs & As during the Convention Workshops will be provided on our website under a Convention portal which is being developed, it will include the presentations, reports and Qs & As.

There was a brief discussion on the RCL Homeless Veterans Advisory Committee and next steps. The last meeting was in 2017 and it is time to review the Terms of Reference and participants on the Committee. The Coordinator will liaise with the Chair and the Coordinator for the Advisory Committee to schedule a meeting in 2022.

**Action: Coordinator**

#### **4. SENIORS REPORT**

Comrade George presented the Seniors report, it is attached to the minutes.

#### **5. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION - REPORT**

Comrade Trevor provided an update on the Buddy Check Coffee Chat and Op VetBuild. The Op VetBuild is expanding as more and more branches are getting interested in the program.

He advised that the Section will be submitting a grant proposal to VAC for funding the Compassionate Listening Course. Facilitators for the Buddy Check Coffee Chat and Op VetBuild will be required to take the Compassionate Listening Course. He mentioned that all facilitators will be properly screened with a Criminal Records Check and a Vulnerable Sector Check.

Comrade Chair asked if the MHFA training is still ongoing. Comrade Trevor responded that they were converting the MHFA to an on-line format. The on-line format was not successful, and they will now look at a hybrid model, it is a work in progress. He will provide a further update at the next meeting.

#### **6. CIMVHR SCHOLARSHIP WINNER 2021**

Comrade Chair advised that the 2021 RCL Master's Scholarship winner will be announced in a virtual ceremony on 29 September 2021.

**Coordinator's Note:** In a virtual ceremony on 29 September 2021, Comrade Bruce presented the 2021-2022 RCL Master's Scholarship to Meredith Seager from the

University of Manitoba's Department of Community Health Sciences. Meredith is a research assistant in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences. She will investigate the chronic pain profile among still-serving military members and veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces who develop effects of a traumatic brain injury or T-B-I.

She will look at parameters like prevalence, demographic trends, and variables that may moderate or mediate the effects when it comes to TBI's and the development of chronic pain. She will compare still-serving members and veterans and will look at differences in males versus females.

Meredith's study will also look at post-injury well-being, inclusive of mental health, moral injury, coping and social support. Her evaluation will provide us with a much better understanding of the mental and physical health issues surrounding traumatic brain injury.

Ultimately her findings could help with the creation of treatment and intervention strategies for those at risk of developing chronic pain after a TBI. In the longer term, the results could lead to new policies and procedures to help doctors and others identify and treat those dealing with chronic pain.

## **7. CIMVHR SCHOLARSHIP RECOMMENDATION**

Comrade Chair advised that 2022-2023 is the last scholarship year, all the previous recipients have been extremely grateful to the Legion and provided their research to CIMVHR for review. We would like to continue this scholarship for another three scholarship cycles ending in 2026. He requested a motion to approve to send the request through the Poppy and Remembrance Committee for their concurrence and onward transmission to DEC in November.

A discussion ensued and questions on previous winners and the importance of the scholarship to the Legion were addressed by the Chair.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to recommend to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee and DEC to continue the RCL Masters scholarship for another three-year cycle, starting in 2023-2024 ending in 2025-2026, for a total of \$90,000.00 from the Dominion Command Poppy Trust Fund.

**CARRIED**

**Coordinator's Note:** On 28 September 2021, a CIMVHR link showing all previous winners of the RCL Master's Scholarship was forwarded to Committee members.

## **8. VETERANS SERVICES – UPDATE**

Comrade Ray advised that the Outreach and Visitation Initiative is still suspended due to the pandemic. We are in communication with VAC to determine the date to resume the program, looks like later in 2022. Contract is extended to 31 March 2022 and there are funds remaining on the contract to permit visits in 2022.

The Director and Deputy Director Veterans Services meet with VAC Centralized Operations Division monthly to discuss issues we are having with VAC. Monthly meetings are also scheduled with the Veterans Review and Appeal Board for discussion on the Appeals we currently have with the VRAB; we have 130 Appeals waiting to be scheduled in 2021.

Monthly Command Service Officer Zoom videoconferences are held on the first Wednesday of each month. They are for Command Service Officers for us to communicate policy changes, service officer issues, etc. RODs are promulgated and forwarded to the Provincial Executive Directors, the National Executive Director, and the Dominion President for information.

Comrade Ray mentioned to the Committee members that a big Bravo Zulu should be given to all the Branch and Command Service Officers for their tireless work in the past 18 months during the pandemic. They provided excellent support to Veterans and their families during this difficult period, whether working remotely or a hybrid model, Veterans and their families were well taken care of with disability benefits and benevolent fund requests.

## **9. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – DISCUSSION**

Comrade Chair advised that he would continue the Committee of the Whole meetings and he would like to schedule two meetings in 2022. There was discussion on whether to send an invitation to the provincial OSI representatives and the Committee agreed an invitation will be forwarded to the President OSI Special Section to invite the OSI provincial reps to the first meeting, tentatively scheduled for May 2022.

## **10. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUNDTABLE**

Comrade Bill asked about the governmental response to resolutions from 2014, 2016 and 2018 Dominion Conventions. Comrade Ray advised that they have been received and will be included with the 2021 Virtual Convention book.

Comrade Dave mentioned that Ontario Command is setting up Homeless Veterans Committees in communities to review affordable veterans housing in Ontario. Comrade Ray requested to see the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for these Committees to share with this Committee and Provincial Commands.

Comrade John asked about the Legion Masters Scholarship and if the scholarship should be with the Legion National Foundation. Comrade George will add it as an

agenda item for the LNF next meeting, perhaps the Foundation may want to explore a new scholarship.

Comrade Owen advised that they are in the preliminary stages of looking for land and developers for a 20-unit Veterans House in Stratford, PE. He asked if Suicide Awareness was a mandate of this Committee and the Chair responded in the affirmative.

There were no further discussion items at roundtable.

## 11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee is tentatively scheduled for **early November 2021, date TBD** via Zoom at 1330. Tentatively, meetings will be scheduled in February 2022, May 2022 (Committee of the Whole), September 2022, November 2022.

## 12. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

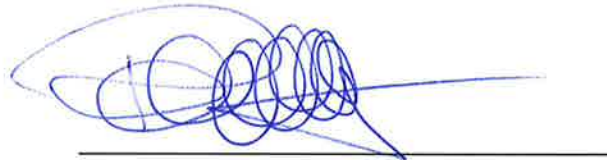
The Chair thanked all for their input, it was a very good meeting and is looking forward to the next three years. Stay safe and be well!

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

**CARRIED**



Bruce Julian  
CHAIRMAN



Raymond McInnis  
COORDINATOR

Dated 04 October 2021

Dominion Command  
Homeless Veterans Report  
September 23, 2021

Covid-19 has not stopped Homeless Veterans. We continue to see more and more Homeless Veterans coming forward and seeking assistance from the Legion.

The following is a review of the 2020 Quarterly reports (numbers assisted) by Command which has been updated with additional numbers from Ontario Command.

**BC/Yukon** – over 100 from Cockrell House (I used the 100 number) a few female. Note there has been indication of Homeless Veterans being assisted in the interior, Comox Valley, however they were not reported through the Quarterly report.

**Alberta/NWT** – 9 – 1 Female

**Saskatchewan** – 30

**Man/NWO** – 1 – Female

**Ontario** – 956 – 100 female

**Quebec** – 150

**Nova Scotia** – 15 – 2 Female

**New Brunswick** - 2

**PEI** - 2

**Newfoundland** - 0

**Total: 1,130 of which 104 are Female.**

NOTE: Female numbers are included in the totals.

Other than Ontario Command there was not much information given to the monetary funds spent on the program and we will be asking for more detail in the future. Ontario Command has disbursed over \$ 2.7 million for their Operation Leave the Streets Behind program.

The Toronto Police Services and OPP are finalizing their Officer Training program regarding Homeless Veterans. For some reason the program has run into legal concerns and we are still in the process of ironing them out.

Veterans House in Ottawa has more than 23 new Veterans who have taken up residence with two being female. The outdoor area has been finalized with the BBQ hook up patio furniture having been installed.

As previously noted, CAEH has been expanding their program and have been in contact with several regions in Ontario. One interesting note is the announcement that London has achieved Functional Zero and many were celebrating they have ended Veteran Homelessness in that city. This is not the case as Functional Zero means the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness is less than or equal to the number of Veterans a community has proven it can house in a month and sustain this number. For example, if they started with 10 and reduced the number to 3 and

maintained it for 3 months or more they reach Functional Zero. CAEH is now establishing committees in more than 30 municipalities in Ontario and the Legion is playing a major role with committees being established in all communities as well and I expect this program will move across the country in due time.

The Ottawa Veterans Task Force is moving along and have set in place a number of committees to take on the various tasks. There was some difficulty with VAC but I believe the concerns are being corrected. This committee will be a cornerstone for other municipalities as they have established several committees and spread the work, which is working very well.

I believe the Homeless presentation at Convention went well and I can tell you I have yet to see the presentation as it was never sent for review. There were approximately 39 questions that have been answered and there were some in regards to the use of Poppy Funds for the Homeless program. Back in July 16, 2012, a letter from the President of the day, Comrade Gord Moore, addressed to the Provincial Presidents, was sent. It was regarding the 44<sup>th</sup> Dominion Convention in Halifax where the Leave the Streets Behind program was approved.

The correspondence gave a review of the program and also, where a few of the Commands have been involved with Homeless Veterans. The letter stated that one of the resources was the Poppy Fund for financial support. "Once a homeless veterans program is established within a provincial command, branches will then be authorized to donate to the provincial command program from their Poppy Trust Funds." We all know that all commands do not have a Homeless Veterans program, however they will come to the aid of a Homeless Veteran when the need is shown.

One of the questions asked - What percentage of the Poppy Funds could they donate? From the above noted there has never been a "percentage" ever discussed and I recall many times that Duane Daly had indicated that there was no restriction. I answered the question in that manner and believe it to be correct. I wanted to share this information with you as I know that it may cause concerns for commands.

Another reason is I believe, we are not getting the proper info from the commands. One is leaving it to the branches to donate without the amounts coming back to the Command for recording. Others are doing the same and authorizing the use of Poppy funds but not recording how much or where the funds have been disbursed. Why the concern? If we have all of the noted information it can be used to promote the program. It is like, Who?, What?, Where?, When? and Why? To many times we have completed presentations only to have the hosts claim they didn't know about the Legion Homeless Veterans program.

Comrades we have to do a better job and it is my intention to work directly with the Command VSS/Homeless Chairmen to promote the program and provide them with information to do the job.

Respectfully Submitted

Dave Gordon



**22 September 2021**

**Seniors Report**

Re-reading my report appended to the Minutes from our last meeting, I note that there has not been much change due to bouncing around of COVID issues and especially because of the ill-advised Federal election call which, of course, turned out to be a waste of time. It is rare for anything to happen during a campaign.

One thing we did see was a list(s) of wonderful promises made by all the major Federal parties noting their plans for Veterans, Defence and Security and Seniors. Some of our expressed goals are included; however, these are simply campaign promises with no expressed plans on how to achieve them.

We will, no doubt, see a shuffling of cabinet posts – soon. One of particular interest is that the Seniors Minister, Deb Schulte was not re-elected. It'll be interesting to see who replaces her and whether the VAC and Defence Ministers will keep their jobs.

We need to determine the content of the various mandate letters to the Ministers to see what commitments are, indeed, made by the Prime Minister. We need to review our list of requirements and determine the most effective ways to communicate them to the Ministers and to all affected departments – soonest.

Here we go again.

Stay safe.

George O'Dair