

**Dominion Command  
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee  
VIA ZOOM**

**24 February 2021, 1330 – 1515**

**Record of Discussion**

**File: 65-1**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

<b>Tom Irvine</b>	-	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Bruce Julian</b>	-	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
<b>Ronn Anderson</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>Larry Murray</b>	-	<b>Ex-Officio</b>
<b>Jill Carleton</b>	-	<b>BSO Legion OSI Special Section</b>

**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**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

He advised that the first tranche of federal funding was provided to branches in December; 7.2M was provided to 701 branches. We have received 282 applications for the second tranche and the funding will be released by 1 March, approximately 2.9M which will leave us with just under 4M for the next tranche.

The Chair mentioned for information purposes that the Veterans Affairs parliamentary committee (ACVA) just commenced a study into the Supports and Services to Veterans' Caregivers and Families. The National Defence parliamentary committee (NDDN) commenced a study into Addressing Sexual Misconduct Issues in the Canadian Armed Forces, including the Allegations Against Former Chief of the Defence Staff Jonathan Vance. We may get called to be witnesses for the ACVA meeting but not the NDDN meetings.

## 2. MOTION TO DEVIATE

**MOTION:** It was moved to deviate from the agenda if so required.

**CARRIED**

## 3. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were distributed on 10 December, a few items from that meeting have been completed.

**Project Trauma Support** – The third and final installment of 100K was received by PTS in January 2021.

**CIMVHR Scholarship** – The winner was announced on 27 January 2021 at an online event, he is Dr. Abdelhakim Khellaf of the University of Toronto and his research will focus on traumatic brain injury. CIMVHR Forum 2021 is postponed until 2022 and will be in Halifax from 17-19 October 2022.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the members approve the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 25 November 2020.

**CARRIED**

## 4. OUTREACH AND VISITATION INITIATIVE (OVI) - UPDATE

As discussed at the last meeting, the current contract was extended to 31 March 2021. Depending on COVID-19 protocols, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) may approve another extension to 31 March 2022. There is sufficient funding remaining on the current contract to complete taskings in 2021-2022 if LTCs allow visitors late 2021 or early 2022.

We sent an update letter to all OVI volunteers advising of the status of the program.

## 5. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS REPORT

Comrade Dave advised that COVID-19 has not stopped Homeless Veterans. We continue to see more and more Homeless Veterans coming forward and seeking assistance from the Legion.

Seven 4<sup>th</sup> quarter reports were received; however, it is understandable with the number of shutdowns during the pandemic. Manitoba/NWO, New Brunswick, BC/Yukon, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and NS-NU Commands submitted reports.

The Toronto Police Services and OPP are finalizing their Officer Training program regarding Homeless Veterans and have recently received permission to use the Legion Trademarks on their training material. This program is going national and will be

shared with the Committee and all Commands once finalized. This is a big step forward as every police officer in Canada, Municipal, Provincial, RCMP, and the list goes on will have access to the program through a national police portal. A portion of the slide program was sent to Steven Clark and Ray McInnis for their review and the suggested changes have been made. Ottawa, London, Kingston, Peel Region and Via Canada Police Services, are all in the process of establishing programs to assist Homeless Veterans.

Veterans House in Ottawa has opened and at this point there are 8 Veterans who have taken up residence with two being female. Ontario Command donated 40 mattresses and 40 apartment kits for the residents and the Ladies Auxiliary have donated a 75-inch TV.

CAEH has been expanding their program and have been in contact with Ottawa, Peel Region in Ontario and St. John's, NL. Comrade Dave referred the St. John's questions to Paul Hillier but have yet to have a reply. Also, Chris Strong is dealing with the questions regarding Fort McMurray. 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. I should also note that the Legion housed 14 Veterans in the month of September 2020 in London.

Affordable Housing seems to be coming to the forefront with announcements being made in Shediac, NB and London and of course Veterans House in Ottawa. Shediac Legion built an 8 unit building next to the branch and last hearing they have one more apartment to fill.

Ontario Command has appointed a Special Advisor for Indigenous Veterans for the Homeless program, this appointment was recent, and the program is just getting started.

A member of the BC/Yukon Homeless Veterans Committee reached out for information regarding the Criminal Justice program. He also noted that he is working with 8 Homeless Veterans in the Comox Valley area.

VAC is still dragging their feet in launching the "Coming Home, Homeless Strategy" and Comrade Dave asked that an attempt be made to contact VAC and give another push. This has gone on too long. He noted that in recent discussions with his VAC contact, he noted that they are changing Directors in some areas as they are all "acting" positions.

In 2019, Comrade McInnis and I attended the press announcement at the House of Commons noting there was a motion being put forward to end Veteran Homelessness by 2025. The motion was passed the next day, but all has gone silent. Comrade Dave

will contact Neil Ellis, MP for Quinte to follow up and see what action the Federal Government has taken.

Comrade Dave thanked Comrade Ray for his support and assistance. Comrade Larry commented on the participation of Ontario Command and District G contributing to the success of Veterans House.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the members approve the Homeless Veterans Report.

**CARRIED**

## **6. SENIORS REPORT**

Comrade George advised that seniors are anxiously waiting to receive the vaccine.

He stated that Branches are still struggling to stay viable; however, substantial financial help is available if Branches take the time to apply for grants, loans, etc. These government loans can be used for renovations and upkeep of our branches. There is a substantial discount if the loan is repaid on time.

He advised that COVID-19 has illustrated the seriousness of the long-term care problems that we have been complaining about for years and now Governments, being responsible for public safety, must act. We need to keep the pressure on and advocate to ensure changes are made to LTC.

He mentioned that government funding and programs have been promised for additional beds, new homes and to assist seniors to stay in their own homes and funding for additional PSWs.

He reviewed the federal government contract with Ontario, and it is a wonderful document, covering many issues that we have previously spoken about. It talks about a 10 year / \$11 billion commitment; however, the contract is only for 5 years, ending on March 31, 2022 and of course, it does not address the monumental increase of problems and costs caused by COVID-19.

There was a lengthy discussion on training the additional LTC staff and who should own the LTC facilities, Private for-profit corporations; Publicly funded non-profit operations or Publicly funded for-profit operations. Theoretically, publicly funded LTC homes should be the most reliable as their priority should be service delivery excellence. Private operations would be suspect as their main priority would be profits for their shareholders. If Governments are doing their jobs, all operations whether public or private should be closely inspected for quality of care and yet we learned some months ago that in some cases, inspectors were afraid to visit some facilities for one reason or another.

The Committee agreed to update the letter to the PM and the Premiers on the state of long-term care in Canada.

**Action:** Coordinator

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the members approve the Seniors Report.

**CARRIED**

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

Comrade Jill reminded the Committee that an online survey is underway to find out how COVID-19 is impacting the health of Canadian Veterans and their spouses. The study is conducted by the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre, once you participate, it is a follow-up survey every three months.

She advised that the MHFA for Veterans will resume mid-March. They are hoping to have 4 to 6 serials in March and April to kick it off. Only the English version is available currently. Information on the course was disseminated to the Committee, Provincial Executive Directors, OSI Provincial reps and posted on-line.

The first serial of the Peer Advocacy/Support Training is anticipated to start in April. Priority for serials will be given to the PPCLI Association and the OSI Special Section event hosts across Canada.

In person Buddy Check Coffee is resuming in places where COVID restrictions permit.

Op Vet Build is also resuming. Nineteen locations with more to come this year. (COVID permitting). A push to expand is happening. Stand up banners are being purchased for Branches currently participating and an online post has been sent out.

The social post states "Operation VetBuild is an initiative by BSO Legion OSI, a Special Section of the Royal Canadian Legion that promotes mental health and fights mental health stigma for veterans and their families. BSO Legion OSI was founded in 2016 and Operation VetBuild was launched in 2019. This is the first initiative of its kind in Canada and was inspired by the great work being done in the UK by Models for Heroes. What started off as a single location pilot program has now expanded to 19 current locations nationwide and 9 more in the planning stages. We have established fraternal partnerships with similar programs internationally and are proudly supported by IPMS (International Plastic Modelers Society) Canada and AMPS (Armoured Modelers Preservation Society) Edmonton along with a long list of hobby shops and distributors.

There is also a long list of great Canadians that have been so generous in providing kits and supplies to provide hours upon hours of enjoyment.

Clinical studies have shown that participation in hobby is great for mental health and the social atmosphere that Operation VetBuild provides for veterans and their families is a great source of healing.

If your Legion Branch is looking for opportunities to better support veterans and their families in your community, please feel free to message us to find out how on this page or email us at [ovb@bsovetsoi.com](mailto:ovb@bsovetsoi.com) .”

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the members approve the OSI Special Section Report.

**CARRIED**

## 8. VETERANS SERVICES - UPDATE

Comrade Ray advised that the new printers/scanners/laptops have been delivered.

Command Service Officers appreciate having the new laptops, more efficient when working remotely. Dominion Command received the docking stations, VAC IT staff will set up on 9 March.

Service Bureau statistics in 2020 as expected are down from 2019 due to the pandemic:

	2019	2020	+ / -
First Applications	3478	2819	-659
Departmental Reviews	601	310	-291
Counselled Out/Withdrawn	1095	830	-265
Entitlement Reviews	161	219	+58
Entitlement Appeals/RfRs	143	99	-44
WI VIP/PME	1297	2718	+1421
SCAN/Field Visits	405	443	+38

**Service Officer Professional Development** in Charlottetown scheduled for October 2021 will more than likely be postponed until 2022.

## 9. VETERAN SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

### **Dispatches Adventure Ride**

The Committee reviewed the application along with previous decisions made by the Poppy and Remembrance Committee for similar requests.

The application states that the ride will start on 31 May and end on 11 September 2021. The federal government is stating that all Canadians should receive the vaccine by late September 2021. Many of our branches are either closed or opened partially through out Canada. We have not experienced the extent of the COVID variant or the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave yet and we certainly do not want to risk the health and safety of our veterans and seniors.

Although it is important to have discussions surrounding mental health and transitional issues, 2021 is not the year to be conducting this type of motorcycle tour. It is this Committee's recommendation to concur with the Poppy and Remembrance Committee and to not fund any events in 2021 that involve inter-provincial travel, and in the response, forward an invitation to Mr. Terry to apply in 2022.

**Recommendation:** Not supported. Invitation to reapply in 2022.

**CARRIED**

### **Ways to Wellbeing**

The Committee reviewed and received support from the President OSI Special Section for this application.

The Committee approved this application to recommend to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee for their concurrence and onward transmission to DEC in April for funding.

**Recommendation:** Supported.

**CARRIED**

### **HiMARC – Resilient Parents – Resilient Communities (RPRC)**

The Committee reviewed this application and approved this application to recommend to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee for their concurrence and onward transmission to DEC in April for funding.

**CARRIED**

**Coordinator's Note:** We have received information that Military Family Services (MFS) recently implemented a new MFSP (with an imbedded resiliency model) that has been approved through CMP and based on extensive research originating with the Comprehensive Military Family Plan. Any resilience initiative (including the one proposed by HiMARC) would have to align with the new MFSP directly.

Representatives from MFS will be meeting with the researcher 12 March to learn about the initiative and assess applicability. Not having had the opportunity to review what is being proposed by HiMARC, MFS cannot provide feedback on the appropriateness of Legion funding the initiative.

Our recommendation to P&R is still valid with the provision that the HiMARC resiliency program would have to align with the new MFSP directly. Both Coordinators have discussed, and the application will be presented to the P&R Committee on 5 March with the stated provision.

**Recommendation:** Supported with provision. Committee was informed via e-mail of this additional information.

## **10. RESOLUTIONS – DOMINION CONVENTION 2021**

### **BC/YUKON 1/C** – Qualifying Programs to Assist Veterans.

Corporate Services also sent this resolution to the Poppy/Remembrance Committee for simultaneous review and consideration.

### **BC/YUKON 2/C** – VAC Recognition of The Forge for Funding

### **BC/YUKON 5/C** – Pension for Spouses after Veteran's Passing

All three resolutions have been reviewed and considered, they have been updated and forwarded to Corporate Services.

The Committee discussed a VSS resolution on the elimination of the Marriage Over 60 Clause. The Coordinator will draft a resolution for Committee review.

**Action:** Coordinator

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

There were no additional agenda items.

### **ROUNDTABLE**

Comrade John requested looking into possible dates for a Committee of the Whole meeting. Comrade Bruce will discuss dates with the Chair and advise the Committee.

**Action:** Vice-Chairman

Comrade Bruce asked the A/Coordinator if he was aware of a psychedelic drug study for PTSD. Comrade Larry mentioned that it was discussed a few years back but no current information.

**Coordinator's Note:** There was some discussion at CIMVHR Forum in Vancouver in 2016 on psychedelic drugs and in 2019, Psychiatrists in Vancouver began a phase III clinical trial of MDMA, a hallucinogenic drug commonly known as ecstasy, for patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This double-blind, placebo-controlled study is being run by the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), a provincial organization with a mandate to develop, evaluate and help implement evidence-based approaches to treat substance use and addiction. Vancouver is one of 16 locations in North America and Israel where teams are working



on the same experiment under the guidance of the non-profit [Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies](#) (MAPS).

While this work is going on, Canadian scientists are exploring other frontiers of the psychedelic spectrum.

## 12. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be on **19 May 2021** via Zoom at 1330.

## 13. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked all for their input, he will select a date for the Committee of the Whole meeting and advise. Stay safe and be well!

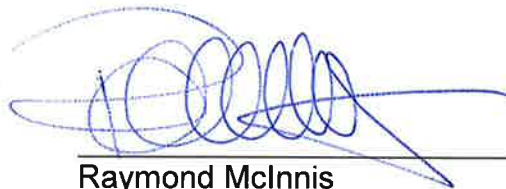
**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting

**CARRIED**



---

Tom Irvine  
CHAIRMAN



---

Raymond McInnis  
COORDINATOR

Dated 5 March 2021