

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
VIA ZOOM
13 and 20 December 2022, 1300 – 1510
Record of Discussion**

File: 65-1

IN ATTENDANCE:

Bruce Julian	-	Chairman
Bill Chafe	-	Member
John Mahon	-	Member
Dave Gordon	-	Homeless Veterans
George O’Dair	-	Seniors Advisor
Trevor Jenvenne	-	BSO Legion OSI Special Section
Carolyn Hughes	-	Coordinator
Alexa Pasha	-	Assistant Coordinator
Dean Young	-	Observer

ABSENT:

Larry Murray	-	Ex-Officio
Owen Parkhouse	-	Vice-Chairman

1. CHAIRMAN’S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Comrade Bruce thanked the committee for delaying the previous VSS meeting, as Veteran Services was busy over the last several months with an increase of calls.

VSS members were notified of the recent appointment of Comrade Carolyn as the new Director of Veteran Services in Dominion Command. Comrade Bruce congratulated her on this new role and notified members that she will continue to serve as coordinator of VSS committee.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion to approve the minutes from 6 October 2022 was brought forward.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the members approved the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 6 October 2022.

CARRIED

3. UPDATES

a. Disability Wait Times

Dominion Command is seeing some decisions for disability applications, still around the 2-year mark in the queue.

Concerns were brought forward by Comrades Bill, Trevor and John of the backlog triage process, and if there is standardization of this process, specifically on if information is available to see if the backlog consist more of current serving members, or retired members. The main concern is that retired members are in higher need for treatment benefits and financial support, whereas current CAF members have access to medical care. There is a meeting between Comrade Bruce, Comrade Steven and Comrade Carolyn and VAC in the New Year to discuss variety of items, and this will be one of the concerns brought forward.

b. Homeless Veterans Report/ TPS PROGRAM

Please see attached report from Comrade Dave.

Comrade Dave gave an update on the presentation by TPS regarding their Military Veterans Wellness program, at the DEC meeting on 26 November 2022. The program is opening across the country. Comrade Dave has been in contact with TPS and has begun the process to make the program compatible with the RCL so it can be introduced to Legion Branches in each Command.

Comrade John is inquiring about the Federal Government plan for Veteran Homeless eradication in 2025, as there has been no movement. Further, he brought forward the concern about the lack of information on the National Veterans Homelessness Strategic Plan. Comrade Bruce noted he will bring this forward with the Minister in the New Year.

Comrade Trevor is looking to seek further information and messaging on why the RCMP has not been as vocal or engaged in the program. Comrade Dave has brought forward these concerns and is awaiting a response from his contact. Once this information is shared, he will be notifying the Committee on what the direction is.

ACTION: Comrade Dave

c. SENIORS

Please see attached report from Comrade George.

Comrade George provided an overview and history of Senior support in the RCL, and of the current demographic of the Veteran population. He spoke on the importance of ensuring that services for Seniors is still a priority, as we have the data to demonstrate our Veteran Senior population, which continues to grow.

Comrade George noted there are about 7 million Canadians aged 65 and over. Below are the ages provided by VAC on the estimates average ages of Veterans as follows:

	<u>Average Age</u>	<u>Survivors</u>
War Service Veterans	95	88
CAF Veterans	59	68
RCMP Veterans	59	73

Comrade Bill clarified that he is not looking to change or make any recommendation regarding the Seniors aspect of the committee at this time. Rather, he was bringing forward the discussion of where we see Seniors in the VSS Committee today and in the future. It was agreed that Seniors are an important part of our advocacy.

d. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION

Buddy Check Coffee and Operation Vet Build has first Vice president Darren Reid, working with Ontario Command to develop the proper format for the Special Use of Poppy Funds for these programs. Comrade Trevor noted on an executive level, currently working on the policy and procedures, and for VSS to keep an eye out for those in the near future.

Update: Comrade Trevor has been chosen to continue as the BSO Legion OSI special section representative. Congratulations to Comrade Trevor!

e. TRYCYCLE DATA SYSTEMS TALKING STICK APP (THE BURNS WAY)

The project has been rebranded as The Burns Way and was named after Earl Burns, a PPCLI Veteran, who died tragically protecting his family at the James Smith Cree Nation, in early September 2022. It is a mental health initiative designed to bridge the gap between when a Veteran realizes that they need mental health support and to when they get into active treatment.

Further discussion on The Burns Way will continue, as it is still in the investigation stage and there are questions coming forward to be answered. Comrades Carolyn and Trevor are on the committee for this initiative and will update as it moves along.

4. NEW ITEMS

a. CONCUSSION LEGACY FOUNDATION VETERANS

Comrade Carolyn recently spoke with Ryan Cary, the Military/Veteran Liaison for the Foundation and brain donor and leader for Project Enlist which will bring awareness to head injuries in the military. He is a former CFL player, served as

an Infantryman with the RCR, played in the Invictus Games this past spring, and is involved in several volunteerism activities in Quebec.

It was mentioned that should there be another request after 2023, it would be appreciated in person rather via email.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to support Poppy and Remembrance the granting of \$75,000 for Concussion Legacy Foundation Veterans.

CARRIED

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

b. CASE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

VAC had third party contracts, and this simply brings two existing contracts into one. The new contract is now in place and files are being transferred to the new system. Comrade Carolyn spoke to ACVA and advised that what we are concerned with, is that Veterans receive the care and treatment they need when they need it. We will continue to monitor for any complaints or problems and the Command Service Officers across the country have been advised to report any complaints to Comrade Carolyn.

Comrade Trevor brought forward the concern potential challenges which may arise from this change. He would like to further to discuss this on February meeting. In the meantime, Comrades Carolyn and Trevor will touch base further this on the matter.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

c. MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Comrade Carolyn spoke to the Hill Times last week and the article, now published, paints the Legion in a great light. To quote some critical pieces in the article:

“Carolyn Hughes, acting director of veterans services for the Royal Canadian Legion, told The Hill Times no veterans have come to her reporting incidents of a case worker offering medical assistance in dying (MAID). However, she said many have expressed they are “feeling really traumatized from all the news on this, and they’re seeing this confirming their fears that the government wants to delay and deny benefits to them.”

Comrade Carolyn spoke on this topic to the most recent DEC meeting stating that MAID is a conversation that is not by Legion Service Officers. The direction is and has always been, that this is a conversation which should occur between patient and doctor.

At this time what is known, is that one Case Manager brought up MAID to four different Veterans. Other allegations we cannot speak on, as they have not been founded in evidence at this time.

Coordinator Update: There was a question asked about which Criminal Code section this would fall under, here is the information for those interested:

Counselling or aiding suicide

- **241 (1)** Everyone is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than 14 years who, whether suicide ensues or not,
 - **(a)** counsels a person to die by suicide or abets a person in dying by suicide; or
 - **(b)** aids a person to die by suicide.

5. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUNDTABLE

Comrade John brought forward the inquiry as to the ability to donate to Food Banks. In April 2021 DEC, it was decided to remove this from the Poppy Manual, and allow the donations of local foodbanks at Branch Level, however this change is not being seen at current time. He has inquired about a meeting in the New year on this topic. Comrade Bill has noted that Comrade Berkley, Chair of the Poppy and Remembrance (P&R) Committee should be notified of this as well and Comrade Carolyn will inform through the Coordinator of the P&R Committee, Comrade Freeman Chute.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

Comrade Dave provided brief overview from most recent Point Time Count and has noted that Quarterly reports show different representation of Homeless Veterans. Further information and promotion of Homeless Initiatives is suggested at the Branch level, to ensure all Homeless Veterans are in the know of this support.

Comrade Bill has inquired if it can be brought forward to VAC if there is intent to reestablish the branch visitation program. This is felt to be missed from the Veterans as they appreciate the face to face as well as, the one-on-one support. Could this be brought forward in the new year during the meeting with VAC.

ACTION: Carolyn

Recommendation from Comrade Bill that Dominion Command present certificates of appreciate to Constables Jeremy Burns and Aaron Dale for their work.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to request certificates and a presentation.

CARRIED

ACTION: Carolyn

6. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee is scheduled for **28 February 2023** via Zoom at 1300.

7. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked all for their input, and the discussion and to have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 1510.

CARRIED



Bruce Julian
CHAIRMAN

Carolyn Hughes
COORDINATOR

Dated this day of 03 January 2023