

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
VIA ZOOM
2 April 2024, 1100 – 1300
Record of Discussion**

File: 65-1

IN ATTENDANCE:

Bruce Julian	-	Chair
Berkely Lawrence	-	Vice-Chair
Larry Murray	-	Ex-Officio
Bill Chafe	-	Member
John Mahon	-	Member
George O'Dair	-	Seniors Advisor
Trevor Jenvenne	-	BSO Legion OSI Special Section
Carolyn Hughes	-	Coordinator
Alexa Pasha	-	Assistant Coordinator

ABSENT:

Dave Gordon	-	Homeless Veterans
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1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Comrade Bruce welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

MOTION: To approve minutes from previous meeting.

CARRIED

3. INFORMATION ITEMS

a. Stakeholder's Summit and Women Veterans Council (Comrades Bruce and Carolyn)

Comrade Bruce reviewed the four day event, with input from Comrade Carolyn and Alexa as they attended both the Stakeholders Summit and the Women's Veterans Council Summit. Comrades Steven Clark and Charls Gendron also attended the Stakeholders summit, and Comrade Bruce attended virtually.

The first two days began with an Indigenous Tribute, an Invictus Games presentation, an update on Veteran Health Research regarding Chronic Pain and

Mental Health including institutional betrayal and moral injuries. Three breakout sessions occurred each with the subjects consisting of Commemorating Modern-Day Veterans, Veteran Homelessness, and Veteran Transition on the first day and Families, Peer Connections, and an Indigenous Sharing Circle on the second day.

The third day began the Women Veterans Forum where the Experience of Women in Service today was discussed and breakout sessions were of Women Veteran Homelessness (unique and personal transition), Service after Service (volunterrism, giving back and finding purpose) and Recognition.

The final day of the Women Veterans Forum, consisted of topics such as the Connection Between Mental and Physical Health, The Female Body: Injury and Care – Hormones, Birth Control, and preventative investigations.

Women Veterans were found to have 50% incidence of chronic pain, whereas there is only 20% in the general population. There are also more women than men, unpartnered at the time of release which could alter the support needed.

To note, VAC is looking at the Guidelines regarding women as most were developed on the male physique and it has been found that in medical research that lumbar spine conditions develop earlier in women than men.

Temporary VAC staff have been contracted to 2026 and the backlog is down to about 5000 claims over the standard time frame.

b. Military Sexual Trauma and Canadian Military Colleges Review Board

A press release was done, regarding two of the recommendations (28 and 29) from the Louise Arbour's report. They refer to analyzing the benefits, advantages and disadvantages to the CAF and Canada regarding the Regular Officer Training at the two military colleges. The structure and organization will be reviewed concerning the long-standing culture concerns, including misogyny, discrimination, and sexual misconduct.

c. New Leadership at RMC- Jill Scott

As of 4 March 2024, Dr. Jill Scott has been become the 14th principal of RMC Kingston. She will oversea all academic and second language activities at the national level and a primary focus on upholding and enhancing the college's reputation and academic distinction.

d. Homeless Veterans/TPS Program

Please see attached report from Comrade Dave.

e. Seniors

Ontario is seeing a rise of Seniors Homes in the building stages, along with the hiring and training of medical staff to support our senior population.

f. BSO Legion OSI Special Section

Currently Comrade Trevor has been working on consolidating the programs for Buddy Check Coffee and OP VET Build to ensure consistency and overview of the program. There has been success with this in Ontario.

g. CIMVHR

The next Forum will be from 21-23 October 2024 in Winnipeg.

h. Queen's University Health Sciences, letter from Jane Philpott March 2024

A thank you email was received, regarding the Doctoral Scholarship from Jane Philpott dated 15 March 2024. She is now the Dean of Queen's Health Sciences and the CEO of Southeastern ON Academic Medical Organization. (attached)

i. CAF Updates

A monument would honour women's service, resilience and sacrifice dating back to the North-West Rebellion. Over 100,000 women have served in the CAF and RCMP and yet many do not see themselves as a Veterans as historically a Veteran has been portrayed mainly as male. There has not been any response from the government to date.

Military attrition is up to 19% in the last three years. During this time, over 47 thousand joined the Regular Force but over 51 thousand released. It takes about 196 days on average to process a recruit from the time of the aptitude test to when they are enrolled. As such they are exploring the role of the aptitude test and medical standards as possible hinderances to recruitment. A trial removal of the aptitude test has shortened the processing time by 45% and the recruit will need to take the test later during basic training. Minister Blair stated to CBC that only 58% of the military are currently available to respond if called upon by our allies.

j. National Police Federation Report- Behind the Badge: Revealing Escalating Mental Health Injuries Amongst RCMP Officers

This report outlines the prevalence of mental health injuries among serving RCMP members, who are six times more likely to screen positive for a MH disorder than the general population. The report and the recommendations were supported by National Headquarters. Defence and Security committee is also monitoring the situation and implementation of the recommendations. The report can be found at <https://npf-fpn.com/app/uploads/securepdfs/2024/02/NPF-Mental-Health-Report-English.pdf>.

k. Manuge v His Majesty the King

This case involves those on long term disability (LTD) with DND's insurance company and received LTD from SISIP. LTD payments were being reduced by military pensions, which is required, however they also took VAC disability pension off the payment. As a disability pension from VAC is tax-free and not considered income, they were wrong to do so.

The lawsuit benefit only applies to those whose LTD amount was reduced by their VAC disability pension. They have all the names who were affected for the time period it applies but if unsure, veterans can also contact VAC for more information at 1-866-522-2122.

l. Merlo Davidson Settlement

This was the lawsuit where VAC was reducing the disability pensions of RCMP women members and veterans who had received compensation under the Merlo Davidson settlement agreement. To correct this the Veterans Ombud made two recommendations to the Minister in 2022:

1. That VAC immediately cease Disability Pension reductions for Merlo Davidson levels 1 and 2 claimants, and issue corrective payments to women who have had their pensions reduced.
2. That VAC publish the methodology for determining whether and in what amount Merlo Davidson compensation constitutes compensation for a pensioned disability, and if unable to do so, immediately cease Disability Pension reductions for claimants at levels 3 to 6 and issue corrective payments to those who have had their pensions reduced.

In response, VAC has advised they have taken meaningful steps to address these recommendations and has contacted all the women who were affected.

4. VETERANS SERVICES UPDATE

To streamline across the country, Comrade Carolyn is developing standard operating procedures, with checklists, for all Provincial and Dominion Command Service Officers to follow regarding the submission of claims on behalf of veterans. Comrade Carolyn will be doing site visits to Commands in the coming months/years. As per the Memorandum with VAC, the Director of Veterans Service is responsible for privacy, security and computer access with VAC systems for all Provincial and Dominion Command Service Officers. To ensure there is consistency and standardization, one standard format of process will be used.

Detailed Command Service Officer Stats will be shared with PEDS when they are in Ottawa.

Comrade Carolyn will be hiring a new Service Officer in Dominion Command, as well as a Service Officer Assistant later in the year.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. VSSP Application for Support from Camp Aftermath

A project from Camp Aftermath aims to provide crucial support to veterans and their families by offering a comprehensive program centered around volunteerism. Camp Aftermath, a registered charity, will be conducting a one-year program in 2024 consisting of three cohorts, with a total of 30 veterans participating.

As part of the program, veterans will engage in various volunteer activities aimed at providing them with a sense of purpose beyond their military careers. They have received \$50K from the Federal Government and are asking for \$30K from the Legion.

A final report will be submitted to The Royal Canadian Legion at the conclusion of the project. This report will provide detailed insights into the program's effectiveness, outcomes achieved, and areas for further improvement.

The Committee has recommended to the P & R Committee that the VSSP Application be forwarded to DEC for approval of a one-time funding request.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

b. Royal Commission/ Commission of Inquiry on Veterans Issues

The decision was made to place on hold at this time and look at other avenues which are less financially and time constrictive. Given the climate of the current Government and upcoming elections, it is felt this avenue could get lost or pushed aside by the next ruling Government. It was suggested that we look at options to work within the system and advocate to VAC for improvements as needed.

It has been asked for the paper to be condensed to one page, which can be brought forward to both the Veterans Assembly Consultation and to the Minister. Comrade Carolyn will connect with Comrade Andrea on this.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

Further to this, it was suggested that the RCL meet with Minister at DEC to bring forward the concerns from Comrade Andreas paper.

Comrade Carolyn will make a list of items that VAC has not acted on and share to the committee.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

c. The RCL Hosing Inventory

Discussion was had on whether to maintain this list and/or binder. Currently there is no way of updating, as Canvet last compiled the binders. The VSS committee discussed the potential that this could be a VSS Provincial Command responsibility, rather than a National Responsibility and it to ensure it turns into a living document.

Comrade Carolyn will ask to have this added to the agenda with the PEDS in April to see if the Commands support updating in their own areas of responsibility.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

6. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUNDTABLE

Comrade Bill noted the decline in those accessing preferred access beds, given the decline of WWII and Korean Veterans. We are saddened by their passing and we will remember them.

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be scheduled in June the second or third week, via Zoom.

8. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked all for their input, and the discussion.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 14:20.

CARRIED



Bruce Julian
CHAIRMAN



Carolyn Hughes
COORDINATOR

Dated this day of 05 April 2024