

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
VIA ZOOM
17 March 2025, 1300-1400
Record of Discussion
File: 65-1**

IN ATTENDANCE:

Berkley Lawrence	-	Chair
Bill Chafe	-	Member
Carol Pedersen	-	Member
George O'Dair	-	Seniors Advisor
Darren Reid	-	BSO Legion OSI
Dave Gordon	-	Homeless Veterans
Carolyn Hughes	-	Coordinator
Alexa Pasha	-	Assistant Coordinator

REGRETS:

Larry Murray	-	Ex-Officio
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1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Comrade Berkely welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that Comrade Garry Pond has resigned from his position. We thank Comrade Garry for all he has done over the years for the Legion and the great work and advocacy he provided on a continual basis.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

MOTION: To approve minutes from previous meeting.

CARRIED

3. INFORMATION ITEMS

a. WIDS Breakfast and Women Veterans Forum

Comrade's Carolyn and Alexa attended both events. At the WIDS Breakfast Comrade Alexa was given an award for a Remarkable Leader, as nominated by the Defense and Security Committee. Comrade Carolyn spoke about the Women Veterans Forum and was pleased to see some progress in addressing ongoing concerns for women who served. Comrade Alexa and another Veteran Services staff member hosted a booth during the event, advising those in attendance as well as other organizations who had booths, about our services.

b. Persian Gulf War - ACVA Report December 2024

For information purposes, the Committee reviewed a report from the Standing Committee On Veterans Affairs entitled The Persian Gulf War was a War, was released this past December and can be found at <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/ACVA/report-18/>

c. Recognition by CIMVHR

CIMVHR recognized the long-standing working relationship with the Royal Canadian Legion which will be made public on their website in the near future.

4. HOMELESS VETERANS REPORT

A review of the current numbers of homeless Veterans accessing Leave the Streets Behind was provided.

Veterans House Canada is close to beginning construction in the Edmonton area for the new building. The new facility will be a 40-unit Homeless Veterans residence.

It was requested that the Leave the Streets Behind program begin to keep track of serving members who are accessing this Program's supports. Comrade Carolyn will request this information from the provinces in the quarterly reports moving forward.

Further information can be found in Comrade Dave's report.

5. SENIORS REPORT

Comrade George noted that there are fewer announcements and progress on Ontario Seniors supports.

Comrade Carolyn will look at the opportunity to have the Seniors Home Away Program distributed through an All-Branch once the contact information of the various resources has been updated.

Further information can be found in Comrade George's report.

6. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION REPORT

Progress is continuing with Operation Northern Vigilance, reaching out to Rangers in the north. Comrades Darren and Carolyn will be presenting the program to various stakeholders and Ranger commands in the coming months.

A national resource list will be distributed to the other Provinces and Commands and will be a living document.

An Operation Vet Build Challenge coin has been approved and being sent to be minted. The coin was developed to represent all veterans as a veteran is a veteran is a veteran.

7. VETERANS SERVICES UPDATE

a. Provincial Commands

Dominion Command is helping other three Commands with files and applications. Over 200 new applications for veteran benefits have arrived so far for the 2025 year at Dominion Command.

Manitoba Command will be sending their Veteran Service Officer to Ottawa in March for training.

Commands without Services Officers are in the process of hiring them.

b. Service Officer (SO) Training and SO Professional Development (SOPD)

SOPD is scheduled for September 2025 and will be held at Dominion Command versus Charlottetown. Further information to come on the date for SO training.

c. Free Support for Veterans - RCMP and Serving You

No veteran should have to pay for services that they can obtain for free. Some agencies are charging veterans 10% of the lump sum amount that Veterans receive for a disability award. The RCL Dominion Command and Provincial Command Service Officers, Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), and the Bureau of Pension Advocates support veterans with applications and appeals for free, whether they are a Legion member or not.

This information is also being shared with the RCMP community and will be in their next RCMP Quarterly magazine.

d. Presentations - VRAB, Minister's Advisory Group

Legion House Professional Development Day was held on 28 February 2025. All departments at National HQ did a presentation on their work, current and future projects, and provided some statistics. It was valuable to for all other departments to learn about the other departments.

Comrade Carolyn presented to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in Toronto on 13 March 2025. All the Board members were in attendance for professional training sessions. She also presented to the VAC Advisory group for Service Excellence and Transition.

- e. A recent Ombuds report was released entitled Additional Dependant Care Reimbursement Under the VAC Rehabilitation Program. After receiving a complaint from a Veteran who attended an inpatient treatment program through the Rehabilitation Program, her dependant care costs were much higher than VAC could legally pay. This complaint raised concerns that the maximum rates for Additional Dependant Care cannot be exceeded for some clients, regardless of their circumstances, and identified that the maximum rates have not changed since 2006. The findings and recommendation to VAC can be found at https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2025-02/adc_report_en_final.pdf.

Comrade Carolyn will draft a letter to send to the Minister to support the findings of the report.

ACTION: Coordinator

8. ACTION ITEMS - VSSP Applications-

a. A.T.H.E.N.A:

A.T.H.E.N.A is a Health and Well-being Program that aims to improve the mental health, physical health and well-being of women CAF veterans through exercise, education and community. It seeks to fight isolation through an online program that is accessible to anyone across the nation.

The request is for \$26,300. This has been approved by the VSS Committee and is forwarded to Poppy and Remembrance for recommendation of funds.

b. Mood Disorder Society of Canada:

The MDSC is asking for \$93,056 to continue their existing programs and to increase their support capacities. The funding request would support the following programs: Companionship Calls, Peer Support Workshops, Train-The-Trainer, and Mental Health Resources.

For many years VAC has been paying for this program and allowed RCL Service Officers and other RCL volunteers to benefit from Mental Health First Aid Training across Canada. This is an opportunity to ensure future Service Officers and others receive this potentially life-saving training.

The VSS committee has reviewed the fund application request from the Mood Disorders Society of Canada and recommends that the funding request for \$93,056 be forwarded to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee.

c. **Canadian Adaptive Snowsports:**

The Invictus games have passed, as such this is no longer relevant to bring forward as a motion.

d. **Ways to Well Being:**

VSS committee members would like further time to review the cost breakdown. Tabled for now, however, will be done secretarially in the coming weeks.

ACTION: Coordinator

e. **Concussion Legacy Foundation:**

VSS Committee has agreed they are unable to make a commitment for the request of funding for 3 years, as the By-Laws state it must be done a yearly basis. As such, the VSS committee is unable to support at this time. It was noted if the program has a smaller amount of funding requested or a single program, this would be something VSS could review for approval.

f. **Hero Lodge:**

Hero Lodge is proudly owned and operated by Canadian Armed Forces veterans and offers you a one-of-a-kind experience. Zodiac boat fishing on Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. It is peer support and a way to experience nature.

Everything must be flown on water planes and all costs are covered by the organization, not the veterans who participate.

Comrade Carolyn confirmed that the request for funds was \$5,000 and that the money would be to support with the cost for meals.

The VSS committee has reviewed the fund application request from the Hero Lodge and recommended that the funding request for \$5,000 be forwarded to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee.

g. **CanPraxis:**

The VSS committee has agreed that at this time, the funding request is not supported.

h. **CIMVHR: Women's Veterans Homeless Study:**

This funding application was tabled for now, while Comrade Carolyn does further research into other funding sources.

9. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUNDTABLE

Comrade Carol shared the Saskatchewan Homeless report and the work being completed at their Provincial Command. See attached report for further information.

Mustard Seed received funding for Veteran services/supports. We will be liaising with Albert/NWT Command to investigate how many homeless veterans they are helping and to engage with them.

ACTION: Assistant Coordinator

There was a meeting with both Parkwood and Sunnybrook Veteran Long Term Care Facilities in Ontario along with VAC where they discussed preferred veteran admission status is an opportunity for post Korean war veterans to receive the care and services they require.

Comrade Carolyn brought forward the potential for VSS to have a small budget to be able to approve more expeditiously. The request will be presented at the DEC meeting in April.

The next meeting will be set in the coming weeks.

10. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked all for their input.



Lawrence Berkley
CHAIRMAN



Carolyn Hughes
COORDINATOR

Dated this day of 31 March 2025

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