

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
VIA ZOOM
25 November 2020, 1330 – 1500
Record of Discussion**

File: 65-1

IN ATTENDANCE:

Tom Irvine	-	Chairman
Bruce Julian	-	Vice-Chairman
Ronn Anderson	-	Member
John Mahon	-	Member
Dave Gordon	-	Homeless Veterans
George O'Dair	-	Seniors Advisor
Larry Murray	-	Ex-Officio
Jill Carleton	-	BSO Legion OSI Special Section

DOMINION COMMAND STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Raymond McInnis	-	Coordinator
Dwayne McCarthy	-	Assistant Coordinator

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Since our last meeting, much has happened. There are more lockdowns across the country and until recently, it would appear the Atlantic Bubble is the place to be.

The Chair along with Comrades Steven, Ray and Carolyn, attended the annual RCL-VAC Bilateral meeting via Zoom on 26 October. Many of the issues discussed will be updated throughout the afternoon.

He advised that Comrades Ray and Steven provided testimony at the Parliamentary Committee on Veterans on 18 November along with Comrade Chad from Saskatchewan Command; the Committee is studying the Backlog of Disability Applications in VAC. The following day, we released a statement for VAC to approve the backlog of claims as Veterans have been waiting up to two years for a decision.

The Chair mentioned that he was very pleased to receive the federal funding and he would entertain any general questions from the Committee on the funding. As there were no questions, the Chair proceeded with the Agenda.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were distributed on 15 October; a few action items from that meeting have been completed:

Item 4 - The Legion's Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Veterans' Homelessness was distributed on 20 October 2020.

Item 4 – Veterans House – A letter of support was sent in spring 2020 to the Minister requesting support to Veterans House. Mandate letter to MVA states to build new, purpose-built accessible and affordable housing units, with a full range of health, social and employment supports for Veterans who need extra help. During our RCL-VAC Bilateral meeting on 26 October, the DM advised that VAC does not have the mandate to build infrastructure. They are engaged with ESDC and CMHC on this issue. We encouraged the department to work with both departments to ensure Veterans House is built on time and with no monetary restraints.

Item 7 – Project Trauma Support – recommendation will be presented to DEC to ratify the third year of funding support for 2021.

Item 8 A letter was sent on 22 October to the PM, the Minister for Seniors and the Minister of Veterans Affairs in regards to our support for the government to adopt an independence program for all seniors to help them stay in their homes longer rather than assisted living or long-term care. We copied all provincial governments on this letter.

I require motion to approve the minutes.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the members approve the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 30 September 2020.

CARRIED

3. OUTREACH AND VISITATION INITIATIVE (OVI)

The initiative was discussed at the bilateral meeting. Current contract extended to 31 March 2021. Depending on COVID-19 protocols, VAC will investigate with PSPC an extension to the current contract.

We discussed re-opening the program on a national level rather than regional as long as all health and safety protocols are in place.

4. PROJECT TRAUMA SUPPORT (PTS) – UPDATE

Comrade Chair advised that PTS ran cohorts from September 27th to Oct 2nd (men's), October 4th to 9th (women's), October 25th to 30th (women's) and November 15th to 20th (men).

Their next cohorts are scheduled November 22nd to 27th (men), December 6th to 11th (men) and December 13th to 18th (women).

They have now completed 47 cohorts with 473 graduates since May 2016. They are running them more and more frequently now, and they have seven physicians besides Dr. Joannou and Dr. Besseman on board, so they can scale up.

As mentioned at the last meeting, they exhausted Legion funds at the end of August. They were able to bring five more serving members through with a grant they received from the True Patriot Love Foundation.

PTS advised that they have seen an increasing number of Special Forces serving members reach out to them, wanting to come to the program. However, they have no funding for them and the CAF will not provide funding.

We have advised her that once DEC ratifies the last instalment, we will provide the funding very early in 2021.

Comrade Bruce asked if there were any Veterans who had to attend a second time and if there are any reports that would gauge the success of the program. Comrade Ray advised that he has not heard of any members who had to attend a second time, the testimonials received to date are all positive. Comrade Jill stated that she has not heard of any repeats either and that the Mood Disorder of Canada are conducting research to validate the results, validating how effective the co-hort is. All data has been collected and in the data analysis phase now.

5. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS

The Chair advised that at the bilateral meeting, VAC recognized the similarities between the Legion's Action Plan to eradicate veteran homelessness and their strategy, which has not been released yet.

Comrade Dave stated that since his last report there has been activity in a few Commands regarding the Homeless Veterans program. He has received five Q3 reports with little or no change in the information being submitted. Ontario Command has indicated an increase of assisting 16 new Homeless Veterans bringing the total to 898; this brings the total nationwide to 1,183.

There has been a change in Chairman in Alberta/NWT Command and he is reaching out to the new chairman to provide updated information. He was also contacted by

Branch # 001 in Regina and have sent information regarding the Homeless program and copied the ED and Provincial Homeless Chairman in his response.

The Ontario Provincial Police have finally announced their partnership in the Leave the Streets Behind program and the Toronto Police Services announced their partnership. Comrade Dave was contacted by Kingston Police Services, Peel Region Police and VIA Canada Police Services. He anticipates the partnership with VIA Canada will become a National program, more to follow. Note the OPP program also includes Manitoba/NWO Command.

He was surprised at how quickly police forces contacted him after the media announcement. He is in discussion with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

As previously noted, affordable housing is at the forefront and in high need for Veterans and their families. Communities across the country are acknowledging Homelessness among Veterans and the need for affordable housing; action is being taken to meet the need.

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre completed their Strategic plan and they have offered to be a Regional Hub for Homeless Veterans with linking them to hospital, community and social services. They would be receptive to admitting those in need of immediate assessment, treatment and care planning. Sunnybrook has offered to set up a Virtual program that could be used across the country especially in remote communities. At a recent meeting at Sunnybrook, attend by VAC personnel, he asked if VAC is tracking Veterans with COVID-19 in LTCs, he has not received a response yet. More to follow.

The City of Ottawa has announced their Task Force to Assist our Veterans and they are in the early stages of establishing various committees. This Task Force includes the NCR and Quebec Command has been advised of this program as Gatineau is in this area.

Going forward Comrade Dave would like to resend the Homeless information, including the Law Enforcement information to all Provincial Chairs in hopes of igniting additional participation in the program.

He advised that Multi-Faith Housing is now accepting applications for Veterans House in Ottawa, scheduled to open on 15 January 2021; they are still short 1.5M in funding.

Comrade Dave mentioned that he received a presentation from Ruck 2 Remember who historically completed their ruck marches in Ontario, but are now looking at completing a cross-country ruck march in 2023. He briefly explained the daily activities and they will be looking to Dominion Command and Provincial Commands to support their ruck march. All funds generated in each Command from the ruck march will be allocated to the Leave the Streets Behind Program in that Command. The presentation is attached to the minutes for information purposes; Comrade Dave will request Ruck 2

Remember to provide a more detailed presentation for discussion at the next Committee meeting.

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

CARRIED

6. SENIORS

Comrade George advised that the federal government and several provincial governments are making funding promises to improve LTCs in Canada. Probably one of the positive effects of the pandemic is that it has finally shone a light on the problems in LTCs that we have identified years ago.

It is important that we continue to advocate for our veterans and seniors until the necessary changes are implemented to LTCs in Canada.

Comrade Larry asked if we had received a response to our letter to the PM. Comrade Tom stated we did and the response is attached to these minutes. Please note the paragraph on Budget 2017, which confirmed 6 Billion over ten years targeted for supports and services to help seniors remain in their homes longer.

Comrade Larry recommended that we brief the Veterans Consultation Assembly, as it is an extremely important issue and we will need all veteran organizations onboard to effect any change. Veterans have an independence program that works extremely well and the government should look at adopting the program for seniors.

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

CARRIED

7. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION

Comrade Jill advised that the pilot Peer Support Training for Veterans/first responders in collaboration with the PPCLI Association/Project Trauma Support is scheduled for 12 December.

The last iteration of the Caring for Others will be conducted on 3 December, as there will be a pilot virtual Mental Health First Aid training on 30 November – 1 December. They are looking at rolling out this MHFA training in 2021.

Peer support activity – Virtual Buddy Check Coffee will start up again, on Thursdays it will be held at 1500 EST and on Sundays at 1400 EST.

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

8. VETERANS SERVICES UPDATE

Comrade Ray provided an update on Veterans Services, specifically communicating with VAC on a daily basis as we work with the new Veteran Benefit Teams and new staff.

The new printers/scanners/laptops should be delivered and operational by mid-December. He has scheduled a CSO teleconference for 16 December and will confirm delivery and connectivity.

He advised the Committee that the Command Service Officers and Branch Service Officers have done an exceptional job of looking after Veterans and their families throughout the pandemic.

The Ministerial Advisory Committees are starting up again, all in Microsoft Teams, no in-person meetings.

He briefed the Committee on his attendance at the Interpretation Hearing before the VRAB scheduled for 25 January 2021 via Zoom.

He informed the Committee that the CIMVHR scholarship would be announced before mid-December, we received excellent submissions and the peer review was delayed due to the pandemic.

Comrade Ray advised that after our appearance at ACVA, we released a statement for VAC to approve the backlog and conduct a risk assessment. We received one e-mail asking us to create a template letter campaign to MPs; this is not our normal way to advocate although we did a letter campaign for increasing funds to the Last Post Fund and most recently for the emergency funding to branches. A discussion ensued and the Committee agreed that we would only use the template when absolute necessary and we would not use a template letter for this issue.

Comrade Jill advised that after the statement was released, she had to field many calls from her members and non-members as the background and rationale was not explained in the release. Comrade Tom stated that he mentioned this in a press release last April/May timeframe; and the comment has been noted for future releases.

Comrade Jill asked if there has been a loosening on claims, are decisions speeding up as opposed to the backlog. Comrade Ray advised it depends on the condition, he explained the Wait time tool and the RZ policy. We are starting to receive more decisions from the Veteran Benefit Teams across the country.

9. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUNDTABLE

PROJET MONARQUES – The Committee reviewed the submission from Projet Monarques, it was reviewed simultaneously by the Poppy and Remembrance Committee and our Committee. P&R secretarially voted to send the request to Ontario and Quebec Commands for consideration.

The Committee concurs with the P&R Committee, that this proposal should be sent for consideration by Quebec Command and Ontario Command only.

After more data is collected and we see the impact of this project, at that time we may consider to see if it would have legs to go across the country.

ROUNDTABLE

Comrade Bruce asked Comrade Jill about the Medical Marijuana Coordinator project that she briefed the Committee on previously. Comrade Jill advised that this project is currently on the back shelf for now.

Comrade John advised that the Alberta government has amended their Highways Act and the definition of Veteran matches the Legion definition. RCMP members/veterans with three years service are now entitled to license plates. Military personnel released 3(b) with less than three years service are also eligible to apply for license plates.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be on 24 February 2021 via Zoom at 1330.

11. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

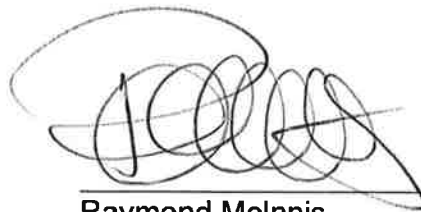
The Chair thanked all for their input, your knowledge and experience is invaluable to the Committee and to the Legion. Stay safe and stay well!

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting

CARRIED

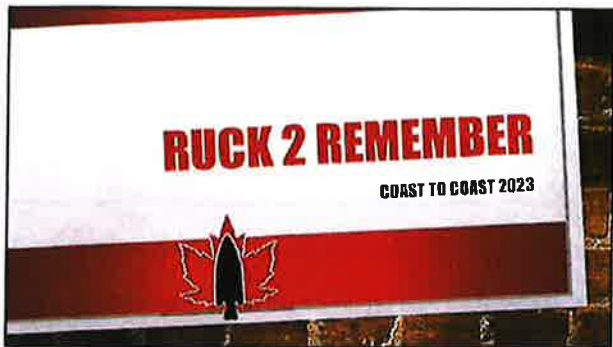


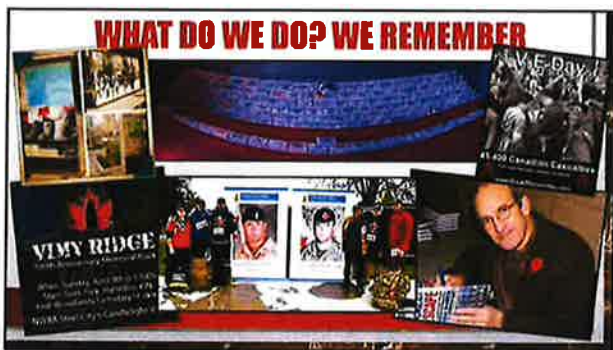
Tom Irvine
CHAIRMAN



Raymond McInnis
COORDINATOR

Dated 9 December 2020







WHAT IS RUCKING?

RUCK • ING [VERB]
Carrying a weighted pack on your back. It implies action, energy, and purpose.

 20 Roman Miles (32.02 KM)	 20 lbs (4.5 kg)	 12 KM (8 miles)	 45 KM (27.86 Miles)
5 SUMMER RUCKS (8 months Round)	4,000 lb/yr	24.6 kg (54 lbs)	10,000 lbs (45 lbs)
		2hrs 28mins	11 hours
		6.79km/HR	4.1km/HR

LEGION 100 MILES

WHAT EVENTS HAVE WE RUN BEFORE?



LEGION 100 MILES

IMPACT SO FAR



**\$213,532.77 raised
for Homeless Veterans**

THE OBJECTIVE

Execute a Charity Ruck March from Newfoundland to British Columbia

Distance: 8000+ miles or total
Fundraising Target: \$1,000,000 (Plus Expenses)
Supporting Operation: Leave the Streets Behind
Duration: 8-9 months (Averaging 30km a day)



Mission Statement:
Our goal is to help fund Operation Leave the Streets Behind in every provincial command across Canada while raising awareness for Veterans Mental Health and Homelessness by executing, perhaps the most grueling, ruck march to ever be attempted.

THE TEAM (SO FAR)

The team will grow as time goes on, there are a number of people that are needed from medical staff, to trainers, Ruckers, and chase drivers, the logistics will be a big part of this initiative. Below are the positions that we have filled so far, and the ones we still need to staff.

All members of the team are volunteers and supporters of veterans and the veteran causes

- Lead Rucker: Lino Di Julio
- Trainer: Mike Gornall (Brock Performance Academy)
- Logistics Lead: Chris "Crummy" Howell
- Media/Print: Dave Ward (Bush Weekly)
- Medical Lead: --
- Sports Massage: --
- Nutrition: --
- Media Relations: --
- Ruck Participant: --
- Chase Drivers: --
- Logistics: --
- Support: --

THE TEAM (SO FAR)

Name: Lino Di Julio
Position: Lead Rucker
Nick Name: "LT."
Status: Civilian
Background: Business Analyst by day, ruck junkie and veterans advocate by night (and weekends). Lino is the founder of Ruck 2 Remember and has been running and leading Ruck based fundraisers for 7+ years.



Quote:
"One foot in front of the other, it's just falling forward"


THE TEAM (SO FAR)

Name: Mike Cornell
Position: Trainer
Nick Name: "Coach"
Status: Civilian
Background:
Mike was a CFL football player before leaving to pursue a career in personal fitness. He has helped clients break world records, restored people's ability to walk and run after surgery complications, and even helped people with Muscular Dystrophy improve their quality of life. He does this while volunteering as the head football, strength and conditioning coach for a local Hamilton football team and running his own gym, and personal fitness company.



THE TEAM (SO FAR)

Name: Chris Kivull
Position: Logistics Lead
Nick Name: "Grumpy"
Status: Veteran
Background:
Chris served in the CAF for over 20 years before transitioning back to civilian life where he currently serves as a Volunteer Firefighter and an instructor at Robert Land Academy, a military school for boys. He is also a Legion branch president and has handled logistics for 3 years with the R2R crew.



THE TEAM (SO FAR)

Name: Dave Ward
Position: Media/Print
Nick Name: "Wardo"
Status: Veteran
Background:
Dave Ward has served (and continues to serve) in the CAF for over 10yrs now with the PPCLI and Argyl and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada. He also runs his own veteran apparel company (Bush Wookie) and volunteers for various veteran causes. He is an advocate for all Canadian veteran endeavours and has assisted R2R with print media needs in the past.



THE PLAN

Execute a Charity Ruck March from Newfoundland to British Columbia

High level the plan is "Simple", train up for a couple years, fly out to Newfoundland with heavy laden Rucksack, walk to Victoria BC, fly home.

In practice this is much more difficult.

We aim to cover a minimum of 30km a day, every day, which means the endeavour will take around 8 months. This means that in addition to the million dollars we aim to raise we'll need to find a way to cover expenses while the road team is on the road.

We also will arrange the event as a relay, with pre-mapped join up points for any participants that want to join us.

Finally there will be a virtual component allowing people to participate from anywhere in the nation, and earn a separate (interlocking) coin for each province or distance covered.

THE PLAN

How can the Legion Help?

This is, in many ways, intended to be your event. The vision of this is to raise awareness across the entire nation for the work that the Legion does for homeless veterans while also kick starting/injecting funds in every provincial command for the program. We're going to be pushing this from the PR side heavily and leveraging every angle we have to succeed. All our friends, and every contact we've made in the last 7 years and also engaging a number of companies that are typically favourable to Veteran causes. To that end the Legion can assist in the below ways:

- Lodgings where possible, the nights at the Legion Branches are a staple of our events.
- Food, the requirements will be more specific but a smaller team than usual.
- Official Support from Dominion command, the Legion brand carries weight that we'd like to leverage for the event but we need permission from provincial commands and Dominion.
- Liaison's from each of the Provincial Command that are committed to the event.
- Full cooperation, it will be exceedingly difficult to do without everyone pushing in the same direction but we can make this a record setting event for the history books if we stay shoulder to shoulder.

THANK-YOU!





Health
Canada

Santé
Canada

Strategic Policy Branch

Direction générale de la politique stratégique

Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

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RECEIVED
DOMINION COMMAND
OCT 21 2020

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

Thomas D. Irvine
The Royal Canadian Legion-National Headquarters
86 Aird Place
Ottawa, ON K2L 0A1

Dear Mr. Irvine,

Thank you for your letter of May 27, 2020, addressed to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, in which you shared your concerns and recommendations with respect to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our health care system, particularly on long-term care homes, as well as weblinks to relevant research and reports. Your letter was referred to the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, on whose behalf we are responding.

As we have seen throughout this pandemic, seniors have been greatly affected by the consequences of COVID-19, including our Canadian Veterans residing in long-term care facilities. The knowledge, experience, and commitment of Canadian health care providers and their representatives is critical to our country meeting the challenges of this public health crisis.

While long-term care is primarily a provincial and territorial responsibility, the federal government is taking a number of steps to help jurisdictions respond to the significant challenges faced by long-term care facilities across the country in the context of the pandemic.

To help manage the spread of the virus and its impacts, the Public Health Agency of Canada has provided infection prevention and control guidance to help prevent COVID-19 infections among residents and workers in long-term care and assisted-living facilities, as well as in home care, including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment. These documents are available on the Government of Canada's website at: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevent-control-covid-19-long-term-care-homes.html and www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/infection-prevention-control-covid-19-interim-guidance-home-care-settings.html.

The Government recognizes the important work done by health care workers in long-term care facilities and has taken steps to make sure that its response to the COVID-19 crisis addresses their needs. Up to \$3 billion in federal funding will be provided in support to provinces and territories to increase the wages of low-income essential workers, which can include front line workers in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

Long-term care workers are providing Canadians with essential services, so we can continue to keep our families safe and healthy. We are relying on them now more than ever, and ensuring that they can access the equipment they need to work safely is a priority. As part of its response, the federal government has adopted measures to facilitate the procurement of personal protective equipment to be used across the health care system, including in long-term care facilities.

With the Canadian Armed Forces transitioning out of the provinces of Québec and Ontario, the Government of Canada is focused on helping provinces and territories find sustainable solutions to staffing shortages in long-term care.

Canada

In April 2020, the Government of Canada coordinated a national recruitment campaign to seek volunteers to assist with case tracking and contact tracing; case data collection and reporting; and health system surge capacity. An inventory of over 53,000 volunteers was created. With the support of the Public Service Commission of Canada, Health Canada has worked closely with the Canadian Red Cross to recruit and train up to 1,000 paid volunteers, who will work in long-term care facilities. They will support epidemic prevention and control, basic care for long-term care residents and long-term care site administration.

The Government is ready to work with provinces and territories on a safe restart agreement to help support Canadians, including seniors and other vulnerable populations, during the upcoming months.

Developments in Canada's whole-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic are being detailed on the following website: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse/government-canada-takes-action-covid-19.html.

You may also be interested to know that Budget 2017 confirmed \$6 billion over ten years for provinces and territories to improve access home and community care services. Although funding is not specifically targeted to facility-based long-term care, this investment is expected to help more Canadians receive the care and services they need so that they may remain at home longer, thus allowing the provinces and territories to optimize the long-term care resources at their disposal.

The federal government has now concluded bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories, which provide details on how the federal funding will be spent. These bilateral agreements are available on Health Canada's website at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/transparency/health-agreements/shared-health-priorities.html>.

The federal government will continue to work in collaboration with provinces and territories to address pressing needs in long-term care facilities and to explore measures that could increase the resilience of long-term care facilities and prevent such significant challenges from reoccurring.

We hope that this information is helpful. Thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely,

Strategic Policy Branch

Health Canada