

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
VIA ZOOM
13 December 2024, 1300-1400
Record of Discussion
File: 65-1**

IN ATTENDANCE:

Berkely Lawrence	-	Chairman
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
Garry Pond	-	Member

**Larry Murray – Ex-Officio
Garry Pond- Member**

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Comrade Berkely welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

MOTION: To approve minutes from previous meeting.

CARRIED

3. INFORMATION ITEMS

a. Veterans Consultation Assembly –

The VCA was hosted at Legion House on 26 October 2024. Key advocacy items were highlighted including the adoption of research on traumatic brain injury, partial entitlements for disabilities and Key financial deficiencies and discrepancies between *Pension Act* and the *Veterans Well-being Act*, including the Marriage after 60 clause under the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act* (CFSA) that the Minister of Public Safety has responsibility for the *RCMP Superannuation Act* (RCMPSA.) Letter to the Minister is enclosed.

b. Endorsement of Heroes Mending on the Fly Canada -

A letter of endorsement was sent to the Minister of VAC, providing support for this organization. The therapeutic and positive psychological and physical aspects of fly-fishing is a nature-based intervention that has been proven in numerous studies to help improve the mental well-being of participants impacted by an OSI. Our endorsement included our full support and recommendation for favourable consideration should they apply for fund through VAC's Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund. The letter is attached.

c. Women Veterans Council –

A council has been formed and several women with different service backgrounds have been appointed to advise VAC on various issues related to female Veterans. Comrades Carolyn and Alexa will be attending the Women's Advisory Committee forum this coming March. Further information on the individuals and council found on link below:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/veterans-affairs-canada/news/2024/12/telling-their-own-stories-announcing-canadas-first-women-veterans-council.html>

d. Research - Women Veteran's Health, Social and Economic Wellbeing –

This is a VAC initiative which posts about women's health, factors into women's homelessness, and mental health and mortality to name a few. Is a useful tool and has been shared with Command Service Officers. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/about-vac/public-engagement/equity-deserving-groups/women-veterans/research>

e. Long Term Care –

A class action lawsuit may occur as the financial benefits for long term care were to have been based off the least expensive territory however, it has been found this is not happening. This was a federal calculation error and as such some individuals have been paying more than they should have.

Further information can be found at:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/territorial-tax-error-vac-1.7365673>

f. Service Animals for Veterans - Bill C-417 –

Rachel Blaney initiated a Bill in ACVA. The idea would be that the service animal or companion animal would be for any military condition the Veteran is experiencing, not just Mental Health.

Further information can be found at:

https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2024/parl/XB441-417-1.pdf

g. CIMVHR –

The forum for the Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research in Winnipeg from 21-23 October 2024. Comrades Berkley Lawrence, Larry Murray, Steven Clark and Charls Gendron attended. Comrade Larry presented the Master's scholarship and Comrade Berkley presented the PhD scholarship to the successful candidates.

4. HOMELESS VETERANS/ TPS PROGRAM -

Comrade Dave provided an update that several provincial commands still have not provided quarterly reports on homelessness. Comrade Dave is receiving only about half of the reports at this time.

He provided an update on the Women's Veterans homelessness research occurring across the country carried out by Cheryl Forchuk and her team and noted the continued expansion of TPS.

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

5. SENIORS -

Comrade George noted that Seniors Support Program – the Home Away Initiative has not been updated for some time and should be reviewed.

Comrade George suggested that the VSS Committee members seek it out on our website and bring forward and comments or notes in next meeting.

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

6. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION -

Comrade Darren Reid has taken over the position from Comrade Trevor as he moved into the Dominion Vice President position.

Comrade Darren notes the program is busy and updated he is working on creating District Rep's for Buddy Check Coffee, regarding who can be a mentor and work with hosts to expand the program and support in branches.

Progress is continuing with the Rangers program, Operation Northern Vigilance. It is a trial currently. Comrades Darren and Carolyn will be presenting the program to various stakeholders and Ranger commands in the coming months.

Comrade Darren has built a national resource list and would like it to be distributed to the other Provinces and Commands. This is a living document and can be added to it.

Lastly, Comrade Darren thanked Ontario Command for funding a trial peer initiative called Metal for Mindfulness, a Blacksmith program. More news will come as the program expands.

7. VETERANS SERVICES UPDATE

a. Postal Strike –

The strike impacted the processing of applications. Urgent claims were actioned immediately with an interim process put in place for the duration of the strike. All dates for retroactivity were protected regardless of the process followed and there were and are no time differences for veterans submitting claims through the Legion.

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

Comrade Carolyn is looking at dates this spring for SO Training and for SOPD, in the fall, likely to be held at Dominion Command versus Charlottetown as in the past. Further information on this to come as dates are finalized.

c. Manuge v His Majesty the King Update –

This was a class action on the miscalculation in the cost-of-living increases on monthly pensions. These payments are being directly made into the Veteran's accounts that were impacted by this miscalculation.

d. DND and the CAF –

SDAs often have/had burn pits where many different types of contaminated material was burned. The American's now recognizes many different types of cancer and other health concern that could be related to these burn pits.

8. ACTION ITEMS - VSSP Applications-

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

ATHENA is a Health and Well-being Program 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 to be moved to Poppy and Remembrance for recommendation of funds.

MOTION: Recommended this request be moved to P&R for funding.

CARRIED

b. Mood Disorder Society of Canada:

The MDSC is asking for \$124,900 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. ON Command has provided \$75,000 for their Peer Support Program.

The VSS committee would like further breakdown of how the money is being spent, in order to move forward for potential financial support. A review will be conducted by VSS with the updated information.

Action: Carolyn

C. Canadian Adaptive Snowsports:

They are asking for \$21,705 in funding to reimburse the Training Costs associated to Veterans attending the Invictus Games. 31 Veterans have been chosen in the Snowsport section by Solider On for Invictus 2025. The financial request would provide financial support to Veteran athletes by reimbursing them for their Adaptive Snowsport training and lesson.

VSS would like to know where the equipment goes once paid for and where the funds will go. VSS would like Solider ON and CAD's to be contacted for further information on the funding and program. Once information is provided VSS committee will discuss further

Comrade Carolyn will contact the agencies for further information and provide to VSS Committee.

Action: Carolyn

9. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUNDTABLE

Comrade Carolyn sent Terms of Reference for VSS Committee for all new members to review.

Comrade Dave noted there are 131 projects in Ontario by Provincial Government for long term care and 21,575 new and redeveloped beds being done and posed the question of how many of those are being set aside for Veterans. These questions should be asked to the Premier and Provincial Members of Parliament. Comrade Dave will be inquiring with his own.

The next meeting will be set in the new year in February.

10. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked all for their input and wished members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Lawrence Berkley
CHAIRMAN



Carolyn Hughes
COORDINATOR

Dated this day of 4 March 2025