

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
VIA ZOOM
20 May 2020, 1330 – 1505
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 advised that we are reaching the second month of this pandemic, and he is so proud of our Legionnaires and appreciate what they are doing for Veterans and their families.

Some days are more difficult than others are, but we are turning the corner. The progress is slow and that is OK, restrictions are being lifted and over time, we will experience a new normal.

We need to ease restrictions in a gradual, controlled manner, keeping your health and safety foremost in our planning. What is clear is that **working from our homes will be normal** for the majority of our employees and a gradual return to Legion House is expected by 6 July if the building gets the all clear to return.

Our priority is everyone's health and well-being. As we plan to ease the restrictions, we need to be cautious, gradual and measured.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair mentioned that the majority of items from the previous minutes from 23 March 2020 would be updated today; however, he provided an update on the generic tri-fold Homeless Veterans pamphlet, it will be forwarded to Commands in June 2020 not April-May as previously reported.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the members approve the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 23 March 2020.

CARRIED

3. OUTREACH AND VISITATION INITIATIVE (OVI)

As was previously reported, all taskings are suspended until further notice.

The Chair advised that VAC requested and it was approved by PWGSC that the OVI contract be extended to 31 March 2020. Veterans Services will not conduct an OVI course in 2020, as it does not appear that the LTC restrictions will be lifted anytime soon.

Comrade Ray requested information from VAC on the historical Long-Term Care Surveyor Program (LTC Survey), and consideration of any enhancements to the current OVI Program.

The OVI was initiated in 2013 and provides funding for social visits by RCL volunteers with Veterans living in long-term care facilities across Canada.

Prior to the OVI, the LTC survey had been introduced in 1998 with the RCL carrying out the surveys, under contract with VAC, from 2003 until 2012. It was a comprehensive survey questionnaire that allowed RCL volunteers to gather a significant amount of information and opinions about the care provided to Veterans in long-term care facilities across Canada. There were a few reasons for the changes from the LTC survey to the OVI, which can be summed up as follows:

- In 2012, new requirements were introduced by the federal government regarding public opinion research. The LTC survey met the definition of this public opinion research and, as a result, VAC had to find another method for keeping in contact with Veterans in long-term care, hence the introduction of the OVI.
- Jurisdiction and responsibility for health care, including long-term care, rests with provincial governments. Facilities are owned and operated privately or by health authorities or provinces. The majority of issues identified as concerns in reports from RCL surveyors were not within the control of the Department to

influence or address in any substantive way – for example, staff and nursing ratios, food type or quality, the extent of social or recreational programming, facility cleanliness, or repairs and maintenance, are all areas where VAC has no ability to enforce change.

- Provinces and health authorities delivering health care have various oversight and quality assurance measures in place including legislation and regulation, accreditation, licensing, provincial standards, and inspections of long term care facilities. A number of provinces and health authorities conduct resident satisfaction surveys (which is often a requirement for licensing).
- Questions were raised about the ongoing utility/relevance of the LTC survey, which was introduced in 1998 in a very different service delivery environment. For several years, the survey results had indicated satisfaction rates of 97-98%, with no serious systemic issues being identified.
- Given the advanced age of Veterans in long-term care, approximately 50% of surveys were being completed by family members rather than by Veterans.
- Mechanisms to assess Veteran/resident and family satisfaction are typically part of provincial licensing procedures for long-term care facilities, suggesting overlap/duplication of effort in VAC's LTC survey activity.

Currently, there is significant heat and light on long-term care across Canada at the moment due to the high number of COVID-19 cases and, sadly, deaths in long term care facilities.

The Prime Minister has recently stated, specifically in relation to the issue in long-term care homes, that it is imperative the federal government respects the Constitution and the areas of jurisdiction of provincial versus federal government. He noted that the federal government would be there to help the provinces as they manage the challenges that they are facing.

We are aware that many Veterans and their families are directly impacted by the situation in long-term care and we are reporting information and data to senior management regularly while continuing to follow the situation very closely. Any possible changes or enhancements to the OVI will be informed and guided by the direction received from the Minister and the government.

The Committee reviewed the information, the letters sent to the Premier of Ontario by Ontario Command and in light of the current situation, the Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to the PM, the MVAC and all Provincial Premiers calling for a full review of LTCs across Canada. The Committee also discussed a review of local legion protocols on LTC visits.

Coordinator's Note: The Dominion President sent a letter to the PM, the MVAC and all Provincial Premiers on 27 May 2020 requesting that they all work together on implementing new and improved strategies for long-term care in Canada.

4. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS – UPDATE

Comrade Dave Gordon reported that Ontario Command and Man/NWO Command joined forces with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and are in the early stages of establishing a Homeless Veterans program. The two Commands have held one video conference and another with the OPP is scheduled for next week. The OPP have suggested that a link to the websites be made available thus allowing the officers quick access to the Intake document. The OPP have offered to do a teaching video in reference to the Homeless Veterans program, it will be used throughout the province, and the goal is to introduce it to Community shelters and other organizations.

Multifaith Housing has continued with the construction of Veterans House although at a reduced rate of 50-75%. However, things should pick up now that full construction can restart.

The new Homeless pamphlets are ready to go and once things get back to normal, all Commands with the exception of Ontario will receive a supply for distribution to their branches and hopefully shelters in their respective provinces.

The Q1 Homeless Veterans reports were due April 15, 2020 from all Commands and all have been received, albeit well past the due date. He reported that he would like to have a comprehensive report completed for the DEC meeting if possible. The stats can also be shared with other organizations and various levels of government to show the work the Legion is doing. The RCL is the leader in the Homeless Veterans Community and the work we are doing is second to none.

The subject of Tiny Homes has come forward again and this discussion was conducted in camera.

5. SENIORS

Comrade George updated the Committee on RTOERO, with over 81,000 members in districts across Canada, they are the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for educating community retirees and are advocating for seniors during COVID-19 pandemic. They aim to improve the lives of their members through vigorous advocacy on issues that affect members, seniors and, in many cases, all Canadians. This mandate has never been more important than right now during this period of pandemic. Their advocacy is focussed on LTC, Pharmacy dispensing fees, travel refunds, financial support for seniors, frauds and cyberattacks.

6. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION

Comrade Jill presented the following report:

Mental Health First Aid Training (MFHA)

- In person training was suspended this past winter due to the COVID-19 crisis. As this report is prepared, MHCC is preparing a shorter virtual course that will be funded from the VAC baseline funding. Once physical distancing measures are lifted, MHFA for Veterans training will resume.

Coordinator's Note: The National Executive Director disseminated the following information on 22 May 2020:

Crisis Response Training - Caring for Others - Veteran Community

(Thanks to Glynne Hines for sharing this information)

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has developed a crisis response training course for the Veteran Community. We know that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Veteran Community are facing several new challenges which may be affecting their mental health. This course is specifically designed to help provide individuals with the tools and knowledge to better understand their own mental health and the mental health of others. It will focus on how to create a safe space to have conversations about mental health and/or substance use problems. This training will prepare members of the Veteran Community to have conversations confidently about mental health during a crisis, with their family, friends, communities, and workplaces. Participants will also be taught the skills required to respond to a mental health crisis until professional help arrives.

<https://mhfa.ca/en/course-type/crisis-response-virtual-training-caring-others-veteran-community> Click find a course

Operation Vet Build

- In person meetings are temporarily suspended for all OP VetBuild locations. Once physical distancing measures are lifted, Op VetBuild will restart. The intention is to make future meetings a combined Vet Build and Buddy Coffee Check Session. The Section received two branch donations and one command donation in support of VetBuild.

Buddy Check Coffee

- Also temporarily suspended. Replaced by virtual meetings every day at PM ET. Currently reviewing multiple timings on alternate days and more hosts as the length of the COVID-19 crisis continues.

COVID-19 Impact on Veterans

- Past President Comrade Glynne Hines is on VAC Committee related to responding to COVID 19 to provide information and virtual tools to Veterans.

Election Results

- Elections were held for all Executive positions in Feb and Mar using a virtual process. Based on the results, there are no changes to the Executive with the exception of two VP positions being left open due to lack of nominations. The OSI Special Section bylaws are currently being reviewed as part of our regular governance cycle and once an updated version is approved, a discussion will occur on whether any vacancies should be filled on an interim basis to finish out the current terms.

OSI Special Section Executive:

Role	Name	Email Address
President	Jill Carleton	Jill.carleton@bsovetstosi.com
Immediate Past President	Chris Richardson	Chris.richardson@bsovetstosi.com
Chair	Crystal Cook	Crystal.cook@bsovetstosi.com
Vice President	Trevor Jenvenne	Trevor.jenvenne@bsovetstosi.com
Vice President	Darren Reid	Darren.reid@bsovetstosi.com
Treasurer	Maggie Vantassell	Maggie.vantassell@bsovetstosi.com

Board Advisors/ Support

Role	Name	Email Address
Past President/MHFA Coord	Glynne Hines	Glynne.hines@bsovetstosi.com
Projects Advisor/ VetBuild	Craig Hood	Craig.hood@bsovetstosi.com
Buddy Check Coffee	Chris Richardson	Chris.richardson@bsovetstosi.com
Membership	James Leroy	membership@bsovetstosi.com
Admin	Vacant	

Executive Council – Exec plus Provincial Command Representatives

Role	Name	Email address
BC Rep	Kent Gulliford	Kent.gulliford@bsovetstosi.com
AB Rep	VACANT	
SK Rep	VACANT	
MB Rep	Trevor Jenvenne	Trevor.jenvenne@bsovetstosi.com
ON Rep	Darren Reid	Darren.reid@bsovetstosi.com
QC Rep	VACANT	
NB Rep	Duane Johnson	Duane.johnson@bsovetstosi.com
NS Rep	George DellaValle	George.dellavalle@bsovetstosi.com
PEI Rep	Owen Parkhouse	Owen.parkhouse@bsovetstosi.com
NL Rep	Jeff Hiscock	Jeff.hiscock@bsovetstosi.com

Comrade Jill mentioned that Comrades Tom, Bruce, Larry, Glynne and Ray received a presentation from John MacBeth, TryCycle Data Systems. Post meeting, Comrade Glynne checked out this technology with current users in the US. The company and Comrade Glynne are requesting that the Legion consider two things:

1. Declaring the Legion the Champion for TryCycle in Canada; and
2. Sending a supportive letter to VAC encouraging a pilot to configure and evaluate the effectiveness of the platform in the context of Veteran Mental Health.

A discussion ensued and the recommendation was to provide a supportive letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs to commence a pilot study on TryCycle. After the pilot study, the Committee will review with a recommendation to DEC on whether or not the Legion will champion TryCycle. It is important to note that there is no cost to the Legion for supporting or championing TryCycle.

Coordinator's Note: The Dominion President sent a supportive letter to the MVAC and the DM VAC supporting a pilot study on TryCycle.

7. ROUNDTABLE

Comrade Ray advised that Veterans Services across the country are assisting Veterans and their families. We are aware of the connectivity problems with VPN and although a third option was presented to the CSOs, they all try to get in on the VPN Moncton and Charlottetown portals; they are adjusting their schedules to access CSDN. He is working on procuring with VAC new printers/scanners and secure laptops for all Command Service Officers.

Comrade Dave requested information on the New Female Veterans directorate in VAC, whether Female Homeless Veterans are on their radar? Comrade Ray will have Comrade Carolyn Gasser check with VAC as she is the DC representative on the committee.

Comrade George reiterated his concerns for branch visits to LTCs.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be on 30 September 2020 via Zoom at 1330.

9. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – PROPOSED MEETINGS IN 2020

The Committee determined that the Committee is on hold for now. A meeting would be scheduled when there is information required from the Committee.

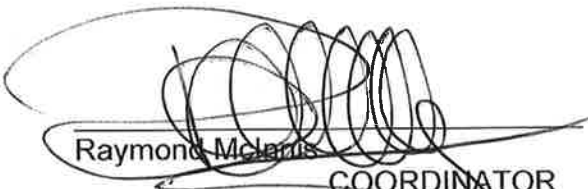
10. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

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

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

CARRIED


Bruce Julian
VICE-CHAIRMAN
Dated 2 June 2020


Raymond McLanis
COORDINATOR