

**Dominion Command  
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee  
VIA ZOOM  
30 September 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 welcomed all to the meeting and mentioned that it is difficult to believe we are now six months into the pandemic and it looks like we will be in it for the near future. He mentioned that the Dominion Command staff have been back full time in their offices since 4 August, everything is working well. Ottawa is seeing a daily increase in cases, as well as new restrictions.

**2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chair mentioned that the majority of items from the previous minutes would be updated today; however, he provided an update on the pamphlet distribution:

The generic tri-fold Homeless Veterans pamphlets were shipped to Commands the week of 24 July 2020. If Commands require additional copies, they can contact Comrade Ray.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 20 May 2020 be approved.

**CARRIED**

### **3. OUTREACH AND VISITATION INITIATIVE (OVI)**

The Chair advised that the OVI program is suspended and will be for the near future.

VAC requested and approved by the Legion and PWGSC to extend the OVI contract to 31 March 2021. At this time, it does not appear that the LTC restrictions will be lifted before the end of December 2020. We will notify all volunteers when the restrictions are lifted and taskings can resume.

### **4. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS – UPDATE**

Comrade Dave reported that COVID 19 has certainly brought a stop to many programs, businesses and affected the country in a manner not seen in the past. However, it was not strong enough to bring a stop to Veterans Homelessness, or Legion Branches continuing to assist our Veterans even when they are closed.

The homeless have been struggling with the closure of public washrooms, restaurants and coffee shops, all locations frequented prior to the shutdown.

He is very proud of the Legion Branches that stepped up to the plate and provided meals, grocery runs and the list goes on, to those who were shut in and not able to make a trip for the necessities they so much required.

He was contacted by BC/YK, AB/NT, MB/NWO, and NB Commands making enquiries regarding the Homeless program and seeking guidance in regards to further establishing their respective programs. The Guidelines were distributed again to each Command with the hope of establishing their own protocols.

ON and MB/NWO Commands have joined forces to establish a new Homeless Veterans Law Enforcement program with the Ontario Provincial Police and the Toronto City Police. The RCMP, with other municipal police services will be coming on board in the near future. Once established, each police officer will be able to connect to the Legion websites, complete the Homeless Veterans' intake form on line, and submit it directly to the respective Command office. This will save a tremendous amount of time and provide a faster service to meet the immediate needs of the Veteran. The launch for the new program is scheduled for 9 November, 2020 at Branch # 385, Aurora.

The Canadian Association to End Homelessness has continued to expand across the country and thus far have programs in place or starting in 13 locations. He advised that Comrades Ray and Steven joined him in a Zoom meeting for their program and in particular, the Built for Zero program, which allows a municipality to reach 100% achievement for the end to Veteran Homelessness in each municipality. He stated that they are also endeavouring to end Homelessness across Canada.

His concern is that they set a percentage that a municipality must meet in order to reach their goal. However, for example if the number is 10 and 7 are housed, the suggestion is given that the municipality has reached their goal of Functional Zero. He questions

this at every opportunity, he is presently involved in the Homeless program in two municipalities, and the saga continues.

Housing and the lack thereof for the homeless, has come to the forefront and more and more municipalities are seeking ways to end this problem. This includes looking at vacant buildings, hotels, motels and the list goes on to seek ways to end homelessness in their respective locations. The Royal Canadian Legion must also become involved and put forward the need of our Veterans for permanent public housing. We do know there are several programs ongoing throughout the provinces, however; there is more that can be done.

This past week, he chaired the Ontario Command VSS meeting and major topics were Transition from the Military, Suicide and Mental Illness, all which apply to the Homeless Veterans program. Also recently, he was taken aback to have three Veterans disclose they have PTSD with two of the three struggling with everyday life. Being close to homelessness and leaving their families was certainly on their mind but with the assistance they received, better lives are ahead although it is a struggle at times.

There have been four suicides in recent weeks leaving three young families devastated. We know suicide is happening among Homeless Veterans and now more than ever we need up to step to the plate and work with whomever to ensure immediate assistance is available for those suffering from PTSD. Consideration must be given to review the existing Mental Health programs. One committee member noted that being a member of the Military and deployed to a country that had suffered an earthquake does not qualify as PTSD, but being part of retrieving bodies can certainly lead to the disease, something to think about.

The Action Plan is now complete and would be distributed within the next two weeks to all Commands and to the many partners that have been established as well as VAC. It is anticipated that a Homeless Veterans Symposium will be held once it is safe to do so. He extended a sincere thank you to Comrade John Mahon, who drafted the original plan, Comrades Jill Carleton and Ray McInnis for their input into this most important document setting out the future for the Homeless Veterans program. He noted that VAC has yet to release a Homeless Veterans Strategy.

In conclusion, all of the Provincial Commands have a Homeless Veterans program with the exception of NL, as they have not reported any Homeless Veterans to date.

Comrade Dave advised that Veterans House is scheduled to open in January 2021. Comrade Larry mentioned that they are still fundraising for the final 2+ million and although we sent one letter of support to the Minister, it is time for another letter to the Minister. An updated letter will be drafted for the President's review and signature.

**ACTION: Coordinator**

Comrade Bruce mentioned that the ten units in the London facilities are occupied as of 1 September; the Ladies Auxiliaries provided 30K in furnishings.

Last January 2020, the Committee started quarterly reports and the following are the results for the first two quarters combined.

The following are the questions asked:

**Does your Command have a Homeless Veterans Fund?**

Four Commands indicated they do not have a Homeless Veterans Fund, however three of the four indicated they use Poppy funds. NL Command was the only one to indicate they do not have a fund.

**Has your Command established a Homeless Veterans Committee?**

All Commands have a committee with the exception of NL, AB/NT, and QC.

Comrade John noted that he tasked his VSS Committee and Service Bureaus the responsibilities of a Homeless Veterans Committee in AB/NT Command.

**Has your Command appointed a Homeless Veterans Chairman?**

All Commands have appointed a Homeless Veterans Chairman with the exception of NL, QC and AB-NT. Note the VSS Chairman in AB-NT is doing the job regarding the Homeless Veterans Program.

**How many Homeless Veterans have been identified in your Command, since the beginning of the program?**

NL – 0, NB – 2, PE – 2, NS-NU – 23, QC – 130,  
ON - 882, MB/NW ON – 2, SK – 25, AB/NT – 9,  
BC/YT – 100 plus

**Total – 1,167 plus. Note: BC/YT noted 100 plus.**

**How many Homeless Veterans have been identified as RCMP?**

AB-NT - 1 is the only Command to report identifying an RCMP Veteran. I do note in some PIT Counts there have been RCMP Veterans identified.

**How many Homeless Veterans have been identified as female?**

ON – 90, AB-NT – 1, NS-NU – 3. BC/YT reported “a few” through Cockrell House.

**Total: 93 plus Cockrell House**

**How many Homeless self-identified as First Nation, Inuit and Metis, with or without status?**

AB-NT – 1, ON – 2, SK- 6

**Total: 9**

**Does your Command track the areas by City or Towns or Regions where Homeless Veterans have been identified?**

SK – informally, PE – No, NL - No

The remainder of the Commands do track by City, Town and Region.

**What steps are taken when a Homeless Veteran is first identified? Is his/her service verified prior to any assistance being provided?**

All Commands answered yes except NL who have yet to record a Homeless Veteran.

**Do you do a breakdown of the monies disbursed in each city or town and itemize what the funds are used for?**

MB/NW ON, ON, AB-NT - **yes**

SK, NS-NU, NB, QC and BC/YT - **no**

PE is taking steps to do so.

## **5. SENIORS**

Comrade George stated that the Legion is getting people's attention, to loosening up some purse strings in the way of Ontario's commitment to support modern day Veterans by way of financial assistance through the *Soldiers' Aid Commission Act*.

Ontario has legislation in the works (Bill 202, *Soldiers' Aid Commission Act*, 2020) to provide assistance to more Veterans by increasing it to a million and a half annually. It provides for items such as hearing aids, glasses and wheelchairs. There are approximately 230,000 post WWII/Korean War Veterans however this assistance currently only deals with Veterans up to the end of the Korean War.

The Bill, currently at second reading and awaiting third reading, is going forward asking for provincial government approval. If approved, assistance will be available to all Veterans and their families.

He also provided an update on what the provincial government is doing in regards to management of LTCS. There are two upcoming online webinars to help explain the differences between Retirement Homes/Long Term Care (options) available

accommodation (costs/availability), recruiting and supporting healthcare workers, and additional funds to protect seniors against the second wave of COVID-19. Ontario is extending the Ontario Community Support Program until March 2021.

He also mentioned that the next round of the 2020-2021 New Horizons for Seniors Program is open for call for proposals for community-based projects; the deadline is 20 October 2020. This year, Branches can apply for funding for projects that offer COVID-19 support activities for seniors and submit proposals for more traditional NHSP projects.

## **6. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION**

Comrade Jill advised that the Section is developing Peer Support Training for Veterans/first responders in collaboration with the PPCLI Association/Project Trauma Support. Training in the form of three modules – basics of peer support/moral and shame and conflict resolution – two dry runs of first two modules, next few days will be dry run final.

This will be an online course at no charge, hopefully to start by the end of October. The goal is to help regulate peer interactions at a friendship level, gives basic skill set requirement when dealing with these type of topics. Course length is one day, free peer support training.

Mental Health First Aid training – No movement on two-day MH course, paid for by VAC, re-assessing course content and delivery due to COVID-19. Existing Instructors may run course on their own (not funded). Looking at formatting for online training (best delivery method during pandemic) also reviewing course content as it is dated.

Caring for Others - two serials, registration online. Course is online/free of charge – Caring for yourself/caring for others. On the MHCC website currently, may transfer to OSI site. OSI Special Section taking over scheduling. The course is available to all Veterans and all first responders. OSI plans to mandate all persons wishing to run meetings/coffee breaks.

Peer support activity – Buddy Check Coffee online - well attended at first however declined in members during pandemic. Recently held in Angus/Perth/Kingston which were well attended (families). One upcoming get together is being planned depending on restrictions. Virtual once a week Buddy Check Coffee to recommence with possible restrictions coming down in ON/QC and possibly other provinces.

Comrade Tom thanked Jill and the Section for the Buddy Check Coffee program and the work the Section is currently engaged in.

## **7. PROJECT TRAUMA SUPPORT**

Comrade Tom advised that Comrades Ray and Jill presented the second instalment cheque to Dr. Joannou in June. PTS are very thankful and appreciative of our funding support.

It is recommended that the third instalment be sent to DEC in November for ratification so that the third and final instalment can be presented early in January 2021.

All of the active duty military have been included in the University of Alberta Study. PTS will be running four more cohorts by the end of October, and both the military Veteran and active duty military studies should be fully populated then. (96 and 50 enrolled respectively is the target).

PTS advised that they are so grateful to have had this funding, as they would not have been able to run the cohorts to supply study participants if it were not for the Legion!

Dr. Joannou provided the following information on the breakdown of the Legion funding used for the past seven cohorts:

Cohort 38 - 2 Active Military - \$10,000

Cohort 39 - 2 Active Military - \$10,000

Cohort 40 - 1 Active Military – 2 RCMP Veterans - \$15,000

Cohort 41 - 4 Active Military - \$20,000

Cohort 42 - 3 Active Military – 1 RCMP - \$20,000

Cohort 43 - 2 Active Military - \$10,000

Cohort 44 - 2 Active Military – 1 RCMP - \$15,000

Comrade Ray has received two testimonials from the serving RCMP members; both thanked the Legion for providing the funding and said that we truly saved their lives.

In addition to the above information, Comrade Ray reached out to Comrade Glynne for current information on PTS and the Mood Disorder Society of Canada (MDS) who are funding the research and can offer the following update:

- Significant work occurred over the summer on both the quantitative and qualitative data sets.
- For the quantitative data, they worked on manualizing the data cleaning process, which will result in hours of less work when they pull the full longitudinal data set.
- For the qualitative data, they were able to transcribe and thematically code about 60% of their interviews. This was tremendously labour intensive, but it has resulted in an extremely robust qualitative data set.
- Work is now underway to write-up their preliminary findings.

Good progress continues to be made with surveying and data analysis. It is most probable that the data collection and initial analysis will be completed by the end of the calendar year however; complete analysis, peer review, and the final report will not be available until later in 2021.

If they do not get all of the remaining PTS participants to participate in the survey research, it could be further delayed. In addition, if COVID-19 restrictions are further tightened, additional delays will be incurred and the final report will be extended. They will still need funds to cover the costs of the remaining test subjects.

DEC approved 300K over three years to Project Trauma Support, this is the third year and in accordance with the Poppy Trust Fund regulations, the Committee must send our recommendation to DEC to ratify the third and final year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That DEC ratify the third year of funding support to PTS in the amount of 100K for the year 2021

**CARRIED**

Comrade Tom advised that there might be an additional request for funding to do the appropriate analysis of the RCMP data; however, no funding request received to date.

## **8. LTC/VIP**

Comrade Larry mentioned he was at a meeting and Andre Picard, the Health Reporter for the Globe and Mail attended. The discussion was in regards to the major issues we are experiencing with LTCs. Comrade Larry advised them of the Veterans Independence Program and was surprised that many attendees had no knowledge of the program. If the federal and provincial governments adopted a similar type of program for all seniors in this country, they would be able to stay in their homes longer and would assist to alleviate the backlog in LTCs.

Comrade Ray advised that the Legion sent letters to the Prime Minister in 2013 and 2018 encouraging the government to identify seniors' health care as a targeted priority and take the necessary action to develop a pan-Canadian strategy to address the health needs of seniors.

Health Canada responded to the letter in 2019 advising of the initiatives in Budget 2018. The Committee discussed the 'Seniors Independence Program' to be modelled after the Veterans Independence Program and agreed that a letter should be sent to the PM, the Minister for Seniors and the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada with the recommendation. In addition, a template letter should be developed for Provincial Command Presidents to send to their respective Premiers.

**ACTION: Coordinator**

## **9. VETERANS SERVICES UPDATE**

Comrade Ray advised that Veterans Services/Service Bureaus across the country are assisting Veterans and their families throughout the pandemic and doing a tremendous job. VAC and VRAB are pumping out decisions and we are communicating with VAC on a daily basis as we try to work with the new Veteran Benefit Teams.



The new printers and scanners have been delivered. Now waiting for the shipment of secure laptops. There is a delay with PWGSC on the laptop delivery.

He advised that he is in daily contact with VAC on the backlog. Ministerial Advisory Committees are starting up again, all in Microsoft Teams, no in-person meetings.

Dominion Command Service Officers presented ten appeals (in-house) in October, one VRAB member in attendance, and two by teleconference. All COVID-19 protocols in place.

Fourteen applications for the Royal Canadian Legion Masters Scholarship were received. CIMVHR will update Comrade Ray over the next few weeks on the recipient and the logistics of the announcement as there will not be a Forum this year.

#### **10. ROUNDTABLE**

Comrade Ronn advised that the mask program was well received at Deer Lodge.

Comrade Dave advised that there are no waiting lists at Sunnybrook, Perley-Rideau or Parkwood.

#### **11. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be on 25 November 2020 via Zoom at 1330.

#### **12. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – PROPOSED MEETINGS IN 2021**

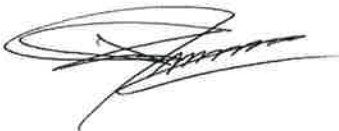
The Chair advised that there would be a Committee of the Whole meeting in 2021 at his call.

#### **13. 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!

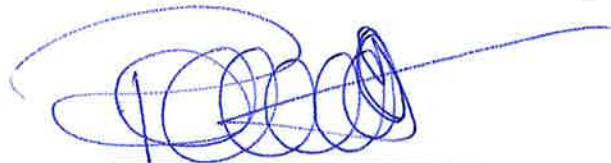
**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting

**CARRIED**



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Tom Irvine  
CHAIRMAN



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Raymond McInnis  
COORDINATOR

Dated 15 October 2020

