

Dominion Command Veteran Services and Seniors

Meeting Minutes

16 June 2026

*Our Mission is to serve
Veterans, which includes
serving military and RCMP
members and their families,
to promote Remembrance
and to serve our
communities and our
country.*



**DOMINION COMMAND
MINUTES OF THE VETERAN SERVICES AND SENIORS COMMITTEE
LEGION HOUSE**

Via ZOOM Conferencing, 16 June 2:30pm

File: 65-1

In Attendance:

Berkley Lawrence	-	Chair
Sharon McKeown	-	Deputy Chair
Bill Chafe	-	Member
George O'Dair	-	Seniors Advisor
Dave Gordon	-	Homeless Veterans Advisor
Craig Hood	-	OSI Special Section
Carol Pedersen	-	Member
Carolyn Hughes	-	Coordinator
Alexa Pasha	-	Assistant Coordinator
Lia Taha Cheng	-	Observer

Regrets: Larry Murray – Ex-Officio

1. OPENING RITUAL

The meeting commenced at 2:30hrs with the opening ritual.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved that the agenda of the committee meeting be adopted.

CARRIED

3. INFORMATION ITEMS:

a. Recognition of Wartime Service –

Senate Bill S-246, an Act respecting the recognition of wartime service was table and underwent third reading on 4 June 2026 in the House of Commons. It recommends the establishment of a framework to determine if past and future conflicts would be defined as a war.

As spoken in the House "It requires the development of objective criteria grounded in the conditions of service. It requires consultation with veterans, stakeholder groups and subject matter experts. It requires transparency. It requires public reporting. It requires the review of past and future military

operations through a consistent process, and it requires the government to explain how decisions are made.”

The complete Bill can be read at:

https://www.parl.ca/Content/Bills/451/Private/S-246/S-246_3/S-246_3.PDF

- b. **Ombuds Survivors Resources Guide** was recently developed with the intention to help survivors (widows and widowers) of Canadian Armed Forces veterans and RCMP veterans and members understand VAC programs they may be eligible for.

The complete guide can be accessed at:

https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2026-06/survivors_resource_guide_-_office_of_the_veterans_ombud_1.pdf

- c. **Suicide Prevention Among Canadian Veterans- ACVA report-April 2026**

A recent committee report highlighted persistent and concerning trends in suicide among both serving members and veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces. The rate is significantly higher than the general population.

It identifies incomplete data regarding reserve force members which serves a major barrier in understanding the full scope of the issues and speaks of key risk factors such as chronic pain, transition challenges, and military sexual trauma. It highlights the lack of a fully integrated national suicide prevention strategy for military members and veterans and stressed the urgent need for coordinated action across institutions and stronger supports during and after military service. The full report can be read at:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/451/ACVA/Reports/RP14038870/acvarp04/acvarp04-e.pdf>

Dominion Command is reviewing the report and drafting a letter to express our concerns and what we expect to see in the future for support in this area.

This has also been highlighted in the Defence and Security Committee meeting.

- d. **Homeless Veterans**

Comrade Dave has noted the final report indicated that 842 veterans have found permanent housing through the Homeless Veterans Program, with the vast majority reported from Ontario Command.

Comrade Dave highlighted the importance of Service Verification when providing support through the Homeless Veterans Program.

The document, Action Plan - Leave the Streets Behind, has been updated and is still relevant. It is attached to this report.

e. **Seniors-** Further Information see Comrade George's Report

Comrade George noted that it would be beneficial to be placed on a mailing list with the various government departments pertaining to seniors, where updates could be shared on what is being done across the country. His report is attached to this report.

f. **BSO Legion OSI Special Section**

Comrade Craig announced a new website being built for the OSI Special Section. Currently it is underway as a partnership with a not for profit that links up students to create the website while being paid for their work. Once completed, Comrade Craig will reach out to Legion House to have it added to the National website.

There are two sessions of Mental Health First Aid one in September and one in October that will be running in the fall. The importance of this training was highlighted for those supporting our Veteran community. The sessions will also be open to Legion House members, and some spots are being reserved for Command Service Officers. In 2027, 6 sessions are expected to be running for this training.

Comrade Craig has noted he will be attending CIMVHR in October BSO/OSI representative.

g. **Veteran Services Update**

I. **Provincial Commands - SO training and SOPD**

The dates of SOPD have been set for September. This year will be different than previous, as there will be a new VAC process which staff will need to be trained on. This will help to ensure consistency and ensure the new business process is being followed appropriately. It further serves to ensure all Command Service Officers support veterans with the professionalism, efficiency and dedication they deserve.

II. **MOU with Transition Center**

Dominion Command Service Officers have been attending the Transition Unit in Ottawa, and it is going well. There has not been a large turn out of Veterans coming to visit, but with time

and more advertising it is expected to pick up once word of our services spreads out.

Comrade Bill has asked that this MOU initiative be shared with the members at DEC. Comrade Carolyn will highlight this initiative in the pre-DEC report.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

III. Women's Veterans Forum – 9-10 June 2026

The forum focused on transition and Comrades Carolyn and Amanda attended in person in Ottawa and Comrade Alexa virtually. A Legion table was set up, highlighting our services for both days however it took several email exchanges to confirm a table at the event. In years past, the Legion, recognized for our service to veterans, was automatically invited to set up a booth/table. Comrade Carolyn advocated to senior VAC executives for the need for the Legion to attend.

Comrade Carolyn has started to attend the monthly partners meeting at the unit.

IV. Service Officer Handbook Update

Comrade Carolyn has noted that only the pertinent information will be contained within it and that it is expected to be completed by end of summer for distribution. The handbook previously had too much information in it, which was not needed, and many updates were required. For the time being, it has been removed from online and will not be accessible until it is fully updated.

V. Home Away Booklet Update

The Home Away Booklet has been updated at Dominion Command however needs to be updated on the website. Comrade Carolyn will send it to the necessary staff to have this completed.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

4. ACTION ITEMS

a. VSSP Applications- Previous and New

- i. Shoulder to Shoulder - Final Report -** The Committee received a final report and shared with the Poppy and Remembrance Committee.

ii. Hero Lodge - Final Report

The participants were appreciated of being able to receive a fresh hot and nutritious meal at the end of the day.

iii. Hero Lodge VSSP Request - \$5,000

The request was for rental of VHF radios and the structure for showers.

Fishing at Hero Lodge takes place on the deepest lake in North America and the tenth largest in the world, Great Slave Lake. As such, VHF radios are rented to ensure they are in constant contact with each zodiac boat and members of the organization. This was approved by the Committee.

As per the guidelines of Poppy Fund use, building of a structure is not permitted. As such, \$3,000 has been denied which was specifically to be used for the building of showers.

It has been approved that this VSSP request be approved and moved to Poppy and Remembrance for finalization of payment request for only the payment of the VHF radios of \$2,000.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

iv. Strongest Families Institute VSSP Request - \$50,000

This program provides services delivered by phone and secure online tools that are tailored support for military and Veteran families. They use evidence-based programs that help to overcome anxiety and depression, build resilience and coping strategies for veterans and family members, empower kids, help parents manage child behaviour challenges, such as excessive worry, and to strengthen family bonds. The program have been proven to reduce anxiety, depression, and family stress.

These programs are delivered in both English/French, with culturally sensitive approaches. This program is free for Veterans and their partners and families.

The request is for \$50,000, to continue their program. It has been approved that this VSSP request be approved and moved to the Poppy and Remembrance committee for review.

ACTION: Comrade Carolyn

5. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS/ROUND TABLE

Comrade Dave will share the End of Mortgage Readiness Guidance to the VSS committee as there is important information to be learned and shared with out Veterans in that stage of life.

6. FUTURE MEETING

Future meeting to be determined after DEC in August.

7. MOTION TO ADJOURNMENT



Berkely Lawrence

Committee Chair

Carolyn Hughes

Committee Secretary

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Veterans Services and Seniors
Committee
Provincial Command Executive
Directors
Dominion Command Committee
Coordinators and Assistant
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