

**Dominion Command  
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee  
VIA ZOOM  
22 January 2024, 1130 –1340h  
Record of Discussion**

**File: 65-1**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

<b>Bruce Julian</b>	-	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Bill Chafe</b>	-	<b>Member</b>
<b>John Mahon</b>	-	<b>Member</b>
<b>Berkely Lawrence</b>	-	<b>Member</b>
<b>Dave Gordon</b>	-	<b>Homeless Veterans</b>
<b>Trevor Jenvenne</b>	-	<b>BSO Legion OSI Special Section</b>
<b>George O'Dair</b>	-	<b>Seniors Advisor</b>
<b>Larry Murray</b>	-	<b>Ex-Officio</b>
<b>Carolyn Hughes</b>	-	<b>Coordinator</b>
<b>Alexa Pasha</b>	-	<b>Assistant Coordinator</b>
<b>Dean Young</b>	-	<b>Observer</b>
<b>Eric Poissant</b>	-	<b>Observer</b>

**1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Comrade Bruce welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Comrade Berkely Lawrence, our newly appointed First Vice President, to the VSS Committee.

The OP Harmony Committee has now been stood down, as all resolutions have been completed, and the Equity Diversity Inclusion (EDI) Committee has been stood up. Comrades Berkely and Bill have been appointed to the new committee. Comrade John has accepted his appointment to the Centenary Committee.

Comrade Bruce welcomed Service Officers Eric Poissant and Dean Young to the meeting as observers.

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

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded that the members approved the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 12 October 2023.

**CARRIED**

## 2. INFORMATION ITEMS

### a. Last WWII and Korean War Veterans recognition update

Comrade Carolyn spoken with the Commemoration Department of Veteran Affairs Canada (VAC) and provided some stats to the Committee about the remaining number of WWII and Korean veterans. VAC is reviewing what was done for the last WWI Veteran and will develop something similar for the last WWII and Korean War Veteran.

It was brought forward that there is potential to identify who the WWII and Korean Veterans are, rather than the number of them. This would support the Branches in planning on how they honour them.

Comrade Carolyn will look to see if Membership can pull a list of names of WWII and Korean Veterans and see what avenues may be accessible for Branches to connect with individuals directly, although efforts may be hampered due to privacy.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

### b. Canada Life – New PSHCP – Switch from SunLife

The most recent information and how things have been progressing with the recent switch have been updated on their website. They have heard the complaints and are working on Contact Centre wait times, processing times, and have a new escalation process for urgent and priority cases (attached). There is also a Frequently Asked Questions page with responses at <https://www.welcome.canadalife.com/pshcp/faq.html>.

Comrade Trevor inquired if there is the ability for a mobile application for this service. Comrade Carolyn investigated this further and an app was found at: [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.gwl.group.groupnet&hl=en\\_CA&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.gwl.group.groupnet&hl=en_CA&gl=US). Comrade Carolyn has asked if Comrade Trevor would test it.

Comrade Carolyn will have an update added into an All-Branch so that our members have further information on the current state of the situation. Although there has been some improvement, it is imperative that all problems be rectified prior to the roll out of the Dental Plan to Canada Life, which has recently been delayed until 1 November 2024 vice this summer. More information can be found at:

[New contract awarded to administer the Pensioners' Dental Services Plan and the Public Service Dental Care Plan - Canada.ca](#)

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

**c. Homeless Veterans/ TPS Program**

*Please see attached report from Comrade Dave for the full overview.*

The National Built for Zero (BFZ) intake form, which has been developed for distribution at the National level of BFZ, needs to be amended. It is not up to standard of what can be used from a National perspective with the Legion.

Still serving members are experiencing a housing crisis. The Post Living Differential allowance, provided to serving members, helped in areas of the country where housing was more expensive. A study has been done and the monetary amounts were readjusted. In some areas the PLD has been adjusted and the new policy is geared toward assisting those in the lower ranks with lower income.

Comrade Larry noted that if still serving members have housing instability in Nova Scotia, it may be occurring in other parts of Canada. Comrade John suggested this be referred to Comrade Andrea at the Defence and Security Committee. With that, Comrade Bruce has asked Comrade Dean to bring this forward into his next Committee meeting with Defence and Security.

Comrade Carolyn will search for more information to distribute to the Committee. Comrade Bill inquired if the section in DND /CAF responsible for PLD is aware and/or are following up on this current concern that still serving members are experiencing a housing crisis.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

**d. Seniors**

Comrade George enquired if there are any other Commands having positive experiences, or ideas on how to move forward on the concerns for our seniors, and if so, he would be interested in hearing their ideas, thoughts and suggestions.

Comrade Bruce noted even with some positive progressions in this area, like the PSWs coming into homes and helping seniors stay in their home longer, there is still much to be done for our senior population. Comrade Bruce has asked Comrade Carolyn to enquire in an All-Branch on seniors housing and senior care.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

**e. BSO Legion OSI Special Section**

Comrade Trevor is focused on getting more staff/volunteers hired to take some of the pressure off others involved in the program.

Other Provinces are becoming engaged, forming events, and getting policies going so that Buddy Check Coffee and other OSI special programs can continue to move forward.

**f. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)**

MHFA is now sponsored by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the training is provided by Opening Minds. It is available and free for those in the Veteran community, including those who assist Veterans. There are in person and virtual options. Any individual registering needs to confirm they are connected to the Veteran community by checking a certain box, in order to gain free access to the course. The link to register for the training is <https://openingminds.org/training/mhfa/veterans/>. At least six to eight weeks notice is required so training can be arranged with a sufficient number of participants.

Comrade Bill has asked that this information be released and dispersed amongst the Branch and Command level for them to access. Comrade Carolyn will distribute.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

**g. CAF Health Care and Transition Services**

Marketing and Communications had sent a post recently endorsing all recommendations from the Canadian Armed Forces Health Care and Transition Services report from the Standing Committee on National Defence. Comrade Carolyn will draft a letter for Comrade Bruce to send to the Minister of National Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff and Veterans Affairs Canada to endorse the recommendations. The complete report can be found at:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/NDDN/Reports/RP12673550/nddnrp06/nddnrp06-e.pdf>

**h. VAC Ministerial Advisory Groups**

Before the new year, the new Minister, the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, took time to attend Advisory meetings and introduce herself to each Advisory Group. During this time, she was able to learn about what has been discussed and focused on in the groups. Further to this, each Advisory Group was given specific issues that the groups could look at when meeting with one another. This will serve to narrow down the scope of focus but does not limit the recommendations for solutions into other issues.

**i. Women Veterans Monument**

Comrade Bruce sent a letter to the Minister of VAC on 15 January 2024 noting that almost 100,000 women have served with dates back to the 1885

North-West Rebellion and that they served with honour, resilience and sacrifice in peace time and in conflict. Too often they feel invisible because historically the image of a Veteran is that of a man, and they do not feel they are a Veteran. A national monument is needed to permanently recognize their service and sacrifice.

This has just been requested but it is hoped the government will move quickly to approve and develop a monument.

**j. Psychedelic Treatment Report**

A fairly new approach to treatment is being looked at for an upcoming study. Comrade Larry noted that this topic has been brought forward at CIMVHR and that there has been some research over the last several years.

More to come as further research is completed and information is shared. More information can be found at:

[https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/441/SECD/Reports/VEAC\\_Ti-meisNow\\_Report\\_e.pdf](https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/441/SECD/Reports/VEAC_Ti-meisNow_Report_e.pdf)

**k. Military Sexual Trauma - Royal Military College**

One of the recommendations by the Honourable Louise Arbour is to conduct an independent review of the Royal Military Colleges. Dr. Jill Scott is the newly appointed Principal of the College, and her role commences on March 4, 2024. For more information see <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/12/minister-blair-announces-the-new-principal-of-the-royal-military-college-of-canada-in-kingston-ontario.html>

We continue to monitor for an appointee to be named for the independent review, on what is occurring in the College and to make recommendations.

**l. Men who Report Military Sexual Trauma (MST)**

At this time, more male survivors of sexual trauma are coming forward to report on the incidents they experience. MST is not just a women Veteran issue and men experience this and are survivors also. It is a great step forward to change the CAF culture. National Defence has vowed to get better at helping them. A link to the report can be found at:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/dnd-sexual-misconduct-canadian-forces-1.7075817#:~:text=Men%20accounted%20for%20almost%20half,and%20528%20identified%20as%20men.>

**m. Valentines For Veterans - 2025**

Each year, Veterans Affairs Canada invites schools, individuals, and organizations to participate in our Valentines for Vets program. VAC then

distributes the valentines to Veterans in long-term care facilities across the country prior to February 14th. The program is seeking Legion support to distribute the Valentines for Veterans program with RCL Branches.

This will be in keeping with the Legion's mandate and reason for existing. It will be brought forward at DEC in April. Comrade Carolyn will connect further with the individual in charge of the program to get more information.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

### **3. VETERANS SERVICES UPDATE**

#### **a. Command Service Officer Yearly Stats**

National Headquarters Veterans Services are currently seeing a decrease in appeals, as we are seeing less appeals regarding partial entitlement. Comrade Carolyn noted that we are likely at a more normal level prior to the policy change on Partial Entitlement in 2018. Further declines are accounted for with staff shortages and by the increase in favourable rulings at both the VAC and earlier VRAB levels.

Concerns were expressed over some Facebook groups, and other social media driven groups, spreading incorrect information about Command Service Officers' assistance and support offered by VAC. It was recommended that these be monitored to provide correct information. Comrade Carolyn commented that there are many ways in which we offer our services, including the Legion Dispatch, testimonial videos, social media posts etc.. and that our Marketing and Communications Department monitors information continuously. Comrade Carolyn will continue to monitor and assist them with posts.

Comrade Carolyn will send VSS committee members the final list of stats completed by all Provincial Commands once she has received them.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

#### **b. Provincial Command Assistance**

Comrade Carolyn noted that Dominion Command is assisting with over 100 files from Provincial Commands for a variety of issues, including staff shortages.

#### **c. Dominion Command Service Officers**

Comrade Carolyn noted that we have a vacancy at National Headquarter in Veterans Services for a Service Officer and are hoping to hire a new staff in the upcoming months.

#### 4. ACTION ITEMS

**a. Resolution from NS/NU – Contract Beds for Post WWII and Korean War Veterans**

Comrade Dave with Comrade Carolyn's help put together a resolution, which each committee member had received a copy to review. Comrade Trevor has brought forward that the word RCMP member should be added into the resolution. Questions were raised about if there is a need for a separate resolution. Comrade Carolyn will look further into this matter to see how to proceed.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

**MOTION:** To move forward with the above-mentioned resolution at the upcoming DEC in April.

**CARRIED**

**b. Royal Commission/Commission of Inquiry**

Presentation to be held between Feb 5-9 from Comrade Andrea Siew for further discussion. Comrade Carolyn will send out a survey on what dates work best for this upcoming presentation.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

#### 5. Additional Agenda Items/ Round Table

It was asked if the Outreach and Visitation (OVI) Program, which had been suspended due to Covid, would be re-instated by VAC as in-person volunteer visits are a vital part of services and support provided to our Veteran seniors in retirement housing or long-term care facilities. Comrade Carolyn noted that there has been no word to date and at last word, VAC was looking into other avenues.

Comrade Carolyn will draft a letter to the Minister requesting the re-activation of the OVI Program.

**ACTION: Comrade Carolyn**

It was also noted that in-home visits, for those remaining in their homes, should also be considered, as more Veterans are choosing to and are able to stay in their homes longer if they have supports.

Further discussion would need to be had on this, as there would be many aspects to consider when discussing in-home visits of a Volunteer/ Veteran, such as privacy and safety.

#### 6. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be scheduled for the **end of March** via Zoom.

**7. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

The Chair thanked all for their input, and the discussion.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 1330.

**CARRIED**



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Bruce Julian  
CHAIRMAN



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Carolyn Hughes  
COORDINATOR

Dated this day of    January 2024