

**Dominion Command
Veterans, Service and Seniors Committee
GO TO MEETING
23 March 2020, 1330 – 1500
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 stating that we are facing an unprecedented time with the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting impacts that are being felt here in Canada, he recognized this is a challenging period. He advised that we have a commitment to support the military and Veteran community and to share how we have been responding to the situation.

He mentioned to the members that each day, the National Executive Director learns of evolving repercussions from COVID-19 as the global community works to contain the spread of the virus and address its impact. We took a balanced approach to addressing the impact; details of action taken in each Provincial Command can be found at <https://legion.ca/who-we-are/covid-19>. This information is updated daily.

There is also a Q&A on our website at <https://legion.ca/who-we-are/covid-19/covid-19-qa>

He informed the members that Comrade Steven closed Legion House until 4 May (to be re-assessed at that time). All Legion House staff are working remotely and remain fully

accessible by re-routed office telephone and connectivity over VPN connection. Support to Veterans in need continues without disruption.

The Chair noted that there is a full agenda for the afternoon and barring any connectivity issues, we should be able to cover all agenda items.

Coordinator's note: Connectivity via Go to Meeting website software was a major problem in that the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator could not hear using this software. In addition, due to the amount of users utilizing cell phones and working remotely, calls were dropped on a consistent basis. The connectivity issues are due to VPN Citrix not Go to Meeting, we have the same problem with Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Legion House now have two Zoom accounts and our next meeting will be scheduled via Zoom by the Assistant Coordinator. We will not use VPN Citrix to sign into Zoom.

Action: Assistant Coordinator

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair mentioned that the majority of items from the previous minutes from 23 November 2019 would be updated today; however, he provided updates on the following issues:

Veterans Services to re-establish communications with the Executive Director, CMA.

The Coordinator has not contacted the ED CMA but will re-establish communications after we return to normal business operations.

The recommendation to forward the review of the Homeless Veterans Program as an area of need to the Legion National Foundation was actioned. In addition, the generic tri-fold Homeless Veterans pamphlet has been produced and will be forwarded to Commands in April-May 2020.

The recommendation to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee to review paragraph 501 iv c of the Poppy Manual to consider the deletion of this paragraph was actioned. The P&R Committee met on 12 March and concurred to delete 501 iv c but will add it as a Special Use Expenditure.

At the end of January, the Chair met with the VAC Executive for the annual RCL-VAC Bilateral meeting. Additional Legion participants were Comrades Steven, Carolyn, and Ray. The DM VAC was accompanied by Steven Harris, Rick Christopher, Charlotte Bastien, Bruno Noury and via teleconference were Sylvie Thibodeau-Sealy and Fiona Jones. They presented current activity on the Pension for Life program, Homelessness, Long-Term Care, Commemoration and Research activities. There were standard presentations, good conversation and the majority of action on the above issues will be occur in summer and fall 2020.

Comrade Ray conducted a Command Service Officer course from 10-12 March at Legion House. There were four Service Officers, 7 Transition Centre members and an Observer from ANAVETS in attendance.

A reminder that the Committee will need to confirm a date for the Committee of the Whole at this meeting.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the members approve the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 23 November 2019.

CARRIED

3. OUTREACH AND VISITATION INITIATIVE

The Chair advised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all taskings are suspended until further notice.

Veterans Services have enough volunteers awaiting training to conduct an OVI course in fall 2020, date to be confirmed.

The current contract ends late September, Comrade Ray will be requesting another two-year contract with VAC in June 2020. The new Project Coordinator is Christine Racine who replaces Gary Foster.

Coordinator's Note: Comrade Ray sent a request to VAC to extend the current contract until 31 March 2021 as it would appear that OVI volunteers will not be allowed in to LTCs for the near future due to COVID-19.

4. VETERANS HOMELESSNESS – UPDATE

Comrade Dave advised that a Homeless Veterans Action Plan has been produced and extended a sincere thank you to Comrade John Mahon for doing the grunt work and writing the base report. He believes the document was changed three or four times with input from Comrades Ray McInnis and Jill Carleton and him. He also believes that the Plan is a very good document that Dominion Command can move forward and hopefully it will prod VAC and other organizations to step to the plate. Once approved, the Action Plan will be presented to the DEC for their approval and then circulated as required. The Action Plan was approved by the Committee to present to DEC.

RECOMMENDATION: The Legion's Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Veterans' Homelessness be forwarded to DEC for approval.

Carried

Comrade Dave reported that he attended a meeting of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Victims Crime Committee in December in Ottawa. The committee is made up of top ranked officers from various forces across Canada and he introduced them to the RCL Homeless Veterans program. Most had no idea of the program and suggested ways for them to be involved and he provided additional information and is awaiting their feedback.

He also attended a symposium put on by Canadian Association to End Homelessness, Built for Zero in January and did a presentation regarding Homeless Veterans. Their program is to assist municipalities and received funding from the Veterans Family and Well-being Fund. Presently they have eight municipalities they are working with, seven in Ontario and one in Alberta, being Fort McMurray. Comrade Dave was contacted by Fort McMurray and contacted Alberta-NWT Command and they made contact with the necessary parties. He was contacted by four municipalities in Ontario and have taken action to connect them with local Legion reps.

Recently, he advised that he participated in a teleconference with Comrades Steven Clark and Ray McInnis with this organization and they all came to the same conclusion that they are doing most of what the Legion has been doing since the beginning of the program. We will continue to monitor the progress they make and work with them whenever possible.

Recently the Ontario Provincial Police have come forward and will be producing an Instructional video for their officers to help them interact and identify Homeless Veterans. The intention is to have the Intake document available in all cars readily available to each officer on patrol, and assist in identifying Homeless Veterans. Ontario Command and Manitoba/NWO Command are working together assisting the OPP in production of the video. Eventually they would like to share the document with all police forces across Canada.

The Homeless Veterans program is slowly taking shape but there is still a lot of work to do. Leave the Streets Behind pamphlets have been printed and will be distributed Commands in the very near future. He thanked Comrade Ray for the review and updating the document.

He advised that he has developed a questionnaire that will be circulated and once all commands have submitted an updated report will be written and shared with everyone.

Companies that want to build Tiny Homes and expect the Legion to donate funds for the construction of these buildings have contacted him. A couple of branches asked why Poppy Funds could not be used and as we know these funds cannot be used for bricks and mortar. Comrade Danny Martin clarified by noting Poppy Funds cannot be donated to a 3rd party or another charity for construction purposes. However, the Poppy Manual, states in Section 403(ii)(a) *“a branch or group of branches may make an allotment (prior Provincial approval is required) of 50 percent of the current balance, to purchase, **construct**, repair or furnish housing accommodation and care facilities, including hospital wards/rooms for Veterans.* He asked for further clarification or

perhaps have this section reviewed by the Poppy Committee as this section would suggest that Poppy Funds could be used for construction.

He extended his thanks to Dominion Command staff for their guidance and assistance and information on Homeless issues.

Coordinator's Note: The Coordinator for the P&R Committee advised that the Committee would be reviewing Section 403(ii) (a) to provide clarification.

5. SENIORS

Comrade George spoke briefly about the report that Ontario says it will have 8,000 LTC beds "shovel-ready" in the next year against a commitment of 15,000 in the next 5 years and the good news that funding has been approved for 30 new and 98 redeveloped LTC beds at Dundas Manor. He then commented on the care situation in LTC, especially as it relates to the coronavirus situation which will not differentiate between civilian and ex-military patients – pushing the point that whatever we can do to improve the lot for Seniors in general helps ex-military as well as many will end up in public LTC. Who pays for the care is important but not as critical as the quality of care.

6. BSO LEGION OSI SPECIAL SECTION

Comrade Jill advised that VetBuild and Buddy Check Coffee checks are cancelled. The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses are all cancelled. There is a Virtual Buddy Check Coffee everyday at 1500.

7. PROJECT TRAUMA SUPPORT (PTS) – RATIFICATION

Comrade Chair stated that our funding to PTS permitted 20 serving members/veterans to attend a co-hort in 2019. Testimonials were provided from the attendees or their families and they could not thank the Legion enough for our funding support. DEC approved 300K over three years to Project Trauma Support, this is the second year and in accordance with the Poppy Trust Fund regulations, the Committee must send our recommendation to DEC to ratify the second year.

RECOMMENDATION: That DEC ratify the second year of the funding support to PTS in the amount of 100K for the year 2020.

Carried

8. HEROES MENDING ON THE FLY (HMOTF) – ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair advised that the final activity report was provided to the Committee in advance of the meeting along with their financial report. Comrade Ray sent an article on the program as well. The report is for information only. The funding request for 2020 was sent directly to the Poppy and Remembrance Committee as per the Partnership

Agreement. The Poppy and Remembrance Committee met in March and will recommend to DEC that funding in the amount of 25K be provided to HMOTF for 2020.

9. MISSION VAV – UPDATE

The Chair issued a reminder that MissionVAV is a web-based program from McGill University. Their team of health professionals and researchers have developed a health promotion program to help veterans, their families and supporters of veterans by promoting healthy lifestyle habits, improving physical and mental health, and supporting social connectivity with other veterans. They have been awarded a 5-year grant from VAC (The Veterans and Family Well-being Fund) to develop a customized program available to veterans free of charge. Also, note **no charge to The Royal Canadian Legion**.

A team from Legion House have won the first two missions. The third mission is a Healthy Heart Mission and there are nine teams across Canada participating and the Legion House team is currently in first place. The next mission starts in May 2020 and our Marketing team will be advertising this mission.

10. RESOLUTION – NEW BRUNSWICK COMMAND

The Committee received a resolution from NB Command for consideration. The subject of the resolution was on VAC Contract Beds for Modern Day Veterans. **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that The Royal Canadian Legion, on behalf of all Canadian Forces Veterans, strongly advocate to extend the eligibility of “VAC Contract Beds” to include all Canadian Forces Veterans. After discussion, the Committee concurred with the resolution.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the resolution be concurred.

CARRIED

11. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS / ROUNDTABLE

Additional Agenda Items:

Comrade Jill provided information from Comrade Chris Banks on a Veterans Guide and education on the use of cannabis; a discussion ensued on this topic. The Committee noted that there is an absence of medical guidance on this issue and research is just getting started. Comrade Jill requested the Committee to review the information and provide feedback to her by end April 2020.

Action: Committee Members

Comrade Ray provided the overall statistics for Command Service Officers in 2019, which were greater than 2018:

Service Bureau Stats for 2019: + is greater than 2018

First Applications – 3478 +359

Departmental Reviews – 601 +49

Counselled Out/Withdrawn – 1095 Minus 58

VRAB Entitlement Reviews – 161 +78

VRAB Entitlement Appeals/Request for Reconsiderations – 143 +127

Work Items for VIP/Reassessments – 1297 +93

SCAN/Filed Visits – 405 +35

ROUNDTABLE

All Committee members echoed Comrade Bruce's comment to stay safe, stay healthy!

12. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the VSS Committee will be on 20 May 2020 via Zoom teleconference at 1330.

13. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – PROPOSED MEETINGS IN 2020

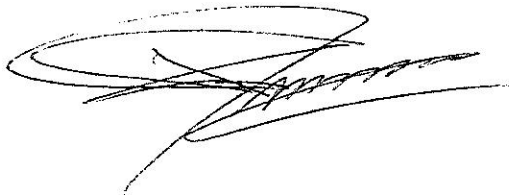
The Committee determined that a meeting would be scheduled after the next VSS meeting on 20 May 2020.

14. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

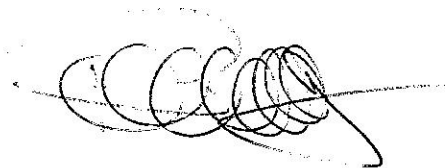
The Chair thanked all for their input today, your knowledge and experience is invaluable to the Committee and to the Legion.

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

CARRIED



Tom Irvine
CHAIRMAN
Dated 17 April 2020



Raymond McInnis
COORDINATOR