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REPRESENTING CANADIAN MILITARY FAMILIES

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HI!

In the beginning we wanted a Dental Plan. As we thought of ways to inform our government, it occurred to us that we needed a national association that could speak about the unique needs and concerns of Canadian Military Families.

During a brainstorming session in August 1984 OSOMM (Organizational Society of Spouses of Military Members) was born. We outlined our goals and objectives, planned our first meeting, and decided that a newsletter was the best way to let everyone know what was happening. We gained support from the local ECS, Women's groups and from various individuals who donated their time and money. Our first newsletter was delivered and forty women attended our first meeting. Base Officials informed us, at this time, that a Dental Plan was considered "political" activity and as long as we pursued the issue of a Dental Plan for Canadian Military Families we could not meet on the base, deliver our newsletter without censorship, or have any of the numerous benefits of a Non Public Funds organization. If we agreed to forget about a Dental Plan and other "political" issues like Homemakers Pensions, we could be provided with a building for a family resource centre within two weeks. It was also suggested that we could possibly receive priority flights to organize nationally. We felt that in order to provide an effective voice for Military Families we could not accept these terms.

Although, all we had wanted was to communicate our need for a Dental Plan to our elected representatives and to form a National Support Group, it soon became apparent that archaic laws governing the DND were now being applied to deny us the freedom of assembly, association, and free speech guaranteed to all other Canadians under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. DND officials have maintained that a group of women seeking changes in living conditions and benefits, for example a Dental Plan, would clearly threaten the political neutrality of the Canadian Armed Forces and therefore could not be allowed these freedoms in their own communities. One DND official stated, "This would be the beginning of another Argentina."

OSOMM will be addressing these and other issues in a brief to be presented to the Committee on Equality Rights.

In the United States the American Military has an organization of Military Families (National Military Family Association, Inc.) which allows them to lobby and make recommendations to their government. All 45 recommendations for improving the quality of Military life in "Final Report, Military Spouse and Family Issues" were implemented by the American Department of Defence, including the opening, in 1985, of the Military Family Policy Office. No fewer than 19 American national organizations represent the military and their families. How many national organizations are there in Canada to represent the Canadian Military and their families?

DENTAL PLAN POSTCARDS: Please note a Dental Plan Postcard has been included with this newsletter. Please sign it and drop it in the mail. NO POSTAGE IS NECESSARY.

RENT INCREASES: You may have heard some wild rumours circulating at CFB Penhold concerning humongous rent increases of up to 200%. In a conversation with the DCBA in Ottawa we were informed that an announcement of rent increases will be made by the end of July. PMQ increases have been limited to 6 and 5 by the Federal Government. There may be a catch up factor involved with the lifting of these restrictions at some Bases. Increases are determined by CMHC appraisals. In the past few years the appraisals have gone down in Calgary; Edmonton has been stable; Cold Lake has gone down a bit and there has been no increase in the appraisals at Penhold since 1982. In Provinces where Rent Controls apply (Ontario, Nova Scotia and PEI) those controls also apply to PMQs.

THE SCHOOL ISSUE: Are you concerned that the DND is getting out of the school business? Schools have closed in Toronto, Montreal, and next year in Calgary. Which Base will be next? We feel that Military Families, including spouses, should be consulted before decisions of such major consequences to our life style are made.

OFFICIAL INCORPORATION: We are proud to announce the official incorporation under the Societies Act of the Province of Alberta on April 11th, 1985 of OSOMM.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: "The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just."

COMMISSION ON EQUALITY RIGHTS: OSOMM is presenting a brief to this commission. Anyone wishing to make recommendations or suggestions should contact us as soon as possible.

HOW CAN OSOMM HELP YOU? OSOMM can help you by promoting better understanding and communication between Military Families, policy makers and our elected representatives regarding issues affecting Military Families.

OSOMM can help you by promoting better understanding of benefits, rights, and legislation affecting the Military Community and Family.

OSOMM can help you by offering information through our newsletter.

OSOMM can help you primarily by providing access to people....
...people who can improve the quality of your life.

WHO CAN JOIN OSOMM? Members of past and present military families who are concerned about one or all the issues facing military families today are cordially invited to join OSOMM. Associate memberships are also available for friends of OSOMM.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership fees: \$5.00 Associate Memberships: Donation

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....Postal Code.....