

Organization of  
Spouses  
Of  
Military  
Members (Canadian)



Newsletter  
May 93

Greetings to old friends and new from Ottawa!

Our last newsletter was prepared by Lucie Richardson during her final year at Law school at Queens. Upon graduation Lucie obtained an articling position at Nelligan/Power in Ottawa and her husband Larry was able to secure a posting there. She is now a partner at the firm of Pothiers and Gahrns, practising under her birth name - Laliberté. Congratulations Lucie on achieving your goal!

**Reorganization** - The move to operate as a national society has proven to be the best way to address issues of national concern. A strong core of dedicated members in Ottawa is continuing to focus on matters of concern to spouses of serving members, retired, divorced or separated members of the CAF.

**Bill C-55** - In the ongoing pursuit of equity and fairness in the splitting of military pensions following a marriage breakdown, OSOMM is happy to report that much progress has been made. The focus in 91-92 was on Bill C-55, legislation which recognizes a former spouse's right to enforce receiving a share of a pension awarded on marriage breakdown. Our members spent many hours lobbying Members of Parliament to make them aware of the inequity of the then existing regulations, and of the importance of change to many ex-spouses, the majority of whom are women. A presentation was made to the House of Commons as well as the Senate Committee, and some of our members attended all of the hearings to ensure that our concerns were heard.

Bill C-55 was passed on 29 September 92, and while the legislation does not contain all that we had hoped, it does provide for pension sharing if the division of the pension is recognized as a family asset. We have been advised that the regulations will be in place in the near future. Ex-spouses will be able to apply for this.

**Quotes from Parliamentary presentations:**  
*These are earned entitlements - not a handout - a question of who is awarded benefits and not of increased cost to the plan members or to the taxpayer: for these are billions of dollars surplus of employee contributions. Treasury Board has no more right to divert these earned benefits back to government revenues than to other persons.*

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*Bestowing itself the bizarre authority to deem a legally married spouse dead, or not to exist i.e., disappeared... Treasury Board deems this extra-marital partner parachuted in the last year of life, to supersede the legal spouse.*

.....  
*Treasury Board overrules wedding and marriage contracts, court orders, legal agreements, wills, pension and matrimonial law to deny Military members, Public Servants, Veterans', Members of Parliament, their right to Canada Pension Plan, Widow's insurance, survivor and pension benefits.*

.....  
*This is wrong - wrong - wrong! Marlene M.P. (Liberal - Ottawa West)*

A copy of Bill C-55 can be obtained from your MP. Should the need arise we urge you to make your legal counsellor is aware of your rights legislation.

**Family Resource Centres** - One of OSOMM's original goals was the establishment of resource centres on every base. Information from the military indicates that over 35 support centres have been opened. We are interested in the success of these centres and will be monitoring their effectiveness.

**Publication of book** - Deborah Harrison, Professor at Brock University (currently on sabbatical) and Lucie Laliberté received a government research grant to prepare a book on military spouses and their work. They have interviewed over 120 spouses across Canada and in Germany. The interviews are nearly completed and we will provide details on the publication date in a later issue.

**Domestic Violence** - Another issue that has concerned us from the beginning is violence against women and children. A number of military spouses made presentations at hearing held by the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. We look forward to seeing the final report and its recommendations when presented to Parliament this year. A report on violence in the military is in its second draft and should also be completed this year.

**Quote:** *Plague of violence on military bases, panel told by Dennis Bueckert (Canadian Press) - Ottawa Citizen 28 June 1992*

Nancy White said military authorities left her helpless at an Ottawa airport after she separated from her abusive husband who was stationed at an European base.

*"There I was with two children and three suitcases representing 20 years of marriage - no home, and still hundreds of miles from my family, no support, no medical coverage".*

*"Blakely said that the Defence Department is not responsible for spouses of its members when marriages break down. We encourage our members to keep their marriages strong but we reflect a part of the population and we do have marriage breakdowns in the military as there are in the rest of Canadian society."*

**Brochures** - One of the goals of OSOMM was to prepare two brochures - one for spouses in the event of marriage breakdown and the other for the legal profession to make them more aware of our rights. We are enclosing the first brochure with this newsletter and information about OSOMM. Please feel free to copy and distribute this to interested persons.

**Fund Raising** - We have been successful in our fund raising activities. Our efforts have included garage and bake sales, and raffles.

Due to the demise of the Court Challenge Program and our determination to continue litigation, we must embark on more ambitious fund raising programs. Any suggestions??

**A Gift in your Will to OSOMM** - Bequests of all sizes are an important source of support to OSOMM. Specific Bequest To pay the sum of \$ to the Organization of Spouses of Military Members to be administered as they see fit.

In lieu of flowers... Memorial donations to OSOMM would be appreciated.

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Please send me the following information:

Name:

Address:

Donations welcomed:

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