

O.S.S.O.M.M.

462 PRINCESS ST., KINGSTON,
ONTARIO, K7L 1C2 613-546-6476

Hi!

Greetings from Kingston.

The length of time between newsletters seems to be increasing but this is a reflection of the amount of activity and the number of goals attained since the last issue in March of 1987.

So much has happened since we first organized that we want to celebrate and recap some of our activities and successes:

1. The dental plan for military families became effective in October, 1987.
2. An overpass was constructed at that troublesome intersection in Red Deer Alberta. OSSOMM was given public credit for speeding up that project.
3. A task group on political activity headed by Dr. Desmond Morton was set up by the Minister of National Defence in the summer of 1987. Its recommendations led to the second changes to article 19.44 which became effective in the fall of 1988. One of the major changes for OSSOMM is that we can now legally hold OSSOMM meetings in our own homes in the Married Quarters. You may have noticed that the political parties took advantage of our insistence on improvements in our rights to gain access to canvassing in MQ's.
4. The D.N.D. is in the process of setting up a national system of Family Support Centres (FSC). This was one of our foremost goals when we started. We feel that this is a major accomplishment in such a short time. Some of us suspect that our Charter case also had something to do with the attainment of this goal.
5. OSSOMM members were invited to sit on the steering committee of the FSC in Calgary.
6. Certificates of Merit were awarded to Marnie Draper and Patricia ter Kuile in Calgary. These were signed by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and presented to them by Harvey Andre as part of Celebration '88 and the Calgary Olympics.
7. Preparation of a Community Needs Survey by the Calgary Chapter was approved by NDHQ.
8. Extensive interviews and stories were conducted across the country with local and national media.
9. Meetings were held between crisis workers, OSSOMM members and battered spouses of military members in Kingston to try to improve awareness and to find solutions to this problem.
10. A meeting in Halifax between Lucie Laliberte and Dianne Roy was held concerning pension inequities facing divorced and separated spouses. See the following article.
11. Meetings were held in Ottawa about pension benefits and how to proceed in correcting the inequities.
12. Regarding Confidentiality in social services- Calgary Social Services Regional Office has been sensitized to the necessity of ensuring confidentiality when DND families use their services. We have assurances that military social workers will not be involved without the client's consent.
13. Numerous letters were sent, presentations made and meetings held with M.P.'s and M.P.P.'s.
14. Preparation and presentation of briefs to various government committees and individual organizations including LEAF.
15. Workshops and presentations for OSSOMM meetings, university classes and conferences.
16. Information prepared for university and college students.
17. Networking and meetings with diverse women's organizations.
18. Participation in the planning and implementation of a conference in September with civilian DND workers and women interested in equality for female military members called Power, Women, and the Military. See the article below.
19. Plans for the set-up of central archives for our documents.
20. The Pittsburgh Township Council apologized for excluding the residents of CFB Kingston and commenced delivery of

- their recreational newsletter into the Married Quarters following the presentation of a petition by an OSSOMM member to the Council. See the March, 1987 newsletter.
21. The initiation of documents that will lead to national incorporation in 1989.

REORGANIZATION

Because our efforts have resulted in the realization of so many of our objectives and because of the difficulties of communication it was decided at a meeting in September, 1988 that we reorganize ourselves in order to face the challenges that still lie ahead.

As a result of OSSOMM's efforts the DND is setting up a series of FSC's (see #4 above). Although these centres will not address all of the problems facing spouses of military members they will be meeting many of the local needs that we, as a group, have identified. OSSOMM will, therefore, shift its focus away from organizing chapters, will incorporate as a national society, and will direct its attention to issues of national concern to spouses of serving members, retired members and divorced or separated members.

Some of these issues are:

- a) Pension rights; b) changes in UIC regulations; c) continuation of the court case; d) effective measures to counteract wife battering and child abuse; e) ending discrimination against "common law" relationships (see note below); f) ensuring the continued development and success of the FSC's; and g) the preparation and distribution of information sheets relating to items of concern to our *military families* members.

If you have problems at a local level we are still here to provide support and information. We have members at many bases and stations so if we can't help you we may be able to put you in touch with someone who can. We would like to have at least one official representative on as many bases and stations as possible to keep us informed. If you have just a few hours you can spare to do this please let us know at the address on the enclosed membership form.

IF ANY MEMBERS HAVE SERIOUS OBJECTIONS TO THIS SHIFT IN FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US A.S.A.P.

FROM MANITOBA - THE CANADIAN FORCES UNIVERSITY PROGRAM

Jackie Stalker is a senior consultant in the Manitoba Department of Education and is also the spouse of a retired military member. We asked her to contribute some information on a study plan for members of the military community and their spouses that she highly recommends called the University of Manitoba Canadian Forces University Program:

My own experience was not unique. As a military "dependent", I found it difficult to complete any program of studies anywhere, because of frequent transfers. Then I learned about and enrolled in the University of Manitoba Canadian Forces University Programme. What a fantastic opportunity it was! I got a bachelor's degree, a Master's degree and, after my husband's retirement, completed my doctorate at another university.

This program is truly unique and tailored to the needs of military personnel and their families. Many of the traditional and sometimes artificial barriers to university study, such as geographic location, residency requirements, and even high school completion, are eliminated without diluting the quality of the undergraduate and graduate programs and also without creating any new or additional barriers.

Through this program, you have the option of taking classes in person, at other universities, by correspondence and teleconference, and even from several universities at the same time, as I did. You can go as fast or as slowly as you wish.

We are really fortunate to have these opportunities which are not yet available for the general public. The success of the University of Manitoba program led to the establishment last year of a similar program at the Universite de Quebec for the francophone military community.

Further detailed information and descriptive brochures may be obtained by phoning or writing to:

The Coordinator, Canadian Forces University Program, Room 166 Continuing Education Complex, The University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2, Tel. 204-474-8005.

Remember that the opportunity to participate in the Program is only available to you while you're associated with the military. Write or call now and aim for that cap and gown. You might even want to make it a family or community project, with both you and your husband or a group enrolling and studying together.

FROM KINGSTON - CONFERENCE - POWER, WOMEN, AND THE MILITARY

This conference was held at Queen's University and was sponsored by OSSOMM and Queen's Women and the Law. There were representatives from three groups of women who have daily contact with the military - civilian DND workers, spouses of military members and military members. The goal was to explore differences and similarities as well as to strategize for the future.

Special guests included Cynthia Enloe from Clark University in Boston who has written a book called, "Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarization of Women's Lives", Ruth Roach Pierson from OISIE in Toronto who wrote, "They're Still Women After All" about women in WWII, and Kathleen Lahey a law professor at Queen's.

As a result of the conference a coalition was formed called - ROSE (Rapport, Ose, Support et Egalite/ Reaching Out in Strength for Equality). The coalition adopted a yellow rose as its symbol, agreed to meet again, set-up the Josephine Butler Archives and is planning a benefit concert to raise funds. If you would like more information on the new group or would like to buy a yellow rose pin (\$5.00) in support, please write to OSSOMM and we'll forward your request.

FROM DARTMOUTH - DIANNE ROY AND A STRUGGLE OVER PENSIONS

Dianne Roy is the divorced spouse of a retired military member. She has focused national attention on the inequities of the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act as it relates to ex-spouses of military members.

Since this has been an issue of concern to OSSOMM we have been in touch with Dianne and have sent a letter regarding this problem to the Prime Minister.

Dianne was divorced from her husband after 25 years and the Nova Scotia Supreme Court awarded her the military annuity (pension) as maintenance (support). Her husband, who has another job agreed to this but Dianne found out that she will only receive the money as long as he is alive. She would be destitute upon his death. As she puts it, "I feel I contributed to that pension...when I was bringing up the children and looking after him. There was a large sum of pay going into that pension each month and I had to do without things because of that." Toronto Star April 2, 1988.

It came as a further surprise to the Supreme Court judge, Dianne, her husband and her lawyer that the court order is not binding on the Crown. Only 50% will be sent directly to her by DND. She relies on the good will of her husband for the balance. The entire amount and her security in retirement depend on her husband's good health.

Dianne has tried to find work but after having been out of the paid force for so long women of her age are labelled "unemployable". Her husband, however has a new job and a new pension plan.

Dianne began writing letters to cabinet ministers but has been given the "runaround" as one department after another passes the buck. Her case has been taken up by a group called Canadian Pensioners Concerned Incorporated who are sponsoring a brief that is to be presented to the Federal Government in Ottawa at the beginning of February, 1989.

The stories of many women in a similar situation have been documented for this brief and although it is too late to participate this time, this is an ongoing problem so if you need some information or would like to help in fighting for a change of these regulations please write to Dianne, OSSOMM or Canadian Pensioners Concerned Inc. at the addresses listed:

Dianne Roy, 24 Dundas St. Apt. 904, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 4L2; Canadian Pensioners Concerned, #103 Tower One, 7001 Mumford Road, Halifax Shopping Centre, Halifax N.S. B3L 2H9, tel. 902-455-7684.

OSSOMM sends a salute and thanks to Dianne for her tireless efforts over the past three years.

RELATED PROBLEMS FOR SEPARATED SPOUSES

Currently, upon the death of the retired member the widow will receive one half of the annuity (pension). We have seen that a divorced spouse will be cut off completely but separated spouse are subjected to intrusive and degrading questioning by Treasury Board to determine their status as recipients. Here are excerpts from letters that some of our members have received from DND officials:

Should the ex-member and his wife be separated at the time of his death, the case would, at that time, be carefully reviewed by Treasury Board to determine what benefits, if any, are payable to the wife. Treasury Board would conduct the review as a means of determining if the wife had been living in a manner which would disentitle her to maintenance. Should this prove to be the case, Treasury Board would deem the widow to have pre-deceased the annuitant. Otherwise, a widow's allowance would likely be paid. 15 July 1987.

Another letter was much clearer in defining what "living in a manner which would disentitle her" means:

[T]he Treasury Board will require a Statutory Declaration from the widow explaining the reasons for the separation as well as providing information concerning her mode of living and means of support preceding her husband's death and, in particular, they wish to know if she was living with another man immediately prior to her husband's death... The Board will also request two supporting Statutory Declarations from persons in the community, preferably not related to the widow, who have a knowledge of the situation concerning the spouses mode of living and means of support during the period immediately preceding the pensioner's death. 1 November, 1988.

FROM OTTAWA

Two military members have challenged the military's regulations regarding "common law" relationships which affect the right to live in married quarters and the right to transfer and travel benefits among other things. The Canadian Human Rights Commission in August, 1988 ruled against the members but an appeal to the Federal Court later in the year was successful. Watch the newspapers for further appeals. If you want more details write to OSSOMM.

Three official spokespersons have been appointed:

- Marnie Draper in Calgary, Alta. at 403-249-6285
- Lucie Laliberte (Richardson) in Kingston, Ont. at 613-549-8614
- Gaila Friars in Ormocto, N.B. at 506-357-3071

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - NO FEE BUT DONATIONS WILL BE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED - Send to: OSSOMM, 462 PRINCESS ST., KINGSTON, ONT., K7L 1C2 613-546-6476

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....
.....
.....

PHONE NUMBER.....

ARE YOU A (CHECK ONE) SPOUSE..... SPOUSE OR EX-SPOUSE OF A RETIRED MEMBER.... FRIEND OF OSSOMM.... OTHER.....