
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION
2023-2024

JULY 2024

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

**The Honourable Michael Parsa
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services**

Dear Minister Parsa:

**I am pleased to present this Annual Report on
behalf of the Soldiers' Aid Commission.**

**This report outlines the history and mandate of
the Commission and summarizes its activity
throughout the 2023-2024 fiscal year.**

Sincerely,

**Philip ten Kortenaar
Chair**

HISTORY, ORGANIZATION AND MANDATE

HISTORY

The Soldiers' Aid Commission is an Operational Service Agency, which was originally established in 1915 to support returning Veterans and their families. This was later expanded to include Canadian and allied Veterans who served in the Second World War and the Korean War. In January 2021, the mandate was expanded once more to include all eligible Canadian Armed Forces Veterans and their immediate family members.

The Soldiers' Aid Commission receives its legislative authority from the *Soldiers' Aid Commission Act, 2020 and Regulations made under the Act*.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), through the Developmental and Supportive Services Branch, is responsible for the administration of the legislation under which the Commission operates.

ORGANIZATION

The Commission operates at arm's length from the government, with respect to the provision of assistance, members may be appointed to hold office for a term of up to three years at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor in Council and may be reappointed.

The Commission may consist of at least three members and no more than 11 members, with the majority of the board comprising Veterans or individuals who are either the parent, spouse, child or sibling of a Veteran. The current Commission comprises a Chair, Vice-Chair, and 8 other Commissioners.

Members are not remunerated but are entitled to such reimbursement for reasonable expenses as determined by the Travel, Meal and Hospitality Directive.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Ministry and the Commission was signed by the Minister and the Chair in 2023.

MANDATE

The mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission is to administer a financial assistance program for eligible Veterans and eligible family members of Veterans who reside in Ontario. The Commission accepts applications for financial assistance made by Veterans in need or their dependents by way of the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). The Royal Canadian Legion or Veterans Affairs Canada receives applications for assistance and completes an initial screening to

confirm Veteran's status, obtain financial/income documentation and quotes for services being requested. These applications are then forwarded to the Commission for review.

FUNDING, ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

FUNDING

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services provides the Commission with annual funding up to **\$1.55M** for payments to eligible Veterans and/or their eligible family members. This funding also includes expenses related to the Commissioners travel and meal costs.

ELIGIBILITY

An eligible Veteran is a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who has completed basic training and was released from service.

An eligible family member of a Veteran can be the spouse of a Veteran, the surviving spouse of a deceased Veteran or a child of a Veteran or Veteran's spouse who is financially dependent, or the child of a deceased Veteran or Veteran's spouse.

The applicant must also demonstrate financial need and make a reasonable effort to access funds from other Veteran-specific programs and show that they cannot reasonably cover the cost of the service/support being requested.

The Commission reviews all applications to assess financial need before eligibility determination.

Financial assistance is available to resolve a specific problem when other resources have been exhausted. Funding is provided on an individual basis.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

All applications for assistance are reviewed by the Commission, typically within three business days. Financial assistance can be granted over a 12-month period up to \$2,000. If both spouses are Veterans, then both would be eligible to receive the funding.

The Commission will consider applications to support eligible recipients with financial assistance for essential expenses in the following categories:

- housing-related items, modifications or repairs that support mobility, accessibility or health and safety
- assistance to secure or maintain housing
- specialized equipment and assistive devices to support mobility, accessibility or health and safety
- health-related items and services to support physical and mental health

- personal items, services and expenses to support basic needs
- employment-related supports to remove barriers to employment or improve employability

The decisions to provide assistance to an individual are not subject to approval by the Minister or any official of the Ministry, nor are they subject to appeal. The applications are reviewed by the board to determine whether to fund all, part or none of the application.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Commission took a step forward during fiscal year 2023-24 which saw uptake rates climb approximately 400% since the year prior. This allowed the Commission to support more Veterans and their families by helping them access funding.

Commissioners focused on their continued outreach campaign which included both in person events/presentations, digitally focused meetings and engagement opportunities. The Commission was able to engage with a wide variety of Veteran organizations ranging from government based to non-profit, and including organizations known through Commissioner networks and affiliations. This work was a key part of a continued effort to engage and meet with the Veteran sector along with continuing to raise awareness.

The Commission continues to meet regularly with both senior staff at the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada to help strengthen its relationship with its two key program partners. The Commission has led presentations to front line staff that work directly with applicants to facilitate applications and to look for opportunities to streamline the application process.

In conjunction with the ministry, new digital and hard copy communication materials were created and launched in Fall 2023. This included a cheque insert that went to all social assistance recipients, new posters/postcards that were distributed to all MPPs, Legion branches and other community based and Veteran organizations. This outreach led to a large spike in applications during the fall/winter due to increased program awareness.

While the Commission has seen growth this past year there is still much room for continued improvement to ensure that the Commission is able to support Ontario's Vulnerable Veterans and their families.

The Commission's continued focus is to build and raise awareness of the funding that is available from the Commission and the positive outcomes that it can create for Ontario based Veterans in need. Maintaining this momentum is the key to our success and the aim is to utilize more of the SAC budget in the coming years.

Strong relationship building with our conduit partners and ministry staff will assist the Commission in our endeavour for success. Key communication strategies must continue to be built to raise awareness of the existence of the Commission.

In addition to external facing program awareness activities, the Chair has incorporated monthly round-table check-ins with the Commissioners to both hear about and share the work they are doing within their own networks. In February 2024, a number of emails were sent to veteran-serving organizations with digital promotional program materials, and a request to reach out to a named Commissioner. The intent to provide a contact person was to build a relationship and to provide individual responses and information sharing moving forward for each of the identified organizations.

APPENDIX 1– Total Disbursements

2023-2024 APPLICATIONS RECEIVED/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

Apr – 2023	5	0	5	\$8,394.00
May – 2023	4	0	4	\$7,740.00
Jun – 2023	7	0	7	\$9,819.23
Jul – 2023	4	1	3	\$5,010.50
Aug – 2023	2	1	1	\$2,000.00
Sep – 2023	3	0	3	\$6,000.00
Oct – 2023	5	0	5	\$8,376.30
Nov – 2023	15	1	14	\$21,348.40
Dec – 2023	23	1	22	\$30,735.40
Jan – 2024	17	4	13	\$15,583.94
Feb – 2024	16	0	16	\$27,746.92
Mar – 2024	9	1	8	\$9,399.00

2021-2022 Disbursement

TOTAL	22	0	21	\$37,281.00
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APPENDIX 2 -Other Expenses

Types of Expenses	Total
Bank Service Charges	\$79.80
Total Other Expenses	\$79.80

* This does not include costs managed by the Developmental Services and Supports Branch budget including travel and meal (commissioner expenses) or operating costs (e.g., IT, mail and communication material costs).