



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Minister of Veterans Affairs Announces Improved Support for Veterans with ALS

Ottawa – The Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), announced today that the Government of Canada has taken action to improve and speed up support for Veterans suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He was joined by Pierre Poilievre, Member of Parliament for Nepean-Carleton, David Cameron, President and CEO of the ALS Society of Canada, and Veteran Mike Watson, who has led a courageous battle against ALS.

“Having met Veterans with ALS, I am deeply touched by what they have lived through. Our government commits to giving them better support and delivering it quickly. These Veterans and their families must concentrate all their energy on fighting this terrible disease rather than fighting to obtain the benefits and financial support they have earned,” said Minister Blackburn. “Our government is there for them, when they need it most.”

Based on the latest medical research, our government has made changes so that Veterans affected by ALS obtain the help and support they need and deserve faster than ever before. These Veterans will now be able to receive disability benefits, treatments and home care support. These services are greatly needed by Veterans and their families who are affected by this devastating disease. For example, they will now be eligible for adapted wheelchairs, medical resources, housekeeping services and more.

“We are extremely grateful to the Prime Minister of Canada and Minister Blackburn for their decision to provide Veterans with ALS the benefits and care they need. Veterans living with ALS now have one less hurdle to face on an already difficult road,” said Mr. Cameron. “Because of the progressive nature of the disease, some Veterans were dying before they had the chance to submit their case to VAC. We want to thank Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn for their quick and decisive action to support Veterans living with ALS.”

ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, is a rapidly progressive and fatal neuromuscular disease that causes the degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. As the nerve cells die, people with ALS lose control of their muscles, which makes breathing, eating and even smiling almost impossible. Eighty percent of those diagnosed will die within two to five years.

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Helping Veterans with ALS is one of several steps our government is taking to improve care and benefits for our Veterans. Other key steps include increasing income support to Veterans who have been seriously injured during their service. This covers Veterans who are recovering from injury, as well as those whose injuries are permanent.

Our government has also established a Legacy of Care to improve the quality of life of injured CF personnel and their families. To help them as they are going rehabilitation, our government will provide access to accommodation, transportation to medical appointments, financial support for caregivers, educational opportunities for spouses, and increased one-on-one attention for Veterans when they need information and help. These recent measures total over \$ 2 billion dedicated to caring for our Veterans, because they deserve our full support.

These changes build on services for Veterans that were already in place, such as rehabilitation, disability awards, health care benefits, and practical help finding a job. Veterans already receive income support up to 75 percent of their salary.

For more information on services and benefits for Canadian Forces members and Veterans, visit **veterans.gc.ca**.

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