

# News Release

December 22, 2010

## Minister Blackburn Announces Important Changes to Agent Orange Ex Gratia Payment

**Ottawa** — The Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), announced today, in company of the Honourable Keith Ashfield, Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, that the Government of Canada is extending the time that individuals have to submit an application for the Agent Orange *ex gratia* payment. Certain eligibility criteria have also been modified.

"Today, I am announcing that our government has extended the deadline to June 2011 and widened eligibility criteria. We estimate that these changes will allow approximately 1,140 people to receive the *ex gratia* payment, for a total of approximately \$24 million dollars. The Department will be communicating shortly with individuals whose applications were previously declined in order to see if they meet the new criteria. I am proud to be part of a government that proves once again that it takes action and shows compassion," said Minister Blackburn.

As a result of today's announcement, the deadline for submitting an application is extended to June 30, 2011. People will also have until June 30, 2011 to obtain a relevant medical diagnosis. They will no longer have to prove that they were expecting their medical diagnosis before February 6, 2006. **Furthermore, the requirement for applicants to have been alive on February 6, 2006 has been removed. This will allow more primary caregivers, including widows and widowers, to apply on behalf of a loved one who died before the *ex gratia* payment came into place.**

"Today's announcement of additional government assistance to Veterans and families living in communities closest to CFB Gagetown in New Brunswick is a welcome continuation to the previous commitment made by this government," said Minister Ashfield. "It demonstrates our continued support to Veterans and their families in this province. I am so pleased to see the Government make good on the commitment made to all New Brunswickers to address longstanding concerns related to the testing of Agent Orange at CFB Gagetown."

In September 2007, the Government of Canada announced a one-time, tax-free *ex gratia* payment of \$20,000 related to the testing of unregistered U.S. military herbicides, including Agent Orange, at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown in New Brunswick during the summers of 1966 and 1967.

While the best research available has confirmed there were no harmful long-term effects from the testing of Agent Orange, the Government of Canada acted with compassion by offering an *ex gratia* payment. This recognizes the uncertainty many individuals have lived with over the years.

"On behalf of the Agent Orange Association of Canada Inc., I would like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Blackburn and his government for extending and changing the Agent Orange *ex gratia* program. I believe that we are moving in the right direction in supporting our Veterans and civilians who were exposed to Agent Orange and other toxic herbicides at CFB Base Gagetown but we also must continue to work together," said Carol Brown Parker, Co-President Agent Orange Association of Canada Inc.

To qualify for the *ex gratia* payment, individuals must be diagnosed with a medical condition listed in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine Update 2004. They must have worked at, trained at, been posted to, or lived within five kilometres of CFB Gagetown when Agent Orange was tested in 1966 and 1967.

To date, a total of 3,137 applicants have received the tax-free, *ex gratia* payment, for a total payout of \$62.7 million. An additional sum of 7.7 million dollars was used to communicate information about this program to the general population, to hire personnel to deal with the applications and to open an office in Oromocto.

For more information, visit the Veterans Affairs Canada [Web site](#) or call **1-866-522-2122**.

See the press release at:

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=department/press/viewrelease&id=1053>