



GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ADDRESS “ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM” REGARDING VETERANS’ BENEFITS

OTTAWA, November 9, 2017 -- The War Amps of Canada/ National Council of Veteran Associations (NCVA) contend that the Liberal Government has failed to live up to its commitment to fix the New Veterans Charter and has ignored the “elephant in the room” which has overshadowed this discussion.

Brian N. Forbes, Chairman of the Executive Committee of The War Amps and Chairman of NCVA, stated that it is fundamentally essential at this time that the Government recognize that much more is required to improve the New Veterans Charter, with particular emphasis on:

1. Resolving the significant disparity between the financial compensation available under the Pension Act and the New Veterans Charter;
2. Ensuring that no veteran under the New Veterans Charter receive less compensation than a veteran under the Pension Act with the same disability or incapacity, in accordance with the “one veteran – one standard” principle.

“It is totally unacceptable that we have veterans’ legislation in Canada which provides a significantly higher level of compensation to a veteran who was injured prior to 2006 [date of the enactment of the New Veterans Charter] when compared to a veteran who was injured post-2006. If applied to the Afghan conflict, we have veterans in the same war with totally different pension benefit results,” said Mr. Forbes.

Upon the election of the Liberal Government in 2015, it was the expectation of the veterans’ community that this inequity would be rectified, based on promises made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during the election campaign.

“It was disappointing that the federal budgetary announcement made earlier this year essentially ‘kicked the can down the road’ on this fundamental dilemma – promising a solution by the end of this year,” said Mr. Forbes. “Veterans are losing faith that the Government will fulfill its responsibility and eliminate the two distinct classes of benefits available to disabled Canadian Armed Forces members.”

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The War Amps and NCVA take the position that this is a critical juncture for the new Minister, Seamus O'Regan, who has inherited a career-defining problem which cries out for immediate resolution.

"There is no reason that the Federal Government cannot implement the recommendations made by veterans' stakeholders and Ministerial Advisory Groups, who have been pushing specific proposals for a number of years to address self-evident gaps and inequities in the New Veterans Charter," Mr. Forbes added.

The War Amps and NCVA contend that, through the utilization of the best parts of the Pension Act and the best parts of the New Veterans Charter, a pension benefit model can be created which removes the inequality which currently exists.

"If the 'one veteran – one standard' philosophy advocated by Veterans Affairs Canada has any meaning, this glaring disparity requires the Government to seize the moment and satisfy the financial needs of Canadian veterans and their dependants," Mr. Forbes said.

"It is time that the Government recognized that the long-standing social covenant between the Canadian people and the veterans' community demands nothing less."

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