

THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION



LA LÉGIION ROYALE CANADIENNE

THE PRESIDENT

LE PRÉSIDENT

86 AIRD PLACE
OTTAWA, ONTARIO K2L 0A1

16 December 2011

RCL: 20-10-15

The Honourable Steven Blaney, PC, MP
Minister of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Affairs Canada
66 Slater Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P4

Dear Minister:

On 29 October 2011 The Legion hosted a Veterans Consultation Group meeting of 17 Veterans organizations. This meeting is held annually at the end of October with an aim to discussing issues of mutual concern. This year much of the meeting was focussed on the ongoing program review and Veterans programs.

The Veterans Consultation Group asked me to write on their behalf regarding the key areas of concern.

Firstly, Veterans Affairs Canada should be exempt from implementing any measure through the ongoing program review that would negatively affect any support that is provided to Veterans and their families. Getting our financial house in order should not be done on the backs of our wounded warriors and their families.

Secondly, Veterans Affairs Canada has embarked on a significant Transformation agenda to streamline business processes and achieve efficiencies in the service delivery of Veterans programs. Any savings from this Transformation agenda should be earmarked for other veterans programs which may already be in existence or for future programs being contemplated.

Thirdly, the Canadian Military Veteran Health Research Institute is fully supported by the Veterans Consultation Group. This initiative is essential to address the gap in a lack of coordinated and prioritized research on Canadian Veterans health issues. Veterans' organizations have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that research requirements are prioritized, research is conducted and policy and programs are implemented to meet the lifelong needs of all Veterans and their families in a timely manner.

Lastly, the New Veterans Charter, as a "living document," is still a work in progress. The changes recommended by the New Veterans Charter Advisory Group concluded that there remain a number of substantial gaps which require further legislative and regulatory amendment. Veterans Affairs needs to begin a substantive consultation process now to address the outstanding recommendations and ensure the programs and services in the New Veterans Charter meet the requirements of the Modern Veterans and their families.

We trust that you will receive this advice in the spirit that it is presented and we look forward to providing future advice and substantive consultation as individual organizations or collectively.

Yours sincerely,



Patricia (Pat) Varga
Dominion President

cc: Suzanne Tinning, Deputy Minister Veterans Affairs Canada
Brian Forbes, National Council of Veterans Associations
Tom Brooks, The Company of Master Mariners of Canada
Paul Baiden, Canadian Naval Air Group
Derrill Henderson, Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association
Paul Greensides, Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations
Peacekeeping
Denis Boyle, Naval Association of Canada
John Eggenburger, Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association
John Jewitt, National Aboriginal Veterans Association
Daniel Drapeau, Veterans UN-NATO Canada
Terry Chester, Air Force Association of Canada
Lorne McCartney, Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans of Canada
John Stuart, Gulf War Veterans Association
Blaine Parker, Royal Canadian Naval Association
Gordon Jenkins, NATO Veterans of Canada
Bill Gidley, RCMP Veterans Association
Perry Gray, Canadian Veterans Association
Sean Bruyey, Veterans Voice