

Veterans

Our veterans served Canada — and were willing to risk their lives to do so. Now it's Canada's turn to support veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to ensure they and their families have equitable outcomes and the well-being, care and benefits they deserve.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

Veteran Women

- Women comprise about 16 per cent of the military; the goal is to have 25 per cent serving by 2026. Women are the fastest growing segment of Veterans Affairs Canada's clients.
- Civilian health research and medical care systems struggle to address male-normative assumptions and biases — that is also true for military and veteran health care in Canada.
- In a 2016 survey completed by the Canadian Armed Forces, 80 per cent of Regular Force members (both men and women) reported seeing, hearing or experiencing inappropriate sexual or discriminatory behavior.

Transition to Civilian Life

- The biggest stressors during transition, as described by veterans, are maintaining financial security, health issues and maintaining a family life. Broken lines of communication between government departments, incorrect or incomplete information being provided, information overload and difficulty processing the volume of things necessary to transition were cited.
- Transition is also challenging for the spouses and families of veterans — many experience stressors including health issues, financial insecurity and family instability. Their employment prospects can be affected by a career spent jumping from job to job due to frequent moves, while their mental and physical health can suffer if they are required to become caregivers.

Ill and Injured Veterans

- Around five per cent of new entrants would have received greater lifetime payments under the Veterans Well-being Act, while three per cent of new entrants would be disadvantaged under Pension for Life, receiving an average of \$300,000 less in financial support. In all cases, the former Pension Act regime would have been the most generous.
- Ill and injured veterans receive inadequate home care and long-term care support. With 32 separate policies and 28 distinct eligibility groups, the programs are too complex and are based on type of military service rather than need.
- Injured and ill veterans are often cared for by spouses, adult children, parents and extended family. Veteran women — especially if single or divorced — and service couples with a deployable spouse may face more challenges finding a caregiver for themselves.

Fair Adjudication

- The most common complaints received by the Veterans' Ombudsmans Office are about the length of time it takes to get a decision from Veterans Affairs Canada on disability benefits, inconsistencies in how certain groups were treated, a lack of prioritization for those who may be at risk and a lack of transparency and communication.



CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

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KEY MESSAGE

■ Inconsistencies in treatment include:

- ▶ Francophone applicants wait longer than anglophone applicants for decisions;
- ▶ Delays are longer for women than for men;
- ▶ Discrepancies in how the Service Standard Start Date is determined resulted in some veterans with less need seeing applications move up the queue before others;
- ▶ Disability benefit decisions under the Pension Act resulted in better access to treatment benefits than decisions made under the Veterans Well-Being Act; and
- ▶ Families were treated unfairly when a veteran died while an application was in process. For example, if a veteran dies while their application is in progress, current legislation does not allow Veterans Affairs Canada to pay disability benefits to an estate if the veteran does not have a surviving spouse or dependent child.

Repair Relationships with Veterans

- Many veterans have felt disrespected and hurt by inadequate communication (in-person, by phone and in written and electronic communications) as they tried to access programs, services or compensation.
- Some veterans have indicated a low level of trust in, and a feeling of institutional betrayal by, Veterans Affairs Canada.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Achieve equitable outcomes for serving military and veteran women
- 2 Ensure a seamless, supported, successful transition and release from service
- 3 Ensure ill and injured veterans and their informal caregivers are supported
- 4 Ensure timely and transparent assessments and reassessments for veterans
- 5 Rebuild institutional trust with veterans by improving outcomes and communications



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