

Additional Recommendations to Honouring Sacrifice with More than Words

By Sean Bruyey

Captain (retired)

Advocate for Disabled Veterans and Their Families and Freelance Journalist

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1. It be recognized that Public Servants enjoy legislated protection against reprisals and harassment by other public servants with mandated mediation, investigation and settlement but veterans and family members enjoy no such protection from reprisals and harassment. Since the New Veterans Charter is a "*wellness*" program focusing on "*opportunity with security*", key to wellness and security is freedom from reprisals in the highly vulnerable population of disabled veterans and their families. As such,
 - 1.1. Parliament pass a "*Comprehensive Veteran and Family Whistleblower Protection*" legislation in conjunction with legislation for an independent and impartial veterans ombudsman 'with teeth' such as powers of investigation, subpoena and enter VAC premises without notice as enjoyed by ALL provincial ombudsman offices.
2. It be recognized that Service Income Security Insurance Plan or SISIP has had a Vocational Rehabilitation Plan (VRP) in place for more than a decade. Almost 90% of their case managers are veterans and all have had years of experience before they were hired by SISIP. VAC Rehabilitation Plan has no similar expertise. As such,
 - 2.1. SISIP VRP must not be allowed to be absorbed by VAC into the VAC Rehabilitation program. Instead, SISIP VRP be requested to participate in overseeing VAC rehabilitation program to ensure the expertise developed by SISIP is not lost and is implemented into the VAC rehabilitation programs.
 - 2.2. Expert practices and processes in SISIP Long Term Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Program be assessed to

help improve the processing time and excessive paperwork required to receive benefits at VAC.

3. As one of the key 299 recommendations of the Special Needs Advisory Group and the New Veterans Charter Advisory Group, particular attention be paid to the Veterans Affairs Earnings Loss Benefit and the SISIP Long Term Disability so that they be amended to provide 100% of release income matching full salary increases in the CF and allowing for typical career promotions/rank advancements which would have otherwise occurred.
4. All Changes to the New Veterans Charter including changes to Earnings Loss Benefit must apply retroactively and retrospectively to permanently disabled members and their families who were in receipt of disability programs prior to April 1, 2006.
5. The Earnings Loss benefit be modified to allow increasing and graduated deduction of employment income as incentive to disabled veterans to take the risk to work while disabled. For example the first \$10,000 should be free from deduction increasing by 10% deductible for every \$5,000 earned.
6. Enhanced employment programs be implemented for all disabled veterans which involve but are not limited to the following:
 - 6.1. Gradual back to work in public and private sector
 - 6.2. Lifelong multiple priority placement in public service with priority for disabled veterans if necessary
 - 6.3. Active national, regional and local partnerships with public and private sector be established to assist in adapting work environment, hours and culture to accommodating veterans of all disabilities
7. Remove the 120 day limit to apply for New Veterans Charter Rehabilitation and SISIP LTD and VRP programs.
8. In addition to access to Departmental Reviews, all New Veterans Charter programs must be permitted review by the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and Federal Court if so chosen by the applicant.

9. It be recognized that the Veterans Affairs Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA) needs to be independent of VAC in order to provide impartial and independent advice to VAC clients. As such,
 - 9.1. BPA once again be established as separate and independent from VAC,
 - 9.2. BPA provide assistance if requested at all levels of application and review for all programs including *Pension Act* and New Veterans Charter programs.
 - 9.3. BPA be expanded to accommodate increased use of BPA resources

10. Re-establishment programs be provided for all CF veterans and with greater benefits afforded disabled veterans and similar to those programs available to World War 2 and Korean War Veterans. Programs to include but not limited to:
 - 10.1. Low-interest start-up business loans
 - 10.2. Start-up business grants
 - 10.3. Low-interest home purchase mortgages
 - 10.4. Full undergraduate and graduate degree funding
 - 10.5. Full apprenticeships and full vocational programs
 - 10.6. Hobby and working farm assistance
 - 10.7. If unable to work: any courses or classes up to a maximum of a degree equivalent tuition over the lifetime of the disabled veteran

11. Canada takes the lead in adapting and expanding the nascent area of psycho-social rehabilitation in order to assist disabled soldiers to enjoy the fullness afforded by life's opportunities including but not limited to:
 - 11.1. Long term full or partial employment coaching depending on abilities and disabilities
 - 11.2. In-home coaching and life skills coaching unique to injured soldiers transitioning out of military
 - 11.3. Federal Government arrangement with post-secondary institutions to accommodate special needs of disabled veterans requiring longer time-periods to complete course and program work if necessary
 - 11.4. Creating partnerships with community groups and activities to accommodate disabled veterans

- 11.5. Close co-operation with and enhancement of OSIS peer support network to provide long term moral support for fullest possible transition
 - 11.6. Long term and easily accessed psychotherapy as deemed necessary by psychologist/psychiatrist
 - 11.7. Education, assistance, support and participation of family members in programs assisting transitioning disabled veterans
12. It be recognized that the Canadian Forces like all militaries invests substantial resources in training and adapting an individual to enter the military culture but little relative resources are allocated to assist that soldier adapt 'out' of the military. Although transition is greatly assisted with one-on-one programs, transition into the military requires substantial team and group work. Therefore, transition out should involve substantial team and group work. As such,
- 12.1. Canada take the lead in developing the first-ever transition course for all leaving the military with more intensive modules for disabled soldiers. Course to include modules involving family, civilian community organizations, already transitioned military and peers of all ranks.
13. The PMO establish a Committee of Ministers Working Group involving all applicable departments similar to what was established during and after World War 2 to oversee the expanded programs of Veterans Affairs. Reporting to Parliament through the VAC Committee and the Minister of VAC will be the following subject matter advisory groups comprised of recognized experts in the applicable fields to be created including but not limited to:
- 13.1. *"University and Post-secondary Education Access for Disabled Veterans"*
 - 13.2. *"Employment for Veterans and Disabled Veterans in Public and Private Sector"*
 - 13.3. *"Psycho-Social Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans"*
 - 13.4. *"Comprehensive Transition Planning and Course for CF Members Entering Civilian Life"*
 - 13.5. *"Financial Re-establishment Programs and Canadian Banking Partnerships"*
 - 13.6. *"Federal, Provincial and Municipal Partnerships in Assisting All Disabled Including Veterans Entering Community"*
 - 13.7. *"Psychological and Mental Health Care Strategy Working Group for Veterans and Civilians"*

14. Veterans, Disabled Veterans, the CF, and the families of all be involved in all advisory groups (including above) in conjunction with a minimum of 30% of all VAC positions be designated as CF liaison, veterans, disabled veterans and family members.
15. It be recognized that Head Office of Veterans Affairs Canada may not always be in touch with the experiences of front line VAC employees and disabled veterans and their families. As such, the Committee hold hearings both in camera and public including the following witnesses:
 - 15.1. front line employees
 - 15.2. seriously disabled veterans and their families
 - 15.3. 'on the road' hearings of disabled veterans and their families
 - 15.4. The following experts be invited to testify:
 - 15.4.1. Dr. Gail Beck
 - 15.4.2. Lyn Williams Keeler
 - 15.4.3. Dr. Greg Passey
 - 15.4.4. Harold Leduc
 - 15.4.5. Veteran Voice Representatives Perry Gray and CJ Wallace