

Opinion



The air detachment crew members, pictured Oct. 6, 2107, aboard Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Charlottetown prepare the recovery of the CH-124 Sea King helicopter into the hanger during Operation REASSURANCE. Veterans Affairs Minister Seamus O'Regan says veterans' advocate Sean Bruyeva is leaving out specific facts about the federal government's Pension for Life program to suit his own agenda. Photograph courtesy of DND

Time for a reality check on veterans' benefits: O'Regan

Our government made a promise to veterans that we would reinstate a pension for life for those injured during service to their country. That is not rhetoric. That is not politics. That is the mandate that I received from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and it is what we delivered this past fall.



Veterans Affairs Minister Seamus O'Regan

Veterans

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Monumental and progressive changes like these can be very complex as they come into effect. And that is precisely why I have been travelling across the country to meet with veterans and their families to hear their concerns and clarify our Pension for Life program.

Once we sat down and discussed Pension for Life, the reception has been positive. We know how important it is to do right by our veterans and

we are committed to doing just that.

But let me be very clear: individuals like Sean Bruyeva, who are stating mistruths about Pension for Life and are leaving out parts of our programs, are doing so to suit their own agenda.

So let's dig into the recent opinion piece by Mr. Bruyeva published in *The Hill Times*. He incorrectly states that those receiving "Pension Act benefits collect more in pain and suffering payments" than those who will be eligible for Pension for Life. The truth is, Pension Act benefits were more than pain and suffering compensation. The Pension Act had a dual purpose as both economic and non-economic compensation. If Mr. Bruyeva were to have honestly compared our Pension for Life program, he would have taken into account the Income Replacement Benefit (IRB) that our plan offers which is 90 per cent of a veteran's pre-release salary. And to a veteran who was making \$60,000 annually while in the Armed Forces, that is an important cheque to them and their families each month.

The piece also misstates that all "injured Canadian Forces veterans, under all three plans essentially have access to the same income loss." I am sure Mr. Bruyeva is aware that the earning loss benefit (ELB) of 75 per cent is not the same as 90 per cent, which was an increase to the income supports that was made by our government. We are also indexing that injured veteran's salary to inflation and including a one per cent career progression factor if they are unable to work.

The piece also notes that veterans "feared the government would merely offer the lump sum dissected and distributed over time." I am happy to allay those fears as this does not happen under Pension for Life. For example, if you look at the chart included, which is factual, a 25-year-old veteran who is 100 per cent disabled will be far better off under our new

lower monthly payments," I can assure all veterans that if they are injured, they will receive the same support that their sisters and brothers receive for life.

While there are numerous other errors in the opinion piece, I want to focus on just one more: the misconceived notion that veterans who qualify for Pension for Life "will receive less than" what they would have previously. Let me be clear—NO veteran will receive less than what they are receiving today and most will be receiving more.

It is clear that veterans are better off now than they were before. We have invested \$10-billion of new money into services and supports for veterans, we reopened

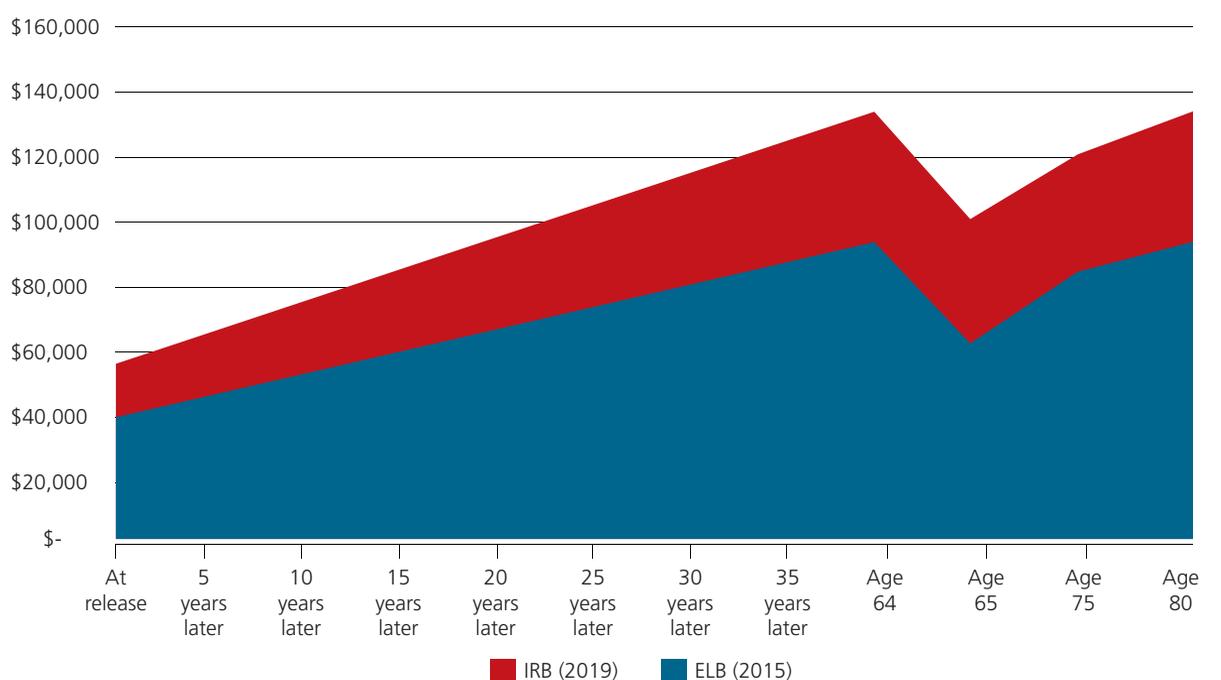
nine Veterans Affairs offices across the country and we have hired more than 460 new staff.

We have also introduced an Education Benefit of up to \$80,000, introduced a Caregiver Recognition Benefit of \$1,000 a month (which is payable directly to the caregiver), enhanced our Career Transition Services and invested into numerous other programs that directly benefit Veterans and their families.

Frankly, the truth is much simpler to understand: our government is committed to supporting Canada's veterans.

Veterans Affairs Seamus O'Regan also represents St. John's South-Mount Pearl, N.L.
The Hill Times

25 year old with three years of service and a salary of \$60K at release



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	At Release	10 years later	20 years later	30 years later	At Age 64	At Age 65	At Age 80	Net Present Value of lifetime Benefit
IRB (2019)	\$54,000	\$72,571	\$94,717	\$115,459	\$137,985	\$98,847	\$133,035	\$2,943,265
ELB (2015)	\$45,000	\$54,855	\$66,868	\$81,511	\$97,414	\$69,553	\$93,610	\$1,669,436
Difference	\$9,000	\$17,717	\$27,849	\$33,948	\$40,571	\$29,293	\$39,425	\$1,273,829

Under the previous regime, this veteran would have received \$1.67-million over their life. Under the new regime, they will receive an additional \$1.27-million, nearly doubling their benefit. —Source: Veterans Affairs Canada