

Ottawa Journal: Trudeau Government Continues to Fail Canada's Veterans

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We owe a debt of gratitude to our veterans.

They've selflessly and courageously served Canada to protect our security and freedoms. They've also brought peace to areas of conflict around the world.

Our country's finest deserve our compassion, care, and most importantly, our respect. Unfortunately, the current Liberal government has not been showing Canada's veterans the respect and gratitude they should expect to receive from their government by forcing injured veterans and their advocacy group back into court.

During the 2015 General Election, the Liberal Party of Canada made a solemn promise that veterans would never need to fight for their rights in court against the Canadian government. In fact, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated at the time, "If I earn the right to serve this country as your Prime Minister, no veteran will be forced to fight their own government for the support and compensation that they have earned."

However, the current Trudeau government has forced veterans and their advocacy group, Equitas, back into court using government lawyers and arguments that were rejected by the previous Conservative government. Our previous government had reached an agreement with Equitas and developed a productive working relationship with this organization.

It is truly disappointing the Minister of Veterans Affairs who is charged with the responsibility of serving veterans allowed his colleague, the Minister of Justice, to end the abeyance agreement our previous Conservative government negotiated. This serves as evidence that the current Minister of Veterans Affairs is unwilling to stand up for veterans and their rights at the Cabinet table.

Veterans from across Canada have raised concerns that the current Liberal government has no plan to keep the promises the Liberal Party of Canada made to them during the 2015 General Election. Their concerns are rightly justified with the current government forcing injured veterans back into court. The current government is demonstrating that it neither adequately understands the issues our veterans face, nor intends to honour the promises made during the election campaign.

To date, the majority of funding spent on veterans' programming by the current Liberal government has done little to support the most vulnerable injured veterans. Reckless spending by the current government and massive deficits are putting future benefits at risk. In stark contrast, veterans' benefits increased by 35 per cent under the previous Conservative government:

- we improved frontline services for Canadian Military Veterans;
- created a network of 25+ front-line mental health clinics across Canada and 31 integrated personnel support centres;
- introduced the New Retirement Income Security Benefit (at least 70 per cent of pre-retirement income, creating a lifelong pension);
- provided up to \$100,000 for each injured Military Veteran who needs vocational rehabilitation, education, and training;

- implemented a New Family Caregiver Relief Benefit (more than \$7,000/ year tax free);
- added a New Critical Injury Benefit (\$70,000 tax-free);
- improved the Permanent Impairment Allowance;
- increased benefits for part-time reservists by providing them with the same Earnings Loss Benefit as full-time Reserve and Regular Force Veterans;
- began increasing the quantity of case managers and new front line staff to improve processing times; and
- created world class service dog and horse therapy standards for all Veterans who need them.

Canada's veterans deserve programs and benefits designed to meet their evolving needs that can be sustained over the long term.

The Conservative Official Opposition believes Canadians have a moral obligation to veterans for their service to Canada and, therefore, ensuring that our veterans and their families receive the services and benefits they need, is a priority for us.

Canada's veterans have proudly and bravely stood on guard for our country. They deserve nothing but the utmost respect from all of us and their government. The current Liberal government is failing to show our veterans this respect by forcing them back into court. Our veterans deserve better from their government.

We as the Official Opposition will stand up for them as they've done for all Canadians