

## Supporting our Veterans

Our Veterans have proudly served Canada and to demonstrate our appreciation for their loyal service to our country, our Government supports these outstanding men and women. We have done this and continue to do this by providing quality programs and services which are responsive to their needs. Since coming to office in 2006, our Government has remained committed to Veterans and their families through various measures and initiatives.

Our Government implemented the New Veterans Charter in 2006 following its unanimous passing in Parliament in 2005. The Charter was developed with the changing needs of ill and injured Veterans in mind by moving the focus from disability to health and well-being. It does this by providing both immediate and ongoing financial support, as well as full physical and psychological rehabilitation services, vocational assistance, health care benefits, and one-on-one case management. This comprehensive approach assists Veterans to successfully transition from the Canadian Forces to civilian life. We continued to build on this commitment by investing almost \$4.7 billion in new funding support Veterans through enhancements to benefits, programs, and services.

We've taken other important steps to support our Veterans by instituting a Veterans Bill of Rights, which establishes the rights for all war-service Veterans, Veterans and serving members of the Canadian Forces (Regular and Reserve), members and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, spouses, common-law partners, survivors and primary caregivers, other eligible dependants and family members, and other eligible clients. Our Government worked with Veterans' organizations to strengthen our Government's ability to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of Veterans. It lays out the rights of Veterans and clients to access the various programs and services offered by Veterans Affairs Canada, to ensure they are treated with the respect, dignity, and fairness they so rightly deserve.

Our Government created the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman to strengthen our Government's ability to fairly and efficiently respond to the concerns of Veterans and their families. This office was established in 2007 as an impartial, arms-length, and independent officer, charged with the responsibility of upholding the Veterans Bill of Rights. Furthermore, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman reviews individual and systemic issues arising from the Veterans Bill of Rights.

We've also ensured the memory of those who served our country is honoured and remembered for generations to come through the preservation and construction of war memorials across Canada. This has been done through the Community War Memorial Program, which is a five-year, \$5 million program, created to help build new monuments to our country's finest and to coincide with existing efforts to help restore and refurbish monuments across Canada.

Economic Action Plan 2013 doubled the financial support for Veterans' families while cutting more cumbersome Red Tape. These changes make Canada's Funeral and Burial Program the most generous and comprehensive in the world! Economic Action Plan 2013 more than doubles the amount available for Funeral Services to \$7,376, in addition to continuing to cover the full burial cost.

Additional initiatives by our Government to honour and remember our country's finest include: the announcement in 2012 of a new honour to acknowledge Second World War Veterans who served as part of Bomber Command; the declaration of 2013 as the Year of the Korean War Veteran, as well as a new Certificate of Recognition that was launched to honour Canadian Korean War Veterans. In 2014, our Government will continue to honour our heroes and their sacrifices through several projects and activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War and the 75th anniversary of the Second World War.

Canada's Veterans can continue to count on the support of our Government. Since 2006, we've worked hard to stand up for and respond to the needs of these exceptional men and women and we will continue to do so. This is our commitment to them and will always be.

**By David Tilson, MP**

