

# ***NATIONAL COUNCIL OF VETERAN ASSOCIATIONS IN CANADA***

*1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion Association  
14<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Regiment Association  
435-436 & Burma Squadrons Association  
Air Force Association of Canada  
Aircrew Association  
The Algonquin Regiment Veterans' Association  
Armed Forces Pensioners' / Annuitants'  
Association of Canada  
The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of  
Canada Association  
Bomber Command Association Canada  
Burma Star Association  
Canadian Airborne Forces Association  
Canadian Association of World War II Veterans from  
the Soviet Union  
Canadian Corps Association  
Canadian Fighter Pilots Association  
Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans Association Inc.  
Canadian Naval Air Group  
Canadian Naval Divers Association  
Canadian Paraplegic Association*

*The Canadian Scottish Regimental Association  
Canadian Tribal Destroyer Association  
Dieppe Veterans and Prisoners of War Association  
The Dodo Bird Club of Ex-RCAF Flight Sergeants  
Ferry Command Association  
First Special Service Force Association  
Hong Kong Veterans Association of Canada  
Jewish War Veterans of Canada  
KLB (Konzentrations Lager Buchenwald) Club  
Korea Veterans Association of Canada  
The Limber Gunners  
Métis Nation of Ontario Veterans Council  
The Military Vehicle Hobbyists Association  
National Aboriginal Veterans Association  
National Prisoners of War Association (E.T.) of  
Canada  
Naval Officers Association of Canada, Montreal  
Branch  
Nova Scotia Naval Officers Association  
Nursing Sisters' Association of Canada  
Operation Legacy*

*The Overseas Club - Canadian Red Cross Corps  
(Overseas Detachment)  
The Polish Combatants' Association in Canada  
The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Association  
R.C.A.F. P.O.W. Association  
Royal Air Forces Escaping Society  
Royal Canadian Air Force Pre-War Club of Canada  
The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps Association  
Royal Canadian Naval Association  
The Royal Canadian Regiment Association  
Royal Naval Association - Southern Ontario Branch  
Royal Winnipeg Rifles Association  
The Sir Arthur Pearson Association of War Blinded  
The South Alberta Regiment Veterans Association  
Submariners Association of Canada (Central Branch)  
Toronto Police Military Veterans Association  
The Toronto Scottish Regimental Association  
The War Amputations of Canada  
War Pensioners of Canada  
War Veterans & Friends Club  
White Ensign Club Montreal  
Wren Association of Toronto*

November 10, 2011

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

An open letter to Canadians this week from Veterans Ombudsman Guy Parent stated, "As a nation, we have the obligation to take care of the men and women that were put in harm's way to protect our rights and freedoms. Ensuring that their needs are met is the nation's greatest and most meaningful expression of gratitude."

The National Council of Veteran Associations (representing 58 member-organizations) strongly supports Mr. Parent's statement, as well as shares his concerns regarding the declared intention of the Government that many Federal Budgets are to be potentially reduced and that substantial financial cuts will have to be exercised by individual Departments, including Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC).

NCVA has recently written to the Prime Minister to express its serious concerns in regard to this announcement, in that it would be highly unacceptable to our members that the Government's Deficit Reduction Plan would conceivably include cuts to veterans' benefits or administrative components of VAC programs.

We also trust that any cuts will not be made on the backs of the Canadian veterans' community, particularly given the fact that a number of Allied countries, in attempting to cope with current economic deficits, have exempted veterans' benefits and services from their proposed austerity programs.

NCVA has consistently pointed out in this regard that, although Canada's Traditional Veterans are aging, VAC continues to have significant responsibility to the more than 150,000 veterans who served Canada during the Second World War and Korea. Many of these veterans are presently suffering from their service-related disabilities together with other medical concerns brought on by the ravages of age.

It is also quite self-evident that extensive financial and human resources are required of the Department due to the influx of disabled veterans returning from Afghanistan and earlier Canadian military missions. Given the physical, mental and psychological concerns confronting these returning veterans, the job of VAC will become more essential and intensive in order to address these multifaceted problems.

It remains our view that VAC has an important and complex mandate and, indeed, is entering a significant phase. VAC currently administers two major pieces of legislation – the original Pension Act for the Traditional Veteran and the New Veterans Charter for the Modern Day Veteran. At the same time, health care benefits, Veterans Independence programs and all of the related policies are administered by the Department for all Veterans and their families.

It is also a stark reality that should VAC's budgetary capacity be impacted, the Department will be unable to fund crucial legislative improvements in order to fulfil its ongoing commitments to the overall veterans' community.

With reference to Traditional Veterans, there remain serious outstanding concerns as to the significant gaps in the VAC Long Term Care Program, inequities in the Last Post Fund/Veterans Burial Regulations and anomalies in the VIP programs for widows.

In relation to Modern Day Veterans, the New Veterans Charter, considered a "living document" by veterans' organizations, is currently an unfinished work in progress.

Given these significant concerns, this is clearly no time to be suggesting any diminishment in the budget or the resources of the Department. In our

judgement, the financial responsibility and debt of gratitude that all Canadians owe to Traditional and Modern Day Veterans should remain a paramount consideration in any evaluation of a Federal Deficit Reduction Plan.

With reference to a specific examination of the VAC budget, NCVA has for many years argued that administrative efficiencies can be established within the Department through the removal of bureaucratic red tape and procedural obstacles which unduly generate financial costs to VAC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Forbes', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brian N. Forbes  
Secretary General  
National Council of Veteran Associations

***For confirmation, please contact Communications at (613) 731-3821.***