



THE CANADIAN VETERANS ADVOCACY

one veteran, one standard

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The Canadian Veterans Advocacy stands with the Union of Veterans Affairs Employees in demanding Veterans Affairs Canada be exempt from pending budget cuts

NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario, December 8, 2011 – In response to the press conference held by the Union of Veterans Affairs Employees in Victoria BC yesterday, December 7, the Canadian Veterans Advocacy fully supports their demand that Veterans Affairs Canada be exempt from the Harper government's proposed budget cuts in the upcoming federal budget.

"Vets already face significant challenges accessing services and benefits," says Michael Blais, President and Founder of the Canadian Veterans Advocacy. "It is illogical for the government to say that staff-cuts at VAC offices won't affect veterans."

The Union of Veterans Affairs Employees questions the Harper government who claim that reduced staff levels will not affect services to veterans. The government argues that due to the decreasing number of World War Two and Korean War veterans, pressure for services at VAC will ease. However, the Union of Veterans Affairs Employees presents data that suggests that the change at VAC will be negligible. The Union estimates that while the total number of VAC clients is projected to decline by 5.6% over the next few years, the number of VAC employees will decrease by 12%.

Ste. Anne's Hospital transfer to provincial control

The federal government and the Government of Quebec have agreed to transfer Ste. Anne's Hospital in Montreal to the province. Ste. Anne's has been providing high-quality care to Veterans since 1917. The hospital is recognized for its expertise in geriatric and long-term care, as well as in the fields of dementia, reduction of physical restraints, dysphagia, pain management and end-of-life care. In recent years it has become a pioneer in the assessment and treatment of traumas related to operational stress injuries (OSI).

Ste. Anne's Hospital provides care to hundreds of World War Two and Korean War veterans. "This is the only VAC-controlled hospital in the country and it will soon be transferred to provincial authority, outside the reach of VAC," states Mr. Blais. "I visited Ste. Anne's Hospital and saw first-hand the very high standard of care provided to our veteran. How can veterans feel confident that this same level of care and respect will continue without federally-mandated safeguards under new provincial management?"

The Union of Veterans Affairs Employees has also raised serious concerns about the transfer of Ste. Anne's Hospital to the Province of Quebec. They have pointed out that under provincial

control, the hospital would be transformed into a long-term care facility under CSSS. Ste. Anne's Hospital would no longer have an independent Administrative Council focused solely on the stewardship of this veteran-focused centre of excellence – in both geriatric care and the study and treatment of Operational Stress Injuries such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

As Mr. Blais points out, “This is about veterans and the lifetime obligation owed to them. Brave men and women pledge their lives in service to this country. If Ste. Anne's Hospital must be transferred to the province, then there must be tangible safeguards to ensure the standard of care does not suffer. Veterans will no longer accept empty promises from the government.”

About The Canadian Veterans Advocacy

The Canadian Veterans Advocacy is a federally registered not-for-profit organization focused on improving the quality of life for Canadian Veterans. The organization was founded in 2010 by Michael L. Blais, CD. Mike was inspired by former PPCLI Colonel (Ret'd) Pat Stogran, Canada's first Veterans Ombudsman, when he watched the colonel stand up for the rights of Canadian Veterans during an extraordinary press conference in August 2010. Not long after this momentous event, Col Stogran was informed that his tenure as Veterans Ombudsman was over. In November 2010, Mike, along with other military, RCMP and police services veterans united in the first annual Canadian Veterans National Day of Protest. Of primary importance was – and is – the restoration of the Social Contract and Sacred Trust between soldiers and the Nation they serve. The government abandoned its soldiers and this social contract in 2006 when it passed the *New Veterans Charter* which replaced the life-time Disability Pension with an inadequate Lump Sum Disability Award.

INFORMATION

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