

NATO VETERANS ORGANIZATION OF CANADA (NVOC)

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE (JANUARY 2019)

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year

A new Minister of Veterans Affairs (VAC) and Associate Minister of National Defence the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould was appointed on 14 January (<https://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister/honourable-jody-wilson-raybould>). NVOC has sent her a letter congratulating her on her appointment. On 1 April 2019 the implementation of the “new” Pension for Life and several other initiatives will begin. I have included the CANFORGEN related to the Pension for Life (this applies to medically released CF members). The CANFORGEN explains this new policy well. This initiative will require considerable staff effort and will have senior leadership of VAC engaged in getting policy into effect. I doubt if there will be much in the way of “Summits”/consultations between now and the autumn. Expect the periodic DM’s “coffee” to continue with the small and select group of which we are a part.

CANFORGEN 203/18 CMP 101/18 041641Z DEC 18

SUBJ: INTRODUCTION OF PENSION FOR LIFE – IMPACT ON BENEFITS AND

SERVICES FOR MEDICALLY RELEASED VETERANS

1. FOR THE PAST YEAR VAC HAS, AS PART OF EFFORTS TO FURTHER IMPROVE THE VETERANS WELL BEING ACT, OUTLINED THE NEW PENSION FOR LIFE (PFL) INITIATIVE. THE PURPOSE OF THIS CANFORGEN IS TO INFORM CAF MEMBERS THAT EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2019 THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA WILL:

A. REPLACE THE DISABILITY AWARD WITH THE PAIN AND SUFFERING COMPENSATION BENEFIT

B. COMPENSATE CURRENT ELIGIBLE DISABILITY AWARD RECIPIENTS WITH AN ADDITIONAL MONTHLY AMOUNT

C. INTRODUCE THE ADDITIONAL PAIN AND SUFFERING COMPENSATION BENEFIT,

AND

D. CONSOLIDATE SIX FINANCIAL BENEFITS INTO ONE INCOME REPLACEMENT BENEFIT (IRB) IN ADDITION TO INCREASED FINANCIAL SECURITY, AND THE STREAMLINED AND SIMPLIFIED ADMINISTRATION, PFL WILL OFFER A CHOICE FOR CAF MEMBERS AND VETERANS LIVING WITH A SERVICE-RELATED INJURY AND/OR ILLNESS TO DETERMINE THE FORM OF COMPENSATION THAT WORKS BEST FOR THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES

2. THE ABOVE NOTED AMENDMENTS RELATED TO PFL WILL INCLUDE CHANGES THAT MAY IMPACT THE BENEFITS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO CAF MEMBERS RELEASING FOR MEDICAL REASONS. FOR THIS REASON, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL AFFECTED CAF MEMBERS TO UNDERSTAND THE UPCOMING CHANGES RELATED TO PFL

3. CURRENTLY, ALL MEDICALLY RELEASED VETERANS RECEIVE THEIR PRIMARY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, VOCATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND INCOME SUPPORT BENEFITS THROUGH THE CAF LONG TERM DISABILITY (CAF LTD) PLAN. IN ADDITION, ALL MEDICALLY RELEASED VETERANS ARE PROVIDED MEDICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL REHABILITATION SERVICES THROUGH VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA (VAC). THEY ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR VAC S REHABILITATION SERVICES AND VOCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND EARNINGS LOSS BENEFIT (ELB)

4. AS OF APRIL 1, 2019, ALL MEDICALLY RELEASED VETERANS, WHETHER THEIR HEALTH PROBLEM RESULTS PRIMARILY FROM SERVICE OR NOT, WILL CONTINUE TO ACCESS THEIR PRIMARY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, VOCATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND INCOME SUPPORT BENEFITS THROUGH THE CAF LTD PLAN

5. FURTHER, AS OF APRIL 1, 2019, CAF MEMBERS WHO MEDICALLY RELEASE AS A RESULT OF A HEALTH PROBLEM RESULTING PRIMARILY FROM SERVICE WHICH CAUSES A BARRIER TO RE-ESTABLISHMENT IN CIVILIAN LIFE, WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE ACCESS TO VAC S REHABILITATION SERVICES AND VOCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND VAC S NEW IRB

6. THOSE CAF MEMBERS WHO MEDICALLY RELEASE ON OR AFTER MARCH 31, 2019, OR WHO APPLY FOR VAC S REHABILITATION PROGRAM AND VOCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ON OR AFTER APRIL 1, 2019, WHO DO NOT HAVE A HEALTH PROBLEM RESULTING PRIMARILY FROM SERVICE, WILL CONTINUE HAVING ACCCESS TO MEDICAL AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL BUT NOT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO ACCESS MEDICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES FROM VAC AS A TRANSITION MEASURE ONLY UNTIL THESE SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED THROUGH THE CAF LTD PLAN (NO LATER THAN APRIL 1, 2024). THESE VETERANS WILL NOT, HOWEVER, HAVE ACCESS TO VAC S NEW IRB IF THEIR HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE NOT ASSESSED AS RESULTING PRIMARILY FROM SERVICE

7. ANY MEDICALLY RELEASED VETERAN WHO IS ALREADY PARTICIPATING IN EITHER A CAF LTD REHABILITATION PLAN OR A VAC REHABILITATION PLAN PRIOR TO APRIL 1, 2019 WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE THEIR EXISTING REHABILITATION PLAN THROUGH TO COMPLETION

8. ANY VETERAN WHO DEVELOPS, AFTER RELEASE, A HEALTH PROBLEM RESULTING PRIMARILY FROM THEIR MILITARY SERVICE, WHICH CAUSE A BARRIER TO THEIR RE-ESTABLISHMENT IN CIVILIAN LIFE, WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE ACCESS TO VAC S REHABILITATION SERVICES AND VOCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, AS WELL AS VAC S NEW IRB

9. THE JOINT PERSONNEL SUPPORT UNIT (JPSU) IS WORKING IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH VAC TO ASSIST CAF MEMBERS WITH SEAMLESS TRANSITION TO POST-MILITARY LIFE. IN THE COMING DAYS THE JPSU WILL BE CONTACTING, BY LETTER AND PHONE CALLS, ALL CAF MEMBERS WHO WILL MEDICALLY RELEASE OR WHO HAVE RECEIVED AN ADVISORY MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR MILITARY CAREERS ADMINISTRATION INFORMING THEM THAT AN ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF THEIR MEDICAL EMPLOYMENT LIMITATIONS WILL BE CONDUCTED. THE AIM OF THE COMMUNICATION IS TO INFORM THEM OF THE UPCOMING CHANGES AND HOW THESE CHANGES MAY IMPACT THEIR PERSONAL SITUATION SO THAT THEY MAY MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION ABOUT THEIR PENDING RELEASE FROM THE CAF. THE INITIAL FOCUS WILL BE ON THOSE WHO APPEAR TO HAVE HEALTH PROBLEMS NOT CONSIDERED ATTRIBUTABLE PRIMARILY TO THEIR MILITARY SERVICE AS THEY ARE THE ONES MOST LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE NEW VAC PFL INITIATIVE

10. COMMAND TEAMS ACROSS THE CAF WILL NEED TO BE FULLY INFORMED AND ENGAGED ON PFL AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATION FOR THEIR MEMBERS WHO THIS APPLIES TO. IN PARTICULAR, IF AFFECTED MEMBERS OF YOUR UNIT HAVE NOT RECEIVED A LETTER OR BEEN CONTACTED FROM/BY THE JPSU BY 12 DECEMBER 2018, THEY ARE ASKED TO CONTACT THE NEAREST INTEGRATED PERSONNEL SUPPORT CENTRE (IPSC) AT (QUOTE)

[HTTPS://WWW.CANADA.CA/EN/DEPARTMENT-NATIONAL-DEFENCE/SERVICES/BENEFITS-MILITARY/HEALTH-SUPPORT.HTML](https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/health-support.html)

(UNQUOTE)

11. FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE NEW PFL SUITE OF BENEFITS CAN BE FOUND AT (QUOTE) [WWW.VETERANS.GC.CA/ENG/SERVICES/PENSION-FOR-LIFE](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/pension-for-life)(UNQUOTE) AND INORMATION ON THE CAF LTD PLAN IS AVAILABLE AT QUOTE

[HTTPS://WWW.SISIP.COM/EN/INSURANCE/LONG-TERM-DISABILITY/LONG-TERM-DISABILITY-LTD-INSURANCE](https://www.sisip.com/en/insurance/long-term-disability/long-term-disability-ltd-insurance)
UNQUOTE

Communications

Communications is always something that can be improved. This is where things can go wrong, The VAC staff have improved information passage - including better and easier to use website structure and access. They have some clever people working hard to improve their communication with us in the Veteran community. All of us, as members of NVOC, should be aware that within the community of veterans [there

are almost 640,000 veterans of which about 110,000 receive an annuity/pension (includes survivors)] - there are many who do not know that their previous service might entitle them to some degree of support from VAC?

ANECDOTE: One of your Directors lives in a small development outside of Ottawa and has a neighbour who served an initial engagement circa 1960's - he was qualified to drive Main Battle Tanks. He released after three years and went on with life. He is now in his 80's and has some health issues. During casual conversations the neighbour mentioned his service - he did not regard himself as a veteran at all. Referred to a Legion Service Officer - some forms were completed - and this chap now has his hearing aids provided by VAC and he was accepted into the Veterans Independence Program [VIP]. Outdoor yard maintenance is now provided and he very much appreciates this support.

All of us can help get the word out to others who have served and who are not aware of the many new benefits that have been made available these past few years. Great strides have been made in providing needed support for veterans and their families. Our members tell me that there has been a noticeable shift in the "culture" within VAC. The shift is positive and welcome. (And "NO" I have not drunk their Kool-Aid).

VETERANS REVIEW AND APPEAL BOARD [VRAB]

The new [as of summer 2018] Chair of VRAB -Mr Chris McNeil spoke to the Ottawa-Gatineau Unit at their monthly meeting 19 January. He is a retired Police Officer [Deputy Chief Halifax Regional Police] and he is a Lawyer. He described the process for a review of VAC decisions [VRAB is independant of VAC] :

- Review Panel where the Veteran can speak . This is NOT advesarial but is an effort to give the Panel a better understanding of the appeal. The Panel is usually two members. The Bureau of Pension Advocates provide Lawyers helping Veterans [no cost to the veteran];and
- Appeal - second level (three members - none of which were part of the Review Panel).

The process can be overwhelming - imperfect evidence and poor records are a factor. He encourages all veterans to appeal decisions that they are not satisfied with -" one on one" help will be provided.. He was warmly received by our members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: from a member about how the Directors manage financial expenses?

Firstly - your Treasurer [retired CPO1] keeps a very close eye on your money. The custom has been that no Directors make claims for travel and we pay our own way for monthly meetings. If there is an approved expense e.g. a hotel room the Treasurer will pay half. I include some emails that give you all our attitude about making claims from VAC.

From: [Randy Stowell](#)

Sent: Thursday, December 13, 2018 1:29 PM

To: VAC

Cc: XXXX

Subject: Re: Travel Claim - National Stakeholder Summit 29 - 30 October 2018

We will NOT be making any travel claims to VAC. Our organization {NATO Veterans Organization of Canada} pays our own way as a matter of principle...we are not a wealthy organization but we like to attend VAC events at our own expense!

Randy

RandyStowell,CD

National President

NATO Veterans Organization of Canada

From: VAC Staff

Sent: Thursday, December 13, 2018 9:54 AM

To: rg.stowell@sympatico.ca

Cc: XXX

Subject: Travel Claim - National Stakeholder Summit 29 - 30 October 2018

Good Morning Mr. Stowell,

Thank you for attending the National Stakeholder Summit in Ottawa on October 29-30, 2018. I would like to follow up on your travel claim. **As of today, we have not received your travel claim in which you are entitled to. If you have not done so already, could you kindly complete & submit your travel claim in the envelope that was provided to you at meeting?** Please ensure the original receipts are submitted and the form is signed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Stakeholders Engagement & Outreach department either by email or by phone at 1-902-XXX-XXXX

Kind Regards, Laura XXXX

Stakeholder Engagement & Outreach

Veterans Affairs Canada

Tel 1-902-XXX-XXXX

Dear Stakeholders and Advisory Group members,

I am pleased to send this message to ask you to mark your calendars for the next Veterans Affairs Canada Stakeholder Summit, to be held on October 29 and 30, 2018, in Ottawa. An official invitation will follow with further details.

Please contact the Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach team (or XXXX at [902-XXX-XXXX](tel:902-XXX-XXXX) as soon as possible if you will be traveling to the Summit.

The department will cover your costs of travel, accommodation and meals as applicable and in accordance with Treasury Board of Canada directives.

I look forward to seeing you on October 29, 2018.. Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.

Question: "how many disabled veterans are members of NVOC?"

We have not asked our members if they are getting VAC "disability benefits" (I do not think this is a question that we should be asking?). I do know that the majority of Board of Director members do have some level of disability benefit from VAC – and I assume we have many NVOC members who also have some level of benefits. At the last Ottawa-Gatineau meeting I asked the people attending how many were receiving disability benefits from VAC? Over half raised their hands! "A Veteran is a Veteran is a Veteran". Some receive an annuity! most do not. Some are disabled in some way attributable to military service. Some are not. Some Veterans are Indigenous. Some are not. NVOC advocates for all Veterans - and their families. We do have members who are serving and are not yet veterans!

Lots of good people working in support of veterans.

Wishing you all a Happy and healthy year.

Randy

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24 January 2019