



VETERAN VOICE.INFO


Feature: Part 1 - Promises and Expectations

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Veteran Voice.info

VVi is for you, all veterans, regardless of whether you belong to a veteran organization or not. VVi is a distribution centre, a conduit for making sure that the information you need as a veteran is there for you in a timely fashion. Our aim is to provide a forum for *all* Canadian veterans, serving members and their families to have access to information pertaining to veteran rights.

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Promises and Expectations

Perry Grey
Chief Editor VeteranVoice.info (VVi)

This is the first in a series of articles which are my response to an invitation to submit

ideas for the next stakeholders summit 5-6 October. There are a lot of recommendations...and I am sure most will be ignored.

Wow, it did not take Kent Hehr long to demonstrate that the commitments made during the election by the Liberals are false. His decision to send the Equitas class action back to the court room and re-appoint Paul Vickery as the lead government lawyer is a very clear message.

It was a very short span of time from the announcement on 2 May that a letter of assurance was being drafted as a definite indication that the government was honouring its commitment to resolve the case to 18 May when it was announced that Kent Hehr approved a resumption of the legal conflict. What happened in the interim to cause an 180 degree turn in the government's position?

In taking this unexpected turn, Kent Hehr made sure that his boss, Prime Minister Trudeau misspoke every time he used the expression sacred obligation or social covenant with Veterans.

In layman's terms, the Prime Minister lied to all Canadians.

This is what the government intended in its commitments to the Veterans Community: Your overarching goal will be to ensure that our government lives up to our sacred obligation to veterans and their families. I expect you to ensure that veterans receive the respect, support, care, and economic opportunities they deserve. You will ensure that we honour the service of our veterans and provide new career opportunities, make it easier for veterans to access services – including mental health services – and do more to support the families of Canada's veterans. PM J Trudeau

This was what the Equitas Veterans agreed to do in return:

"The veterans promised to drop the litigation if Hehr provided timelines for enacting the priorities outlined in his mandate letter. But, according to Donald Sorochan, the lawyer representing the veterans, the minister has been noncommittal on timelines for implementing key promises, namely when lifetime pensions will be restored." CBC News 18 May, 2016

This is what really happened:

"There is already sufficient evidence of the usual delays and deferrals that plagued the Conservative government of Stephen Harper.

(Hehr) also said he is dedicated to implementing all the items his mandate letter, including lifetime pensions, but said that "veterans' stakeholders have asked us to get this right and not rush.

The fact the Liberal government is now reverting to the same arguments that the Conservatives acknowledged were problematic has exasperated veterans groups.

I am bitterly disappointed that I took some flack for trusting this government and now people are telling me 'I told you so, the government couldn't be trusted.' They were right," Sorochan said. "I think [Hehr's] an inexperienced minister with little background on the veterans affairs file and his chief of staff comes from the insurance industry where this type of approach is common, they're motivated to increase profits," Sorochan said." CBC News 18 May, 2016

The minister has never bothered to explain why the court case had to continue. The deputy minister told me that it was necessary, but I really do not understand the legalese. The minister has to provide a much better explanation and the next summit is a good forum to do so.

I certainly will be asking questions.

Nobody forced the Liberal Party to make "promises" during the 2015 election so including commitments to Veterans was voluntary action, which now seems more like the typical political ploy to win an election than an honest plan of action. Can the government really afford to waste more of our tax dollars fighting some of the most dedicated Canadians? It certainly will disappoint many Canadians, who expect any government to be financially responsible, particularly after expecting Canada to increase its national debt to achieve many of the Liberals' objectives. It is hardly the sort of legacy to pass on to future taxpayers.

What else will Kent Hehr or his replacement do to renege on the commitments of 2015?

I questioned his commitment to his mandate letter in my speech during the stakeholder summit on 9 May. Many may have been dismayed by my belligerence. The minister had the opportunity to respond to my speech. He spoke about achieving all of the 15 commitments in his mandate.

He did not provide a single example of what he has achieved.

I contacted his office to find out exactly what has been done in his first six months. His response is at the end of this article.

On the subject of re-opening the nine VAC offices, the minister has stated that the office in Windsor, Ontario will open within a year according to a letter from his office sent in February, 2016. Yet VAC could not confirm this timeline when asked by CBC News.

Instead of wanting to "get this right", it just seems like more procrastination which will just further alienate the Veterans Community. It did not take VAC more than 18 months to close the nine offices, so why does it take more than 18 months to re-open them.

Either they serve a function or they do not.

If they should not be re-opened in the former locations, then make that clear and provide a reasonable explanation as to why alternates should be selected. Meanwhile why do Veterans have to suffer with long commutes to existing offices? This is a prime example of not following the prime minister's directions:

“make it easier for veterans to access services – including mental health services – and do more to support the families of Canada’s veterans.”

If the government wants to battle Veterans in the law courts, then it should be prepared for more, particularly one based on breach of contract (something that Kent Hehr understands as a veteran lawyer).

“Breach of contract is a legal cause of action in which a binding agreement or bargained-for exchange is not honoured by one or more of the parties to the contract by non-performance or interference with the other party's performance. If the party does not fulfill his contractual promise, or has given information to the other party that he will not perform his duty as mentioned in the contract or if by his action and conduct he seems to be unable to perform the contract, he is said to breach the contract.”

“Failing to perform any term of a contract, written or oral, without a legitimate legal excuse. This may include not completing a job, not paying in full or on time, failure to deliver all the goods, substituting inferior or significantly different goods, not providing a bond when required, being late without excuse, or any act which shows the party will not complete the work ("anticipatory breach"). Breach of contract is one of the most common causes of law suits for damages and/or court-ordered "specific performance" of the contract.” <http://dictionary.law.com>

By repeatedly stating that he recognises that there is a sacred obligation, the prime minister has acknowledge the existence of a contractual obligation, which can be recognised in a court of law. Instead, Canadians are expected to accept failure of delivery of services and goods, the substitution of inferior or significantly different goods and services, being late without excuse, etc.

Veterans should not trust any political party that fails to support its own policies and commitments. Should any Veteran be expected to honour the onerous terms of such legally binding commitments like “universality of service” and “unlimited liability” if the government imposing such conditions of service can repeatedly renege on its responsibilities?

My answer is an emphatic no.

If Kent Hehr is so dedicated to Veterans, why did he accept another appointment as the chair of a special cabinet committee to co-ordinate Fort McMurray aid and reconstruction efforts. With a comfortable majority in the House of Commons, surely

there were equally qualified Liberal MP's who could have been given this position.

It is reminiscent of Jean-Piere Blackburn, who was MVA in 2010-2011, who only accepted the job if he could continue as a minister of state. Neither man seems to be dedicated to any one job, which suggests that they will only do something as long as they get to do what they like.

This is what the Conservative Party considered as its major policies in 2005 before winning the 2006 federal election:

- i) A Conservative Government will treat all veterans with respect and will create a Veteran's Bill of Rights to ensure that all disputes involving veterans are treated quickly, fairly and with the presumption in favour of the rights of the veteran.
- ii) A Conservative Government will ensure the veterans of Canada's wars and peacekeeping operations receive their veterans' benefits and health care in a timely fashion.
- iii) A Conservative Government will conduct a complete review of the veterans' hospitals to ensure that the needs of veterans are being met.
- iv) The Conservative Party would immediately disband the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) and replace the membership with qualified medical and military members who are capable of adjudicating appeals on an informed basis rather than a political basis. The VRAB would be housed in offices separate from VA offices and be in locations as set out in the VA Regional offices (major centres).
- v) The Conservative Party would immediately enlist the services of an Ombudsman with a mandate similar to that of the National Defence Ombudsman.
- vi) The Conservative Party would immediately extend Veterans Independence Program services to the widows of all Second World War and Korean War veterans regardless of when the Veteran died or how long they had been receiving the benefit before they passed away.
- vii) The Conservative Party would examine measures to ensure that National military treasures are retained in Canada as a part of our Canadian heritage.
- viii) The Conservative Party would immediately institute a complete overhaul of Veterans Affairs Canada bringing it online with the needs of today's veterans of conflict and peacekeeping missions. This would include instituting a standard of delivery of services, i.e., reviews, payment of services, etc.

How many of these commitments were accomplished?

Why does the Veterans Community have to accept sub-standard support in return for its services to Canada? The federal government seems content to expect much more from Canadians than Canadians should expect from its government. If that is not a breach of contract, then what is?

Note: This is my e-mail and the minister's response.

Dear Kent,

You had an opportunity to respond to my speech on 9 May. You mentioned that you have achieved some of the objectives from your mandate letter; however, you did not provide any details. Would you please provide those details and a schedule of when Veterans can expect the remainder of your mandate to be completed. If you can not provide this information, then would you please explain why not and what will be required to complete all of your objectives.

I would like to have a preliminary response by 27 May. I plan to write an article about your mandate for publication in early June. If I have not received any information from you, then the article will likely be very critical because it has been hard to find any evidence of what you repeatedly claimed to have accomplished.

*Perry Gray
Editor-in-Chief
Veteranvoice.info*

Kent Hehr's reply:

Perry Gray is a Regular Force veteran, serving as the Chief Editor of VVi. Perry has been with VVi for 13 years.



You Can Help!

All veterans are encouraged to pass information, opinions, links to self-help sites onto VVi. VeteranVoice.info is a distribution centre and we are dependant on others to pass information. This is your site. Tell other veterans about your site.

Email: info@VeteranVoice.info

Facebook Messenger: <https://www.facebook.com/VeteranVoice.info>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VetVoiceinfo>



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(VVi)**

<http://VeteranVoice.info>



VVi Bulletin Board

<http://VeteranVoice.info/bulletinboard.htm>



VVi Database

http://www.veteranvoice.info/db/all_records.asp



VVi CSAT Forum

<http://csat.top-talk.net/>



VVi on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/VeteranVoice.info>



VVi on Twitter

<https://twitter.com/VetVoiceinfo>



**Veteran's Aide
Memoire**

http://veteranvoice.info/archive/aide_memoire/Vet_Aide_Memoire.pdf



Marijuana For Trauma Inc.
VETERANS HELPING VETERANS
**MARIJUANA For Trauma
(MFT)**

<https://mftgroup.ca/>

**National (US) Gulf War
Resources Center, Inc.**

<http://www.ngwrc.org/>



PPCLI
Association
Volunteer Patricia
Program (VPP)

<http://vpp.ppcliassoc.ca>



<http://seanbruyea.com>



<https://www.cfpsa.com/Splashpages/SoldierOn/>



Veterans Affairs **Anciens Co**
Canada **Canada**

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/>

V.E.T.S
Veterans Emergency
Transition Services

<http://www.vetscanada.org/>



Veterans **Ombudsman**
Ombudsman **des vétérans**

<http://www.ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/>



Veterans of Canada
A Community for Canadian He

<http://veteransofcanada.ca/>



Wounded Warriors
Fund

<http://www.woundedwarriors.ca/>