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Feature: Breach Of Trust or Selling a Pig's Ear as a Silk Purse

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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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CONSULTING WITH VETERANS



Breach Of Trust or Selling a Pig's Ear as a Silk Purse

By Perry Gray

“How can you tell when a politician is lying? When his [or her] lips move.”

Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs and his deputy, Walt Natynczyk, have had plenty of practice moving their lips as they discuss their new “Pension for Life” with Canadian Veterans. They have done so over 40 times in the past year at town halls, regional summits and most recently a national summit.

All of these activities have been part of the national consultation process before the pension starts in 2019. Both men will say that this has been a very thorough consultation.

Many Veterans will disagree because their input has been ignored. You only have to read Brian Forbes or Sean Bruyeva's articles to understand how insignificant has been the “contribution” of Veterans.

When Veterans attending the national summit complained about this, the minister and his deputy ignored them.

Ironically, both men expect the Veterans who have spent years providing advice on this pension to continue to provide advise in the future.

Sadly no one got outraged at the national summit and many were also shocked to learn that the advisory groups, which have been largely ignored during the development of the new pension, and have been inactive since early 2017 (despite being told that groups would be several times each year to discuss policy) are still considered to be “in operation”.

But all is well because Veterans will receive the pension plan soon even though it bear little resemblance to what was expected.

To understand the completely different perceptions of Veterans Affairs and Canadian Veterans, one has to delve into the byzantine policy development process of the federal government.

The Liberal Party announced that it would “reinstate the life long pension” during the 2015 election. Both Liberal ministers, Kent Hehr and Seamus O’Reagan were given detailed mandate letters, which included the following statement:

“Re-establish lifelong pensions as an option for our injured Veterans, while ensuring that every injured Veteran has access to financial advice and support so that they can determine the form of compensation that works best for them and their families.”

Now it is important to consider the words that are used. First, the intent was to re-instate and then it was to re-establish. People may see these as meaning the same thing, but policy makers would argue otherwise.

Let us consider one definition for re-establish:

to return something to an earlier good condition or position

So what preceded the new pension plan?

The only pension provided to Veterans is contained in the Pension Act, which was developed during World War 2. For many Veterans, this has been used as the baseline for discussions about pensions.

Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government decided to modernise the antiquated Pension Act and developed the New Veterans Charter, which is now used almost exclusively by Veterans Affairs in its policy development since 2006. The only problem is that there is no pension in the NVC, only a lump sum.

Basically, the old pension was replaced by a one time payment or lump sum. When Veterans complained that this was unfair, Veterans Affairs slowly began to consider another option. This was during the period in which the Conservative Party formed the government.

One idea that was offered was to pay the lump sum over a longer period of time. And this was debated up until 2015 when the Liberals won the election and decided that a pension was a good idea, but it could not appear to be like the Conservative proposal.

Unfortunately, bureaucrats and politicians decided that re-establishing the Pension Act was not going to happen because it conflicted with the NVC. The Pension Act was now some heretical thing that needed to be expunged from the policy dogma.

The new pension may look like a modification of the Conservative proposal, but Seamus O'Reagan will argue that it is not despite the fact that his deputy was developing the plan when he was first appointed in 2014.

What is really appalling about this whole story is that Canadian Veterans have experienced it all before with the NVC. The implementation was almost identical; Veterans Affairs develops policy with minimal input from stakeholders, and then tries to convince Canadians that stakeholders were instrumental in the development.

How gullible do the minister and his deputy think that the majority of Veterans are? Have they never hear of the old expression fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame me.

As well do the two men really think that Veterans will continue to trust them after violating their trust, being grossly disrespectful and exploiting their loyalty?

If yes, now who is really gullible???

Editor's Note: This was written before the cabinet shuffle was announced.

Perry Gray is a Regular Force veteran, serving as the Chief Editor of VVi. Perry has been with VVi for 18 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.

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(MFT)**

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



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**Association
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Sean Bruyea

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