

Mr. Mark Strahl, MP

Chilliwack-Fraser Canyon

House of Commons

Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Sir,

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you on 17 Dec 2014 and once again address the subject of the disbandment of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. This month marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the disbandment announcement by the Liberal Government's Minister of National Defense David Colonette.

For the thousands of veterans who served the Airborne Regiment with such selfless dedication and professionalism, the disbandment anniversary generates once again a remembrance of a bitterly harsh, unprecedented political decision that in effect punished the entire Airborne Regimental family for the shortcomings of a few. Indeed it was not just those who wore the Maroon Beret who suffered the public indignation of a disbandment order that directly implied the Airborne Regiment was an undisciplined, rogue Regiment whose behavior and conduct violated Canadian values and sensibilities, but it also deeply affected the families and extended families of those who served.

Our conversations have shown me that you are not only sympathetic to those victimized by the action taken January 1995 but that you and the Conservative Government disagreed with the disbandment decision. This view is reinforced in the letter then Minister of National Defence Peter Mackay wrote to you 9 Feb 2012 when he states "the former government's decision to disband the Canadian Airborne Regiment was a mistake that reduced the Canadian Forces (CF) core capabilities".

I clearly understand that since disbandment the CF has undergone structural changes to incorporate some of the Airborne Regiment's capabilities in organizations such as infantry regiment jump companies and the Canadian Special Operations Regiment. Although I do not believe this reconstitutes what the Airborne Regiment provided in capability, I recognize it is the CF's current leadership who will make decisions on structure that they think best meets the mix of operational challenges facing the CF.

In this regard I wish to emphasize that my interest is not to interfere with decision making of those serving now and thus I am not lobbying for the reinstatement of the Canadian Airborne Regiment (although I believe there is a sound argument for its' reinstatement). Rather my concern, as the last Commander of the Airborne Regiment, is to give a voice to all those soldiers who served so honorably under my command and under previous Regimental Commanders. Specifically, I respectfully request on their behalf, that our government publicly state that the disbandment of the Airborne Regiment 20 years ago was wrong and that the Government wishes to recognize the highly professional service of Airborne veterans to this country throughout the 27 year history of the Airborne Regiment.

Sir, I ask that you vigorously pursue this matter with our new Minister of Veterans Affairs. I cannot emphasize enough how important this matter is to Airborne veterans. For all of us who stood on the parade square following the retirement of the Airborne Regiment's Colours, March 1995 and for the many hundreds of veterans who watched the end of everything they so firmly believed in, the past two decades have been difficult ones. Little is being asked for; simply a few words that correct an historical wrong.

I am very grateful for your ongoing support.

Respectfully

Col (Ret'd) Peter G. Kenward

Last Commander Canadian Airborne Regiment