

Minister
of Veterans Affairs



Ministre
des Anciens Combattants

MAY 25 2016

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0P4

Perry Gray
Editor-in-Chief
Veteranvoice.info

Dear Mr. Gray,

Allow me to thank you for attending the Stakeholder Summit on May 9, 2016, your attendance helped shape a number of the conversations that were held that day and the next. Additionally, I really appreciated your remarks and I do think that meaningful consultation means hearing every point of view - critical or otherwise.

You've asked me to outline what we are accomplishing right now and I'm glad to do that.

In Budget 2016, we announced \$5.6 billion in measures to support the financial security of Veterans and their families. This includes:

- increasing the Earnings Loss Benefit from 75% to 90% of a Veteran's pre-release salary and removing the indexation cap to allow the benefit to keep pace with inflation
- changing the Permanent Impairment Allowance to the Career Impact Allowance, to better reflect the intention of the benefit and improve access to the various grade levels
- increasing the Disability Award from \$310,000 to \$360,000
- re-opening the 9 Veterans Affairs offices closed by the previous government and opening an additional office in Surrey, British Columbia and offering mobile services in the North
- hiring more staff to move the case worker to Veteran ratio towards 25:1
- expanding access to funeral and burial assistance by increasing the estate exemption from approximately \$12,000 to \$35,000

Canada

Most of these items are contained within the Budget Implementation Act or are subject to Treasury Board authority and will be implemented in the coming year. It took a lot of hard work, but I'm pleased that we have been able to move these markers in the first few months of our new mandate.

The remaining items in my mandate letter are still vital and my department and I are working to implement them over the coming years of our mandate.

One thing that has been made clear, especially when it comes to the pension option, is that we need to take the time to get it right.

To accomplish this we will continue to consult with Veterans through the 6 Ministerial Advisory Groups and larger Stakeholder Summits like the one we just had. We need this feedback to build, cost and deliver these programs and benefits.

I want to close by thanking you for your service and for your continued advocacy on behalf of Veterans. I look forward to continuing a constructive dialogue with you as we deliver on the remainder of this aggressive mandate for our service men and women and their families.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K. Hehr', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Kent Hehr, P.C., MP