

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Correcting the Record on Veterans Affairs

There has been a great deal of misinformation on the issue of changes to Veterans Affairs Canada service locations.

The fact is that Canada's Veterans are far better served today than at any other time in history. With the new expansion of service options, Veterans can now access services locally instead of having to travel, in some cases, great distances. Veterans in Newmarket-Aurora for example, wishing a face-to-face meeting, can do so at the Newmarket Service Canada office located at 18183 Yonge Street instead of travelling to Toronto.

Before the change, there were 68 points of service for Veterans throughout the entire country, including 35 operated by Veterans Affairs Canada. Now, there are 644 points of service including 27 operated by Veterans Affairs Canada and 584 operated by Service Canada. Each Service Canada location has workers specially trained and knowledgeable in services for Veterans.

Unfortunately, national media has confused the reduction of eight lightly-used Veterans Affairs Canada office points of service with a lessening of total services. The reality, however, is that the issue of office staff relocation is not a reduction in any way of services for Veterans and in fact, is quite the opposite. Annual funding to Veterans is now \$3.64 Billion compared to just \$2.8 Billion when our Conservative Government took office.

Since 2006, our government has invested nearly \$4.7 billion in new funding to enhance benefits, programs and services for Veterans. Year over year, our spending on support and services has continued to increase as a marked demonstration of our deep commitment to delivering for Veterans.

While 90% of Veterans come home without any need from Veterans Affairs, not all make a smooth transition and some become at-risk or homeless. Our government is dedicated to helping ensure that all of our Veterans get the assistance they need and deserve.

For these Veterans, our government has made a series of improvements to the Enhanced New Veterans Charter which provides a comprehensive suite of tools and help to meet their needs. These benefits include:

? Income replacement that ensures their annual income does not fall below 75% of their pre-release military salary with the minimum pre-tax salary being set at \$42,426.

? An additional monthly financial benefit of up to \$1,709.27 for those that suffer from lost job opportunities because of permanent and severe injuries. In the event that a Veteran has been severely injured in the service of Canada and cannot find suitable employment on a permanent basis because of those injuries, an additional monthly support of \$1,047.53 is available.

? Those that have completed rehabilitation and are able to work but have not been able to find a job, or have a low-paying job, may also receive a tax-free monthly payment of up to \$2,593.32 plus an additional \$328.64 per dependent child.

? A one-time, tax-free award for injuries up to a maximum of \$298,587.97.

? Up to \$194.45 per month for wear and tear on specially maintained clothing to support a disability.

In addition, veterans and their families may benefit from a range of other programs offered by Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence.

We are also partnering with community-based organizations to help deliver services to our most vulnerable Veterans. We have increased the number of case workers in the regions where Veterans need them most and have opened 17 Operational Stress Injury Clinics and 24 Integrated Personnel Support Centres near Canadian Forces Bases and in major city centres right across the country. Our new Hardhats Program is designed to assist Veterans' transition to private life and we have doubled Government contribution rates to the Burial Services Fund.

Our government will continue to work hard to serve our Veterans as well as they have served Canada.

Thank you, Frank

As has been reported in The Auroran, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees will be stepping away from public service at the end of his term.

I would like to add my appreciation to Frank for all he has done for his constituents and all Ontarians throughout the years. He will be greatly missed and will be leaving very big shoes to fill. Until that time, however, I know he will be giving 110% to his community as he always has. Our offices continue to work hard together on your behalf, and I will continue to do so with whomever is elected as Member of Provincial Parliament for Newmarket-Aurora.

If you would like to contact me on any issue, please call 905-953-7515 or visit my website at www.loisbrown.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.