

## **Media Report 18 October 2019,**

**This weeks media reports will cover and answer great questions veterans are asking such as the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Process. Getting help paying for healthcare services and expenses related to your health needs to you as a member or former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and local Media Articles.**

## **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)**

Options available to you as a member or former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

### **Disability pension programs and services**

Financial payments provided for a service-related illness or injury.

### **Medical costs**

Get help paying for healthcare services and expenses related to your health needs.

### **You and your family**

Services for you and your family when you leave the RCMP.

### **Talk to a professional now**

Get support right now from a mental health professional by calling 1-800-268-7708.

## **Questions Ref the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Process**

### **What does the Veterans Review and Appeal Board do?**

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board is the arm's-length tribunal that provides an independent avenue of appeal for disability benefits decisions made by Veterans Affairs Canada ( VAC, the Department). The Board offers Veterans two levels of redress: a Review hearing; and, if the Veteran remains dissatisfied, an Appeal hearing.

## **How is the Board different than Veterans Affairs Canada?**

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board is an entirely separate and independent organization from Veterans Affairs Canada. Our mission is to provide timely, respectful hearings and fair, plain-language decisions to those who turn to us for redress of their disability benefits decisions.

## **Who can apply to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board?**

Anyone who is dissatisfied with a Veterans Affairs Canada decision on disability benefits can apply to the Board for an independent review of that decision.

## **What kind of decisions can be appealed to the Board?**

The following kinds of decisions can be appealed to the Board:

- Disability pension
- Disability award
- War Veterans Allowance
- Critical Injury Benefit
- Special awards (Exceptional Incapacity Allowance; Attendance Allowance; Clothing Allowance)

## **How do I apply to the Board?**

If you are considering appealing a Veterans Affairs Canada decision to the Board, you should contact the Bureau of Pensions Advocates ( BPA) to discuss your case. The BPA is an organization of lawyers who offer free legal representation to Veterans when they come to the Board. Some Veterans organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, also provide free representation.

Your representative will make the application to the Board on your behalf.

## **Review**

### **What is a Review hearing?**

The Review hearing is the first level of redress offered by the Board. It is the Veteran's only opportunity in the disability benefits adjudication process to appear before decision-makers and tell their story in their own words.

Review hearings are conducted by panels of two Board Members in locations across the country. Here, the Veteran and their representative have the opportunity to present evidence and arguments, give oral testimony, and bring witnesses in support of the case. Board Members will listen and ask questions to clarify the case and to help them make a fair and informed decision. The Board's process is non-adversarial, which means no one is arguing against the Veteran or defending the Veterans Affairs Canada decision under review. Hearings are recorded, and this audio recording is made available to the Veteran upon request.

Veterans have access to free legal counsel through the Bureau of Pensions Advocates ( BPA), and are reimbursed for their travel costs to attend their hearings.

## **What kind of evidence do I need?**

Visit our [Evidence Requirements](#) page for detailed information on this subject.

## **What happens after the Review hearing?**

After the hearing, Board Members discuss the information and arguments of the case to make a decision. They conduct a thoughtful analysis of all available information (i.e. oral testimony, medical reports, opinion evidence from experts, written statements, etc.) and discuss the merits of the case, bearing in mind the requirement to resolve any doubt in the weighing of evidence in favour of the Veteran. If the two panel members disagree, the decision most favourable to the Veteran stands.

## **How long does it take to receive a Review decision?**

The Board is required by law to prepare written reasons to inform Veterans of how and why the decision has been made. These are written by the Board Members who heard the case, processed at the Board's office in Charlottetown, and usually mailed within six weeks of the hearing. This time is needed to ensure decisions are well-reasoned and clearly written.

## **How long does the Review process take?**

On average, it takes 6 months from the time your representative submits your Review application to the Board until you receive a decision.

## **How do I request a Review Hearing?**

If you are considering appealing a Veterans Affairs Canada decision to the Board, you should contact the Bureau of Pensions Advocates ( BPA) to discuss your case. The BPA is an organization of lawyers who offer free legal representation to Veterans when they come to the Board. Some Veterans organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, also provide free representation.

Your representative will make the application to the Board on your behalf.

## **What if I am dissatisfied with my Review decision?**

If you are dissatisfied with your Review decision, you can request an Appeal hearing which is the second and final level of redress.

# **Appeal**

## **What is an Appeal hearing?**

While the legislation does not permit oral testimony at this level, the Appeal hearing provides a further opportunity for a Veteran, through their representative, to submit new information and make arguments in support of their case.

Appeal hearings are conducted primarily in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island by panels of three Board Members who did not hear the same case at Review.

Appeal decisions are final and binding.

## **What kind of evidence do I need?**

Visit our [Evidence Requirements](#) page for detailed information on this subject.

## **What happens after the Appeal hearing?**

After the hearing, Board Members discuss the information and arguments of the case to make a decision. They conduct a thoughtful analysis of all available information (i.e. medical reports, opinion evidence from experts, written statements, etc.) and discuss the merits of the case, bearing in mind the requirement to resolve any doubt in the weighing of evidence in favour of the Veteran.

## **How long does it take to receive an Appeal decision?**

The Board is required by law to prepare written reasons to inform Veterans of how and why the decision has been made. These are prepared at the Board's office in Charlottetown and usually mailed within six weeks of the hearing. This time is needed to ensure decisions are well-reasoned and clearly written.

## **How long does the Appeal process take?**

On average, it takes 4 months from the time your representative submits your Appeal application to the Board until you receive a decision.

## **How do I request an Appeal Hearing?**

If you are considering appealing your Veterans Review and Appeal Board Review decision, you should contact the Bureau of Pensions Advocates ( BPA) to discuss your case. The BPA is an organization of lawyers who offer free legal representation to Veterans when they come to the Board. Some Veterans organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, also provide free representation.

Your representative will make the application to the Board on your behalf.

## **What if I am not satisfied with an Appeal decision?**

If you are dissatisfied with a final-and-binding Appeal decision, you can apply to the Board for a Reconsideration (i.e. a reopening of the case) if new, credible, and relevant evidence comes to light at a later date, or if an error in fact or law is found in the Appeal decision.

If you have exhausted all your redress options at the Board and remain dissatisfied, you have the right to apply to the Federal Court of Canada for a judicial review of the decision.

## **Other**

### **Can I have my file referred back to the Minister/Department?**

As per sections [18](#) and [26](#) of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act, the Board has full and exclusive jurisdiction to hear reviews and appeals of disability pension and award decisions made by Veterans Affairs Canada.

To preserve the independence of the appeal process, [Sections 85](#) and [86](#) of the Pension Act and the Veterans Well-being Act, respectively, prohibit the Minister/Department from considering an

application that has already been heard by the Board. However, these sections allow the Board to give permission to the Minister/Department to reconsider a matter in exceptional circumstances where the requester has given a clear justification for a new first-level decision.

Here are some examples of why the Board has given this permission:

- Changes in medical-scientific understanding of the causation of a condition;
- Changes in legislation;
- A new basis for, or issue in an application that has not yet been considered by the Minister/Department; and
- Relevant new jurisprudence.

This exceptional process is not a remedy for Veterans who are dissatisfied with the Board's decisions or who have new evidence to support their case. The options for recourse for these Veterans would depend on the level of the last Board decision, and may include applying for an Appeal hearing or a reconsideration (based on new evidence or an error in fact or law).

Click [here](#) for more information.

## **What is a compassionate award? Am I eligible to apply for one?**

Compassionate awards are made under [section 34](#) of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act, and are an extraordinary remedy that fall outside the usual appeal process.

A Veteran can apply for a compassionate award if they have exhausted redress procedures at the Board for an application under the Pension Act or part 3 of the Veterans Well-being Act, and if their case is meritorious and they are in financial need.

The Board has issued a leading and persuasive decision that reviews the legislation and sets out the criteria for compassionate awards. The decision identifies a set of principles that will tend to be applied by the Board when considering these applications. You can read the summary [here](#) and the full decision [here](#).

If you think you might be eligible to apply for a compassionate award, you should [contact your representative](#) for advice.

## **When does the Board obtain an independent medical opinion?**

When Board members hear a case, they may identify a gap or issue in the medical evidence brought forward by the Veteran. In this situation, their first step is to raise it with the representative and ask them to address it. It is the Veteran's responsibility to provide evidence to establish their case, and representatives have resources to help them with this.

If the Board members still feel that the gap or issue is unresolved, they may decide to obtain an independent medical opinion. [Section 38](#) of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act allows the Board to do this. It is a discretionary authority, which means it is up to the Board to decide whether it needs this kind of additional information to help clarify medical evidence in individual cases.

An independent medical opinion may be helpful in a case involving:

- A specialized area of medicine not ordinarily seen by the Board;
- A new type of application or medical condition; or
- An ambiguity raised by the evidence.

## How are independent medical opinions used?

When the Board asks for an independent medical opinion in a Veteran's case, it identifies specific issue(s) and questions related to that Veteran's unique facts and circumstances. The expert's opinion, then, is a review of the Veteran's case/documentation: it is not generally applicable to other Veterans and does not represent general medical information.

Before accepting an independent medical opinion as evidence in the file, the Board shares it with the Veteran and their representative and gives them an opportunity to make arguments and/or submissions on the issue.

Click [here](#) to read independent medical opinions requested by the Board.

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## Napanee pays tribute to military veterans with banners in downtown core

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Global News

There was a round of applause from members of Napanee's Legion Branch 137, the public and the town's mayor as the first veteran memorial banner was raised along Dundas Street recently. Each banner has the name of a veteran, their picture and the conflict they served in. The first banner raised of 33 now lining Napanee's main street was Howard John O'Connor's. [READ MORE](#)

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## Alberta calls on Ottawa to reverse military health funding change

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CBC News

Alberta Health Minister Tyler Shandro is calling on the federal government to reverse a decision that will see provinces pick up more of the cost of treating members of the military for medical operations and other health care. Shandro says the Alberta government was not consulted about the change, which will cost the province about \$2 million per year. Last year, the province budgeted to spend more than \$22 billion on health care. [READ MORE](#)

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## Importante simulation militaire à l'Université de Sherbrooke

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Radio-Canada

Militaires, policiers et pompiers sont mobilisés samedi avant-midi dans le secteur du parc technologique de l'Université de Sherbrooke. Une importante simulation militaire est organisée par la 52e Ambulance de campagne de la réserve de l'Armée canadienne. Plus de 140 militaires, majoritairement du corps médical, participent à l'opération. [LIRE PLUS](#)

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## 2 sappers killed, 4 injured in explosion in south Poland

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The First News

Two sappers lost their lives and four were injured, including two seriously, in an explosion that took place recently in a forest near the south-Polish town of Kuznia Raciborska, the Polsat News TV channel has reported, quoting the Government Security Centre. The soldiers were defusing the unexploded munition that had been discovered three days earlier. [READ MORE](#)

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## Veterans Parkway dedicated in Sarnia

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Sarnia Observer

A four-kilometre stretch of Highway 40 through Sarnia was recently dubbed Veterans Parkway in honour and memory of local service personnel. Vijay Thanigasalam, the parliamentary assistant to Minister of Transportation Caroline Mulroney, unveiled a sign at Sarnia's Heritage Park recently for the dedication of this highway span between Plank Road and Highway 402. [READ MORE](#)

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## **UBC Okanagan awarded \$1.5 million to develop comfortable bulletproof clothing**

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CTV News Vancouver

Researchers at the University of British Columbia are testing out new textile technologies to create lighter and more comfortable protective gear. The university's Okanagan campus was awarded \$1.5 million to develop the high-performance body armour, intended for the Canadian Armed Forces. The funding was provided by the Department of National Defence, as part of their security program. [READ MORE](#)

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## **Un vétéran de la Seconde Guerre mondiale fête 100 ans**

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Le Soleil de Chateauguay

Le 18 octobre, le vétéran Garnet Elias Bourgaize, de Châteauguay, fêtera son 100e anniversaire de naissance. Entretien avec un centenaire bien allumé. [LIRE PLUS](#)

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## **Ottawa International Airport tests new anti-drone technology**

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Ottawa Citizen

The Ottawa International Airport will test new drone detection technology in an effort to counter the threat posed by the proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicles. The year-long pilot project will evaluate the accuracy and speed of a radar-based drone detection system, which needs to be in place before another system to bring down UAVs can be introduced. [READ MORE](#)

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## **Free mental health first aid course for veterans, RCMP coming to Cranbrook**

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Trail Daily Times

A free mental health first aid course is coming to the Kootenays for the first time, offering valuable skills to medically released veterans and RCMP, their family members, and anyone who provides service to them. According to a press release from The Mainland BC Military Family Resource Centre (BCMFRC), a range of mental health issues will be covered by the course, including mood, anxiety, trauma-related, psychotic and substance abuse disorders. [READ MORE](#)

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## **Ghost town soldiers' graves not forgotten**

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Pacific Navy News

For the fourth year in a row, a No Stone Left Alone Remembrance Ceremony was held in Anyox, B.C., to ensure soldiers from the First World War buried in the now-abandoned town are not forgotten. Organized by the Stewart Canadian Ranger Patrol, 11 Junior Canadian Rangers from the Stewart and Telwka Junior Canadian Ranger Patrols, along with local Canadian Rangers, travelled by helicopter to Anyox for the event. [READ MORE](#)

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## **Veterans Affairs planning a pilgrimage to the Netherlands 2020: Deadline extended**

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CMEA

The Colonel Commandant is seeking to nominate a WW II Royal Canadian Engineer veteran to join a Veterans Affairs pilgrimage to The Netherlands in May 2020. This Sapper would have participated in the actions leading to the Liberation of Holland in May 1945.

See: <https://cmea-agmc.ca/pilgrimage-netherlands-2020>

If you know such a veteran who is interested in participating and is in good health, please submit his name and his WW II unit to Ken Holmes at: [history.heritage@cmea-agmc.ca](mailto:history.heritage@cmea-agmc.ca) by 25 Oct 2019.

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## **Anciens Combattants Canada pèlerinage aux Pays-Bas 2020**

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AGMC

Le colonel commandant cherche à désigner un ancien combattant du génie royal canadien de la Seconde Guerre mondiale qui se joindra à un pèlerinage d'Anciens Combattants aux Pays-Bas en mai 2020. Ce sapeur aurait participé aux actions menant à la libération de la Hollande en mai 1945.

Voir: <https://cmea-agmc.ca/fr/pelerinage-aux-pays-bas-2020>

Si vous connaissez un ancien combattant intéressé à participer et en bon état, veuillez soumettre son nom et son unité de la Seconde Guerre mondiale à Ken Holmes à l'adresse: [history.heritage@cmea-agmc.ca](mailto:history.heritage@cmea-agmc.ca) avant le 25 octobre 2019.

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## **Veteran Build Day**

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Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity Greater Ottawa would like to invite you to join us for our 2019 Veteran Build Day. Local military organizations and Habitat Greater Ottawa are joining forces to bring together a diverse team of volunteers to help build homes alongside local families in need of affordable housing

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## **MCpl Burles (Ret'd) and the Canadian Walk for Veterans**

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Canadian Military Family Magazine

The second Annual Canadian Walk for Veterans will be taking place across Canada on Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019. The walk is a nation-wide event in support of veterans and the challenges they face after service. [READ MORE](#)

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## **Un ingénieur a besoin de votre aide**

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AGMC

L'épouse, la belle-mère et le fils de 20 mois du caporal Brent Dewell, du 32e CER de Toronto, ont été frappés par un délit de fuite alors qu'ils attendaient à un passage pour piétons alors qu'ils se dirigeaient vers l'église, dimanche matin. Un suspect a été nommé.

La section de l'AGMC – Toronto a un appui en place et l'Exécutif national a également approuvé le soutien.

De plus, le Cpl Dewell a créé une page GoFundMe et tout soutien des membres de la famille CME serait grandement apprécié. [LIRE PLUS](#)

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## **The Last of the Few Good Men of Normandy**

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CMEA

Sapper Albert Richard Wells (Ret'd) passed away peacefully on 21 July 2019 at his home in Kamloops BC, three months shy of his 104th birthday. Albert was a veteran of the Second World War and was the last known surviving D-Day veteran of the 6th Field Company, RCE. Today 6th Field Company RCE is perpetuated by 6 Engineer Squadron of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment. [READ MORE](#)