

Media Report 07 May 2021

This week's media reports will cover and answer great questions veterans are still asking such as Frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 in Ottawa. Due to ongoing and evolving COVID-19 pandemic callers may experience increased wait times when calling the Government of Canada Pension Center. Callers may also experience dropped calls, as all telecommunication networks across Canada are presently facing capacity challenges. and local Media Articles and An illness or injury can have an impact on your ability to adjust to life after service. We all need healthcare services. The Treatment benefits program provides coverage for a variety of benefits and services to help you get—and stay healthy. Have you made an application for disability benefits from Veterans Affairs Canada and received a decision? If you disagree with that decision, you have the right to review or appeal i

Tracking every case of COVID-19 in Canada

Active COVID-19 cases: 81,469 |
Recovered: 1,151,207 | Deceased: 24,450 |
Total: 1,257,328

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/tracking-every-case-of-covid-19-in-canada-1.4852102>

Canada

% of total population vaccinated (at least one dose)	% of eligible population vaccinated (16 years and older)	Total doses administered
35.24%	42.43%	14,568,067
+0.67%	+0.80%	+283,833

First doses	Second doses	Received from manufacturer	Received doses administered
13,394,105	1,173,962	16,757,084	86.94%
+253,110	+30,723	+43,452	+1.47%

Population numbers from [Statistics Canada](#). Read more about the [vaccines approved for use in Canada](#).

NEW DELHI

The number of new confirmed cases breached 400,000 for the second time since the devastating surge began last month. The 412,262 cases pushed India's tally to more than 21 million. The Health Ministry also reported 3,980 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 230,168. Experts believe both figures are an undercount.

NVOC PRESIDENTS REPORT ON A VAC DM'S "COFFEE CLUB" MEETING – "VIMY RIDGE DAY" 9 APRIL 2021

A meeting of Veteran advocates and the VAC DM and senior staff was held "virtually" [Microsoft "Teams"] on Friday 9 April 2021 from 1030 to 1230hrs.

My "Observations" follow:

- Attendance at these events has grown. When I first attended four years ago, the advocates could fit into the DM's office (Legion; ANAVETS ; Peacekeepers [two groups], Brian Forbes ; Aboriginal Veterans and ourselves. At this meeting there were 18 different Veteran "voices". Some of the new groups are "RAINBOW" Veterans ; The Defence Team PRIDE Group ; Women in Defence ; RCMP Veterans ; The National Association of Federal Retirees ; "Soldiers helping Soldiers" ; Persian Gulf Veterans ; RWANDA Veterans, and others.

COMMENT: the challenge will be to speak with one voice for Veterans. NVOC has always been keen on "A Veteran is A Veteran". There are now special interest groups within the Veterans community.

- The DM recognized Vimy Ridge celebrations and also the passing of The Duke of Edinburgh. We are all deep into the COVID-19 "third Wave" and must all continue to be safe and cautious. Get Vaccinated.
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is the new term that was a very "Hot" issue for several. Harassment and discrimination are a concern. VAC will accept disability claims for MST on face value and will accept what is described. About 75% of claims are from females and 25% are from males. There is a need for peer support programs [New Requirement]. This is a moral injury.. New resources are coming within the CAF to address MST – duty to respect.
- VAC continues to shrink the backlog of disability claims – they now have over 350 new, trained , staff working to adjudicate claims –they are referred to as "SPIKE Teams". VAC is well aware of the "wait time" issue for Veterans. They continue to receive about 1500 telephone calls per day.
- VAC has completed a Veterans Survey 2020 [will be posted on their website]. The last survey was 2017. Lots of statistics on how well the service delivery is going! No surprise that the younger Veterans are the least satisfied.
- The Veterans Emergency Fund is distributing about \$1.5 M each year – about 75% of applications are approved within 48 hours.(NOTE to Ted This should be highlighted in one of our weekly reports.)
- Communications with VAC continue to seek Veteran engagement. They have a new program "Lets Talk" [new to me!]. Their monthly newsletter is available on line – you just need to sign up. The Canadian Census [available in May] will have a Veteran identifier – the first time since 1971,

- The RCMP had three attendees and they are going through much the same issues and concerns as is the CAF. They did raise the issue of marriage after age 60 which is a concern to some of our members.
- The Legion has closed all Branches in Alberta and Ontario - some are open in the Maritimes and Saskatchewan. They will conduct a "Virtual" Dominion Convention 13 to 15 August. They are doing a study on inclusiveness and diversity that should report mid summer, and they are taking a fresh look at the conduct of the annual Poppy campaign,
- Ministerial Advisory Groups can anticipate an "announcement" soon.
- The class action lawsuit related to Veterans service at Saint Anne's is nearing resolution. Of interest is that the 18 Veterans Hospitals that once existed now have the roughly 4000 Veterans in Long Term Care in over 1000 facilities across the nation. Veterans want to be "close to home".
- An exciting new member is from "Treble Victor" a business networking group that makes effort to hire Veterans. They are promoting a "Buy from Veterans" program for veterans in business. Their mission is to enable ex-military leaders to achieve their full potential in the marketplace, through our common values, teamwork, mentorship and our network's connectivity.<https://treblevictor.org/>
- NVOC items were:

- to ask about a "COVID" Dividend [similar to the Peace Dividend] where all Departments will be asked to return resources to the centre to help pay the debt. Our concern that progress made in wait times will be impacted by future cost cutting efforts and "Diminishing Budgets"?.DM's response was that the Government respects it's "statutory obligations";

- another group had asked about lack of response to letters to the Minister? I also asked about the NVOC letter sent May 2020 to the Minister without a reply. I will recirculate the letter to Directors and Senior Advisors.(The letter dealt with CF98 and the Reservist; Environmental damage incurred due to service; the claim adjudication process amongst other issues); The DM said that he would investigate this issue

- NVOC has maintained our priority of effort to be Long Term Care (LTC) for Veterans and their families – with an emphasis upon keeping the Veteran "at home" for as long as is possible. The current pandemic has highlighted flaws in the "Institutionalized" LTC that Veterans are confronted with – the main flaw being high orders of death! Approximately 2000 veterans are in 463 LTC facilities that have had outbreaks. About 86 veterans have tested positive for COVID-19. NVOC advocates for reference to "people" NOT "Beds. We advocate forspending more on home care than institutional care. Perhaps there is a place for a system that calls for people to be cared for in their homes as long as possible, even as people lose functioning capabilities? .The money follows the person -instead of funding being assigned to a bed, funding is assigned to an individual, who has the choice of how to use the money within certain parameters. The VIP program is a wonderful benefit for those eligible Veterans.

There were some dynamic moments during this meeting! Not every one is finding joy in their work!

A REPEAT OF AN EMAIL FROM ONE OF OUR MEMBERS FROM THE LONDON, ONTARIO AREA:

I don't wish to stretch this out into a lengthy Email, but a couple of years ago, (Mar 2019) a topic came to my attention through the media of an article in the Toronto Star dealing with the service career of a Wolf William Solkin. At the time, I was busy putting together my second booklet dealing with little known stories concerning the Great Wars, following a 5 year NATO posting over to Europe during my Service Career in the 60's, as well as 3 personal Tours of the Normandy Beaches overseas, 2 of them taken with the Legion. This story "THE ENEMY WITHIN" concerning this Veteran, and the difficulties which ensued, and brought the Class Action Lawsuit from St. Annes Veteran's Hospital, was somewhat sad, so in short, I wrote about it, in the second volume of 2 booklets. The story is available (FREE OF CHARGE) on my VIMY LEGION Br 145, Website at www.vimylondon.ca, just follow the LINKs to THE SCRIBBLER, as well as THE SCRIBBLER TWO, (page 131.)

I was happy to see in your report that this class-action Lawsuit (which he was responsible for) and related to this gentleman personally, along with his Comrades, was nearing resolution. I sincerely hope that you might give this story, some publicity, as well as support, to all of our NVOG members of this organization, because the Lawsuit is important, the topic, tragic. Imagine 'fighting the government we once fought to preserve'. For certain, we can utilize all the exposure that is possible to provide. Interestingly enough, in the January issue this year of Esprit de Corps, it was reported that the 202 Veteran's Ombudsman Commendation had been awarded to Lt (Ret'd) Wolf SOLKIN for his lifetime contributions! Poetic Justice, perhaps?

SPECIAL NOTE :

Veteran died before winning \$19M settlement in lawsuit over care at Ste-Anne's hospital.(CTV News 5 March 2021)A Second World War veteran who launched a class action lawsuit in a fight for better living conditions at Ste-Anne's hospital never lived to see the final \$19-million settlement.In his last battle before his death on Feb. 3, Wolf William Solkin (1923-2021) spearheaded the legal fight to challenge the poor care he and other residents said they received at the facility. He argued the hospital took a turn for the worse after the Quebec government took over management of the facility from the federal government in 2016.According to Solkin's previous statements, when he first arrived at the hospital, the care was exceptional, but after the change in management, the facility became understaffed and he claimed that the quality of care had been much reduced.

Support for British veterans under threat as Treasury considers 40pc budget cut

Plans to slash funding described as 'worrying', with warnings it would 'cut the Office for Veterans Affairs off at the knees'<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2021/03/24/office-veterans-affairs-could-see-budget-cut-40-per-cent/>

“The Telegraph” 24 March 2021

TheOffice for Veterans Affairs(OVA) could see its budget cut by 40 per cent under plans being considered by the Treasury.

On Wednesday night, the department came under pressure to scrap the plans that could reduce the OVA's annual budget from £5 million to £3 million after a backlash from MPs and military charities.

The Prime Minister added: "We spend up to £18 million through the NHS on specific mental health services that are targeted at veterans, £10 million to support veterans' mental health charities, we have national insurance rebates, obviously subsidised for those higher veterans as well as cut price, free transport for veterans on public transport – something I remember pioneering when I was mayor of London and I'm very proud we've taken that into Government as well."

During the Armed Forces Bill select committee on Wednesday morning it was established that the veterans office had only spent £1.6 million out of a £5 million budget for the 2020/21 financial year. (\$1.70 Cdn buys 1 Pound Sterling)

SPECIAL NOTE Contrast the Budget of the UK for Veterans with that of Canada. Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) 2019-2020 budget of \$5.3 Billion. Over 90% of the VAC budget represents payouts to veterans and other program recipients.

The following is an overview of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Command Homeless Veterans program, operation Leave the Streets Behind.

The program was initiated in November 2009, by Ontario Command and the template created has since been developed across Canada, by Veterans Affairs and other Provincial Commands. The objective of course is to end Homelessness among our Veteran population. Through the generosity of our Legion Branches and Ladies Auxiliary, throughout the Province, money has been raised through various functions to support the Homeless Veterans program. To date 2.7 million dollars has been disbursed from the Ontario Command Homeless Veterans Fund and over \$ 100,000.00 from our Ladies Auxiliary. There has been no financial support from any level of Government. More than 927 Homeless Veterans have been identified in 176 towns of which 93 are Female Veterans, since the beginning of the program. (Note: numbers given are as of May, 2021 and change monthly)

When a Homeless Veteran is identified we have the proper form completed (Request for Assistance and Release form) and once completed, it is sent to Veterans Affairs to verify the applicant has served in the Canadian Military. This form allows the Legion and VAC to access information to better understand their present situation. Once complete, the Legion will determine what the immediate needs of the Veteran are and take the appropriate action to meet those needs such as food, clothing or shelter.

We offer gift cards from Walmart, Tim Horton's or a local food store, to fulfill immediate needs and most can be provided the same day or within 24 hours. We use our network of the 395 Legion Branches in Ontario to meet the needs. For example, from our office in Aurora we can reach out to a Legion branch in various communities to assist and provide the gift cards for food, or clothing thus meeting the immediate need of the Homeless Veteran.

The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Command has also partnered with George Brown College in Toronto, Algonquin College in Ottawa and St. Joseph's Health Care Centre in London creating Dental programs in the three locations for Homeless Veterans. All Dental work is paid for by Ontario Command.

The Homeless Veterans program has been a great success assisting more than 662 Homeless Veterans with rent payments and finding new apartments, providing dental work, clothing, and assisting with education requirements. A Veterans Hotline has been established (437-228-4747) to provide emergency service to our Veterans.

For further information please visit our website at www.on.legion.ca, where you will find additional information, or contact our office at 1-905-841-7999 or toll free 1-888-207-0939.

FUNERAL AND BURIAL PROGRAM

The Veterans Affairs Canada Funeral and Burial Program ensures that eligible Veterans receive dignified funeral and burial services. The Program is administered on behalf of VAC by the Last Post Fund | Fonds du Souvenir, a non-profit organization that has served Veterans since 1909.

Eligibility for the program is established through military service and financial criteria.

SERVICE CRITERIA

A Veteran is defined as any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training and was honourably discharged.

Service eligibility for the Funeral and Burial Program extends to :

- Canadian Armed Forces Veterans or any predecessor Naval, Army or Air Forces of Canada or Newfoundland
- Canadian Merchant Navy Veterans of the Second World War or the Korean War
- Allied Veterans who served with the Allied Forces during the Second World War or the Korean War

FINANCIAL CRITERIA AND “MATTER OF RIGHT”

Once the Veteran has met the service-related criteria, eligibility for funeral and burial benefits is established either through financial means testing to determine financial need or as a matter of right. Matter-of-right refers to a situation where a VAC medical authority determines that the cause of death is due to service, meaning a condition for which Veterans Affairs Canada provided a disability benefit.

TYPES OF ARRANGEMENTS

Depending on circumstances, assistance may be provided in one of two ways:

LPF makes the arrangements:Standard funeral services may be provided when the Last Post Fund is contacted, and eligibility determined before firm arrangements are made with a funeral home. In this case, the Last Post Fund will contract directly with the funeral home within the maximum amounts set out in the Veterans Burial Regulations.

Family / Estate makes the arrangements:When arrangements for funeral and burial are made by a Veteran's estate, family or another person/organization, an application for reimbursement (partial or full) may be made within one year. This reimbursement is subject to the amounts set out in the Veterans Burial Regulations.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Assistance toward funeral and burial expenses is calculated in accordance with the amounts determined in the Veterans Burial Regulations. The current maximum rate payable toward funeral home costs such as professional services, casket or urn is \$7376 + tax. Over and above this amount, the cost of a plot, cemetery charges for opening and closing, the cost of cremation and other related costs may also be covered (maximums apply).

APPLY FOR FUNERAL AND BURIAL BENEFITS

Apply Online:An [Online Form](#) may be used to supply preliminary information and initiate the application process. Once submitted, a Last Post Fund counsellor will contact you.

Apply by Phone:Our counsellors are available to answer your questions and to assist with the application process, Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4 pm EST. Toll Free-800-465-7113

Email: General inquiries may be sent to info@lastpost.ca

Mailing Address: Written inquiries may be sent to:

Last Post Fund | Fonds du Souvenir
401-505 Boul. René Lévesque Ouest
Montréal, QC, H2Z 1Y7

Please note To qualify for assistance under the Funeral and Burial Program, both service-related and financial eligibility criteria will be evaluated. Before approving assistance, the Last Post Fund will conduct a short interview with the Veteran's next of kin, executor, or other responsible person to establish eligibility. When contacting the Last Post Fund to apply for assistance, we recommend you have a Veteran's military service record and financial information on hand to facilitate the application process.

Please note there is a one-year time limit after the Veteran's death to apply for assistance.