

Veterans Dialogue des vétérans

The Ombudsman's Corner



Since January 2010, I have travelled across the country from Newfoundland and Labrador to British Columbia to meet with Canadian Veterans, their families and friends at a series of [New Veterans Charter Town Halls](#).

These meetings followed closely on the heels of our November 2009 launch of an [online public consultation](#) into issues facing Veterans and their families.

I want to thank you for coming out and participating in these meetings and for voicing your opinions on the New Veterans Charter. It has better informed me to make your case for change.

It is the position of the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman that the process to address the required changes to the New Veterans Charter should embrace the same sense of urgency and collaboration that characterized the passing of the bill in the first place.

I believe this should be a national priority.

Pat Stogran

Government of Canada
Veterans Ombudsman

Canada

The New Veterans Charter: A Call to Action

From January to March 2010, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO) held 13 [New Veterans Charter Town Halls](#) across the country. This has already led to a 50% increase in the number of new cases that OVO staff has open on a weekly basis.

From Ontario (*Orleans, Vanier, Pembroke, Petawawa and Toronto – January 5, 12, 14, 15, and March 9*), to Nova Scotia (*Halifax – January 27*), to New Brunswick (*Fredericton – January 29*), to Newfoundland and Labrador (*St. John's – February 2*), to Quebec (*Valcartier and Montreal – February 9 and 11*), to Manitoba (*Winnipeg – February 25*), and finally to British Columbia (*Esquimalt and Vancouver – March 10 and 11*), Veterans Ombudsman Pat Stogran and OVO frontline staff travelled the country to get Veterans opinions on the New Veterans Charter.

The common message that they heard was: "The system needs to do the decent thing and treat Veterans with respect".

The New Veterans Charter lump-sum disability award came under sharp criticism from the Veterans Community because it is viewed as a step back from the commonly recognized obligation of the people and Government of Canada to Veterans.

Concern was raised also about what Veterans and their families perceive as a change in commitment by Veterans Affairs Canada to Veterans' long term well-being. An example raised is the Department's decision to stop maintaining contract long term care beds for elderly Veterans.

On April 22, the Veterans Ombudsman appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to report on what he learned from Veterans and their families at the [New Veterans Charter Town Halls](#) and through the [online public consultation](#).

In addition, as a result of the Town Halls and extensive research by OVO staff over the past year, a report is being prepared that will act as a catalyst for change for the New Veterans Charter.

The report will introduce clear principles upon which the New Veterans Charter can be amended. It will be presented by the Veterans Ombudsman to the Minister of Veterans Affairs in the fall. Then the real work will begin to move forward comprehensive changes to the New Veterans Charter as quickly as possible.

Caring for Canada's Veterans: Traditional Issues and 21st Century Challenges



On March 9, 2010, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman hosted a Panel Discussion at the University of Toronto's Hart House on [*Caring for Canada's Veterans: Traditional Issues and 21st Century Challenges*](#). The event also focused on the New Veterans Charter. Panellists included, from left-to-right, John Ralston Saul, historian, philosopher and noted author; Wolfgang Zimmerman, expert in disability rehabilitation; Darragh W. Mogan, Director General, Policy and Programs Division, Veterans Affairs Canada; Brigadier-General (Ret'd) G. E. 'Joe' Sharpe; pictured along with Veterans Ombudsman Pat Stogran.

The event was live streamed on the Internet allowing Veterans and other interested persons and organizations not able to attend to follow the discussion and post questions for the Veterans Ombudsman and panellists to respond to in real time.

Additional Outreach to Veterans: Veterans Ombudsman Pat Stogran combined visits to residents of Long Term Care facilities, Veteran and Family Support facilities, and District Office staff with his three month [New Veterans Charter Town Hall](#) itinerary. He also visited injured soldiers to obtain their perspective on the Charter. In addition, in recent months he participated in Speaker's Platforms at Carleton, Dalhousie, and Memorial Universities. This intensive outreach program has increased the OVO's knowledge of the issues facing Veterans and their families and, combined with media interviews and increased advertising, it has led to a noticeable increase in media coverage of Veterans' issues.

Public Consultation Topics

- *Agent Orange*
- *Case Management*
- *Families*
- *Homeless Veterans*
- *Long Term Care*
- *Mental Health*
- *New Veterans Charter*
- *RCMP*
- *Red Tape*
- *Treatment Benefits*
- *Veterans in the Criminal Justice System*
- *Veterans Independence Program (VIP)*
- *Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB)*

If you would like to participate in the online public consultation, please provide your feedback [here](#).

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