



Veterans *Dialogue* des vétérans

December 2010

The Ombudsman's Corner



To begin, I want you to know that I am honoured and proud to be the Veterans Ombudsman. I believe that together, we can make a difference in ensuring that all Veterans and their families are treated with fairness and respect.

One of my first tasks is to look at our organizational structure and plan our future operations with the objective of ensuring that issues of concern to Veterans can be addressed efficiently and effectively. We will focus on eligibility for WWII Veterans to access programs, such as Funeral and Burial Expenses, the Veterans Independence Program, the New Veterans Charter and RCMP issues.

A real dialogue is all about communications, and this newsletter is an opportunity to share information with those of you who prefer print over Web-based media. Through this venue, we will be able to keep you up-to-date on the various activities of the Office and be able to inform you of our news, as well as changes to Veterans Affairs Canada programs and services.

I encourage you to share this newsletter with fellow Veterans and their families and encourage them to subscribe so we can spread the word about Veterans' interests and concerns and reach as many Veterans as possible.

Guy Parent
Veterans Ombudsman

First Canadian Military and Veteran Health Research Forum: Health from a life course perspective

Guy Parent, Veterans Ombudsman, and key OVO staff attended the first national Canadian Military and Veteran Health Research Forum, hosted by The Royal Military College of Canada and Queen's University from November 16th – 17th in Kingston, Ontario.

This national forum was an important gathering of health professionals and researchers, as well as Canadian and international delegates interested in military and Veteran health research.

Its main objective was to engage and invigorate support for a Canadian national research agenda that considers military and Veteran health from a life course perspective.

The agenda, which included high profile speakers and focused on specific areas of interest ranging from battlefield medicine and surgery to ethics and epidemiology, provided opportunities to identify gaps in the current knowledge base of military and Veteran Health and stimulate scientific interest in these areas.

Going forward, it is hoped that the forum acts as a catalyst to provide education and increase awareness of the major implications of military service, as well as bring existing programs to the forefront and exploring new requirements and opportunities for advancing military and Veteran health research.

There are 90,000 men and women, including reservists, currently serving in the Canadian military and over 750,000 Veterans. For these Canadians and their families, military service can uniquely affect their, social, mental and physical health.

Wing Commander Dr. Hugh Milroy on homeless Veterans: From welfare to wellbeing

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman was privileged to have received a visit from Veterans Aid CEO, Dr. Hugh Milroy on November 15th.

Dr. Milroy, a former RAF Wing Commander and author of a groundbreaking book on the causes and consequences of Veterans' homelessness issues, was at the OVO (Ottawa) to speak to staff about his research and his charitable organization located in the UK.

The doctrine he subscribes to involves a move from welfare to wellbeing, combining the military family approach of the Services with developing independence.

His philosophy, and that of the organization he leads, focuses on taking care of the immediate needs of homeless veterans before anything else.

Basic needs and shelter are taken care of immediately, with no waiting period or forms to fill out. Larger needs, such as chemical dependencies and alcoholism are also taken care of as soon as possible, often within a few hours.

This model of care for homeless veterans has so far achieved astounding results.

To find out more:

<http://www.veterans-aid.net/index.html>

The York Report

Completed in 2008, the report is the product of the Ex-Service Action Group on Homelessness that championed for an independent review of homelessness among ex-service personnel in London (UK).

It is very pertinent given the general societal interest in how Veterans are being treated, particularly when new Veterans are being created every day, and as a nation we owe them a debt of gratitude for their service.

The report identifies the characteristics and paths to homelessness and the effectiveness of various services being provided. Most importantly, it offers guidelines to providing effective support to homeless Veterans.

The complete report can be found at:
<http://www.veterans-aid.net/pdf/yorkstudy.pdf>



Office of the Veterans Ombudsman Annual Report 2009-2010

The report is available to read online or download, or you can contact us through our website to obtain a print copy.



How we work

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman provides the Veterans Community with three main services: information, facilitation and intervention.

Please visit our website for more information on our services.

Contact



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Canada's Veterans
Ombudsman



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Investigator Guy Thibault attends Annual meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

In early November, the 26th Annual Meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress studies took place in Montreal.

Guy Thibault, OVO investigator, attended the conference to gain a clearer understanding of the impact that traumatic stress injuries can have on an individual's life.

Participants from around the world attended and shared their knowledge and experience with colleagues at a variety of seminars.

Renowned international and national speakers, including Senator Roméo Dallaire, shed light on this type of injuries and their repercussions and

shared their own personal experiences in the area.

Notwithstanding current initiatives to advance knowledge in the field, the consensus was that there are still many unanswered questions when it comes to traumatic stress injuries and a lot more work needs to be done before they are fully understood.

To learn more about the society and traumatic stress injuries, please visit:

www.istss.org



Guy Thibault has been an investigator with the OVO since 2008.

Before joining the OVO team, he worked at Veteran's Affairs Canada for a number of years gaining in-depth understanding of the challenges facing Veterans.

From case manager to casualty support coordinator, he gained a wealth of expertise and knowledge that assist him in his current position.

Perspectives: In their own words

We invite you to visit a brand new feature of our website – Veterans Perspectives – where Veterans and their families talk about their experiences.



Eric Rebière story:

Eric Rebière is a 26 year veteran of the RCMP who sustained severe PTSD while serving overseas. Upon taking a medical discharge he quickly realised that there were no resources available to him.

Read the full story on our web site.

News from our front line services

Located in Charlottetown, the Early Intervention Team is staffed by Ombudsman Service Representatives and Early Intervention Analysts. It is their responsibility to:

- take time to really understand issues;
- reframe issues to eliminate emotions;
- learn the perspective of the service provider;
- determine if the stakeholder was treated fairly;
- address issues by mediating on behalf of the stakeholder or informing the stakeholder that he or she was treated fairly.

Visit our web site for statistics and updates on the types of services being provided along with hot topics and success stories.

Success story from our front line

An 82 year old Veteran has taken the same route to his medical appointments for years because he feels that it is the safest route for him. VAC used to reimburse him based on his odometer reading. However, VAC recently changed its policy and began reimbursing him based on the mileage calculated via Google Maps, which uses his home address and the address where his appointments take place to calculate the distance. Although he had written to VAC to advise that he took his route because of safety concerns, it fell on deaf ears.

We checked his exact route on Google Maps and could see that the shortest route would involve this elderly Veteran merging into and out of a three lane highway. We contacted VAC and advised that although the Health Related Travel (HRT) guidelines state that an online calculator can be used to determine mileage, the policy is not so strict that it specifically dictates that a calculator must be used. Travel reimbursement is to be based on the most convenient and economical means, to say nothing of safety. As such, we requested VAC review the Veteran's letter, pointed out the safety issue for him and the related policy. VAC agreed to overturn its decision and will backdate his previous HRT claims to reflect the full mileage.

For more information on these stories, please visit
www.ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca