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Web site: **www.vac-acc.gc.ca**

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INTRODUCTION

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) offers a wide range of services and benefits to:

- qualified Veterans;
- Canadian Forces (CF) members;
- serving and discharged members of the RCMP;
- certain civilians; and
- their families.

These services and benefits honour their sacrifices and achievements, and are designed to meet their changing needs.

To deliver these services and benefits, our Department has adopted a philosophy of client service based on a Client Centred Service Approach. To build on this approach, we have implemented the Integrated Service Delivery Framework (ISDF). As part of the ISDF, we offer clients one toll-free telephone number to call if they need information about their services and benefits. This, plus other ISDF changes, improves the consistency of our service and helps us to better understand what our clients need so that they can receive the right service, at the right time, by the right person.

This approach to client service is very important because it allows us to:

- **screen clients** at all points of entry. This means that if we contact clients, or clients call, write or visit us for any reason at all, we can talk with them about other problems or changes in their life that might otherwise be overlooked;
- do a **needs assessment**. This helps us to learn if the client has needs that are not being met. If so, we can work together to develop a care plan that links the client's needs with programs and services available through our Department or elsewhere;
- provide clients with **counselling** on our services and benefits, who qualifies for them, and how to apply for them, as well as information about health and safety matters that may be important to them;
- provide **case management and coordination services** to help clients be as independent as they would like to be, help them maximize their choices and learn how to access community resources. This results in a better quality of life for clients and their families; and
- provide **free legal help** to clients who are not satisfied with a departmental decision about their benefits.

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) is an independent federal tribunal that hears appeals at two levels regarding unfavourable disability pension decisions at the departmental level. It is also the final level of appeal on all allowance decisions.

What follows is an overview of the services and benefits provided by Veterans Affairs.

You can also learn more by visiting our Web site at www.vac-acc.gc.ca

DISABILITY PENSIONS

You may qualify for a disability pension if you have a medical disability that is related to your service and you are:

- a Canadian Armed Forces Veteran or a Merchant Navy Veteran of the First or Second World War or the Korean War;
- a current or former member of the Regular or Reserve Force;
- a civilian who served in close support of the Armed Forces during wartime; or
- a serving or discharged RCMP member.

Additional benefits may be awarded if you are a disability pensioner who has a spouse/common-law partner or other qualified dependants.

If you need help preparing and submitting a disability pension application, you can contact:

- Veterans Affairs Canada; or a
- Veterans' organization, such as The Royal Canadian Legion or The War Amps of Canada.

Prisoner of War Compensation

You may receive Prisoner of War (POW) Compensation if you are a Veteran or a qualified civilian who was held prisoner, or avoided capture, by the enemy. Additional compensation may be awarded to qualified dependants.

Allied Forces

If you are a Veteran of the Allied Forces, you may qualify for a disability pension and/or POW compensation if you lived in Canada prior to your service in the First or Second World War.

Special Awards

Special awards are paid in addition to disability pensions.

You may qualify for an **Attendance Allowance** if you:

- receive a disability pension paid at 1% or more **or** POW compensation; **and**
- are totally disabled and need help with daily living tasks, such as having a bath, eating or going to the bathroom.

You may qualify for an **Exceptional Incapacity Allowance** if you receive:

- a disability pension of 98% or more; or
- a combination of disability pension and POW compensation totalling 98% or more.

You may qualify for a **Clothing Allowance** if you are a disability pensioner who has one or more pensioned conditions that:

- require you to wear special devices or specially-made clothing; or
- cause wear and tear on your clothing.

Survivor and/or Survivor Dependant Benefits

In most cases, the surviving spouse or common-law partner of a disability pensioner or a former POW receives, for one year, all the monthly benefits that were in place at the time the pensioner/POW passed away. This could include payments such as: Disability Pension, POW Compensation, Attendance Allowance or Exceptional Incapacity Allowance. At the end of the one-year period, a survivor pension is paid. This is based on the amount of disability pension and/or POW compensation that was being paid at the time the pensioner/POW passed away.

Parents and/or siblings of a deceased pensioner may qualify for a survivor pension if they were:

- fully, or to a great extent, supported by the pensioner; and
- not able to support and/or take care of themselves after the pensioner dies.

Surviving dependent children also may qualify for benefits, including financial help to continue their education past high school. Children of CF Veterans can apply for **Education Assistance** if their parent:

- died as a result of military service; or
- was pensioned at the 48% rate or greater at the time of death.

The post-secondary education must take place before the surviving child's 30th birthday.

ALLOWANCES

The **War Veterans Allowance (WVA)** provides a regular monthly payment to low-income clients. To qualify for WVA, you must meet certain income and residency requirements and you must be:

- a Canadian Armed Forces Veteran, Merchant Navy Veteran or civilian who served in close support of the Canadian Armed Forces in a theatre of war during the First or Second World War or the Korean War; or
- an Allied Veteran with wartime service in the First or Second World War providing you lived in Canada at the time you enlisted or at any time while a member of that force.

Surviving spouses or common-law partners, as well as orphans, may qualify for WVA if the deceased Veteran or civilian had the required war service. The survivor may continue to receive WVA at the same rate as married or common-law partners for one year after their loved one passes away. After one year, the rate will then be reduced to a single rate. The WVA payment ends when the survivor passes away, remarries or begins a common-law relationship.

Assistance Fund

Clients who receive an Allowance may qualify for financial help through the Assistance Fund if they are faced with an emergency situation and they have no way to pay for these expenses.

HEALTH CARE

Veterans Affairs Canada offers Health Benefits, the Veterans Independence Program and Long-Term Care.

Health Benefits

Veterans Affairs Canada offers 14 kinds of health benefits, including medical, surgical and dental care, prescription drugs, and hearing and vision aids. Our Department also offers supplementary health benefits, treatment allowances and other miscellaneous benefits. For example, the cost of travel for medical services, including the cost of travel for an escort, where necessary, may also be covered. The ability to access our health benefits may depend on your eligibility, your health needs and whether these services are available through your province.

Veterans Independence Program (VIP)

This national home care program helps qualified veterans, still-serving CF disability pensioners and certain civilians to remain healthy and independent in their own homes and communities.

Under VIP, qualified clients may receive funds to help pay for grounds maintenance (such as grass cutting or snow shovelling), housekeeping, personal care, certain changes to their home, care and support by health professionals, and some transportation. Your ability to access VIP services depends on your health needs and if these services are available to you through another federal, provincial or municipal program.

VIP housekeeping and/or grounds maintenance services are also available to eligible primary caregivers of those Veterans who received these VIP services at the time of their death or admission to a long-term care facility in the years since the program began in April 1981. A primary caregiver can include a spouse, common-law partner, adult child or another individual.

Only those services that the Veteran was receiving at the time of his/her death or admission to a long-term care facility may be extended to the primary caregiver. That is, if a Veteran was only receiving grounds maintenance services, the primary caregiver will only be entitled to grounds maintenance services. To qualify, a primary caregiver must have a continuing need due to health reasons for the services to remain self-sufficient at home.

Long-Term Care

Eligible war service Veterans and certain civilians may qualify for intermediate or chronic care at Ste. Anne's Hospital, which VAC administers, or community facilities under contract with our Department. CF pensioners may qualify to receive intermediate or chronic care in a community facility if the need for this care is related to a pensioned condition. Allied Veterans who have lived in Canada for 10 or more years after their period of service may be eligible for long-term care in community facilities.

Health Promotion and Rehabilitation

Veterans Affairs Canada is committed to improving the quality of life and independence of our clients, their families and their caregivers. Our health promotion programs and services support, educate and involve clients in adopting healthy behaviours and lifestyles. Our Department uses a community-based approach that involves partnerships with government departments, community agencies, seniors groups and client organizations.

Please contact us to learn more about falls prevention or the *Safely Home Alzheimer Wandering Registry* program for Veterans.

Appeals

Applicants dissatisfied with a decision concerning an application for health benefits may appeal in writing to the Department.

DND/VAC CENTRE

The DND/VAC Centre provides information and services to help support injured and retired CF members and their families.

“The Centre,” as it is commonly known, is an initial contact point and referral service for injured and retired members — Regular Force and Reserve — and their families. In addition to initial consultations and referrals, the Centre’s staff conduct follow-ups to ensure that your concerns or issues have been resolved and that you have received all the assistance to which you are entitled. All calls are confidential.

The Centre is a focal point for the joint efforts of the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada.

SUPPORT FOR OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURY

An operational stress injury (OSI) is any persistent psychological difficulty resulting from military service. OSIs include diagnosed medical conditions such as anxiety, depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

To support wartime Veterans and still-serving and former Canadian Forces personnel recovering from operational stress injuries, VAC has established Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinics. OSI clinics provide standardized assessment, treatment, prevention and support services. A team of health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and clinical social workers, work together to develop treatment plans that meet individual needs.

Individual, group, couples or family counselling and educational programs are also available.

Veterans and former CF members can access an occupational stress injury clinic by obtaining a referral from a VAC medical officer at the closest VAC district office. **Still-serving Canadian Forces members** need to obtain a referral from their Base Surgeon.

A Peer Support Network has also been established by the Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) program. The Peer Support Network is made up of Veterans across the country who have experienced an operational stress injury firsthand, and who have managed to gain control of their situation. Drawing from their experience, they are in a position to help. Confidential support is available by contacting the Peer Support Coordinator nearest you at **1-800-883-6094** or visit on-line at **www.osiss.ca**

MODERNIZATION OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

On May 13, 2005 the *New Veterans Charter* became law. This legislation is designed to modernize the services and programs VAC delivers to Canadian Forces members, Veterans and their families. It provides for: job placement assistance, rehabilitation services, economic loss support, disability awards, health benefits, and case management. VAC will begin implementing the new Charter as early as April 2006. For more information on the *New Veterans Charter*, visit the VAC Web site.

CANADA REMEMBERS

The Canada Remembers Program endeavours to keep alive the achievements and sacrifices made by all those who served Canada in times of war, military conflict and peace, and to promote an understanding of the significance of these efforts in Canadian life as we know it today. The Canada Remembers Program includes:

- **Memorials:** To ensure the preservation and presentation of two memorial parks in France and 11 battlefield memorial sites in France and Belgium. Canada Remembers also has responsibility for the National War Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa, and the Cross of Sacrifice in Arlington National Cemetery in the United States.
- **Cemetery Maintenance:** To maintain Canadian war graves and cemeteries through partnerships with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Korea. As well, the Program cares for the graves of Veterans who are buried by the Government of Canada.

- **Funeral and Burial Assistance:** To provide funeral and burial assistance when a Veteran's death results from a pensioned disability, or when there are insufficient funds in the Veteran's estate and service eligibility requirements have been met. The Last Post Fund Corporation administers the funeral and burial assistance on VAC's behalf.

Applications must be received by the Last Post Fund within one year of the date of death. To contact the Last Post Fund, please call 1-800-465-7113. More information on the Last Post Fund can be found on their Web site at www.lastpostfund.ca

- **Ceremonies and Events:** To provide a leadership role in conducting ceremonies and events nationally and internationally that recognize and honour Canada's war dead and Veterans. Major anniversaries of significant military events are marked by ceremonies overseas and in Canada, including Veterans' Week (November 5-11).
- **Learning Initiatives:** To provide both learning opportunities and learning materials that enable Veterans to share their experiences with Canada's youth. These initiatives include information sheets, virtual tours and interactive exhibits.
- **Public Information:** To provide information to Canadians through on-line initiatives, print materials, publications and multi-media. *The Canadian Virtual War Memorial* and the *Heroes Remember* on-line Veteran interviews provide new methods for Canadians to learn about Veterans and their contributions.

For information on Canada Remembers and its programs, please call 1-877-604-8489.

HOW CAN I GET INFORMATION ON SERVICES OR BENEFITS?

For more information on Veterans' services and benefits, to find out if you are eligible, or to apply, please call:

1-866-522-2122 (English)

1-866-522-2022 (French)

If you live outside Canada, please call **Foreign Countries Operations (FCO)**.

FCO is responsible for the provision of benefits and services available to eligible Canadian Veterans and their dependants who reside or vacation outside of Canada.

1-888-996-2242 (Toll-free from Canada and the United States)

00-800-996-22421 (Toll-free from the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Belgium)

(613) 996-2242 (Collect, all other countries)

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

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Web site: www.vac-acc.gc.ca
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CAN I APPEAL A VAC DECISION?

Yes. If you are not happy with a decision concerning your application for VAC pension benefits, you may appeal. Within Veterans Affairs Canada, the key organization available to help you through this process is the **Bureau of Pensions Advocates** (BPA).

BPA's main function is to provide free advice, assistance and representation when exploring your options for appeal. These options could include a Departmental Review, a **Veterans Review and Appeal Board** (VRAB) Review Hearing or a VRAB Appeal Hearing.

For information about your disability pension decision or how to request a review or appeal, you may call:

Bureau of Pensions Advocates

Tel: 1-877-228-2250 (bilingual service)

Outside Canada: Please consult the phone numbers listed for *Foreign Countries Operations* on page 12.

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

Tel: 1-800-450-8006 (bilingual service)

Outside Canada: (902) 566-8835 (collect)