



Ottawa, Ontario  
June 13, 2018

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan  
Minister of Veterans Affairs  
The Honourable Carla Qualtrough  
Minister of Public Services and Procurement  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers:

We learned with dismay of the recent cancellation on March 27, 2018 of the work being done by the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) to establish National Standards for Service Dogs.

The cancellation of this work – in mid-project – has not been adequately explained by the Government of Canada, beyond a web-posting on the Veterans Affairs Canada website stating that there is no consensus on a National Standard for all service dogs, and adding that “we will be moving forward with a standard specifically for psychiatric service dogs”.

After almost three years of work, a benign non-specific statement that no consensus exists does little to instill any confidence within the Veteran community as to the likelihood that a national standard will indeed be established any time soon, nor does it inform us of what professional, qualified authority will be assigned to accomplish this task.

We are awaiting the second and final (Phase 2) report of the Service Dog pilot study being conducted by Dr. Claude Vincent of *Université Laval* and the *Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation and Social Integration* (CIRRIS), scheduled for release next month (July 2018) to see if the findings shall support the use of psychiatric service dogs (PSDs) as an effective therapeutic benefit to assist Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder / operational stress injuries. A positive finding that encourages the use of PSDs by Veterans dealing with PTSD / OSI will predictably increase the demand for service dogs that are professionally trained. But to what standard?

In the absence of a national standard, there is no protection to prevent Veterans seeking appropriately-trained psychiatric service dogs from being exploited by unqualified or

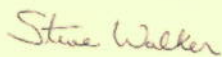
unscrupulous dog trainers seeking to cash in on an increasingly lucrative market. The effect, of course, will be that Veterans who purchase unqualified service dogs will not realize any benefit or relief from the vagaries of PTSD / OSI, and that the Veterans – or those who purchased the dogs for their benefit at significant cost – will be out thousands of dollars.

Additionally, dogs that are inadequately trained and that act inappropriately or unpredictably present potential risks to the handler (Veteran), to the public and to the dogs themselves, a factor recently remarked upon by the *Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS)*. A national standard will give reassurance to the public and will work to increase acceptance of, and access for service dogs to public venues. Without a national standard, these issues and risks remain unresolved.

We do not underestimate the challenge in developing this national standard, particularly in light of a lack of consensus within the stakeholder community as to what those standards should be. But walking away from the task through withdrawing from the national professional body we entrust to establish those standards is not the path to success; particularly after 2 ½ years of work has been devoted to the effort.

We call upon the Government of Canada to immediately re-establish the project with the Canadian General Standards Board, to work through the remaining points of disagreement, and to establish, publish and put into force a National Standard for Service Dogs. Veterans need it. The public needs it. Please finish the job.

Sincerely,



Steve Walker  
President  
RCMP Veterans' Association

c.c. Honorable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety  
c.c. Commissioner Brenda Lucki, RCMP