



May 5, 2018
Ottawa, Ontario

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan
Minister of Veterans Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0a6

Dear Minister:

As our colleagues at the Royal Canadian Legion have already expressed to you, the RCMP Veterans' Association must also protest the absence of any documented requirement within the recent posting of the selection process for the Veterans' Ombudsman, specifying that applicant candidates must have prior military experience or service within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

There is no substitute for experience that an applicant candidate can have, that will satisfy our Veteran community, short of time spent in the service of Canada, engaged in the type of duties that are unique to the CAF or RCMP.

The challenges and risks that each of these community's face are indeed unique, and not well understood outside. As you know, Minister, transitioning from life in the CAF or RCMP to civilian life is often difficult for some of our Veterans; particularly for those who are suffering from physical or mental injuries at the time of their discharge. It is for this very reason that when Veterans look to the Veterans Ombudsman to investigate their concerns and to speak on their behalf, they want to know that the person sitting in that chair understands them as only a fellow Veteran can.

We concur with the position expressed by the Legion that the Veterans' Ombudsman must be seated in the National Capital Region. It is essential that the Ombudsman is accessible and in reasonable proximity to the primary departments involved in the affairs of Veterans – VAC, National Defence, RCMP, and Parliament – and to Veterans' agencies located in the NCR.

We have no doubt, Minister, that your objective is to hire the best qualified candidate and, as the selection process announcement states, we accept that *"The overarching goal of the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence is to ensure that the government lives up to our commitment to veterans and their families."* You have been

articulate in, and passionate about your dedication to Veterans, and your interactions and statements have always reflected *respect, dignity, fairness and courtesy*; hallmarks of the Veterans Bill of Rights.

The selection process announcement as worded, however, infers that the overarching requirement of the selection process is to hire a candidate whose most important qualifications will be bilingual proficiency and diversity. We concur that these are important attributes that merit consideration.

The announcement highlights these 'soft skills' necessary for the successful candidate, and – by omission – the announcement is anemic by failing to reflect the need for the hard skills; the life experience that can only be gained by 'walking the walk'; serving on a Canadian warship at sea; delivering medical aid and much-needed supplies as air crew on an air transport mission abroad; developing rapport with local leaders in a conflict zone on a peace-keeping mission; managing a multiple vehicle accident scene on a dark stretch of highway in the Prairies in the middle of the night.

The current Veterans Ombudsman, Mr. Guy Parent, enjoys wide respect within the Veteran community for what he and his team achieved during the eight years Mr. Parent has served in the post. He succeeded because of his knowledge, skills and experience. And he succeeded because Veterans could look at him and see themselves. They trust him.

As you well know, Minister, Veterans' trust is hard earned, and fragile. We ask that you urgently review the essential requirements for the candidates to succeed Mr. Parent, and that you publicly re-insert military experience upon the selection process announcement as a required element. We believe that it is an essential requirement for the post, and we believe that it is equally essential that Veterans see that you give full value to their experience, as you select a new Ombudsman to represent us.

Sincerely,



Al Rivard
President
RCMP Veterans' Association

c.c. Hon. Ralph Goodale – Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

c.c. Hon. Harjit Singh Sajjan – Minister of National Defence

c.c. General Jonathan Vance – Chief of the Defence Staff

c.c. Commissioner Brenda Lucki – RCMP

c.c. Mr. Guy Parent – Veterans Ombudsman, Office of the Veterans' Ombudsman