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The Honourable Seamus O'Regan
Minister of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Affairs Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0P4

Dear Minister:

It was a pleasure to see you at the National Remembrance Day Ceremony and I applaud your attendance knowing that you had to return to the hospital. We hope that you will make a complete and speedy recovery.

On 4 November 2017, the Legion hosted 14 other Veterans' organizations in our annual Veterans' Consultation Group. The group received briefings on the anti-malarial drug Mefloquine, the outreach being conducted by the National Association of Federal Retirees and an update by the Ombudsman on his recent study "The Continuum of Care". The consultation group agreed that much more is required to improve the New Veterans Charter with particular emphasis on resolving the significant disparity between the financial compensation available under the Pension Act and the New Veterans Charter, in accordance with the "one veteran – one standard" principle. It was felt that, through the utilization of the best parts of the Pension Act and the best parts of the New Veterans Charter, a pension benefit model can be created which removes the inequality which currently exists.

As is customary with the Consultation Group, a roundtable discussion ensued and on behalf of the group, I would like to bring some of those issues to your attention:

- **Frailty.** Frailty was often mentioned in the OVO Continuum of Care Study and has been an ongoing point of advocacy for many. When considering streamlining the access to benefits, the current definition of frailty presents a set of complex conditions that have to be met before a Veteran would qualify in order to obtain benefits and more specifically VIP that would allow Veterans to remain in their homes longer. The group agreed that frailty needs to be considered in more general terms to permit the awarding of VIP benefits and would like to see this aspect pursued in the near future.
- **Veterans' ID Card.** Collectively the group supports the introduction of a Veterans' ID card which would recognize veterans and assist in their transition from the CAF. The CAF One card issued by CF Morale and Welfare is not an

ID card but rather an access card into the CANEX system. On transitioning from the CAF a card, using the same service number, needs to be issued thereby recognizing an individual's service, facilitate the transition process and assist in the one veteran – one standard approach.

- **Research.** It was fully agreed that more directed and meaningful research needs to be conducted. As the veterans' world evolves and changes and centres of excellence are being considered, committed and directed research will help to lead the way. Currently, research is needed in the use of anti-malarial drugs, with special focus on mefloquine and particularly with regard to the symptoms of acquired brain injury, and cannabis-based therapies for Veterans. Research continually needs to be updated to meet the needs of our Veterans. This research must be shared by the various Government departments who have any connection to the Veteran community and with the Veterans themselves.
- **Advisory Groups.** The advisory groups are useful to continue the broad range of consultation with the Veterans' community. As the groups progress, there is also a perceived need for better communications to the community which at this time appears to be lacking. As well, the advisory groups are waiting to see if their efforts will deliver results for the betterment of the Veterans. As stated by Brian Forbes: "there is an expectation that proposals from the advisory groups will be addressed in a positive manner". In general, all acknowledged that positive steps are occurring but it is the big, costly issues that now need to be addressed positively as well. There is a strong consensus within the Veterans' Consultation Group that the next budget represents a critical time for visible Government action. Veterans' organizations will be watching Budget 2018 very closely to assess the credibility of the Advisory Group process and whether the recommendations which resulted from it have any significant positive impact for Veterans and their families.

Minister, we are encouraged by the progress made and appreciate being engaged to offer advice and knowledge into the process. As stated earlier the prime concern in the Veterans' community is the long-term financial security of the ill and injured. Regardless of the nomenclature, Veterans who have had their careers and livelihood cut short by injury must be looked after and fairly compensated for their injuries. Long-term financial security is a precondition for wellness, rehabilitation and family stability.

Sincerely,



David Flannigan
Dominion President

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Al Rivard RCMP Veterans Association

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Jim McCutcheon	Maritime Air Veterans Association
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