



Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
The Royal Canadian Legion

61 Gloria McCluskey Avenue
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 2Z3

Tel: 902-429-4090

Fax: 902-429-7481

Email: info@ns.legion.ca

ns.legion.ca

All Branch Mail Out #1

Date: January 04, 2021

TO: NS/NU Branches
NS/NU Executive Council
NS/NU Zone Commanders
NS/NU Past Presidents
NS/NU Command Staff

From: Comrade Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte
Executive Director
NS/NU Command, RCL

Subject: Letter to Members of Parliament

Message: Comrades: The attached letter from RCL NS/NU Command President Marion Fryday-Cook has been mailed to each Member of Parliament in Nova Scotia and Nunavut. President Fryday-Cook encourages all NS/NU Command Legion Members to connect with their Member of Parliament to press this important issue.



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January 4, 2021

Member of Parliament for _____

Dear _____ MP:

Nova Scotia is home to a large veteran population. Many of these 'new generation' men and women have been released from military service due to chronic mental health injuries and face significant challenges making the transition to civilian life. Often, they are unable to take advantage of retraining programs and post-secondary education offered through the Government of Canada. They are often unable to fulfill family responsibilities and parental roles which contribute to marital strain and family dissolution.

Historically, these problems have been attributed to the nature of their mental health struggles which are routinely managed by psychiatric medications as a front-line treatment. The benefits of these medications in helping patients in the short-term are well-supported by the available research and generally by anecdotal reports from patients. Even so, these drugs also produce unwelcome and persistent side effects which are well documented (e.g., sexual problems, sleep disruption, agitation, weight changes, mental confusion, problems with focus, and emotional blunting). Apart from research on the short-term benefits, however, there is an absence of research in Canada focusing on the long-term benefit or unintended neurological effects of prescribed psychotropics.

Emerging research in Canada and the United Kingdom points to possible damage to specific brain structures and raises concerns over the addictive properties of these drugs along with severe withdrawal syndromes among a substantial number of long-term patients. This research and anecdotal accounts from local veterans, family members, and clinicians raises questions over possible damaging effects of long-term reliance on psychiatric medications.

When it comes to the successful transitions to civilian life for medically released veterans, there are crucial questions to be explored. A clearer understanding of the possible contributing role of long-term psychiatric medication effects is required in explaining: (a) reports of lack of progress among veterans undergoing psychosocial treatments; (b) the incidence of family conflicts and dysfunction; (c) the inability of veterans to transition to civilian life; and (d) the low rates of accessing available post-service program initiatives among medically released veterans.

The Government of Canada oversees healthcare for the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP, and veterans. On behalf of all Members of The Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, I call upon the Government of Canada to initiate a third-party investigation into the long-term effects of



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psychiatric medications, identifying (i) the relationships between psychiatric drugs and medical releases, (ii) beneficial and injurious physical, neurocognitive, emotional, and quality of life outcomes for members and their families, (iii) the ability of prescribed members to benefit from non-medical interventions, (iv) relationships between medication usage and transitions to civilian life.

On behalf of all Members of The Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, I call on the Government of Canada to act on this matter urgently and to make the findings available for public review.

I look forward to your response on this most urgent issue in the best interest of Canadas' Veterans and their families.

Sincerely

Marion Fryday-Cook
President
Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
The Royal Canadian Legion