



## Remembrance Day

On Remembrance Day, we honour and commemorate the brave men and women who have served Canada through their military service. It's a time to reflect on the vital role they serve in protecting Canada, defending freedom, and ensuring peace.



As the NDP critic for Veterans Affairs I was honoured to be part of the Spring voyage to Vimy Ridge to commemorate the 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and the more recent voyage to Gallipoli, Turkey to witness the dedication of the Gallipoli Newfoundland Memorial and the completion of the "Trail of the Caribou." The moments I spent at the monuments and grave sites will stay with me forever.

I will always think of the lives that are taken far too early, and of the families who have lost their loved ones to war.

The cost of war is great, which is why we must continue focusing on diplomacy, undertaking war only after deep consideration. Many lives are lost or forever changed during service. It's vital that we remember the terrible price that people pay during war.

I also think of the people in North Island – Powell River. The men and women

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who serve in the military in 19 Wing do much for Canadians, at home and around the world: through their work combatting COVID-19, their role in search and rescue, their emergency response efforts, and their time spent serving in missions. I am forever grateful to them for their sacrifice and their dedication.

Thank you, to everyone who has served and continues to serve to defend the homes of Canadians as well as people around the world.

Lest we forget.





## Indigenous Veterans Day

November 8 marked [National Indigenous Veterans Day](#), which commemorates the brave contributions of the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis who served in missions in Canada and around the world, in war and peacekeeping efforts. Despite the substantial role Indigenous Peoples had in protecting Canada going back generations, their heroic contributions are far too often overlooked. Yet many lost their lives or had their lives forever changed as a result of their service.

More than 2,700 Indigenous members currently serve in Canada's military forces. For them, and for all the brave men and women who served before them, I am deeply grateful. I am committed to working towards the systemic discrimination in our institutions, which far too often ignore, overlook, and exclude Indigenous Peoples.

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## Report on Homeless Veterans

On November 3, [I gave a speech in the House](#) in response to a concurrence motion moved by the Conservatives on the first report of the [Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on Homeless Veterans](#). The report was initially tabled in 2019. At the time, there was sense that this was a priority and

immediate action was necessary.

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I am frustrated that we still don't have an action plan to ensure no Veteran is unhoused. All we have is a response from the Liberals that does not address key issues brought up in the report.

The Auditor General's report was very clear that Veterans Affairs Canada does not collect data in a meaningful way that enables it to identify where there are issues in the system. Each day that we do not take action, we fail more of our Veterans. Meanwhile, money is continually thrown at the problem with no understanding of whether it's being spent effectively.

Around 5,000 Veterans are homeless. These are people who dedicated their lives to protecting Canada, but they are not given the respect they deserve.

The Department of Veterans Affairs must deliver better quality service to Veterans. Specifically, they must establish a sustainable, long-term resourcing plan by identifying bottlenecks in the claims process through better data management.

Canada's Veterans deserve better treatment.

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## **VAC's Outsourcing of Services**

The [Union of Veterans Affairs employees](#) has expressed serious concerns about the quality of service supplied by Veterans Affairs Canada. They are worried about the plan to outsource rehabilitative services to a large corporation, which will make it more difficult for Veterans to get the care they desperately need.

This move to outsource services is the result of continued erosion of services caused by government underfunding and inaction.

I recently stood up in Question Period on this matter. [It's time for the minister to either step up and make things right or step aside.](#)

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## Fairness in Survivor Pension Benefits

The Committee on Veterans Affairs will soon be tabling the report from their study of the [survivor pension benefits](#). We know that if bill C-221 is passed, it would add less than 2% to the annual federal pension payouts, yet still the clause has not been eliminated. The clause unfairly punishes Veterans who marry after the age of 60.

I have introduced a private Member's bill to eliminate the 'golddigger clause' following years of the Liberals promising and failing to remove it.

Canada's Veterans deserve better than this sexist and ageist clause. If you agree, please sign the petition to support my bill C-221 and tell the Liberals it's time to end the 'golddigger clause' and give Canada's Veterans the respect they deserve.

[Add your name to support eliminating the golddigger clause](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Blaney".

Rachel Blaney, MP  
North Island - Powell River

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