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Greetings friends,

I'm reaching out with some important updates I wanted to share with you all.

Experience of Women Veterans Report

First of all, the Experience of Women Veterans report will be tabled on June 12th! This has been a labour of love for me and a critical study for women Veterans who have been made to feel invisible for far too long. I've been pushing as hard as I could to get it tabled in Parliament before the summer break and I couldn't be happier with this news. Thanks to the Veterans who have been emailing the committee and its members. Your pressure had a profound impact!

I will be sure to keep you updated and will share the report when available.

Denied Claims for Veterans

I have heard from too many Veterans that they are being denied the claims that they earned and deserve. I asked a question in the House which you can watch below.

I will be following up during an upcoming Late Show Adjournment Debate. That means I get to ask three minutes of questions, get an answer, then get one minute more to follow up. If you have any questions or concerns you'd like asked of the government, please reply to this email so that my Ottawa staff and I have the opportunity to review it.



Interaction transcription:

"Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past two years, there has been a 50% increase in denied claims for veterans seeking disability benefits. This is shameful. They served our country, risking their lives and safety in the process, yet the Liberals keep turning their backs on them, just like the Conservatives did for years before. This is an issue of respect and livelihood. Many veterans are struggling and rely on these benefits to make ends meet.

Do the Liberals plan on fixing this or will they keep denying veterans their dignity?"

"Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank my colleague for her important work on the veterans affairs committee.

Our government has always been there for veterans, and will continue to be there. Since 2015, we have invested more than \$11 billion in additional funding to support veterans and their families. In contrast to the Conservative Party of Canada, when they closed the Veterans Affairs offices, we on this side of the House opened them immediately because recognized they provided direct services to veterans.

We will always be there to help support our veterans and their families in their time of need."



At the Persian Gulf War Ceremony

Response from the Minister re Persian Gulf War

Back in January I wrote to The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor regarding designating Canadians who served in the Persian Gulf War of 1990 – 1991 as Wartime Service Veterans. You can read the letter I wrote [here](#) and the response our office received [here](#).

I have invited the Minister of National Defence to visit North Island - Powell River multiple times and I look forward to discussing important concerns that have been shared with me by constituents and Veterans across the country.

Upcoming trips

I wanted to also share the exciting update that I will be attending the next NATO NATO Parliamentary Association in Sofia, Bulgaria at the end of May and will be travelling to Normandy, France with the Minister of Veterans Affairs this June.

I look forward to bringing the concerns and priorities I hear in my role as MP and as the NDP Veterans Affairs critic to my colleagues from other countries and their respective governments. Hearing from parliamentarians internationally helps to keep me informed and relay the amazing work happening across the world with you, our government and my NDP colleagues.

When I return from NATO on May 27th, I will be attending the “Top 20 Women in Defence” Gala Awards. I am humbled to be one of this year’s award recipients. This event will be an opportunity to mingle with many of the other amazing people who are working to make a difference in peoples lives. In case you haven’t seen the article for the 2024 Women in the Defence World, below is a screenshot from the Esprit de Corps Women in Defence Award magazine clipping.

2024 **BREAKING DOWN**
THE BARRICADES:
 Women in the Defence World

"We need more women in the military and more women in the House of Commons."

~ MP Rachel Blaney



Beyond her military accomplishments, Col Bégin is a dedicated mother of twin boys and finds joy in outdoor pursuits like mountain biking, cross-country skiing, tennis, and ice hockey. Her ability to balance her personal and professional life is truly inspiring. Col Bégin is a shining example of what can be achieved when passion, determination, and a commitment to positive change come together.



As the Member of Parliament for North Island – Powell River, **RACHEL BLANEY** is the federal representative of the people serving at 19 Wing Comox. Listening to their stories and concerns, and those of the members of her family who have served in the CAF, stirred a passionate interest in advocating on behalf of serving and former CAF members.

As an MP and as the NDP Critic for Veterans Affairs, Blaney is dedicated to being a strong voice in Parliament for those who are too often ignored and to pushing for real solutions that improve people's lives. Yet she was initially reluctant to enter politics because "I didn't see myself as a politician. After reflecting, I realized that if I wanted to see more women representation, ... I needed to step up and become the voice I wanted to hear."

And Veterans can be grateful that she did step up. Since 2019, Blaney has continuously advocated and supported measures to improve the lives for Veterans and their families. To date, the truly stand-out moment in her career was being able to get the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA) to conduct a study of the experience of women Veterans. As the lone NDP member on the committee, she had to convince the other parties that this study was important and that they needed to take trauma sensitivity training to support the witnesses, who were often sharing very difficult

ABOVE LEFT: Colonel Marie Eve Bégin with 5th Light Artillery Regiment of Canada.

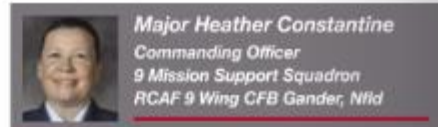
ABOVE CENTER: MP Rachel Blaney in the House of Commons.

RIGHT: Major Heather Constantine at her Change of Command ceremony.

stories. Blaney and her staff have worked tirelessly to reach out to the women military community and help prepare them to testify. And she continues to help women Veterans resolve issues with VAC.

As Blaney says, "... I heard from countless women that they felt ignored or invisible when they tried to discuss their injuries, physical, and mental health issues, or their navigation through the retirement and long-term care process. ... We need more women in the military and we need more women in the House of Commons. But for us to do that, we must listen to the women who are already there. Our systems must do more to create a safe and welcoming space for all women to feel comfortable sharing their stories. We aren't there yet, but we're getting closer."

It is because of remarkable people like Rachel Blaney that we are indeed getting closer.



MAJOR HEATHER CONSTANTINE joined 537 Gander Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron in the fall of 1990, and after five wonderful years, during which time she earned her wings, she graduated from the cadet programme as the top air cadet in Newfoundland & Labrador. She went on to enroll in the Cadet Instructor Cadre, and following graduation from both Mount Allison University and Saint Mary's University, she turned her part-time military service into a full-time career with the Canadian Cadet Organization. In October of 2016, then Captain Constantine component transferred to the Regular Force as a Logistics Officer, specializing in Human Resource Management. After completing her trade trades training in November of 2017 at the Canadian Forces Logistics Training Centre (CFLTC) at Canadian Forces Base Borden, she became a "Lynx" when she was posted to 406 (Maritime) Operational Training Squadron as their Administration Officer. Responsible for all logistics functions at the Maritime Helicopter schoolhouse, her tenure saw the platform transition from the CH-124 Sea King to the CH-148 Cyclone. In December of 2019, Major Constantine was appointed the 12 Wing Administration Officer, overseeing all administrative requirements in Shearwater. In December of 2021, Major Constantine was selected for a command position at 9 Wing Gander where she was selected

Just a reminder that you can stay updated on my actions on this file by visiting my Youtube page. Below are the links to some of the existing playlists you may be interested in:

ACVA Study on the Experience of Women Veterans

Playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeOQtKd1hBw&list=PL2OWFPV-baq5sZV16nZ5A84FIHcQtDgqy&pp=iAQB>

Veterans Affairs Playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWeyLa6cdg8&list=PL2OWFPV-baq46rYFc-Vc2DO7MIsv-ob4Y&pp=iAQB>

Marriage After 60 Playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3oGdEuGGmo&list=PL2OWFPV-baq5d1Tyn2DDNMisJW5jYWttv&pp=iAQB>

As always, I want to hear from you. Please email me at Rachel.Blaney@parl.gc.ca with your concerns and priorities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel Blaney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Blaney, MP
North Island - Powell River



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