

[View this email in your browser](#)



Rachel Blaney, MP for North Island - Powell River

## Gallipoli Newfoundland Memorial

This past September, I was honoured to be part of the visit to Turkey for the dedication of the Gallipoli Newfoundland Memorial, as part of my role as critic for Veterans Affairs. The Memorial was created to honour the members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, who fought bravely for almost four months at Gallipoli during the First World War.



On the journey, I joined the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Speaker of the Senate, representatives of the Royal Canadian Legion, Newfoundland and Labrador Command, and representatives of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The “Trail of the Caribou” recognizes the sacrifices of the members of Royal Newfoundland Regiment, who fought and won important battles during the First World War. Along with the Gallipoli Newfoundland Memorial, we visited the Green Hill Cemetery, where one Canadian from Oshawa, Ontario, is buried; Amzack Cemetery, where 12 soldiers from the Newfoundland Regiment are buried; Lancashire Landing Cemetery, where four Canadians and two soldiers

from the Newfoundland Regiment are buried; and Lone Pine Australian Monument, where two Canadians are buried and four Canadians are listed on the memorial.

It is always deeply humbling to represent people from across Canada internationally, and especially in situations where we are honouring the brave soldiers who endured a significant burden fighting in incredibly harsh conditions. I am always moved to see so many grave sites of soldiers who died so young when they gave their lives to fight for freedom. We must always recognize the terrible price that people pay during war.

Our visit included a stop at the Kemal Atatürk Memorial. The inscription from Kemal Atatürk honours the foreign soldiers who died fighting in Turkey, and notes that they now lie in the soil of a friendly country. This is an important reminder to recognize the humanity in war, even in the people we fight against.



---

### *The Auditor General's report on the disability claims backlog*

In May 2022, the Auditor General released a [report about the disability claims backlog at Veterans Affairs Canada](#). Despite claims to the contrary by the Minister, the

---

Attorney General's report clearly states that 80% of Veterans applying for disability benefits for the first time are waiting 39 weeks, far longer than the service standard of 16 weeks. Additionally, the standard of 16 weeks has not been met for 7 years.

Following my motion to have the Auditor General appear to discuss the report with members, the Auditor General testified on Oct. 6 at committee.

I had the opportunity to ask the Auditor General about the report, and about [what Veterans need to know about VAC processing times, the impact staff turnover and temporary employment have had on processing times](#), and on why [RCMP Veterans had a 38% longer wait time for claims processing](#) in 2020-2021 compared with the following fiscal year.



The Auditor General at Committee discussing her May 2022 report.

I've spoken with Veterans who have a deep mistrust of the Veterans Affairs department because of the long-standing delays, and who are waiting months to receive financial support for vital medical care. The Liberal government has failed in its duty to Veterans and their families and has no clear plan to fix the problems identified by the Auditor General.

Canada's Veterans have made untold sacrifices for our country, and fixing these issues must be a top priority for the Minister. I, and the New Democrats, will continue fighting to have the Minister implement a plan to address Veterans Affairs Canada's poor data collection management and the lack of a stable, long-term workforce in the department.

---

### *Marriage after 60 clause*

I am passionate about supporting Veterans, RCMP, and federal public servants, and their families, which is why I have introduced a [private Member's bill to eliminate the marriage-after-60 clause](#) (known also as the golddigger clause). This clause disallows pension benefits to survivors of Veterans who married after the age of 60.

The Liberals promised to eliminate this sexist and ageist clause in 2015 and 2017 but still have done nothing except make promises that they are studying the issue. The government gives no justification for keeping the clause. The longer they take on this matter, the more Canadians unfairly go without financial support simply because they found love later in life. That's why it's vital that we take action now, to ensure more Canadians—in my riding and across Canada—aren't unfairly penalized for falling in love during their senior years.

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

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs will soon be releasing a report about my study of the impacts of the survivor benefits pension issue. Keep watching for more information.



---

### *Funding*

Organizations that conduct research or implement initiatives that support the well-being of Veterans and their families can now send in their grant applications for the [2022-2023 Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund](#). Applications are being accepted until November 14.

Sincerely,

---



Rachel Blaney, MP  
North Island - Powell River



---

*Copyright (C) 2022 MP Rachel Blaney. All rights reserved.*

You are receiving this email because you have consented to be contacted by MP Rachel Blaney via email on this issue or a related matter. You may unsubscribe at any time. Please let us know if you would like to update your preferences.