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It is my great honour to advocate on behalf of Canada's Veterans. I am committed to ensuring that the brave Canadians who have served this country receive the respect and benefits they and their loved ones are entitled to.

In the past few weeks we have heard more from women Veterans regarding their experiences during and after their service. I also had the opportunity to question The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Veterans Affairs, about Veterans' concerns as they navigate the Veterans Affairs system.

Experience of women Veterans

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA) has undertaken the study I initiated on the [Experience of Women Veterans](#). The purpose of the study is to explore the unique and specific experiences of women during their service and as they transition after service, including physical, psychosocial and mental aspects.

This fall we had the privilege of hearing for the first time from a woman Veteran of the RCMP, who shed a light on the inequalities women RCMP Veterans experience when dealing with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). It is my hope that women Veterans will hear testimony from the Davidson Institute, so they can learn more about supportive programs for women Veterans.

Veterans Affairs Canada is mandated to look after RCMP Veterans as well. In late October, the Committee heard for the first time from a woman Veteran of the RCMP. Senator Bev Busson shed an important light on the unacceptable inequalities women RCMP Veterans experience when dealing with VAC to get benefits. We expect to hear more from representatives of the RCMP Women Veterans Council at a later meeting.

[Automatic approvals for disability claims for women veterans](#)

While I appreciate the concern for efficiency in governmental departments, I want to ensure Veterans Affairs becomes more Veteran-centric. I've heard from many women Veterans, especially those who enlisted prior to 2000, who don't have proper documentation of medical issues because they were pressured not to come forward with their issues at the time. As a result, far too many women Veterans aren't getting the benefits they are entitled to. Retired Captain Louise Siew of the Navy has recommended an automatic approval process. Will the department consider implementing an automatic approval process?

Reception for women Veterans

On October 16, I was honoured to host a reception with Luc Desilets, [député de Rivière des Mille-Îles](#), in honour of the first ever study of women Veterans experience in a parliamentary committee. More photos of the event can be found on [my Facebook page](#).



A big thank you to everyone who showed up to share their support for women Veterans.

Seeking answers from Minister of Veterans Affairs

I had the opportunity to speak with The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Veterans Affairs, to ask about the issues that Veterans across Canada have brought to my attention.

Click on the link to view my questions and Minister Petitpas Taylor's responses.

[Welcome and thank you](#)

I welcome Veterans to the Committee meeting and thank them for attending. I also ask Minister Petitpas Taylor to ensure she makes the time to speak with Phil, a Veteran who is engaging in a hunger strike outside the House.



Meeting Madeline Landry, the widow of a Veteran, impacted by the Golddigger clause

[Marriage after 60 clause](#)

I am still deeply concerned by stories like that of Madeline Landry, who was married to her spouse, a Royal Canadian Air Force Veteran, for more than 20 years but is not eligible for the pension because they were married after the age of 60. Although the annual pension payout from the federal government is \$12 billion and eliminating the Marriage After 60 clause would add less than 2% to that budget, it still has not been eliminated. With women struggling in

immense poverty for years and years after caring for their Veteran spouses, when will this clause finally be eliminated?

[Automatic approvals for tinnitus and hearing loss](#)

Veterans are required to submit medical documentation for their claims within 30 days but because many Veterans do not have family doctors, they cannot meet that timeline. We know the Veterans Review and Appeal Board approves claims for tinnitus and hearing loss at a rate of 98%. Will the Minister consider an automatic approval for these claims?

[Burns Way and other Veterans organizations](#)

Many smaller organizations have come to me to find out why they are being denied funding through the Veterans and Family Well-Being Fund when larger organizations receive significant amounts of money. Does the Minister's office share information on how funding decisions are made and what the criteria for those decisions are? And will the group seeking funding for the Burns Way project, which is focused on connecting Veterans to Veterans, hear back about their project and how it might move forward?

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

Sincerely,



Rachel Blaney, MP
North Island - Powell River



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