



*Syndicat des employé(e)s des Anciens combattants / Union of Veterans' Affairs Employees
de l'Alliance de la fonction publique de Canada / of the Public Service Alliance of Canada*

November 15, 2018

To the Editor,

Re: Veterans Affairs reverses decision, opens beds for Allied war vets

As recently reported, Minister O'Reagan has made legislative changes to ensure that more beds are available for Allied and modern-day veterans at the Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Hospital in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, the minister's actions have now created an inherently inequitable practice. Why does the government feel the need to treat veterans differently based on where they live? All veterans deserve our respect and care, which includes access to properly funded long-term care facilities.

The minister of Veterans Affairs acknowledged that "as the population of Second World and Korean War Veterans who are eligible for a contract bed in these former Veterans facilities decreases, we need to turn our focus to more community long-term care beds for Allied and modern-day Veterans".

The Deer Lodge Centre is a prime example of this inequity. The Centre will be grappling with decreased revenue partially due to a funding shortage from Veterans Affairs Canada. The federal government had established criteria to determine who can access services in facilities such as the Deer Lodge Centre. Only veterans who fought in the First and Second World Wars as well as the Korean War qualify. Unfortunately, this means that thousands of other veterans who could use these services are excluded.

The decrease in the number of veterans at the Deer Lodge Centre is a result of the federal legislation that restricts access to beds. The government needs to change its eligibility requirements, so all veterans across Canada can have access to the care they need. Our nation needs to live up to the sacred responsibility of caring for our veterans.

These funding cuts will harm our veterans' quality of life. The very people entrusted with the care of our veterans will see their hours cut – some will even lose their jobs. How can our veterans possibly expect the same high quality of care?

The Union of Veterans Affairs, amongst others, are lobbying the federal government to change the eligibility criteria to ensure that all veterans can access long-term care in an equitable manner. The Manitoba government should join us in advocating on behalf of veterans for a change in federal legislation. In the meantime, the provincial government should do everything in its power to ensure that those who have fought to protect democracy receive the care they've earned. It's the least we can do.

Sincerely,

Virginia Vaillancourt
Acting National President, Union of Veteran Affairs Employees

