

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CLOSURE OF NINE VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICES WILL HURT VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES: NDP

OTTAWA – Official Opposition Veterans Affairs Critic Peter Stoffer (Sackville-Eastern Shore) blasted the Conservative government today for their plans to close nine Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) District Offices across the country. He was joined by Yvan Thauvette, National President of the Union of Veterans Affairs Employees (UVAE) and other staff representatives to outline the serious affect that these closures will have.

“While in Charlottetown last week, VAC staff informed me that because they did their job ‘too well’ and had too many veterans coming to the office for service, the federal government was closing the Charlottetown District office,” said Stoffer. “They were told to direct more veteran clients to the toll-free phone service and the internet.”

The NDP opposes the reckless changes and cuts to service. Many of Canada’s military and RCMP veterans have complex needs that cannot be addressed over the phone or through the internet. They require one-on-one assistance from VAC staff.

Stoffer noted that the nine district offices that are targeted for phasing out are: Sydney, Charlottetown, Corner Brook, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Brandon, Saskatoon, Kelowna, and Prince George. In most of these cases Veterans will now face long drives to access the services they so crucially need.

“Last week, at a town hall meeting in Saskatoon, the Veterans Ombudsman assured veterans that budget cuts will not affect quality of care,” said Stoffer. “I respectfully disagree. Anytime you take away a direct service to the public, you are diminishing the quality of care offered to military and RCMP veterans and their families.”

“We will be pressing the federal government to keep these district offices open.”

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