



Government of Canada Cutting Red Tape for Seriously Disabled Veterans

December 10, 2013

Ottawa – The Honourable Julian Fantino, Minister of Veterans Affairs, today joined Brian Forbes, Chairman of the War Amps Executive Committee and of the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada (NCVA), to announce new Cutting Red Tape measures to help Canada's most seriously disabled Veterans and their families. The announcement was made following a meeting between Minister Fantino and Brian Forbes at the War Amps National Headquarters, and reflects recommendations put forward by the War Amps.

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) is now making it easier and quicker for seriously disabled Veterans to get authorization for some health care benefits, and simplifying their application process for New Veterans Charter (NVC) benefits. Veterans with prostheses will also find noticeable enhancements to their health care benefits. VAC worked with stakeholders, including the War Amps and the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada, to develop the new improvements for Veterans.

"Veterans who are leaving the Canadian Armed Forces because of a serious injury deserve easy access to the supports they need to manage their disabilities and adjust to civilian life," said Minister Fantino. "These practical, common sense changes are a tangible example of how Veterans Affairs Canada is modernizing and updating the way it delivers services to better serve Veterans and their families. We will continue to listen to Veterans and stakeholders in order to improve services and assistance to meet the needs of Veterans and their families."

"We welcome Minister Fantino's announcement today, indicating that the greater majority of the recommendations emanating from the War Amps Task Force have been accepted by Veterans Affairs Canada," said Mr. Forbes. "We have been fully engaged with the Minister in identifying other areas where red tape and undue bureaucracy can be substantially reduced, and will continue to work with Veterans Affairs Canada to improve the administration of the Department's prosthetic policy and related health care programs."

The Department is committed to making it easier for all Veterans to apply for NVC benefits by streamlining the application process through enhanced online navigation, reusing information already gathered from Veterans, and simplifying forms.

The changes will also simplify the approval of health care benefits such as chiropractic care, physiotherapy and massage therapy, and will improve access to the prostheses benefits.

These changes to cut red tape for Canada's seriously disabled Veterans build upon the Veterans Transition Action Plan, launched last fall. The plan consists of new measures for cutting red tape for Veterans, enhancements to service delivery, post-military career opportunities for Veterans, ground-breaking research on the needs of releasing Canadian Armed Forces personnel, and enhanced cultural awareness.

Veterans Affairs Canada's support and services offer the right care at the right time to achieve the best results for Veterans and their families. Find out more at veterans.gc.ca.

Cutting Red Tape for Seriously Disabled Veterans

Background

As part of Veterans Affairs Canada's (VAC) Cutting Red Tape initiative, the Department is streamlining policies and processes to make it easier and quicker for seriously disabled Veterans to get what they need. VAC is making a number of changes that could provide all Veterans, including those who require prostheses, with easier, hassle-free access to benefits. On receipt of the recommendations from the War Amps of Canada Task Force, the Department began to prepare for full and comprehensive implementation of these improvements as outlined below.

- Veterans Affairs Canada is simplifying the approval of health care benefits. The Department has eliminated annual pre-authorization for the majority of benefits and reimbursements. Pre-authorization is only required the first time a Veteran receives a benefit. Previously, service providers were required to submit a request for pre-authorization each year. This change is reducing wait times and giving Veterans what they need much quicker.
- Veterans Affairs Canada's Prosthetic Policy will be adjusted so that an expanded list of medical professionals (including prosthetists) can recommend prosthetic devices for war amputees. Previously, a medical specialist was required.
- The requirement for a doctor's prescription for replacement prosthesis is being eliminated, allowing the prosthetic provider to make the determination on what is needed. This will eliminate wait times of months, if not years in some areas, to obtain such a prescription.
- Veterans who have a demonstrated need can now access various types of prostheses including a primary device for daily use, a back-up prostheses, a limb for specific activities such as showering, and a recreational prostheses (skiing, swimming, golfing, etc.).
- Prosthetic repairs and/or replacement will not require a doctor's prescription, accelerating the process for Veterans, streamlining their access to the support they need and reducing the amount of time spent on paperwork.
- Veterans Affairs Canada has updated its annual funding limits for services such as chiropractic, physiotherapy and massage therapy, allowing Veterans greater flexibility to manage within the overall limits. VAC will post extension request forms online to make it easier and quicker to submit requests for Veterans who require benefits beyond the annual funding limits. If the ceiling is reached, then the Department pre-authorization approval mechanism will be retriggered to exceed the approved annual funding limits. This annual allowance will empower the Veteran, reduce workload, and exclude the requirement to obtain a doctor's prescription.
- Veterans with service-related amputations can now be reimbursed for over-the-counter prosthetic supplies without a prescription (e.g. sleeves, stockinets) making it easier for Veterans to be reimbursed for the cost of these necessary items. This will speed up the prosthetic service providers' work and reduce the workload on family physicians who are routinely asked for a prescription for these sorts of items.