



CIMVHR
Canadian Institute for Military
and Veteran Health Research

ICRSMV
L'Institut canadien de recherche sur
la santé des militaires et des vétérans

Serving those who serve us

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget

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CIMVHR recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the government provides continued investment in military, Veteran, and family health research, with extension to the RCMP and other first responder populations, to improve the health and well-being of these Canadians through a federal funding commitment to the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) in the amount of \$25 million over 10 years.

Recommendation 2

That the government recognizes CIMVHR as a leader in collaborative, coordinated research and knowledge translation efforts in support of the *Strong, Secure, Engaged* policy and other policies during military service, transition to civilian life, and in life as a Veteran.

Recommendation 3

That the government continues to invest in science and research innovation through direct project funding to attract and advance research talent, more specifically, by increasing support for military, Veteran, and family health research, with extension to the RCMP and other first responder populations, using the Industrial and Technological Benefits program.

Introduction

CIMVHR appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance's pre-budget submission for the 2019 federal budget.

Since 2010, CIMVHR has been working to "serve those who serve us" by creating a centralized collaborative hub, through multidisciplinary partnerships between academia, private industry, government institutions, and philanthropic organizations. CIMVHR supports research focused on the needs of Canadian military members, Veterans, and their families, with extension to the RCMP and other first responder populations. From inception, CIMVHR has had the full support of the Department of National Defence (DND), the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), and since 2014, receives operational funds from Health Canada (HC).

CIMVHR is the only national institute in the global military, Veteran, and family health (MVFH) research landscape, with extension to the RCMP and other first responder populations, and is the catalyst for a network of 43 Canadian university members, 10 global affiliates, four philanthropic organizations, three industry partners, government departments, and over 1700 researchers who are all committed to how Canada cares for its military personnel, Veterans, and their families.

A 2018 consultation with 70 Canadian and international stakeholders confirmed a number of CIMVHR's achievements over the past decade. Namely, CIMVHR's achievements, which include a productive arms-length working relationship addressing the research needs of DND, VAC, and HC have increased Canada's MVFH research capacity, contributed to priority-setting, heightened public awareness and interest in MVFH, and increased the output and efficiency of MVFH research investments across Canada.

CIMVHR's operations are funded predominantly by Health Canada. This non-renewable Health Canada grant is set to end on December 31st 2019. Continued federal funding from the 2019 budget cycle is essential for CIMVHR to maintain its national network of world-class research capacity and knowledge translation activities. Continued funding will also allow CIMVHR to maintain and strengthen its ability to be Canada's leading authority on evidence-informed, data-driven strategies, and solutions to optimize the health and well-being of military members, Veterans, their families, and beyond.

CIMVHR mobilizes the only national platform for MVFH research and knowledge dissemination, brings together committed and highly engaged researchers, and publishes the only open access, peer-reviewed scholarly journal specific to these populations – the Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health (JMVFH). As such, CIMVHR has a unique role to play. Without the continuation of the government's support in the 2019 federal budget cycle, CIMVHR's work and impact will be greatly reduced or cease to exist, putting Canada's MVFH research capacity and global leadership in serious jeopardy. The loss to Canada would be immeasurable.

Through Canada's defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, the government has indicated that it will grow defence spending over the next 10 years. This growth includes a strong commitment to a *Total Health and Wellness* strategy, a policy that prioritizes a people-centred approach to support total health and well-being. A

second priority outlined in the strategy, and consistent with VAC priorities, is a commitment to support military members, Veterans, and their families through a multi-agency approach from recruitment to transition back to civilian life and beyond.

Scientific research at Canadian universities, facilitated by CIMVHR, should be the foundation for the *Total Health and Wellness* strategy and a life-long strategy for supporting the health and well-being of military members and their families. These institutions are crucial to understanding the complex processes requiring a continuum from fundamental to applied interdisciplinary research to promote related innovation and ensure successful implementation of new science and technology. Universities and affiliated researchers fulfill a unique role in the sector, supporting independent, trusted expertise in Canada. They are an integral component of research and innovation and must be brought to the table to resolve Canadian research challenges.

To continue the work and maintain momentum in addressing the contemporary issues affecting military, Veterans, their families, and beyond, CIMVHR respectfully requests that this investment be approved in Budget 2019.

Background

Military members, Veterans, and their families face unique experiences and needs that require progressive responses for physical, psychological, and social care throughout military service and beyond. While the Canadian context shares some similarities with other countries, the Canadian military personnel experience differs with respect to age, education, genetics, length of service, deployments, policies, and health care. Veterans and family members also experience unique challenges, for example, in transition to civilian life and the requirement to access provincial and territorial health care systems. Additionally, while most Veterans experience good well-being, there are heightened levels of physical and mental health conditions, including higher prevalence of PTSD, suicide, and chronic pain compared to the general Canadian population.

These research findings also have horizontal implications across other populations, including first responders. In this era of global challenges and a policy to increase the size and diversity of the CAF, CIMVHR provides a long-term, nimble, arms-length, external-to-government presence to address and prevent ongoing military, Veteran, and family health and well-being challenges.

Since its inception, CIMVHR has driven change and advanced meaningful collaboration with government, industry, philanthropy, and other leaders in the MVFH research space, while also informing new policy, programs, and services. Capacity building achievements include:

- Leading knowledge translation initiatives, including the annual research Forum and the JMVFH, making significant national and global impacts and catalyzing new partnerships where none existed before;
- Leading contracting opportunities that engage researchers across Canada, in emerging and priority research areas, funded by government, industry, and philanthropic organizations; and
- Building the next generation of researchers focusing on innovative MVFH research through scholarships and a national university-approved graduate course that attracts new research talent.

After a decade of achievements in knowledge creation, sector building, and supporting key stakeholders, CIMVHR is well positioned to build on its successes to become an even stronger credible authority in Canada on MVFH research, and beyond, and turns its attention towards strengthening knowledge mobilization and impact.

Investing in MVFH research

CIMVHR has advanced MVFH research capacity, with measurable impact on policies, programs, and advances in technologies that can have applications for the wider Canadian population. For instance, CIMVHR initiated and organized the Expert Panel on Suicide Prevention, led by Dr. Jitender Sareen. The panel is the foundation on which the *Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy – Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada* was built. CIMVHR is also leading initiatives with stakeholders in other emerging areas by investing in innovative research that is making a difference. Tangible CIMVHR examples that have direct outcomes on MVFH include: program development for transition to civilian life, advances in exploring blood coagulation in wound care, informing mental health service delivery through clinical research, leveraging artificial intelligence to increase access to and treatment of mental health services, improving the use of advanced prosthetic devices following limb amputation, and advancements in health technologies.

With a government investment, CIMVHR would continue to be the catalyst for improving the lives of military members, Veterans, their families, and other vulnerable and unique populations. In addition to continuing to collaborate with existing government partners, CIMVHR would also explore relationships with other key government partners, including Public Safety Canada and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, to ensure research findings are translated across populations.

CIMVHR, in partnership with private industry, is a strong leader in identifying the Industrial and Technological Benefits (ITB) program as a promising opportunity to advance military, Veteran, and family health research and its economic impacts. CIMVHR will expand this opportunity further by working with partners to identify how MVFH research priorities outlined in the *Strong, Secure, Engaged* policy could be more strongly aligned and integrated into the ITB policy as eligible areas to conduct research for the purpose of fulfilling credit obligations. These efforts would support “Canada’s Way” of bringing together multidisciplinary partnerships between private industry, government, and academia to advance industry-funded research.

The 2017 Naylor Report outlined Canada’s re-investment into science. Universities are at the forefront of innovative research and the government recognizes that academia and other experts strengthen the foundation of evidence-based defence policy-making. The government acknowledges that health and well-being are crucial to a strong defence force and CIMVHR can continue to be the successful broker to unite these two worlds and expand collaborative networks including fundamental, clinical, health, and social sciences.

The 2019 budget provides CIMVHR with the opportunity to support the implementation of the *Total Health and Wellness Strategy* and well-being in life after military service. CIMVHR is identifying emerging research opportunities including, but not limited to, advances in battlefield medicine, access to care for military families, mental health injuries and treatments, gender and other diversities in military and Veteran populations, health care and rehabilitation at the intersection of technology and engineering, prevention and treatment of chronic health conditions, suicide prevention, transition to civilian life, and issues in the public safety sector.

Additionally, CIMVHR’s existing network of researchers across Canada provides opportunities for national economic impact and benefit. The proposed funding would support new provincial, territorial, and regional investments in research and innovation, while continuing our investment in health research for the benefit of Canadian military, Veterans, their families, and beyond.

Conclusion

CIMVHR supports the government's plan to ensure Canada remains competitive in the global economy. The research capacity created by CIMVHR and its partners has enabled Canada to be a global leader in MVFH research and knowledge translation. This investment provides Canada and CIMVHR with the opportunity to build on existing CIMVHR-supported successes in research and innovation, while strengthening future investments in research for the benefit of all Canadians.

CIMVHR would like to thank the Standing Committee on Finance and the Government of Canada for the opportunity to provide input into Budget 2019. This investment will enable CIMVHR researchers to conduct research across a full spectrum of areas, all of which will have an impact on Canada's socio-economic landscape, ultimately having a positive influence on regional prosperity and improving the health and well-being of Canadian military members, Veterans, and their families, with extension to the RCMP and other first responder populations.

