



Mr. Neil R. Ellis, MP
Chair, Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
House of Commons
131 Queen Street, 6th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Colleague:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, we are pleased to provide the enclosed Government Response to the report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs entitled *Mental Health of Canadian Veterans: A Family Purpose*, which was tabled in the House of Commons on June 19, 2017.

We have read your report with interest and value the observations made. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the members of the Standing Committee for your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,

The Hon. Seamus O'Regan, PC, MP
Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate
Minister of National Defence

The Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan, PC, QMM,
MSM, CD, MP
Minister of National Defence

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Jean-Denis Kusion
Clerk, Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Government Response to the Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
“Mental Health of Canadian Veterans: A Family Purpose”

The Government of Canada welcomes the opportunity to respond to recommendations made in the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. We would like to thank both the Committee for this report and the 71 witnesses who were heard over 19 meetings before the Committee.

The Committee undertook a comprehensive study on mental health, with a focus on improving the transitional support between the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada, and support the development of a coordinated Suicide Prevention Program.

Suicide is a challenging issue. Our Government is working hard to improve support to families and loved ones of Veterans and to provide opportunities to develop and maintain a sense of purpose for Veterans after releasing from the Canadian Armed Forces. We are pleased to provide you with a recommendation-by-recommendation response on the progress made to address your concerns.

Committee Recommendation 1 - That Veterans Affairs Canada take steps to systematically register all releasing Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members for a *My VAC Account*, whether they are being medically released or not, so that it is easier to establish contact between them and the department should the need arise.

Government Response - Veterans Affairs Canada is actively working to register serving Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans as well as family members of those receiving Veterans Affairs Canada benefits for *My VAC Account*. Registration in *My VAC Account* is promoted during transition interviews and at Second Career Assistance Network seminars available through the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces, where releasing Canadian Armed Forces members can learn about Veterans Affairs Canada’s services and benefits. As well, promotion is occurring through DND and Royal Canadian Mounted Police internal publications and through a digital advertising campaign undertaken in March 2017. These efforts are proving successful. The number of *My VAC Account* users has increased by almost 60% over the past year, resulting in over 60,000 active users, including more than 16,000 new users who registered between April and June 2017, following the March 2017 campaign.

In addition, Veterans Affairs Canada is currently working with the DND to explore ways to systematically register new CAF recruits for *My VAC Account* after basic training so that *My VAC Account* is a familiar service to CAF members and one that they can use to access services or information from Veterans Affairs Canada at any point during their career.

Committee Recommendation 2 - That the Canadian Armed Forces, in collaboration with its public and private partners, examine how to better recognize the contribution of releasing members through a public event in which the members could participate voluntarily.

Government Response - The existing Depart with Dignity Program for releasing CAF members is designed to ensure that proper recognition is bestowed upon all military members leaving the service under honourable circumstances upon their release. These events are intended to celebrate the career of a CAF member and to provide the opportunity for colleagues, friends, and family of retiring members to demonstrate their appreciation for the retiring member's service. Each Depart with Dignity event is entirely voluntary, and the member's wishes dictate the size and scope of the ceremony, including the possibility of inviting members of the public. It is the responsibility of the member's commanding officer to ensure a function coordinator is appointed and that the event is planned according to the wishes of the member. Given that there are approximately 10,000 releases annually throughout the country and over the course of the calendar year, it is not possible to arrange significant public events for each releasing member.

Committee Recommendation 3 - That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada harmonize their transition programs and services, and launch an initiative to:

- ensure that releasing members and veterans have access to dedicated career transition services; and,
- examine and look to improve access for releasing members and veterans to priority hiring in the public service.

Government Response - Both Veterans Affairs Canada and the DND currently offer transition services, and the Committee will be pleased to learn that the two departments are currently working together to develop a more synchronized and harmonious transition process. This will include a joint Career Transition and Employment Strategy that will aim to establish the Federal Public Service as a leader in Veteran recruitment.

Currently, the CAF provides assistance to all releasing CAF members to transition from their career in the CAF to the civilian workforce. The Second Career Assistance Network provides seminars and workshops related to job searches and transition. CAF Transition Services encourages prospective employers, both private and public, to consider providing employment opportunities to releasing CAF members. Services include connecting members with potential civilian employers as well as providing continuing education, vocational training, and entrepreneurial opportunities to releasing members.

The *Veterans Hiring Act (2015)* allows medically-released Veterans who were injured in service to Canada to be given first priority consideration for job openings in the Federal Public Service. The Committee will be pleased to learn that Veterans Affairs Canada has created a special human resources unit dedicated to facilitating the hiring of Veterans. Under the leadership of a Veteran, this unit works collaboratively with the CAF, DND, and the Public Service Commission to facilitate the hiring of Veterans within the Public Service and to enhance Veteran retention through the implementation of a mentorship program to partner Veterans with mentors who are also Veterans already working in the Public Service.

In Budget 2017, our Government announced that it is investing \$133.9 million over six years to create a new Education and Training Benefit that will provide up to \$80,000 to Veterans who wish to go to university, college, or a technical school after they complete their service and move on to work in the civilian workforce. Veterans with six years of service may be eligible for up to \$40,000 and Veterans with at least 12 years of service may be eligible for up to \$80,000 to cover tuition, course materials, and some incidentals and living expenses. Our Government also announced through Budget 2017 that it is investing \$74.1 million over six years to enhance the Career Transition services program. Specifically, the changes will expand program eligibility, improve program delivery and enhance the services that the program can provide. Services will be available to serving CAF members who complete basic training and eligible Veterans, survivors, spouses and common-law partners. The Education and Training Benefit and enhanced Career Transition Services will be available on April 1, 2018.

Committee Recommendation 4 - That Veterans Affairs Canada reach out to members of the Canadian Armed Forces who served in Somalia, Rwanda, or other deployments in that time period, to ensure each is receiving the mental and physical health services and support, as well as Veterans Affairs Canada's benefits and programs to which they are entitled for their service.

Government Response - Our Government appreciates that outreach to members and Veterans is important to ensure they are knowledgeable of the services and benefits available to them. The CAF is committed to providing integrated support that promotes rehabilitation, reintegration and recovery through a series of programs and services that are available to all serving members, including those who may have served in Somalia, Rwanda or other deployments in that time period.

Veterans Affairs Canada also agrees that reaching out to Veterans who served in Somalia, Rwanda or other deployments in that time period is beneficial and will integrate mission-specific outreach into existing processes. Veterans Affairs Canada conducts information sessions to CAF members about its programs and services at various points throughout their career. During the release process, Veterans Affairs Canada representatives conduct individual transition interviews at which time deployments are discussed. The interview is an opportunity to identify concerns or challenges the releasing member and his or her family may be facing - whether as a result of their service or not. In addition, Veterans Affairs Canada has 37 area offices across Canada where Veterans are able to talk directly with front line staff about the programs and services to which they are entitled.

Ongoing outreach occurs with the assistance of approximately forty Veteran stakeholder organizations, six advisory groups, and over twenty professional organizations. This network knows its members, understands their needs and is able to identify relevant information for the purpose of sharing. Additionally, Veterans Affairs Canada uses various communications channels to communicate with Veterans including the departmental website, Facebook, Twitter, and a toll-free telephone line.

Committee Recommendation 5 - That Veterans Affairs Canada cooperate with any institution concerned in any research program that would study the effects of mefloquine.

Government Response - Veterans Affairs Canada has and will continue to partner with a number of independent scientific bodies, such as the Canadian Institute for Military & Veteran Health Research, to further the understanding of the health issues faced by Veterans, seek best practices and facilitate knowledge transfer. As part of its ongoing development of policies and programs, Veterans Affairs Canada considers credible research undertaken on matters that concern Veterans. Veterans Affairs Canada relies heavily on independent scientific advice to develop evidence-based policies and programs that support the well-being of Veterans and their families.

Committee Recommendation 6 - That the Canadian Armed Forces further integrate family members into their mental health and suicide prevention programs.

Government Response - Healthy families provide an important foundation for promoting positive mental health and preventing mental illness. The Government's defence policy, *Strong Secure Engaged*, recognizes that military families are the strength behind military personnel and commits the CAF to enhancing support provided to families of military members.

The defence policy commits an additional \$6 million per year to modernize Military Family Support Programs, which includes providing better support to families through Military Family Resource Centres, improved access to psychological services, and the development of a Comprehensive Military Family Plan to help stabilize members and their families who frequently have to relocate.

In addition, there are a number of existing programs and services which CAF family members can access. These include the Family Information Line (telephone service) that provides supportive counseling and referral services to military families by a professional; Canadian Forces Members Assistance Program, a voluntary and confidential service that provides short-term intervention and crisis support; Integrated Personnel Support Centres that provide support services to currently serving and former Canadian Armed Forces personnel who are ill and injured along with supports for their families; Military Family Services Programs that provide short term mental health support if families or members require it, and, for longer term help or mental health counselling, information about resources in the community to help members access it; a psychosocial program that is staffed with social workers, mental health nurses, and addiction counselors (available at all CAF medical centres); and Strengthening the Forces health promotion programming delivered by Personnel Support Services Health Promotion personnel on 24 bases and wings across Canada, which provides mental health workshops and services to adult family members of serving personnel.

Committee Recommendation 7 - That a Veteran's family members have the opportunity to become Veterans Affairs Canada clients as soon as the Veteran enrolls in a Veterans Affairs Canada rehabilitation program.

Government Response - Our Government is committed to supporting families of Canada's Veterans because it understands that, when a member serves, the whole family serves with them. As a result, their health and well-being is also a priority. Family members do not have to wait until the Veteran enrolls in a Veterans Affairs Canada rehabilitation program to become clients. For example, family members who are receiving benefits can enroll for My VAC Account at any time. In addition, there are a number of programs and initiatives available to family members and caregivers of Veterans including: a 24 hour VAC Assistance Service (telephone) which, through a nation-wide team of mental health professionals, provides confidential professional counselling services; a Veteran-specific Mental Health First Aid Training program which helps individuals to intervene and offer support to someone experiencing mental health problems until they can access professional mental health intervention; and peer support and community networking through the Operational Stress Injury Social Support program.

In addition, our Government announced in Budget 2017 that it would enhance support for the families of ill and injured Veterans, including caregivers. Specifically, we are:

- Eliminating the one-year time limit for eligible spouses/common law partners and survivors to apply for the Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance Program so they can access the program whenever they are prepared to return to work (\$23.8 million over 6 years);
- Expanding access to the Military Family Services Program so that the families of Veterans who are medically released will have full access to the transition services and supports offered (\$147 million over 6 years);
- Creating a Caregiver Recognition Benefit for modern-day Veterans which will replace the existing Family Caregiver Relief Benefit and provide a more generous non-taxable \$1000 monthly benefit payable directly to caregivers (\$187.3 million over 6 years); and
- Creating a new Veteran Emergency Fund to assist Veterans and their Families who do not have immediate access to the food, shelter, or medication they need (\$4 million over four years).

Committee Recommendation 8 - That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence examine and make available programs, including peer support, for those veterans that have an operational stress injury related to *military sexual trauma*.

Government Response - Our Government recognizes and compensates for disabilities related to service, including sexual trauma, and has a number of supports available to those who suffer from this trauma. Each and every Veteran who feels they may have a service-related illness or injury is encouraged to reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada so that their needs can be discussed and support provided wherever possible.

Those who have experienced sexual trauma have access to an extensive national network of around 4000 health professionals who deliver mental health services to Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and other operational stress injuries. Additionally, the Operational Stress Injury Social Support program helps with mental health issues such as post-traumatic

stress disorder, anxiety, or depression, through confidential social support from trained peer support and family peer support coordinators who are typically former CAF members with first-hand experience with these injuries. Where required, the peer support coordinators will refer individuals to the appropriate health professionals.

In addition to the programs and services offered by Veterans Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence is taking concrete steps to deal with sexual trauma amongst its currently serving members. While the term *military sexual trauma* is one that is not used in medical circles, the CAF is taking the issue of sexual trauma seriously, and has a number of initiatives underway to deal with the issue. These include the development of education and prevention programs as well as enhancements to investigation and prosecution measures to provide better support to victims.

The *Operation Honour* initiative was launched in 2015 to drive cultural change in the CAF to address issues surrounding sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military. The broad-ranging initiatives encompassed as part of *Operation Honour* are based upon four lines of effort: understanding the issue of harmful and inappropriate sexual behavior, responding more decisively to incidents, supporting victims more effectively, and preventing incidents from occurring.

In addition to the stand-up of the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, the expanding of Victim Support Services, and other programs and initiatives currently underway as part of *Operation Honour, Strong, Secure, Engaged* commits an additional \$198.2 million over 20 years to further improve the total health and well-being of Canadian Armed Forces personnel, including supporting those with an operational stress injury related to sexual trauma.

Committee Recommendation 9 - That the Department of National Defence better recognize the contribution of chaplains to the mental health of military personnel, and ensure the chaplains receive the mental health support they require.

Government Response - Our Government recognizes the exceptional contribution made by military chaplains, or padres. Military chaplains fulfill a critical role in the support available to service personnel and their families. They contribute to the operational effectiveness of the CAF by supporting the moral and spiritual well-being of military personnel and their families in all aspects of their lives. This critical support is recognized and valued on a day-to-day basis by CAF members. Formal recognition occurred in 2010 when the Royal Canadian Chaplain Services was awarded with a Chief of Defence Staff commendation in appreciation for the hard work and excellent support the Chaplain Services provide to CAF members at home and deployed.

With respect to mental health support, the spectrum of care offered by the CAF provides mental health support to chaplains. In addition, recognizing the fact that chaplains and other caregivers often have to shoulder the suffering of those they tend to, the CAF has instituted a Care for Caregivers program in which chaplains may participate. This program is designed to improve the skills of support workers and to reduce the distress that some caregivers

experience. It covers a wide range of subjects, including vicarious traumatization, post-traumatic stress disorder, coping techniques, and self-care.

Committee Recommendation 10 - That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada ensure that all medically releasing members diagnosed with a mental health condition have their mental health care in place as close as possible to where they will reside, at an Operational Stress Injury clinic or with other mental health care providers, before they are released from their military service.

Government Response - Our Government recognizes the importance of a continuum of care for the successful transition from military to civilian life and is strongly committed to developing a more synchronized and harmonious transition process. Significant efforts are underway to harmonize and improve the support provided to releasing members in order to make the transition between military and civilian life, including medical care, seamless.

In September 2015, Veterans Affairs Canada introduced Enhanced Transition Services to ensure that medically releasing CAF members assessed as having complex transition needs do not fall through the cracks. Six months pre-release, these members are assigned a Veterans Affairs Canada Case Manager who then works closely with the CAF Nurse Case Manager to coordinate the transfer of treatment benefits, care, and services post-release.

CAF members can apply for a disability benefit for a mental health condition at any time during their career. Veterans Affairs Canada may refer the individual to an Operational Stress Injury Clinic or other qualified medical practitioner for assessment and diagnosis related to the disability claim. Currently, VAC funds a network of 11 Operational Stress Injury clinics across the country (10 outpatient and one inpatient), as well as 10 satellite service sites closer to where Veterans live. Each clinic currently utilizes technological innovation such as telehealth to provide services to those living in remote areas.

These clinics and satellite service sites are complemented by the CAF network of seven operational trauma and stress support centres that primarily assist serving military personnel.

Committee Recommendation 11 - That Veterans Affairs Canada, in partnership with the provincial and territorial authorities concerned, launch an awareness campaign directed at front-line workers and healthcare professionals to help them identify veterans experiencing mental health problems, establish a system to follow up on the progress of such veterans, and refer them to Veterans Affairs Canada services.

Government Response - Like all Canadians, Veterans (including those experiencing mental health issues) receive their health care through the professionals in the publically-funded provincial health care systems in accordance with the *Canada Health Act*. All Canadians, including Veterans, in a crisis situation access urgent health care needs through emergency services such as 911 and Emergency Rooms at local hospitals. This information is made

available to Veterans, their families, and the general public via the VAC website and by VAC staff.

Veterans Affairs Canada continues to work closely with the College of Family Physicians of Canada on steering committees and through presence and presentations at the College's Annual Forum every year to sensitize Canada's family doctors on Veterans' health issues. This forum is used as an opportunity to acquaint Canada's physicians with information that is specific to Veterans experiencing mental health problems and to familiarize them with the services that are available to these Veterans through Veterans Affairs Canada. Following the conference, the presentation was subsequently made available to Canada's family doctors through the College of Family Physicians of Canada's website.

Our Government is also supporting Private Member's Bill C-211, *An Act Respecting a Federal Framework on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*, first introduced in the Senate on June 19, 2017, with amendments. If enacted, the framework may include the creation and distribution of standardized educational materials related to post-traumatic stress disorder, for use by Canadian public health care providers that are designed to increase national awareness about the disorder and enhance its diagnosis, treatment, and management.

Committee Recommendation 12 - That Veterans Affairs Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial partners, continue to find ways to improve access to mental health care for veterans through technological innovations or other means, including but not limited to the possibility of expanding the network of Operational Stress Injury satellite clinics, and investigating, in partnership with provinces and territories, incentives for professionals to work in rural, remote, and/or underserved areas.

Government Response – Our Government recognizes the importance of finding innovative ways to provide access to mental health care, especially in rural and remote areas of the country and that several advancements are already in place, for example, each Operational Stress Injury Clinic provides telehealth services to support those living in remote areas. Often, these services are delivered through video-conferences linking clients with mental health and other professionals. Veterans with operational stress injuries also have the option of using provincial and private health services available in the community.

As a result of Budget 2016 funding, Veterans Affairs Canada has recently expanded outreach in the North with staff travelling once a month to the territories and other northern, remote communities to meet with Veterans and their families.

Veterans Affairs Canada has also collaborated with partners to develop a series of free online and mobile applications which can be used by Veterans and their families. *PTSD Coach Canada* and *OSI Connect* are examples of self-assessment tools that provide information about Operational Stress Injuries, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, where to find support, and ways to help manage symptoms and stress. These mobile apps provide valuable information to Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans, and their family members impacted by an Operational Stress Injury.

Through a partnership between the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada, a specialized Mental Health First Aid course has been designed specifically for the Veteran community. This program helps members of the Veteran community recognize symptoms of mental health problems, offer support, and guide individuals toward professional help for their mental health issues. The Mental Health Commission of Canada will deliver the Canadian Veteran-specific Mental Health First Aid training to up to 3,000 Veterans, their families and caregivers across the country by 2021.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is funding the Canadian Distress Line Network to develop a national suicide prevention service. The service, which will use text, chat, and phone technology, will integrate and link existing regional distress and crisis services across Canada. Once fully implemented in late 2017, it will ensure that individuals in crisis, regardless of where they live in Canada have access to free and confidential support, on a 24/7 basis. Veterans, like all Canadians, will have access to this service.

Committee Recommendation 13 - That Veterans Affairs Canada and Health Canada work together to make the Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service available through online chatting, and accessible through multiple platforms.

Government Response - Our Government continues to seek new and innovative ways to provide services to Canadians and to increase accessibility regardless of where in Canada they live. The Committee will be pleased to learn that a new secure web technology feature will soon be introduced to the VAC Assistance Service. This will allow Veterans, former RCMP members, their families, and caregivers to interact with mental health professionals through secure video, audio, and text conversations available in real time 24 hours per day, seven days per week via an Internet navigator or mobile application.

Committee Recommendation 14 - That Veterans Affairs Canada approach all its partners in mental health to establish a mutual cooperation strategy in order to better assist veterans in crisis situations.

Government Response - As previously stated, there are a number of initiatives both in place and in development to assist Veterans in crisis situations. Through Budget 2017, \$17.5 million will be dedicated creating a Centre of Excellence on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and related Mental Health conditions to increase knowledge of Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans' mental health issues. The Centre of Excellence will be responsible for advances in applied research, knowledge transfer and the development of tools to support treatment by health care providers from coast to coast to coast. The Centre will have a strong focus on the creation and dissemination of knowledge and awareness that addresses evidence-based mental health injury prevention, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, as well as assessment and treatment needs of Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans.

The Centre is one element of a joint mental health vision between Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces, which also includes forums to share best practices in assessment and treatment, collaborative research, a joint suicide prevention strategy (to be completed fall 2017) and continuing education opportunities for health care professionals. We will continue to review and enhance mental health services in order to provide Veterans and their families with the best possible services.

Should Bill C-211 receive Royal Assent, federal, provincial and territorial representatives responsible for health as well as representatives of the medical community and patients' group will work together to develop a comprehensive federal framework to address the challenges of recognizing the symptoms and providing timely diagnosis and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Committee Recommendation 15 - That Veterans Affairs Canada expand the Veteran Family Program, in cooperation with the Canadian Armed Forces and Military Family Resource Centres.

Government Response - Our Government recognizes the importance of continued support during the transition process from military to civilian life, not only for the member, but for his or her family as well. Budget 2017 provides funding to extend the Military Family Services Program to the families of medically releasing Veterans for as long as they require them. This funding will cover services through three access points: a 24/7 Family Information Line, via the website www.CAFconnection.ca, and in-person at any of the 32 Military Family Resource Centres across Canada. Some of the services offered by the program include short term counselling, transition programs and workshops, and support navigating the civilian health care, employment, and mental health systems.

Committee Recommendation 16 - That Veterans Affairs Canada work with provinces, territories, and related service providers to ensure that veterans with an operational stress injury have all options available for treatment, while ensuring that the provincial and territorial jurisdiction for healthcare is recognized and respected.

Government Response - Veterans Affairs Canada currently partners with provinces, territories and related service providers through its Operational Stress Injury Clinics, and by paying for services provided by provincial, territorial and private health services. Our Government agrees that it is important to continue these effective working relationships in order to provide Veterans with the best possible care while ensuring that provincial and territorial jurisdiction for healthcare is recognized and respected.

Committee Recommendation 17 - That Veterans Affairs Canada incorporate international research on service standards and efficacy studies on dog therapy.

Government Response - Our Government launched a dog therapy pilot project in 2015. As part of that pilot, we requested that Université Laval conduct research to evaluate the use of service dogs to support Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. Part of this study will include

referencing international service dog research and literature. As well, communication with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, who are also conducting a service dog study, is occurring.

Veterans Affairs Canada has a contract with the Canadian General Standards Board to establish a National Standard of Canada to provide assurance that the service dogs being provided to Veterans are properly trained and meet standardized behavior requirements. The Canadian General Standards Board has selected experts drawn from the service dog and guide dog training industries, Veterans' organizations, regulators, airlines and Veterans with service dogs to create the standards.

As well, the Canadian General Standards Board has collaborated with and references guidelines used by international organizations such the International Guide Dog Federation and Assistance Dogs International. The Canadian General Standards Board is also collaborating with the European Committee for Standardization in order to stay engaged with European Standards also being developed for service dogs.

Committee Recommendation 18 - That Veterans Affairs Canada conduct an evaluation of the response process and support services available to victims of *military sexual trauma*, and make available any training necessary in *military sexual trauma*.

Government Response - Veterans who have suffered sexual trauma during their military service can apply for Veterans Affairs Canada disability benefits for a recognized mental health condition incurred as a result of a service-related traumatic experience regardless whether the trauma is the result of combat, a service-related accident, or due to sexual violence suffered while in the military. Victims of sexual trauma have access to the same mental health supports and services as all other Veterans with a Veterans Affairs Canada mental health disability benefit. Veterans Affairs Canada staff receive extensive training in mental health services and on the subject of trauma.

Committee Recommendation 19 - That the Government of Canada weigh the merits of continuing to exclude members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from the workers' compensation plans provided under the Government Employees Compensation Act.

Government Response - Our Government recognizes the importance of supporting federal employees in their recovery and return to work following an occupational injury or illness. Access to specialized medical and disability case management services, including rehabilitation programs, are crucial to supporting better outcomes for ill or injured workers. The Labour Program will continue to work with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to weigh the respective merits of continuing to exclude them from coverage under the *Government Employees Compensation Act* or of including them.