




DEC 22 2010

Mr. Ray Kokkonen, CD
National President
Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association
P.O. Box 905
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 4X8

Dear Mr.  Kokkonen:

Someone once said that we come to know ourselves best during times of adversity, because that is when we are most free of admirers. I think that describes these past few months at Veterans Affairs Canada. There is no question that 2010 has been a difficult time for our Department but, despite the challenges, I want to re-assure you that our core values remain intact: We are committed to providing Veterans and their families with the support they need after their military service, and doing so with the integrity, respect and dignity they have earned and deserve.

We are also making good progress on many important files. For example, as you know, the Minister has tabled legislation that provides \$2 billion in additional support directly to seriously ill and injured Veterans. As well, it establishes greater flexibility in how disability awards are paid to eligible recipients.

And, as I mentioned in the email I sent you on Nov. 17, our main priority in the months and years ahead is to transform the Department to meet the needs of ALL Veterans and to adapt to the demanding new expectations of this technological age. This is why I am writing to you; I am looking forward to introducing you to my new associate, Mary Chaput, whose main responsibility is to oversee the Department's transformation activities. Mary will join us the next time we meet; I have already shared with her how much I have valued your advice and input and how much the Department has benefitted from your expertise and experience.

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As you well know, the New Veterans Charter was the result of much discussion over the years, and I encourage you to take every opportunity to inform your members of the support offered to them and their families through the new charter's programs. As you are well aware, there were many compelling reasons for developing a modern, new social contract that promotes the health and well-being of our Canadian Forces Veterans rather than a system focused on their disabilities. With the recent changes the government has announced, I am more convinced than ever that this is the right direction to take to care for and support Veterans and their families. I believe all Canadians would also be better served if more was said publicly as to why you supported this more comprehensive and compassionate approach.

Finally, with the approach of the holidays, I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you and your loved ones the very best of the holiday season and warmest wishes for a happy and healthy new year. This special time of year invites both celebration and reflection, and I truly look forward to your continued support and collaboration.

Happy Holidays,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Tining', with a stylized, cursive script.

Suzanne Tining