



AUG 03 2016

Mr. Alistair MacGregor, MP
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6



Dear Mr. MacGregor:

Thank you for your letter regarding Veterans of the Royal Canadian Navy who were exposed to asbestos and their eligibility for disability benefits.

First, I would like to assure you that the well-being of those who selflessly served our country is Veterans Affairs Canada's top priority, and we are committed to providing Veterans and their families with all the benefits to which they are entitled.

As you know, Veterans Affairs Canada pays disability benefits to former and current members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have a service-related illness or injury. Each disability benefits application is adjudicated on its own merits based on the evidence presented. To reach a favourable decision, supporting medical documentation is needed, such as a diagnosis of a recognized medical condition provided by a medical doctor and medical records that show the progression of the condition resulting in a permanent disability. The documentation must also show that the condition was caused or aggravated by the applicant's service.

It is uncontradicted that Canadian naval ships contained asbestos, and Veterans Affairs Canada encourages anyone who believes that they have a disability or illness as a result of exposure during their service to submit a claim. Indeed, even though the exposure may have occurred decades ago, there is no time limit on when one can apply for disability benefits.

The Department has approved applications related to asbestos exposure in cases where the exposure is confirmed and linked to cancers or other disabilities. For Veterans who received an unfavourable decision, the disability benefits process is set up in such a way as to provide multiple levels of redress. These include a review by Veterans Affairs Canada and/or review and appeal levels through the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

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Individuals who wish to appeal a decision may contact a representative from the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (1-877-228-2250, toll-free) who would be pleased to counsel them, free of charge, on the options available to them.

Again, thank you for writing and for your interest in the welfare of those who defended the peace that we enjoy today. I hope that the information provided is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K. Hehr', written in a cursive style.

The Honourable Kent Hehr, PC, MP