

The program is an example of the transfer of social service administration from the government to the native people. Approval is granted only to projects that are planned, designed and operated by band councils or their delegated groups.

6.1.5 Veterans of the Canadian forces

Legislation for veterans and their dependents is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and three affiliated independent agencies: Canadian Pension Commission, Veterans Appeal Board, and the Bureau of Pensions Advocates. Changes in legislation through the years have been made in relation to changing economic and social circumstances of veterans, particularly regarding pensions and allowances. Programs administered by the department include medical treatment, in-home care, housing, educational assistance, counselling and other services. Departmental work is carried out through regional and district offices across Canada.

Pensions for death and disability. The Canadian Pension Commission administers most of the Pension Act, the Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act and parts of the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act.

The Pension Act provides for payment of pensions in respect of disability or death related to military service. These could result from injury or disease incurred during or attributable to service with the Canadian forces in war or arising from or directly connected with peacetime service. Pensions may also be paid to dependents of a disabled former member of the forces or to the surviving dependents of a deceased veteran. The amount of disability pension payable is set out in the Pension Act based on a rate established in 1978 and pensions are indexed in accordance with the Consumer Price Index.

The Compensation for Former Prisoners of War Act provides for compensation to former prisoners of war and their dependents, in addition to any disability pension they may be receiving.

War veterans allowance. The War Veterans Allowance Act provides for allowances to war veterans who, because of age or incapacity, can no longer maintain their employment income at a specified level. Widows, widowers and orphans of qualified veterans are eligible for benefits.

Civilian war allowance. Similar benefits are available to certain groups of civilians and their widows, widowers and orphans, under the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act.

The Veterans Appeal Board acts as a court of appeal for aggrieved applicants and recipients.

It reviews decisions of district authorities to ensure that adjudication is consistent with the intent and purview of the War Veterans Allowance Act or the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act and that the legislation is applied uniformly throughout Canada. The Board may at any time review and alter its own former decisions.

Programs. The Programs Branch manages a wide range of health, economic support and special programs designed to serve veterans and special categories of civilians who served in close support of the armed forces in wartime, and the spouses, widows/widowers and children of the two groups.

Special programs include a wide range of projects designed to meet specific needs or to perpetuate the memory of deceased veterans. Examples of such programs are: the Assistance Fund, the Educational Assistance Program, funeral and burial assistance, veterans' insurance, and the maintenance of veterans' cemeteries, plots and memorials both in Canada and abroad.

Health care and treatment are provided throughout Canada to eligible veterans and civilians in departmental hospitals and veterans' homes, in contract beds or in the veteran's home and community. Health care and treatment provided outside Canada may be paid for by the department if it relates to a pensioned condition resulting from war service. Prosthetic devices are provided to eligible veterans to help minimize handicaps.

The Veterans Independence Program is being extended to assist an even larger segment of the veterans' population. The objective of the program is to enable the aging veteran population to remain independent and healthy in their own homes and communities.

The Programs Branch also administers a range of legislative measures providing social and financial benefits and provides support services to the Field Operations Branch, the Canadian Pension Commission, the Bureau of Pensions Advocates, the Veterans Appeal Board and Service Benevolent Funds.

The Bureau of Pensions Advocates provides a free legal aid service to persons seeking to establish claims under the Pension Act, the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act and allied statutes and orders. This service includes: the initiation of claims; the searching of records; the identification of evidence; the counselling of applicants; and the preparation and presentation of claims to the Canadian Pension Commission, and to the Entitlement and Assessment Boards of the Commission. It also represents applicants for benefits