



Bulletin

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WHITE PAPER ON VETERANS PENSIONS

On September 9, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Mr. J.E. Dubé, released the Government White Paper on veterans pensions, a statement of how the Government proposed to improve the Pension Act. Two of the main changes concern Hong Kong veterans, who have now been recognized as deserving special consideration, and "100 percent pensioners", who suffer from exceptional burdens of disablement - "physically, socially and psychologically". Some of the other changes affect the "benefit of doubt" section of the act, retroactive awards, stabilizing pensions, dependant's remarriage, posthumous assessment, legal damages, "irregular unions", consequential disability, loss of paired organ, attendance allowance and clothing allowance.

Part of Mr. Dubé's statement regarding the White Paper follows:

...As the White Paper points out, over 136,000 of Canada's veterans and about 30,000 dependants now receive pensions. It is very important, therefore, that the keystone of our veterans legislation, the Pension Act, be kept up to date and designed to serve our contemporary standards of efficiency and social justice.

Canada's record of legislative programs articulating our obligation to veterans and their dependants is a proud one, and I am proud to be able, today, to present this White Paper on behalf of the Government outlining a great many proposed improvements in our pensions policy. It is the product of a very comprehensive survey which was initiated by my predecessor in this portfolio in 1965.

The report of that survey was entitled "Recommendations of the Committee to Survey the Work

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and Organization of the Canadian Pension Commission". This is quite a mouthful so it has inevitably become known as "The Woods Committee Report", from the name of its Chairman, Mr. Justice Mervyn Woods.

The task of the Woods Committee was to review very carefully every aspect of the operation of the Canadian Pension Commission, including the procedure by which pensions are granted to veterans. As the title of the Committee indicates, pension rates were not within its terms of reference.

The Woods Committee made 148 recommendations and I am pleased to say that four out of five are acceptable to the Government, either in the form suggested or with some modification.

In essence, the White Paper proposes two things: (1) more emphasis than ever on the human element and (2) a streamlining of the Pension Act and its administration.

HONG KONG VETERANS

One striking example of the human approach is the recommendation regarding the Hong Kong veterans. Here, surely, is a particularly compelling situation. The intense hardships suffered for nearly four years by Canadian prisoners of war have been recognized by medical authorities in Canada and elsewhere as