



# UPFRONT

with **Mike Wallace, MP**



A Publication of Mike Wallace, Member of Parliament for Burlington

Issue No. 15 Winter 2011

## Enhanced New Veterans Charter Act

Recently there has been a great deal of discussion and media coverage regarding the treatment of our Veterans by the Federal Government. I would like to take this opportunity to provide the facts and advise of the changes to the New Veterans Charter our Government is implementing.

It is important to understand the basic background to the creation of the New Veterans Charter. The New Veterans Charter was created and passed by the House of Commons in 2005 under the Liberal Government. I want to emphasize that all political parties, including the Conservative and NDP members supported the new legislation in parliament. The New Veterans Charter was thoroughly studied and was supported by the majority of Veteran's groups across the country. In reality, the New Veterans Charter did not receive much fanfare in the media.

It was under the New Veterans Charter that a bulk payment system was introduced for Veterans. In addition, with our commitment to Afghanistan, there is an increased need to help Veterans with their re-entry to civilian life and the injured and disabled Veterans. The changes in how we were compensating Veterans and the issues surrounding the financial security of our injured and disabled Veterans

required this Government to re-visit the Charter. The current Conservative Government completed a necessary review.

In November 2010 our Government announced changes to the New Veterans Charter. Our goal is to make sure our Veterans receive the care, services and financial support they need and deserve. The Government has introduced flexibility to the Charter that did not exist under the lump sum payment system. The new system will respect the right of our Veterans to decide how best to arrange their finances while recognizing that not everyone is capable of managing a lump sum of money all at once.

To be clear, the changes to the New Veterans Charter ensure there is still monthly financial support for those who are seriously injured and who can no longer work. The financial support amounts to at least \$58,000 per year. In addition to the financial support Veterans Affairs Canada is adding 20 new Case Managers to assist those Veterans who are injured or seriously ill.

Care for our Veterans has been a very important issue for our Government and for me personally. We have taken the issues raised very seriously and have responded to the needs of our Veterans. I



Mike Wallace speaking at the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Remembrance Ceremony

have included a number of questions that I am frequently asked with regard to the treatment of our Veterans. I trust the information I have provided is informative. Please contact our office should you require more detailed information.

### Questions and Answers

- Q. How does this legislation improve the financial support to CF Veterans with serious injuries?
- A. Recognizing that severely injured Veterans and their families require more monthly financial support to meet their needs, we have improved access to the PIA (up to \$1,609 per month) and EIA (up to \$1,269 per month) and introduced a \$1,000 per month supplement for those receiving PIA and unable to be gainfully employed. Now, with these new financial supports in place, injured CF Veterans can focus on the most important goal – getting well.
- Q. How much is it going to cost?
- A. The proposed amendments represent an investment of \$2 billion to increase financial support for CF Veterans.
- Q. Why aren't Veterans of the Second World War and Korean War receiving these enhancements, too?
- A. Since the establishment of the Department in 1944, Veterans Affairs Canada has provided a wide range of benefits and services to war-service Veterans including health benefits, disability benefits, home services through Veterans Independence Program (housekeeping, grounds maintenance, etc.) and long-term care based on the health of the Veteran. The New Veterans Charter is just over four years old. When we introduced it, we committed to

scrutinizing it closely and making changes that needed to be made to ensure the highest quality care for our CF Veterans and that is what these changes are all about.

- Q. With this improved access to the PIA and EIA, how many seriously injured Veterans do you anticipate will now begin to receive it?
- A. By amending the qualifying criteria, more than 3,500 CF Veterans are expected to gain access to the benefits in the first five years of implementation, with 500 of these Veterans also eligible for the \$1,000/month supplement, payable for life.
- Q. Why was the minimum monthly amount for the Earnings Loss benefit increased?
- A. We are increasing the minimum base salary in the EL calculation to ensure a minimum income of approximately \$40,000 per year, pre-tax, for Veterans who released as full-time Reservists or as Regular Force members. This change will benefit Veterans who released early in their careers when they held a low rank in the military or for those Veterans who released years ago when military salaries were lower.

The minimum benefit for Veterans who released as part-time Reservists is also being increased. The current benefit is calculated based on 75 percent of a deemed salary of \$2,000 per month. As a result of these amendments to the Regulations, it is being increased to 75 percent of a deemed salary of \$2,700 per month.

- Q. How many CF Veterans are expected to benefit from the increase to the minimum benefit?
- A. It is estimated that approximately 2,300 CF Veterans will benefit over the first five years.
- Q. What are the payment options being offered?
- A. Veterans/CF members receiving a disability award will be given a choice of receiving a single lump-sum payment, annual payments over a number of years of the recipient's choice, or receiving part of the award as a lump sum and the remainder as annual payments. At any time, a Veteran can choose to be paid a lump sum in place of the remaining annual payments.



# Community Group Profiles

## Compassion Society

Elizabeth came to Burlington with her small son, fleeing a relationship that had become abusive. Compassion Society was told of her arrival a few days prior and started pulling in resources for her. By the time she arrived, food, clothes, some furniture and most important a toddler bed for her son had been arranged.

Elizabeth is a strong single mom and a caring neighbour in the co op where she lives. She took a carpentry course to better her skills while her son was in day care and focused on bettering her life. Elizabeth wanted to give back and asked if there was anything the Compassion Society needed. A new shelf unit was needed for the baby section of the free shop; Elizabeth took measurements and built a new shelf unit.

This is one of the reasons why we can accommodate people due to high referrals from local agencies and charities. Whether it be a former client who is now working and suggests CS as part of community outreach, or clients from years past who financially donate to us now.

Mina Wahidi is the Founder of this charity that started in her basement 10 years ago. Lori Booth is her Assistant and right hand. Together they manage the Compassion Society that serves approximately 250 children and 200 adults per week with food or clothes or both.

The success stories could fill pages. Another is a family whose young son had an accident. As an active toddler their son pulled a pot of boiling water over his chest. His mom

had just had a new baby, so the father stayed at the child's side in Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital, thus losing his job. Compassion Society did their best to get them support as well as food and clothes for their newborn son. Two years later the father is a Police Officer with the OPP and has publicly praised Compassion Society for helping them during their time of need.

Mina has a knack for inviting anyone and everyone who cares about those in need to join in the work of Compassion Society. This ability led, in part, to her receiving the 2008 Citizen of the Year Award from the City of Burlington. Mina remains humble and always claims that the success of her charity is driven by her dedicated volunteers and a community that will leave no one behind. Donate, drop in or even volunteer! Learn more about this small but mighty service that succeeds in helping so many due to the generosity of the local community.

Mina Wahidi, Burlington Citizen of the Year 2008  
Founder/Director, Compassion Society of Halton  
[www.compassionsociety.net](http://www.compassionsociety.net)  
905-592-3722



If you belong to a local not-for-profit organization doing great things in our community, or know of a group that you feel should be highlighted here, please get in touch with us.



Mike Wallace attending the grand opening of the expanded Appleby Ice Centre

## Tax Quick Tip

Even if you are expecting a refund, it is important to file on time. Filing late could result in suspension of benefits or payments – Child Tax Benefit and GST for example. This is because your income is required in order to calculate the amount you are entitled to.

## Zero Returns

Even if you have not made any income for a given tax year, it is still necessary for you to provide a tax return to Canada Revenue Agency. This is called a “zero return”.

If you fail to provide CRA with a tax return it could result in loss of benefits, the Canada Child Tax Benefit or the GST rebate for example. These particular benefits are based on your income and if they do not have your information to calculate it, they can not provide it.

## Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

If you have low income (including low household income) you may qualify for free tax preparation from one of the local volunteer clinics. These volunteers are skilled at tax prep and donate their time and expertise to help others in the community. Our office is provided with a list of contacts mid-February, so please give us a call if you feel this service could be applicable for you.

# How Government Works: Member's Staff

As elected officials, Members of Parliament are expected to respond and attend to the concerns of their constituents. To assist in meeting the various needs of my constituents I maintain an office in Burlington and an office in Ottawa. My staff members have a variety of responsibilities. The primary focus of the Burlington office is assisting constituents, while the focus in the Ottawa office is more towards supporting my legislative and committee work.

My constituency staff members are the point of contact between residents and me. My staff will do an initial assessment of a situation and can often resolve most issues without involving me. It would be impossible for my staff to know everything about every Federal Department and program, but they can get the answers to most of the questions you may have. If you have a concern that does not fall within the responsibility of the Federal Government, my staff can direct you to the appropriate level of Government that can assist you. However, I am very happy and prepared to meet or talk with constituents about their concerns.

Responsibilities of my constituency office:

- Investigating Federal issues on behalf of constituents, e.g. pensions, OAS, citizenship and immigration, income tax, employment insurance, passports, etc.
- Redirecting constituents to the appropriate contact to address their issue or concern e.g. regional, municipal, provincial

- Arranging for federal greetings to commemorate milestone birthdays or anniversaries
- Certifying photocopies and commissioning documents
- Liaising with Burlington companies and organizations
- Media relations
- Advertising
- Scheduling my time in Burlington

As mentioned, my Ottawa staff's primary focus is my legislative and committee responsibilities. This is not to say they do not get involved with constituent issues – they do, but at a different level. They liaise with Ministers' offices concerning local issues. They work with Burlington companies, educational institutions, charitable groups and organizations as well as the various levels of municipal government when those groups have dealings with the Federal government. My Ottawa staff also conducts a significant amount of research for question period, for member's statements and for the various caucuses I am part of: Marine, Industry Caucus, Parliamentary Steel, Auto, GTA and Central Caucus, Ontario and National. They also look after a variety of administrative duties such as sending responses to my regular mail and email; scheduling; making travel arrangements; monitoring the media; arranging for and hosting individuals, families and groups visiting Parliament Hill; assisting with the production of newsletters and other mailings; as well as assisting the Burlington office when necessary.

Please feel free to contact our office at any time. In Burlington, Andrea Strathdee, Dorothy Lundy and Jackie Ireland can be reached at:

Burlington Mall, Suite 209  
777 Guelph Line  
Burlington, ON L7R 3N2

Telephone: 905-639-5757  
Fax: 905-639-6031  
Email: wallam1@parl.gc.ca

In Ottawa, Tom McBride and Terry Long can be reached at:

Room 115  
East Block  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Telephone: 613-995-0881  
Fax: 613-995-1091  
Email: wallace.m@parl.gc.ca

## Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman

The Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman was created to promote professional service and the fair treatment of taxpayers by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

The Taxpayers' Ombudsman is mandated to review taxpayers' services complaints, identify and investigate emerging and systemic issues related to the CRA's service to Canadians and to uphold the rights found in The Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

### Know Your Rights

You have rights as a taxpayer and you should know about them. To learn about your rights and how to file a complaint if you feel they are not being respected, visit our Web site at [www.taxpayersrights.gc.ca](http://www.taxpayersrights.gc.ca)

### Contact Information

Taxpayers' Ombudsman: J. Paul Dube  
Telephone: 1-866-586-3839  
Fax: 1-866-586-3855  
Address: 724 – 50 O'Connor Street  
Ottawa, ON K1P 6L2



Mike Wallace speaking to Grade 6 students at Pauline Johnson Public School

## Mike would like to hear from you!



I welcome your feedback and appreciate being informed of the issues that are important to you. Please take a few moments to complete the questionnaire and mail it to me, free of charge. I look forward to hearing from you.

Please share your thoughts and concerns with Mike on issues that are important to you.

What do you think is the most serious issue facing Canada today?

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What do you think is the most serious issue facing Burlington today?

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Please list your top 5 issues so that we can continue to work hard on your behalf.

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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4. 

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5. 

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# Information and Updates

## Burlington Transit Operations Centre Officially Re-Opens

Burlington MP Mike Wallace, Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn and Burlington Mayor Rick Goldring officially re-opened the expanded Burlington Transit Operations Centre in December.

The revamped Transit Operations Centre was upgraded under the Canada/Ontario Infrastructure Program. Burlington benefited from more than \$42 million in infrastructure stimulus spending. The Transit Operations Centre Investment totaled \$8.6 million split equally between the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments.

The Transit Operations Centre at 3332 Harvester Road was constructed in 1978. Systems from lighting to plumbing needed to be replaced to meet current workplace health and

safety requirements.

Mike Wallace stated "The Transit Operations Centre stands out as a stellar project. The existing centre was literally bursting at the seams. Now, a year later we have a state-of-the-art operation".



Mayor Rick Goldring, Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn and MP Mike Wallace officially re-opened the expanded Burlington Transit Operations Centre

## Upcoming Events

### Seniors Pension and Tax Seminar

Are you receiving the benefits to which you are entitled?

Please join Mike Wallace, MP with representatives from Canada Revenue Agency and Service Canada

**Wednesday, February 23, 2011**  
**1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Burlington Senior's Centre**  
**2285 New Street**

Topics to be covered:  
Income Tax  
Changes for the 2010 Tax Year  
Tax Credits  
CPP & OAS

**Please register by calling 905-639-5757 or email wallam1@parl.gc.ca**

### Town Hall Meeting with Mike Wallace, MP

**Tuesday, April 19, 2011**  
**7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**  
**Burlington Central Library**

Mike will provide an update on federal issues being debated in the House of Commons. Participants are encouraged to ask questions.

### Burlington Community Cleanup

**April 2011**

We encourage you to get involved, organize your own local cleanup group and make a difference in our community. Please register your group at [www.burlington.ca](http://www.burlington.ca)

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**UPFRONT**  
with **Mike Wallace, MP**

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**MP Burlington**

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