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LEGION CONCURS WITH VETERANS OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT ONE VETERAN: A MATTER OF FAIRNESS

OTTAWA, January 10, 2013 – The Veterans Ombudsman's 2011-2012 Annual Report, One Veteran: A Matter of Fairness highlighting the Ombudsman's operations and activities as well as priorities for the coming year was released today. The Royal Canadian Legion fully endorses the One Veteran theme, in that military personnel with similar illnesses or injuries should have access to the same benefits, regardless of the nature of their service and where and when they served.

The New Veterans Charter when introduced in 2006 was heralded with much fanfare and celebrated as a living document. While changes were introduced in 2010 to improve financial benefits, there still remain issues of dignity, fairness and equity. "The most important outstanding issue that has not yet been resolved is ensuring fairness and equity in the availability of benefits, services and programs for our Veterans and their families who have been injured while in service to their country, no matter where and when they have served," says Gordon Moore, Dominion President of The Royal Canadian Legion. "The Royal Canadian Legion asks that the government commit to the review of the New Veterans Charter in 2013 and take the necessary action to ensure fair and equitable treatment in the availability of benefits, services and programs for the men and women who valiantly protect our rights and freedoms," he adds.

The Royal Canadian Legion applauds the report from Guy Parent and his team. The Ombudsman's office has brought forward issues that are pertinent to all of Canada's veterans. The same issues have been at the forefront of Legion advocacy as mandated by the delegates at the Legion's Dominion Convention. However, we are deeply concerned with the unfair and inequitable treatment of injured Reservists. How can this government continue to differentiate between classes of Veterans? Why is a Reservist

who is injured, disabled or killed in the service of his/her country less entitled than his/her Regular Force counterpart yet they stand should-to-shoulder in service? There has been no change made to the Accidental Dismemberment Insurance Plan which provides less to a Reservist for a loss of a limb than it does to Regular Force members, despite being highlighted by the CF Ombudsman back in 2008. There is only one Veteran and they should all be treated with dignity, fairness and equity.

Looking ahead, we share the Ombudsman's concerns about Veterans Affairs Canada's ability to identify, reach out to, and maintain contact with the larger group of Veterans, other than those who are already its clients, especially our Reservists. We concur that a Veterans Identification Card would facilitate the transition from membership in the Canadian Forces and the RCMP to membership in the community of Veterans, and fulfill an important commemoration and recognition function.

We, in the Legion, will continue our advocacy on these critical issues as mandated by our members and delegates, and still ask this government the crucial question...“What are you waiting for when it comes to treating Veterans with the dignity and respect they deserve?”

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About The Legion

Established in 1926, the Legion is the largest Veterans service organization in Canada with more than 330,000 members. Its mission is to serve all Veterans including serving Canadian Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police members, and their families, to promote Remembrance and to serve our communities and our country.

The Royal Canadian Legion's Service Bureau Network Service Officers can assist and represent still serving CF members Veterans, RCMP members and their families regarding disability claims or related issues with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB). We provide professional counselling, and representation services at all stages of the disability claim process under the *Pension Act* or the *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act*, commonly referred to as *the New Veterans Charter*.

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