



## **NATIONAL VETERANS GROUP CALLS ON FEDERAL LEADERS TO COMMIT TO MILITARY COVENANT AND BILL OF RIGHTS PROMISED IN PARLIAMENT IN 2015**

**VANCOUVER, BC (Sept. 13, 2021)** – Equitas Society, the national veterans’ organization which in 2011 sued the federal government over pension reforms which have negatively affected Canadian veterans, is calling on all federal leaders to commit to the Canadian Military Covenant and the Military Bill of Rights that was promised in parliament in 2015.

The Covenant and Bill of Rights are important pieces of legislation that will help address the shameful conditions faced by permanently disabled veterans and their families, as well as the families of the men and women that sacrificed their lives in the service of their country.

Without the Covenant and Bill of Rights, veterans across Canada will continue to face:

- Multi-year wait times to have their disability claims processed.
- Inadequate suicide prevention support and strategies.
- Inadequate support for homeless veterans.
- Time-consuming and inefficient paperwork applications instead of online processes.
- Doctors reluctant to take on veteran patients because of massive paperwork involved; and
- Little support for transitioning back to civilian life.

To date, the Conservative Party of Canada leader Erin O’Toole and People’s Party of Canada Leader Maxime Bernier have signed the pledge to enact the Covenant and the Bill of Rights in the next parliament. The teams of every other federal party leader have received pledge documents from Equitas Society, but none have yet signed on. This includes NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, Green leader Annamie Paul, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, and Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, whose party reneged on a promise in 2015 to enact pensions for veterans.

“Canada needs to take better care and show more respect for the men and women that put their lives in danger and make tremendous sacrifices to serve our country,” says Major (Ret’d) Mark Campbell, wounded in Afghanistan in 2008. “The Canadian Military Covenant and the Military Bill of Rights will help make that possible and show our veterans that we stand behind them just as strongly as they stand up for us. We call on each party leader to demonstrate their commitment to Canada’s veterans by signing the pledge and enacting this important legislation.”

The call for a Canadian Military Covenant and the Military Bill of Rights stemmed from the Equitas Society’s unsuccessful six-year legal battle with the federal government to secure better disability benefits for returning soldiers of the Afghan War. The feedback from the courts throughout the legal process was that parliament needs to pass legislation to secure the support for the Canadian armed forces sought by Equitas Society.

In May 2015, a House of Commons motion regarding the Canadian Military Covenant and the Military Bill of Rights passed unanimously, stating:

“That, in the opinion of the House, a standalone covenant of moral, social, legal, and fiduciary obligation exists between the Canadian people and the government to provide equitable financial compensation and support services to past and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have been injured, disabled or have died as a result of military service, and to their dependents, which the government is obligated to fulfil.”

Six years later, the men and women of Canada’s armed forces, their families, and veterans across Canada, are still waiting for Canada’s political parties to honour their sacrifices by enacting this promised legislation.

For more information, and to view the proposed Military Covenant and the Military Bill of Rights, please visit [www.equitasociety.ca](http://www.equitasociety.ca)

**About the Equitas Society (Equitas):**

Equitas was formed in 2011 to support a class-action lawsuit against the Government of Canada for the reinstatement of the Pension Act Pension for injured soldiers returning from the Afghan War. Though the court case was ultimately lost, Equitas has not wavered in its resolve to achieve the restoration of veterans’ benefits and rights. Equitas is continually moving forward to have a Canadian Military Covenant and a Military Bill of Rights enshrined in Canadian Law and are seeking this action via a political solution. For more information, visit [www.equitasociety.ca](http://www.equitasociety.ca)

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