



News Release

Communiqué

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CANADIAN FORCES TO CHANGE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES REGULATIONS

OTTAWA -- The Honorable Perrin Beatty, Minister of National Defence, has accepted the recommendations of a report that dependents of members of the Canadian Forces be allowed to be politically active on the military bases where they live.

The advisory group responsible for the report and headed by University of Toronto historian and educator Dr. Desmond Morton, examined current policy, visited several Canadian Forces bases, and met with senior officers as well as representatives of community groups and military families. The report contains seven recommendations, of which six are either being implemented or are being examined in greater depth.

"These changes," said Mr. Beatty, "will provide greater political freedom to those civilians who live on our military bases. I believe that these changes are consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and can be made safely without putting the political neutrality of the Canadian Forces at risk."

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The seven recommendations are:

1. That members of the Canadian Forces be given a better understanding of the evolution of the concept of political neutrality of the Armed Forces of Canada and of the importance of this principle in a free and democratic society. (This recommendation has been accepted and this subject will be given more attention, particularly in officer professional development);
2. That civilian dependents of voting age be given the option in federal elections of voting in their selected places of residence, on the same terms and conditions as military members. (This is being discussed with the Chief Electoral Officer for Canada who has the ultimate responsibility for making such recommendations to Government);
3. When the changes are formally published, political meetings, advertising and statements will be permitted on the part of dependents and civilian occupants within the confines of individual married quarters in Canada;
4. Additionally, the present restrictions on political canvassing and the distribution of political advertising to married quarters and single quarters

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on Canadian Forces bases will be removed. While security or privacy considerations will dictate that some quarters remain closed to canvassing, the objective is to ensure minimum interference with the right of the occupants to be informed on political matters;

5. That municipal and provincial candidates who ask a commanding officer for the names of married and single residents living on a Canadian Forces base for the purpose of addressing political information by mail should be provided with their names or have political material delivered to members by service means. (For legal and administrative considerations, this recommendation was not supported by the Canadian Forces);

6. That no change is required to the existing ban on military members organizing or taking part in a political or party meeting on a defence establishment. (The Canadian Forces supports this recommendation); and

7. That the minister consider the formation of a Canadian Forces family association with branches at bases and stations and a mandate to study and suggest solutions to social problems affecting military

families. (The formation of a family association, along the lines suggested by advisory group, is under active consideration by a group tasked to make a wide ranging review of military family support policy. It is anticipated that a decision on this and other aspects of military family policy will be made by the end of this August.)

In addition to Dr. Morton, the advisory group included Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Yolande Leblanc from Bellefeuille, Quebec and Michelle Deschênes, an organizer of the Military Family Network in Ottawa.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A report by an Advisory Group to the Minister of National Defence, The Regulation of Political Activities in Canadian Forces Establishments, is available by contacting (613) 995-2534. Media queries are to be directed to the Media Liaison Office at (613) 996-2353 or (613) 996-2354.