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NEWS RELEASE

National Institute on Ageing Calls for a Comprehensive Strategy to Support Ageing Veterans with Complex Health Challenges

TORONTO, Friday, November 8 — The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) in partnership with the Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research (CIMVHR) and the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN) has released a groundbreaking new report calling for the urgent development of a comprehensive strategy to support Canada's ageing Veterans.

The report, [Addressing the Coming of Age and its Related Complexities Among Canada's Veterans](#), highlights our ageing Veteran population and the growing challenges they face, including complex physical and mental health conditions that require specialized care.

With two-thirds of Canada's Veterans now over the age of 55, many of them are at risk of worsening health due to service-related injuries and conditions such as chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. This puts them at increased risk of accelerated ageing, frailty, social isolation, and premature need for long-term care (LTC). The report stresses the need for a proactive, preventative health strategy for today's Veterans, and to build on existing programs by enhancing mental health and caregiver supports.

"Research shows that nearly a quarter of veterans released from the military between 1998 and 2018 need help with at least one functional activity of daily living and the overwhelming majority of them rely on their spouse or partner for care," says Madison Brydges, Lead Author and Health Policy Researcher at the NIA. "Close to one in four live alone, increasing their risk of social isolation and possibly making it more difficult for them to age in their own home for as long as possible, which is something most veterans want."

The report outlines six key recommendations:

1. **Develop a Healthy Ageing Strategy to Support Canada's Ageing Veterans:** The NIA calls for a federal strategy focused on healthy ageing for Veterans to meet their evolving physical, mental health, and social needs.

- 2. Evolve the Veterans Independence Program (VIP) to Meet Future Generations' Needs:** While the VIP has been a successful model for enabling Veterans to remain in their homes, it must adapt to the needs of future veterans, including more flexible supports for home-based care.
- 3. Support Veterans to Age in the Right Place with a Continuum of Long-Term Care Services:** Veterans should have access to a comprehensive range of long-term care (LTC) options that prioritize ageing in place and delay or prevent institutional care where possible.
- 4. Enhance Support for Unpaid Caregivers:** Spouses, partners, and family members often serve as the unpaid caregivers for ageing veterans. The government must ensure that these unpaid caregivers receive adequate financial, physical, and mental health support.
- 5. Integrate Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Care into Everyday Veteran Care:** Given the high rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression among veterans, there is a need to incorporate mental health supports and trauma-informed care as integral components of their care systems as they age.
- 6. Increase Research and Access to Trauma-Informed, Culturally Safe Care for Veterans from Equity-Deserving Groups:** The report calls for more research into the unique needs of women, Indigenous, racialized, and 2SLGBTQI+ veterans to ensure they receive culturally safe and inclusive care as they age.

"Today's Veterans are not a homogeneous group or the same as previous generations of Veterans, says Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research of the NIA. "We must be intentional about addressing the evolving needs of all Veterans, including those from equity-deserving groups who have historically been overlooked. This is an opportunity to create a system that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the increasingly diverse experiences and realities of Canada's Veterans."

The report calls for the federal government to act swiftly to develop a Veterans' healthy ageing strategy that focuses on health promotion, mental health, frailty, and caregiver support, ensuring that veterans can age in place for as long as possible.

"Our Veterans have given so much to Canada, and now it is our turn to ensure they receive the care and support they need to age with dignity and independence," says Alyssa Brierley, Executive Director of the NIA. "This report highlights the unique health challenges Veterans face as they grow older and the gaps in our current systems that must be addressed."

About The National Institute on Ageing

The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) improves the lives of older adults and the systems that support them by convening stakeholders, conducting research, advancing policy solutions and practice innovations, sharing information and shifting attitudes. Our vision is a Canada where older adults feel valued, included, supported, and better prepared to age with confidence.

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