

# OPINION

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## EDITORIAL Conservatives pick wrong battle with veterans

**ISSUE: Conservative  
government closes multiple  
Veterans Affairs offices.**

**C**anadian veterans found themselves in another battle this week, but this time it was against our own government and, this time, they lost.

The Conservatives closed eight Veterans Affairs offices — Kelowna, B.C.; Saskatoon, Sask.; Brandon, Man.; Thunder Bay and Windsor, Ont.; Sydney, N.S.; Charlottetown, PEI; and Corner Brook, N.L. — Friday and then, Monday, voted down a last-ditch-effort motion by the NDP that would have kept them open.

The Conservatives say the office cuts coincide with a drop in demand. Service Canada centres will offer assistance in affected areas and there will also be Veterans Affairs Canada services online.

But veterans argue the service won't be the same.

On the face of it, the Conservative government is finding efficiencies and savings, so they're eliminating 100 jobs as a result of a decrease in service needs.

But as much as Canadians want a reduced deficit, most of us do not want to see the men and women who fought for our rights and freedoms left out in the cold.

It's hard to condone going after our aging war heroes in light of the continued scandals that waste taxpayers' money.

Why not go after the expenses of MPs and senators?

Bev Oda had her wrist slapped over switching a London reservation from a five-star hotel to an even more expensive accommodation.

She also hired a chauffeur to drive her around in a luxury car and signed off on \$16 glasses of orange juice. She was forced to repay some

of the illegal claims only after the expenses came to light. Unfortunately, that's not an isolated incident.

There's a troubling sense of privilege among elected officials that's exposed regularly.

What about the plum pensions they receive?

*It's hard to condone going after our aging war heroes in light of the continued scandals that waste taxpayers' money.*

Even after the most recent changes, which mean MPs will have to wait until 65 to collect their full pension, instead of the current age of 55, they still qualify for the lucrative plan after serving six years in office.

And, of course, there's the most recent scandal that saw senators incorrectly claiming expenses.

The Veterans Affairs cuts don't have a direct impact on York Region, but it's fair to say this is a bitter taste of the future under this government.

In fact, the government is expected to cut 784 Veterans Affairs jobs in the next two years.

We don't doubt there will come a time when tough decisions have to be made. But leave our veterans alone and find the savings elsewhere.

This government needs to show more respect to the men and women who fought for this country.

**BOTTOM LINE: Program cuts are a fact of life right now, but going after veterans now is wrong move.**

## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Who is responsible for making road hazard level again?

How wonderful it is to now drive through Whitchurch-Stouffville along Aurora Road from Woodbine Avenue to Hwy. 48. since it was paved last year.

That is until you approach the "level" — or better still "uneven" — rail crossing between Warden and Woodbine avenues.

Why was this overlooked during the paving process and whose responsibility is it to make it level?

I am sure I am not the only person who

cares about vehicle damage when driving this route west of Ballantrae.

*I'm not the only one who cringes every time they approach this road hazard.*

I'm not the only one who cringes every time they approach this road hazard. Something should be done — and soon.

PAUL CANNING  
BALLANTRAE

*We like mail, Stouffville*

**WEIGH IN ON THE DISCUSSION ... e-mail your comments/letters to [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)**

