



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01243**

BY: **MR. GODIN (PORTNEUF-JACQUES-CARTIER)**

DATE: **APRIL 4, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **JEAN RIOUX**

Response by the Minister of National Defence

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Canadian Armed Forces

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

This Government recognizes that when a soldier serves in the Canadian Armed Forces, their family serves with them. Military families are the strength behind the uniform. They deal with unique challenges that most Canadian families never have to face such as long separations from loved ones, frequent relocations and the inherent risk that accompanies all those who serve. Military families deserve the necessary support and programs that are tailored to the dynamics of military life.

Through Budget 2017, our Government acknowledged the important role played by military families and the sacrifices they make as military spouses, common-law partners and family members of veterans living with physical and mental health issues as a result of their service. Budget 2017 will invest \$147 million over six years to expand access to the MFRC for the families of medically released veterans. This will increase the number of MFRCs available to medically released veterans from seven locations under the current pilot project to all 32 locations across the country.

Canada has a long history of supporting its military families, and the Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) are an important part of that effort. Located on Canadian Armed Forces bases and wings, local MFRCs provide programs and services that empower and encourage strong, independent individuals and families. This includes community information and education, deployment support, health care referral services, activities for children and youth as well as counselling and crisis support.

MFRCs are key service providers for military families living in proximity to Canadian Armed Forces bases and wings across Canada. They are not-for-profit organizations, provincially or federally incorporated and governed by a volunteer Board of Directors composed of 51% military family members. Moreover, they have charitable status but are funded primarily through a blend of public, non-public and provincial and municipal sources. MFRCs operate at arms-length from the Department of National Defence, empowering military families to develop programs that best meet the needs of each individual community. It also allows the Boards of Directors to act as autonomous employers and enables the Centres to be eligible for funding from non-Departmental sources.

The support provided to military families was a topic that was widely discussed in consultations across Canada as part of the Defence Policy Review process. At its core, the Defence Policy Review is about balancing priorities in a constantly evolving world, investing in the military and ensuring the men and women in uniform – and their families – are well-supported. As such, supporting military families will form an integral part of Canada’s new defence policy, which is being finalized and is expected to be released in the near future.