



# B.C. Liberals call on government to leave the veterans licence plate alone

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The B.C. Liberals are suggesting the provincial government create a separate licence plate for first responders, rather than expand the veterans licence plate.

**“I believe the NDP should be looking for ways to honour first responders in their own right, without taking away from the unique contributions of veterans. Honouring first responders should not involve extending to them eligibility for veteran’s licence plates.”**

Kamloops-South Thompson MLA Todd Stone said the “unique eligibility requirements” for veterans licence plates should remain intact.

“Veterans and first responders have made, and continue to make, tremendous sacrifices on behalf of British Columbians and all Canadians,” said Stone.

“As the son of a firefighter, I believe the NDP should be looking for ways to honour first responders in their own right, without taking away from the unique contributions of veterans. Honouring first responders should not involve extending to them eligibility for veteran’s licence plates.”

The provincial government is in the midst of public consultation into the eligibility requirement of the veterans licence plate. Currently, the plates are available for people who were honourably discharged from, or are currently

serving in, Canada's military.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Municipal Police, or Correctional Services of Canada officers who served under the command of the Canadian Armed Forces in a UN or NATO operation are also eligible for the plates.

Since 2004, military veterans have been eligible to apply for a special licence plate to recognize and honour their service. The B.C. government has received requests from the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans' Association, and others to expand the criteria to allow eligibility for veteran RCMP officers.

Lt.-Col. Archie Steacy was a strong advocate for a veterans plate in B.C. and received the first such plate in the province. Steacy says the province needs to protect the traditional definition of veteran.

"One cannot deny that RCMP members become veterans — veterans of the RCMP. They are policemen. They are not soldiers, sailors or airmen," said Steacy.

"When we established the B.C. veterans licence plate for military service with former premier Gordon Campbell we used the federal government's definition of veteran, which was the only established definition of veteran."

But the Royal Canadian Legion has made the argument that the definition of veteran is changing. The legion has opened the door to former RCMP officers to become members and have led the charge to change the licence plate rules in Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

"I think the traditional definition of veteran is changing," Dave Whittier, Executive Director of the BC/Yukon Command, Royal Canadian Legion, said. "And if you take a look at veteran affairs, members of the RCMP are eligible for benefits under the veterans affairs program."

“Fundamentally from a legion’s perspective [it] has to do with consistency. So if you go to any of the provinces you may find a difference in what constitutes the definition of veteran. So one person who may be eligible in one province, may not be available in another province which causes some concerns, especially for people who are mobile.”

The Liberals are also expressing concern that the public consultation is only online and is scheduled to last six weeks.

“The veterans licence plate program was designed to honour the men and women who have served on our behalf,” Prince George-Valemount MLA Shirley Bond said.

“It is important to retain the specific recognition for veterans to ensure that their sacrifice and dedication continues to be remembered with gratitude. I have heard from concerned family members about any potential changes and it is critical that their voices be heard.”

The B.C. Veterans Commemorative Association met with Attorney General David Eby on Tuesday.

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