

Minister
of Public Safety
and Emergency Preparedness



Ministre
de la Sécurité publique
et de la Protection civile

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0P8

MAR 30 2020

The Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of National Defence
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to follow up on recent communications between our departmental officials regarding the employment of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) assistance in support of the whole-of-Government response to COVID-19. As the situation continues to evolve and as we move toward the Mitigation phase of the response plan, there is a need to ensure that the whole-of-Government is able to respond to an anticipated wide number and scope of Requests for Assistance (RFAs) from all levels of government, as well as civil society and the private sector, some of which may require CAF support. It has become apparent that the COVID-19 response is placing a strain on emergency planning organizations across the country. It may be appropriate to address the natural disaster season in conjunction with the COVID-19 response. To this end, a coordinated effort that provides for the appropriate degree of flexibility will enable the whole-of-Government to respond quickly and decisively to both natural disaster and COVID-19 emergency activities concurrently.

Accordingly, I assess that CAF assistance to this overall response is in the national interest, and request that you authorize the CAF to assist with whole-of-government response operations – in support of all levels of Government, civil society, and the private sector – through the provision of logistics and general support, and transportation and infrastructure support, on a case by case basis as jointly coordinated by our senior departmental officials. In addition, I request that you authorize CAF support in providing humanitarian relief to Canadians. Finally, I would ask that you issue directions authorizing the CAF to provide assistance to law enforcement agencies in circumstances described in this letter, which I assess to be in the national interest, which cannot be effectively dealt with except with the

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assistance of the CAF, and where there is no expected requirement to detain, arrest, or use force with respect to any person. The assistance described above would be provided as CAF capacity allows, and to the extent that it does not degrade CAF military preparedness to continue ongoing operations.

Therefore, pursuant to National Defence Act (NDA) section 273.6(1), the assistance of the CAF is requested to provide the following types of support, including but not limited to:

- Providing planners and liaison officers to provincial/territorial levels of government and federal regional offices to assist with planning of a CAF contribution to regional containment efforts;
- Establishing dispersed command and control nodes in support of lead departments and agencies;
- Providing infrastructure for use by interdepartmental / intergovernmental teams;
- Facilitating the evacuation of designated communities and vulnerable populations by providing transport or related non-enforcement support;
- Assisting with the monitoring of critical infrastructure;
- Assisting with the coordination and delivery of goods and supplies to distribution centres and to OGD partners when private vendors are not readily available to conduct the task; and
- Providing engineering support to interdepartmental camps/containment work (i.e., field engineers, construction engineers, heavy equipment, etc.)

Further to the types of public service support noted above, and also pursuant to NDA section 273.6(1), the assistance of the CAF is requested to directly support the provision of humanitarian relief to Canadians, including but not limited to:

- Conducting wellness checks for designated vulnerable populations, when directed and advisable to do so;
- Assisting in water purification;
- Assisting in establishing and operating alternate care sites;
- Providing limited assistance with civilian patient management including triage, secondary assessment and treatment of COVID 19 patients, within the scope of CAF capabilities and authority to provide medical care to civilians;
- Providing limited assistance with civilian patient management including triage and secondary assessment of vulnerable populations (i.e., rural/remote, indigenous, prison inmates), within the scope of CAF capabilities and authority to provide medical care to civilians; and
- Support PHAC or provincial health authority with PHAC or provincial/territorial health vaccination programs when COVID-19 vaccination is available.

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Pursuant to NDA section 273.6(2), and based on my determination that the criteria in that subsection have been met with regard to the tasks outlined below, the assistance of the CAF is requested in respect of the following law enforcement matters, where there is no expected requirement to detain, arrest, or use force with respect to any person:

- Supporting law enforcement officials in the enforcement of COVID-19 related orders under federal or provincial legislation, including under the Quarantine Act;
- Supporting law enforcement officials in the enforcement of evacuation orders
- Providing logistical and general support, as well as transportation; and infrastructure assistance similar to the support outlined above under the NDA section 273.6(1), to law enforcement officials.

In the event that a request to provide assistance with respect to law enforcement matters requires CAF support beyond what is outlined in this letter and subsequently approved by you, I will write to you separately to make that request under existing procedures.

Finally, pursuant to NDA section 273.6(1), as required within the duration of the authorities agreed upon in this document, the assistance of the CAF is requested to support natural disaster emergency response activities, including but not limited to:

- Evacuation assistance:
 - Providing air, inland maritime and ground support to facilitate the evacuation of persons affected by flooding and/or fires;
 - Providing airlift support to move emergency response crews and equipment in order to assist with flooding and/or fire operations;
- Humanitarian assistance:
 - Providing assistance to vulnerable, stranded or in distress persons affected by floods, fires, or other climate-related emergencies;
 - Conducting welfare checks on persons in affected areas;
- General and logistical support:
 - Providing personnel to perform tasks to mitigate the effects of floods and fires, including the protection of critical infrastructure, access roads, and properties as designated by local authorities; and;
 - Providing personnel and equipment for consequence management operations in designated areas affected by floods and/or wildfires.

Should you authorize this requested assistance, an inter-departmental protocol has been developed to channel all RFAs through a single point of entry for senior officials to receive, coordinate, evaluate, prioritize, and action. This protocol will ensure a coherent whole-of-Government approach in responding to emergency management activities, by requiring inter-

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departmental and/or inter-governmental consultations to be undertaken prior to directing specific requests to the CAF for assistance. It remains understood that the CAF is intended to be a force of last resort, that all other options reasonably available to requestors have been exhausted before CAF support is considered, and that the proposed assistance does not unduly place the CAF in competition with the private sector.

In consideration of the evolving nature of the national response to COVID-19 and in the context of the approaching flooding and wildfire season, I will direct my officials to regularly review this request for CAF assistance with officials from your department, starting within the next 60 days, in order to determine whether any changes are necessary or whether the conditions are met for termination of any approved support. I will write to you in the event that there are any developments in that regard.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for the support of the CAF during this unprecedented whole-of-government response operation. Your contribution is vital and greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Blair', written in a cursive style.

The Honourable William Sterling Blair, P.C., C.O.M., M.P.