



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



Sheila Malcolmson

**Member of Parliament
Nanaimo—Ladysmith**

Parliamentary Office

House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Phone: (613) 992-5243
Fax: (613) 992-9112

Community Office

495 Dunsmuir St, Suite 103
Nanaimo, British Columbia
V9R 6B9

Phone: (250) 734-6400
Fax: (250) 734-6404

Sheila.Malcolmson@parl.gc.ca
www.SheilaMalcolmson.ndp.ca

SheilaMalcolmsonNDP
 s_malcolmson
 SheilaMalcolmsonNDP

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K 1A 0A2

August 15th, 2018

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

My Nanaimo—Ladysmith office is flooded with urgent requests from desperate constituents who cannot access the federal services they need. Whether waiting on Service Canada to process their Old Age Security or the Guaranteed Income Supplement, attempting to contact the Canada Revenue Agency or seeking critical information from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, they're encountering many frustrating obstacles which your government has so far failed to address.

Government phone lines are jammed. Front line agents sometimes give incorrect information. Processing backlogs are causing wait times to stretch from weeks, to months, to years. People with disabilities, seniors, low-income individuals and new Canadians are left in limbo while they await crucial approvals.

How could the promise of your government be so betrayed, when you failed to use your power to restore service, re-hire frontline staff, reopen regional offices, and deliver with speed and respect the support people need?

I've raised this repeatedly in Parliament¹, and now that I'm home in Nanaimo-Ladysmith for the summer, I hear that people still aren't getting the help they need:

- "Being given a jigsaw puzzle and turning out the lights." That is what a young veteran with PTSD told me it is like to deal with Veterans Affairs.
- Reporting a death results in a tangle of filing with every department to stop federal payments.
- Seniors are left destitute if they don't apply for CPP a year before they turn 65.
- The Phoenix pay debacle continues to have cascading and calamitous impacts on the lives of public servants.
- People living with disabilities have to prove eligibility repeatedly with multiple government departments.
- Several federal support programs claw back benefits, when people unable to live on low support levels have to cash RRSPs to make ends meet, and then find themselves ineligible for payments the next year.

¹ S. Malcolmson (Feb 7th 2018, Hansard p. 16936): www.youtube.com/watch?v=snY1_dIMONw
S. Malcolmson (Jan 30th 2018, Hansard p. 16580): www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EBDmjm-hkM
S. Malcolmson (Oct 20th 2017, Hansard p. 14364): www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKYLUBiUemg
S. Malcolmson (Oct 20th 2017, Hansard p. 14355): www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbKDDSyEWdg

Cont.

- Workers who've paid into EI for years are declared ineligible just when they need the support most, like with terminally-ill family members.
- Sometimes people have to call 20 times to have the "privilege of being put on hold". Once they get an immigration officer, sometimes their advice is questionable, which can have lifetime impacts on the people Immigration is meant to serve.

People get kicked off Service Canada's phone line, are directed to a website (which is especially frustrating for some seniors), often to incorrect pages and forms, and I've heard complaints that the Service Canada website is regularly offline for maintenance. People have even been sent by Service Canada staff to my MP office just blocks away, because they are too backed up.

Last summer in particular, Service Canada seemed severely short-staffed, and people couldn't even get through on the help lines. So they phone our MP offices: we are happy to help, but because our staff is providing a navigation service and aren't decision-makers, this can be confusing for constituents. And not all MPs hire staff for such support (my Conservative predecessor didn't), which makes access uneven for Canadians.

And to top this all off, even the back-door phone number my staff use to contact Service Canada, Immigration and CRA became suddenly out-of-service earlier this month, cutting with no notice the only avenue remaining to constituents whose access has been thwarted in other ways.

Community members who've worked hard all their lives are asking for help, whether they've fallen on hard times or are simply accessing support programs they have already paid into. Public service staff are scrambling to deal with the ever-growing backlog of requests for help. It is far past time for this government to hire back the workers the Conservatives cut, and give Canadians the services they deserve.

Will you please let me know you recognize this problem and are committed to fast action to get people the help and respect they deserve?



Sheila Malcolmson, MP
Nanaimo – Ladysmith

CC: The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
The Honourable Ahmed D. Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
The Honourable Patricia A. Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour
The Honourable Seamus Thomas Harris O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence
The Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister of Seniors

Jagmeet Singh, Leader of Canada's NDP

Guy Caron, MP Rimouski-Neigette — Témiscouata — Les Basques, NDP Parliamentary Leader

Jenny Kwan, MP Vancouver East, NDP Critic for Multiculturalism, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Pierre-Luc Dusseault, MP Sherbrooke, NDP Critic for National Revenue

Gord Johns, MP Courtenay—Alberni, NDP Critic for Veterans

Scott Duvall, MP Hamilton Mountain, NDP Critic for Pensions

Niki Ashton, MP Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP Critic for Jobs, Employment, Precarious Work and Workforce Development

Brigitte Sansoucy, MP Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP Critic for Families, Children and Social Development

Karine Trudel, MP Jonquière, Critic for Labour

Rachel Blaney, MP North Island—Powell River, NDP Critic for Seniors