
News Release

MP Byrne asking Marine Atlantic to provide details on free travel for veterans and military personnel

Ottawa (February 10, 2009) – The Liberal MP who successfully took up the cause of granting veterans and current day members of the Canadian Armed Forces free travel on Marine Atlantic is asking the federal crown corporation and the federal government to provide details of their plan.

In February 2008, another federal crown corporation, VIA Rail, announced that all Canadian veterans and all members of the Canadian Armed Forces would receive free passenger rail travel any where in Canada VIA rail operates for the entire month of July of that same year. In addition to offering veterans and soldiers with this benefit, they also allowed up to five of their family members to buy tickets for half price for the entire month as well. Byrne applauded the move but insisted that it fostered a regional inequality.

“It was good to do this for our veterans and soldiers”, Byrne said, “but I knew that an important group of these people would be unfairly left out. There are no trains to Newfoundland, just a ferry, and that ferry is operated by another federal crown corporation, Marine Atlantic. I said the right thing to happen here is for Marine Atlantic to do the same. After a few weeks of lobbying, Marine Atlantic informed me that free travel would be offered on the same basis as VIA Rail had done and I announced this decision in the House of Commons to the applause of all sides of the House.

Today, I left wondering where Marine Atlantic’s follow through is in all of this. There is still no mention of this on their web site, there has been no promotion of the offer and they do not appear to be working with the province on joint tourism marketing initiatives. I watch with a certain amount of pride the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism ads on TV and can only say to myself ‘wouldn’t it be great if free travel for armed forces personnel and veterans on Marine Atlantic could be part of that strategy to attract people to our province?’

Byrne has asked Marine Atlantic for details to be made public and for a marketing strategy to be unveiled.

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