

AGENT ORANGE
(GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY
COMMISSION)

- In January 2024, the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission, established by the Maine Legislature, published its recommendations.
- The Commission made several recommendations which are important for the Government of Canada.
- One recommendation is to ensure that all US military members posted at Gagetown have access to health services.
- As you are aware, Canadian Veterans already have access to benefits and services through Veterans Affairs Canada.
- Recommendation two invites experts to review the Canadian Report entitled Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report.
- The Government of Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada will continue to monitor the work of the Maine Legislature.

WHEN PRESSED:

Q1 – What will the Government of Canada do in response to the recommendations of the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission?

The Government of Canada has already taken action to address the longstanding uncertainties held by many individuals over the years, in regards to the use of herbicides at CFB Gagetown. In 2007, the Government of Canada announced a one-time, tax-free ex gratia payment for eligible civilians and military personnel. By the conclusion of the program, over 5,000 payments were made to eligible individuals.

In addition, and separate from the ex gratia payments, VAC introduced policy providing guidance in the adjudication of disability benefit applications for claims associated with exposure to unregistered US military herbicides, including Agent Orange.

In response to the recommendations, Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence will continue to monitor research on the issue. As new evidence becomes available, including those of the Maine Commission, results will be evaluated, and VAC will update its processes accordingly.

Q2 – What is currently known about the long-term health impacts of Agent Orange exposure on Veterans?

Exposure to Agent Orange has been strongly linked to various long term health effects in humans, including some cancers and hypertension. Weaker associations have also been observed for conditions such as Parkinson disease, stroke, and early-onset peripheral neuropathy.

Q3 – What support does Veterans Affairs Canada provide today for Veterans suffering from a disability related to Agent Orange exposure?

Veterans Affairs Canada accepts that Veterans who served in Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 were exposed to Agent Orange.

For disability benefit claims related to exposure outside of Vietnam, e.g., on a US military base or at CFB Gagetown, the applicant must have an illness that VAC accepts as being associated with exposure to Agent Orange, and must provide evidence of exposure.

An individual's presence at CFB Gagetown from June 14-16, 1966 and/or from June 21-24, 1967, during the testing of unregistered US military herbicides, including Agent Orange, does not constitute exposure that would place an individual at an increased risk for long-term, irreversible health effects.

The following is the list of illnesses that VAC accepts as being associated with exposure to Agent Orange. These are set out in the [Exposure to Agent Orange and Other Unregistered US Military Herbicides](#) policy.

- i. Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- ii. AL amyloidosis
- iii. B cell leukemias
- iv. Chloracne
- v. Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL)
- vi. Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)
- vii. Hodgkin's Disease
- viii. Ischemic Heart Disease
- ix. Multiple Myeloma
- x. Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- xi. Parkinson's Disease
- xii. Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- xiii. Prostate Cancer
- xiv. Respiratory Cancers – includes cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus; and/or
- xv. Soft-Tissue Sarcomas

Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans suffering from a disability they feel to be associated with exposure to Agent Orange during their service, are encouraged to apply for VAC's suite of programs, including rehabilitation, health benefits, financial support, and disability benefits.

Q4 – What was the Agent Orange ex Gratia Payment?

On September 12th, 2007, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, joined by the Minister of National Defence, announced a one-time, tax-free ex gratia payment as a compassionate response to recognize the longstanding uncertainties held by many individuals over the years. This was a one-time \$20,000 payment for eligible civilians and military personnel. The original deadline to apply for the ex-gratia payment was April 1, 2009, and was later extended to June 30, 2011.

To qualify for the ex-gratia payment, individuals must have had an illness associated with exposure to contaminants in Agent Orange, as determined by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM), and must have worked at, trained at, been posted to, or lived within five kilometres of CFB Gagetown, when Agent Orange was tested in 1966 and 1967.

Q5 – What was the *Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact- Finders' Report*?

In August 2005, the Department of National Defence, in collaboration with Veterans Affairs Canada, Health Canada, and other departments and agencies, initiated a fact-finding investigation to gain information on the history of herbicides tested and used at CFB Gagetown from 1952 to 2004, and the potential risks to human health and the environment. This investigation involved a comprehensive approach in order to understand the past testing and use of herbicides at Base Gagetown and included several fact-finding tasks. Research was conducted by highly qualified, non-government experts, and was peer-reviewed by independent specialists in the field. The entire investigation was overseen by Dr. Dennis Furlong, who was named as the Independent Fact-Finding and Outreach Coordinator. The *Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report*, also known as the Furlong Report, was the report of findings of this investigation.

BACKGROUND – AGENT ORANGE: GAGETOWN HARMFUL CHEMICAL STUDY COMMISSION

Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission:

The Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission (the Commission) was established by the Maine Legislature in 2023. The ten-member commission was charged with studying the impacts of exposure to harmful chemicals on American Veterans who served at the Canadian military base in Gagetown, New Brunswick. All members were lay people, and none were experts in medical or scientific issues related to Agent Orange exposure (See Annex A for Executive Summary from the Report).

In January 2024, the Commission published its report which included one recommendation pertaining to the *Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report* (Furlong Report). It recommended that, the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee (of the Maine State Legislature) should invite individuals with relevant expertise to review and discuss the existing reports and underlying data that comprise the Furlong Report, to evaluate the reports' processes, methods, data and analysis and to determine what steps and resources would be required in order to either reanalyze the existing data or to conduct new studies. There were comments made in the Report that data and analysis within the Furlong Report was incorrect, and based on, in some cases, incomplete data and poor study design. They also stated that as the report was issued over 15 years ago, significant knowledge about these chemicals have emerged and been developed.

Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders' Report (Furlong Report):

In August 2005, the Department of National Defence, in collaboration with Veterans Affairs Canada and other departments and agencies, initiated a fact-finding investigation on the history of herbicide tests and use at CFB Gagetown, and the potential risks to human health and the environment. Research was conducted by highly qualified, non-government experts, and was peer-reviewed by independent specialists in the field. The investigation concluded that, aside from two instances of testing in 1966 and 1967, all herbicides used at CFB Gagetown were regulated and used in accordance with all federal and provincial regulations and scientific policies at the time. The results from the human health risk assessments concluded that most people who lived and worked at or near CFB Gagetown were not at risk of exposure to herbicides, and that only specific populations were at a greater risk for developing adverse health outcomes.

Ex gratia Payments:

On September 12th, 2007, the Government of Canada announced a one-time, tax-free ex gratia payment as a compassionate response to recognize the longstanding uncertainties held by many individuals over the years. This was a one-time \$20,000 payment for eligible civilians and military personnel. The original deadline to apply for the ex-gratia payment was April 1, 2009, and was later extended to June 30, 2011.

Direct Excerpt from “Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission Report¹”

Executive Summary

“The 131st Legislature established the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission, referred to in this report as the “commission” with the passage of Resolve 2023, chapter 95 (Appendix A). Pursuant to the resolve, ten members were appointed to the commission: two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including a member from each of the two parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature; two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, including a member from each of the two parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature; two members who represent veterans’ advocacy organizations; one member who is a family member of a veteran who served at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada; one member with expertise processing veterans’ claims for benefits related to harmful chemicals; and two members who served at Gagetown and were exposed to harmful chemicals during their service.

Over the course of four meetings, the commission developed the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1. To request that the United States Department of Veterans Affairs provide access to medical care and assistance to members of the National Guard who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada and who have been diagnosed with a condition or illness associated with exposure to tactical herbicides or exposure to other dioxins.

Recommendation #2. The Veterans and Legal Affairs committee should invite individuals with relevant expertise to review and discuss the existing reports and underlying data that comprise the Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Herbicide Spray Program 1952-2004 Fact-Finders’ Report, as well as other related content, in order to evaluate the reports’ processes, methods, data and analysis and to determine what steps and resources would be required in order to either reanalyze the existing data or to conduct new studies.

Recommendation #3. The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans’ Services should reestablish and expand the registry of individuals who served/serve in the Maine National Guard who have trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada.

Recommendation #4. The Legislature should reestablish the Gagetown Harmful Chemical Study Commission.

¹ [10717 \(maine.gov\)](https://www.maine.gov/doc/10717), p. iii