

Celebrating 100 Years!

Media Backgrounder



The War Amps

1918-2018

A Short Summary of Our Long History

One hundred years ago, amputee veterans returning from the First World War started The War Amps. With Lt.-Col. Sidney Lambert, an Army padre who lost his leg on the battlefields, at the helm, they helped each other adapt to their new reality and advocated for seriously disabled veterans. With a philosophy of “amputees helping amputees,” they welcomed the next generation of war amputees following the Second World War and established the Key Tag Service to gain meaningful employment and provide a service to the public. Later, recognizing that their experience could help others, they developed programs to serve all amputees. Under the leadership of Cliff Chadderton, a Second World War amputee, the renowned CHAMP Program was created to ensure children would have artificial limbs and to share the “amps” positive motto: “It’s what’s left that counts.” The War Amps grew dramatically, and today, this charitable Association continues its crusade to improve the lives of war amputees, and all amputees, including children – a legacy that will carry on long into the future.

Marking our 100th anniversary in 2018, we look back on some of the milestones in our journey so far – made possible by our generous supporters.

1918 – The origins of The War Amps trace back to September 23, 1918, when the Amputation Club of British Columbia held its first meeting. It was the first of many groups of war amputees across Canada to organize and, eventually, amalgamate into a national organization. War amputee veterans envisioned a fraternal society where they could help each other adapt to their new reality and advocate for seriously disabled veterans. In 1920, the organization was formally chartered as the **Amputations Association of the Great War**, and Lt.-Col. Sidney Lambert, an Army padre who lost his leg during the First World War, was named the first Association President. He laid the groundwork for ensuing generations of amputees and shaped the philosophy that, with courage and determination, amputees can succeed in life.

1932 – The War Amps and four other veterans’ groups came together to appear before parliamentary committees to represent the concerns of Canadian veterans.

By presenting a unified voice, submissions to the government were considerably enhanced. Eventually, The War Amps, along with the other founding groups, officially formed the **National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada (NCVA)**, advocating for the rights of war veterans, especially those with disabilities. Throughout the years, the NCVA has continued to accept a number of other veterans’ organizations into its membership, which today stands at 60-plus member groups.

1945 – As the new Second World War amputees returned home, they were welcomed to the Association by the “old” amps. In anticipation of this, the Association changed its name to **The War Amputations of Canada** in 1939. These new members, like the generation from the First World War, went on to contribute greatly to the success of the organization as we know it today.

1946 – The **Key Tag Service** debuted, creating jobs for war amputees in its sheltered workshop and generating funds for the Association by providing a valuable service to Canadians. By attaching a War Amps tag to a set of keys or other valuables, Canadians could feel assured these important items would be returned to them if lost. The Key Tag Service remains a sheltered workshop today, employing amputees and people with disabilities. To date, it has returned more than 1.5 million sets of lost keys to their owners.

1957 – Arising out of a need for more functional artificial limbs and better fittings, The War Amps formed the **Association Prosthetics Committee**. At the time, some members were wearing limbs that had not changed since the 1920s. The committee worked hard over the years to bring to light the needs and challenges of amputees, conducted extensive research that included looking to international advancements in prosthetics, and became an expert in the field.

1962 – The War Amps began expanding its support to all Canadian amputees with the introduction of the **Civilian Liaison Program**. The two versions of the Program – one for adults and one for children – were the precursors of the modern-day Adult Amputee Program and Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program.

1965 – **H. Clifford Chadderton** was named CEO of The War Amps. He was a Second World War veteran who lost his leg while battling for the Scheldt estuary in Belgium and Holland in October 1944. Under his leadership, the Association made the transition from a solely veteran-oriented organization to a charitable institution that effectively represents all amputees in Canada. Known to Canadians as “Mr. Veteran,” Cliff Chadderton held the position of CEO for 44 years and was

renowned as Canada’s most influential developer of innovative programs and services for war, civilian and child amputees, and as a tireless advocate for veterans.

1972 – The Association introduced the **Address Label Service** to thank donors for their support and to provide year-round employment for people with disabilities at the sheltered workshop.

1975 – With war amputees’ needs well served by existing programs, War Amps members recognized their knowledge and experience could benefit children across Canada who were dealing with the effects of amputation. As a natural evolution of the Civilian Liaison Program, and an extension of the Sidney Junior award, which encouraged a positive attitude and courage in child amputees, the **CHAMP Program** was created. CHAMP would ensure children had artificial limbs and shared the “amps” positive motto: “It’s what’s left that counts.”

2014 – Since its founding at the end of the First World War, The War Amps has fought to protect the rights of amputee veterans and address the inequities they face. In 2014, the collective efforts and resources dedicated to these ends were formalized in the Association’s **Advocacy Program**. Through Advocacy, The War Amps supports individual amputees who have encountered discrimination or red tape in accessing important financial benefits and/or legal rights.

2018 – Today, as **The War Amps celebrates 100 years**, there is still much to do to ensure amputees have the artificial limbs they need to lead independent and active lives. The CHAMP Program, which is unique in the world, and the Association’s many other vital programs, serve more amputees than ever. Thanks to the public’s continued support of the Key Tag Service, The War Amps legacy will carry on long into the future.

The Battles We Fought

Since its founding at the end of the First World War, The War Amps has fought to protect the rights of amputee veterans and address the inequities all Canadian amputees face. Here are some of our important battles:

- 1965* – The Committee to Survey the Organization and Work of the Canadian Pension Commission, called the “**Woods Committee**” after its chair Justice Mervyn Woods, was launched to investigate veterans’ pension legislation. The War Amps CEO, Cliff Chadderton, served as the committee’s secretary and executive director. The final three-volume report resulting from the committee’s work made available to veterans for the first time a complete and detailed explanation of virtually every section of the Pension Act. The comprehensive recommendations made by the committee led to extensive amendments to the Pension Act.
- 1975* – The War Amps played a leading role in initiating several significant interpretation hearings before the Pension Review Board in the 1970s and 80s, which provided a more liberal interpretation of veterans’ legislation. In 1975, The War Amps took its first appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal from the Pension Review Board. This was an historic judicial intervention which eliminated discrimination regarding **seriously disabled veterans** in the Pension Act and its policy guidelines of automatic age increase and fixed disability increase. In 1985, a new Exceptional Incapacity Allowance guideline was established due to the collaborative efforts of the Canadian Pension Commission and The War Amps. This guideline continues to provide improved benefits to war amputees and is an integral component of a seriously disabled veteran’s financial package under the Pension Act.
- 1987* – To address the needs of the Canadian thalidomide victims, The War Amps established the **Thalidomide Task Force**. The task force issued a report in 1989 arguing that the federal government was responsible for compensating victims. In 1990, the Canadian government issued lump-sum payments to thalidomide victims, which The War Amps viewed as a starting point, affirming that the government was responsible for meeting any future needs of thalidomide victims. Twenty-four years later, the Canadian government agreed to additional lump-sum payments and announced annual pensions – a major breakthrough in this hard-fought battle.
- 1989* – The War Amps sought and secured consultative status as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the **United Nations**. This certification allows the Association to assist amputees on an international level and present submissions to the UN’s human rights bodies as necessary.
- 1995* – In a major breakthrough with Veterans Affairs Canada, The War Amps succeeded in creating a “**seriously disabled veteran**” category within veterans’ legislation, regulation and policy – a change that continues to benefit war amputees today. This change recognized those veterans with more than 78 per cent pensioned disability (effectively all war amputees) as being in a category of their own, resulting in automatic entitlement for health-care and long-term care benefits as a consequence of their pensioned and non-pensioned conditions.
- 1998* – After an 11-year battle seeking **compensation for former Canadian Far East PoWs**, The War Amps succeeded in getting the Canadian government to pay a claim to each surviving Hong Kong veteran who had endured the atrocities carried out under the direction of the Japanese government during the Second World War. As part of this battle, The War Amps went

before the UN Human Rights Committee with a petition seeking compensation from the Government of Canada. The strategy was to trigger an “organization of shame” to compel the Japanese and Canadian governments to recognize the claim by exposing their failure before an international tribunal. In 1998, the Canadian government paid the claim, and in 2011 Canada’s Far East PoWs received a long-awaited apology from the Japanese government.

2000 – In 1997, the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada (of which The War Amps is a founding member) presented a submission to the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs demanding the **Merchant Navy veterans** be fully compensated for the benefits they were denied from 1945 to 1992. Although full compensation was not granted, in 2000 and 2001, the Canadian government announced payments totalling more than \$100 million for Canada’s Merchant Navy veterans and surviving spouses as recognition of their years of lost benefits.

2002 – The National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada (NCVA), chaired by War Amps CEO Cliff Chadderton, filed a claim with the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations seeking comprehensive compensation for benefits denied to **Indigenous veterans**. Today, it remains an ongoing mission of The War Amps – with the support of the NCVA – to continue pursuing its claim against the Canadian government to provide this compensation.

2014 – In 2014, the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada (NCVA), of which The War Amps was a founding member, presented a submission to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs which charged the government with failing to fulfil its commitment to update the **New Veterans Charter** as gaps and other issues became apparent. Following the NCVA’s submission, the Canadian government announced a number of adjustments to the charter. To The War Amps, these changes amounted to “half measures,” as the recommendations were not fully implemented. Again in 2015, NCVA presented in comprehensive detail the recommendations to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, describing the flaws in the charter, which remain outstanding. If the “one veteran – one standard” philosophy advocated by VAC has any meaning, the Government must seize the moment and improve the New Veterans Charter to ensure that no veteran under the New Veterans Charter receives less compensation than a veteran with the same disability or incapacity under the Pension Act. With the support of NCVA and the Policy Advisory Group to the Minister of VAC, correcting this disparity to ensure all disabled veterans receive equal compensation remains The War Amps ongoing mission.

2016 – The War Amps ongoing Advocacy work resulted in the discovery of a number of gaps in prosthetic funding, both from public health care and private insurers. The War Amps fills the gaps in funding where it can, but as a charitable organization that relies on public donations, these funds can only go so far. As a result, the “**crusade for reform**” was launched to improve the standards of financial support offered by provincial governments and the insurance industry.