



Paul Ledwell >

Apr 1, 2025 at 2:12 PM

To: ★ Jim Hutton >

Cc: Steven Harris > Anthony Saez (VAC/ACC) > Steven Woodman >

Trudie MacKinnon > Chris McNeil > Nishika Jardine > Phillip Drew >

Donald MacPhail > Randy Hladun >



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Re: Three (3) Realizable Solutions to Reduce Wait-Times 3

Dear Commander (Ret') Hutton,

Thank you for your email and for sharing your concerns about the delays in processing Veterans' Disability Benefit applications. We fully recognize the importance of addressing these issues, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with an update on the ongoing efforts and progress we have made to improve the processing times.

The number of applications for Disability Benefits continues to rise. Reducing processing times for disability benefit applications has long been a priority for VAC. Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, the Department saw a 78% increase in the number of applications received. To respond to this growing demand, the Government has committed to a series of temporary funding measures aimed at enhancing both resourcing and automation.

Building on these efforts, I'm pleased to highlight the significant improvements VAC has made in addressing the backlog, particularly for Female and Francophone Veterans. We recognized that these applications were taking longer to process compared to those from Male and Anglophone Veterans. In response, we implemented a dedicated team solely focused on processing claims from female Veterans, which has resulted in a nearly 40% reduction in wait times. Similarly, we addressed the processing delays for Francophone applications through targeted hiring, successfully eliminating the gap in processing times. It remains critical that we continue our consultations, outreach, and research to ensure we're meeting the needs of all Veterans. These ongoing interactions deepen our understanding and identify areas where we may still fall short.

Our Recommendation Number 3

To further strengthen our efforts, a formalized approach to communication has been established between VAC, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB), and the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA) at the senior management level. This collaborative committee ensures that trends and emerging issues are promptly identified and addressed. As pensions advocates, BPA's lawyers specialize in reviews and appeals related to disability benefit claims, offering legal services to Veterans that are subject to solicitor-client privilege. VRAB, as an independent arm's-length tribunal, provides a separate avenue of appeal for disability benefits decisions made by VAC.

While these efforts have brought some positive changes, it's important to acknowledge that the time it takes to process each application can vary. Complexity plays a significant role—what may seem like a simple case could involve detailed medical evidence or unique circumstances that require more time to evaluate thoroughly. These complexities can add time to the process as we work to ensure that each Veteran receives a fair and accurate decision.

While we continue to make progress in reducing our processing times, we are committed to addressing the delays as quickly as possible. We remain dedicated to improving our processes to ensure that Veterans receive the support they need in a timely manner.

Thank you once again for your insight and continued support. We remain dedicated to putting Veterans first and will continue to take action to improve their experience with VAC's services.

Sincerely,

Paul Ledwell

Deputy Minister | Sous-ministre

Veterans Affairs Canada | Anciens Combattants Canada