



Bruce Henwood

Chair,

The National Council of Veteran Associations (NCVA)

2827 Riverside Drive

Ottawa, ON K1V 0C4

March 23, 2025

Dear Mr. Henwood,

I am writing on behalf of Veterans with Cancer Inc., a member organization of the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada, to share our enclosed paper, *Doing More with Less: How Veterans Affairs Canada Can Exceed Service Standards Despite Budget Cuts*, and to seek the Council's support for a key recommendation: the establishment of an **Early Dispute Resolution (EDR)** program.

Our organization has valued its long-standing relationship with the Council, including our work with Brian Forbes to ensure that veterans with service-related cancer were reflected in the NCVA's legislative agenda. We see this proposal as a natural extension of that shared commitment to advancing practical reforms that improve outcomes for veterans.

The challenge addressed in our paper will be familiar to the Council. Veterans continue to face lengthy delays in the resolution of disability benefit claims, often waiting years for final decisions. With recent budget reductions affecting key support structures, these delays risk becoming further entrenched. For many veterans, the process itself has become a barrier to accessing the benefits to which they are entitled.

The proposed EDR program offers a targeted response. By introducing a facilitated resolution step between initial decisions and formal appeals, EDR can resolve a significant proportion of cases earlier, reducing wait times and improving access to fair outcomes. Evidence from comparable jurisdictions—and from Veterans Affairs Canada's own early resolution efforts—demonstrates that this approach can deliver meaningful results within existing resource constraints.

We believe the NCVA is uniquely positioned to help advance this initiative. As the leading national voice of veterans' organizations, the Council's support would carry significant weight in shaping both departmental and government consideration of this proposal.

We are therefore seeking the Council's support in principle for the EDR initiative and would welcome the opportunity to engage further—whether through presentation at a Council meeting or discussion with your policy committee.



– 2 –

To support your consideration, we have prepared a draft NCVA resolution endorsing the EDR initiative in principle and calling for its development and implementation. We offer this as a practical mechanism should the Council wish to formally express its support and engage the government on this issue.

Veterans have waited too long for timely, fair decisions. We believe this proposal offers a practical and achievable way forward, and we would be honoured to have the NCVA's support in advancing it.

Respectfully,

Commander (ret'd) James P. Hutton, rmc, CD, BSc, MSc, MBA
Director, Veterans with Cancer Inc.
cell: (519) 374-4081

Enclosures (3):

1. *Doing More with Less: How Veterans Affairs Canada Can Exceed Service Standards Despite Budget Cuts (Policy Paper)*
2. *Doing More with Less: Executive Summary*
3. *Draft Proposed Resolution*

Draft NCVA Resolution:

Early Dispute Resolution for Veterans' Disability Claims

WHEREAS veterans continue to experience unacceptable delays in the adjudication of disability benefit claims through Veterans Affairs Canada, often waiting years for final resolution;

AND WHEREAS these delays are compounded by increasing system pressures, including recent reductions in resources available to support veterans through the review and appeal process;

AND WHEREAS a significant proportion of initial decisions are overturned on review, indicating systemic inefficiencies and avoidable escalation of disputes;

AND WHEREAS evidence from comparable jurisdictions demonstrates that Early Dispute Resolution (EDR) models—introducing facilitated resolution prior to formal adjudication—can resolve a majority of cases more quickly, fairly, and at lower cost;

AND WHEREAS Veterans with Cancer Inc., a member organization of the Council, has advanced a proposal for the implementation of an EDR program within the federal veterans' benefits system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada endorses in principle the development and implementation of an Early Dispute Resolution (EDR) program for veterans' disability benefit claims;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Council call upon Veterans Affairs Canada and the Government of Canada to give full and timely consideration to this proposal as a means of improving service delivery and reducing delays;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Council offer its collective expertise to support the design of an EDR model that ensures fairness, accessibility, and the protection of veterans' rights;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Council communicate its support for this initiative to relevant decision-makers, including Veterans Affairs Canada and the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.