



Marie-France Lalonde, MP

Chair, Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA)
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

March 23, 2026

Dear Chair Lalonde,

On behalf of Veterans with Cancer Inc., I am pleased to share our enclosed paper, *Doing More With Less: How Veterans Affairs Canada Can Exceed Service Standards Despite Budget Cuts*. We are writing to seek the Committee's attention and support for a practical reform that addresses long-standing delays in disability benefit claims: the establishment of an **Early Dispute Resolution (EDR)** program.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, you are uniquely positioned to advance evidence-based reforms that improve outcomes for Canada's veterans. The current system is under significant strain: VAC has not met its service standards for disability claims for over a decade, and reductions to the Bureau of Pensions Advocates have further limited veterans' access to impartial legal support. As a result, many veterans experience years-long delays in receiving benefits to which they are legally entitled.

The proposed EDR program introduces a facilitated resolution step between initial VAC decisions and formal appeals. Evidence from comparable jurisdictions—and from VAC's own early resolution pilot—demonstrates that such models can resolve a majority of disputes earlier, reducing wait times, lowering system costs, and improving veterans' experience of the claims process. Importantly, EDR does not replace legal representation or formal review; it complements them while ensuring that veterans' rights are fully protected.

We believe the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs can play a critical role in reviewing and supporting this initiative. By examining the EDR proposal, the Committee has an opportunity to highlight practical, evidence-based solutions that deliver faster, fairer outcomes for veterans without requiring additional funding.

We would welcome the opportunity to brief the Committee or provide further information to support its consideration of this proposal. Canada's veterans have waited far too long for timely, fair decisions, and we believe that EDR offers a credible path forward.

Respectfully,

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CC. Sean Casey, Member of Parliament for Charlottetown

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 ACVA Briefing Note*

ACVA Briefing Note

Issue: Delays and inefficiencies in Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) disability benefit claims

Purpose: Inform Committee members about the Early Dispute Resolution (EDR) proposal and support evidence-based review

Background:

- VAC has not met its own service standards for disability benefit claims for over a decade.
 - Veterans routinely wait 3–5 years for final decisions.
 - Reductions to the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (44% cut in staffing) reduce access to impartial legal support at a time of increasing caseloads.
 - 9 out of 10 VAC decisions challenged before the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) are overturned, indicating systemic inefficiencies.
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Proposed Solution – Early Dispute Resolution (EDR):

- Introduces a facilitated resolution step between initial VAC decisions and formal appeals.
 - Objective: resolve a significant portion of disputes earlier, reducing wait times and improving fairness.
 - Evidence of effectiveness:
 - Government of British Columbia quasi-judicial appeals: 70% resolved without formal adjudication.
 - VAC Early Resolution pilot: turnaround reduced from months to five weeks.
 - Comparable results documented in U.S. EEOC, Merit Systems Protection Board, and BC Civil Resolution Tribunal.
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Benefits:

- Faster outcomes for veterans and reduced stress from adversarial processes.

- Reduces volume of formal appeals, freeing VRAB and BPA resources for complex cases.
 - Can be implemented within current budgetary constraints—structural reform, not new funding.
 - Preserves veterans’ right to full legal review if disputes are not resolved early.
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Strategic Considerations for ACVA:

- Committee review can:
 - Examine feasibility and implementation pathways for EDR.
 - Recommend pilot projects or adoption within VRAB oversight to ensure independence and credibility.
 - Highlight practical, evidence-based reforms that mitigate the impact of budget cuts on service delivery.
 - Supports broader parliamentary advocacy for improved outcomes without additional legislative or financial burden.
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Recommended Action:

- Invite Veterans with Cancer Inc. or other stakeholders to brief the Committee on EDR.
 - Conduct hearings or consultations to assess operational and legislative implications.
 - Consider issuing a report or recommendation supporting EDR as a reform initiative.
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Contact for Further Information:

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