



**Nancy Gardiner**

Deputy Minister, Veterans Affairs Canada  
PO Box 7700  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 8M9

March 23, 2025

Dear Deputy Minister Gardiner,

On behalf of Veterans with Cancer Inc., I congratulate you on your appointment as Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada and extend our best wishes as you assume this role. Your background in program delivery and service operations positions you well to address the challenges now facing the department.

We are pleased to share the enclosed paper, *Doing More With Less: How Veterans Affairs Canada Can Exceed Service Standards Despite Budget Cuts*, as a practical resource for your consideration at the outset of your mandate.

Veterans Affairs Canada has not met its disability benefit service standards for over a decade. Processing times routinely extend into years, and recent reductions to the Bureau of Pension Advocates will further limit veterans' ability to navigate an already complex and adversarial system. Absent structural change, delays will worsen.

Our paper focuses on a solution that can be implemented within existing constraints: an **Early Dispute Resolution (EDR)** program. By introducing facilitated resolution between initial decisions and formal appeals, EDR can resolve a significant portion of cases more quickly and at lower cost. Evidence from comparable jurisdictions—and VAC's own early resolution efforts—demonstrates that this approach can substantially reduce adjudication volumes and improve outcomes for claimants.

This is not a call for additional resources or legislative change. It is a call for a different approach to resolving disputes—one that delivers faster, fairer outcomes for veterans while easing pressure on the system.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how an EDR program could be implemented within Veterans Affairs Canada.

Canada's veterans are entitled to timely, fair decisions. We believe this proposal offers a practical way to deliver them.

Respectfully,

Commander (ret'd) James P. Hutton, rmc, CD, BSc, MSc, MBA  
Director, Veterans with Cancer Inc.

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**CC:** Steven Harris, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister

**Enclosures (2):**