

Media Report 17 March 2023

This weeks media reports will cover and answer great questions veterans are still asking and local Media Articles and An illness or injury can have an impact on your ability to adjust to life after service. We all need healthcare services. The Treatment benefits program provides coverage for a variety of benefits and services to help you get—and stay healthy

NATO Veterans Organization of Canada – Presidents Report to Members.

HAPPY SAINT PATRICKS DAY EVERYONE -

St. Patrick's Day observes of **the death of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland**. The holiday has evolved into a celebration of Irish culture with parades, special foods, music, dancing, drinking and a whole lot of green.

I sat in on a MICROSOFT Teams meeting with the Deputy Minister (DM) and his senior staff and a dozen or so Veteran Advocate Groups. March 10th. The issue of VAC staff giving MAID [Medical Assistance in Dying] was front and center. The VAC Report went to the Standing Committee that morning.

The Deputy Minister [Paul Ledwell] spoke with passion and conviction. He was clearly concerned about trust issues within the Veterans community about this Issue. He impressed me very much about the concern within the Department about their care and compassion for Veterans being eroded. There are always “communication” issues, and I report to you members that the Veterans Affairs Department has taken this issue very seriously. They have been shaken.

The TEAMS meeting was a “send” event by the DM – they did take Questions. Some of my take away's:

- Mental Health Benefits – so far they have been about 9,500 Veterans approved for treatment [since 1 April 2022] access is under 20 days from application.;
- there are about 70,000 Veteran “Claims” made every year – 75% are from veterans who no longer serve, and 25% from serving members. My observation is that links between serving members and VAC are seeing results. All CF members upon enrollment are given a “MyVAc account” and their medical issues are shared between Departments. This is significant progress.
- **How VAC reviews a disability benefit claim**

Learn more about how your disability claim is reviewed by the department

and particularly, by the adjudicator – a trained decision-maker for disability claims.

Do we have everything?

A complete application for a disability benefit will have all the information needed to determine that you have a diagnosed medical condition related to your service. In this first step, we will review your:

1. Disability benefit application (form #PEN923);
2. Medical reports or CAF/RCMP health reports;
3. Medical questionnaire(s);
4. Your service health records; and if needed one or all of the following,
5. Your profile (form #VAC1055) including your proof of identify, third-party consent, and direct deposit form (form #VAC441).

Learn more about how to complete an application for a disability benefit.

Who reviews the claim?

Once your application package is complete, it is assigned to an adjudicator.

Every application for a disability benefit is reviewed by an adjudicator – who are specially-trained to review and make decisions on claims for a disability benefit. The adjudicator must base their decision on the evidence they receive. To ensure they review your claim accurately and quickly, it is very important to provide only information that clearly shows that you have a diagnosed medical condition. Your service records will confirm if that diagnosed condition is related to your service.

How is my service covered?

If your service records show that you were serving in a Special Duty Area (SDA) or Special Duty Operation (SDO) when you became ill or were injured, any disability from that service is covered by the Insurance Principle, which provides 24-hour coverage.

If you were serving outside an SDA or SDO, you will be covered through the Compensation Principle, which provides coverage for an illness or injury that occurred while you were on duty.

Assessment tools used to review the claim

If the adjudicator determines that there is clear medical evidence of a chronic or permanent disability, they must then determine:

6. Your entitlement – is the disability directly or partially-related to service?

and

7. Your assessment – what is the severity or extent of the disability and its impact on your quality of life?

To ensure that all decisions are fair and consistent, adjudicators always use the following tools to review your entitlement and assessment:

8. Entitlement Eligibility Guidelines - These policy statements are based on evidence from peer-reviewed medical research and literature both in Canada and abroad. They help to ensure the consistency, equity and quality of decisions made regarding the relationship between your service and your disability.
9. Table of Disabilities - The table is used by an adjudicator to assess the extent of a disability for the purposes of determining disability benefits. Specifically, to assess the level of an impairment and the impact that impairment has on your quality of life.
10. Medical questionnaires - The purpose of a questionnaire is to support your diagnosis and supplement the information found in the Table of Disabilities.

The decision letter

Once the adjudicator reaches a decision on your claim, you will receive a decision letter. The letter will let you know the decision and what evidence the adjudicator used to reach their decision. If they confirmed you have a service-related disability, the letter will also show your entitlement and your assessment.

If you receive an unfavourable decision, the letter will explain the reasons why your claim was not accepted. It will also provide the name and telephone number to call if you wish to discuss this decision further or to identify what evidence your claim requires to be approved. The letter will also explain your appeal rights if you believe the adjudicator has made an error in reviewing your application and supporting evidence.

Additional information

Learn more about how to provide all the components of a complete application for a disability benefit.

How long does it take to be approved for a disability benefit?

We are committed to providing a decision as quickly as possible. To make their decisions, adjudicators must use only the evidence they received. Once adjudicators have received all the information they require - complete and signed form(s), service records, medical reports and questionnaire(s) - they can usually make a decision within 15-41 weeks.

This timeframe will vary depending on several factors such as:

11. the complexity of your condition,

- 12.the complexity of the medical reports and questionnaires explaining that condition,
- 13.how long it takes to receive service health records from DND or Library and Archives Canada,
- 14.the level of detail (or lack of detail) in those service health records, and
- 15.any challenges in getting other needed evidence to support your claim.

The Wait time tool provides current average wait times for receiving a decision on certain applications.

A message from the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence
On the release of a Veterans Affairs Canada report into allegations of inappropriate conversations with Veterans about medical assistance in dying

Dear partners,

Today, we released the Veterans Affairs Canada report into allegations of inappropriate conversations with Veterans about medical assistance in dying, including to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Going back to last summer when this unfortunate situation first came up, it has been our Department's top priority to find out exactly what happened. That is why I instructed the Deputy Minister to undertake a full and thorough investigation into the matter.

While I recognize the concern this issue has raised within the Veteran community, I can share with you that the report found there to be no widespread, systemic issue at Veterans Affairs. Rather, after a full and thorough investigative process it was determined that a single employee had inappropriately raised the issue of medical assistance in dying with Veterans on four separate occasions. This person is no longer a VAC employee.

The inappropriate actions of a single employee do not reflect the work of the hundreds of other VAC staff who engage with Veterans with the utmost care, compassion and respect every single day. I can assure you that our people are fully committed to meeting this standard with anyone who contacts the Department for assistance.

Going forward, we will continue to develop and offer mandatory and clear employee training on how VAC may respond to Veterans or their families who have decided to raise the issue of medical assistance in dying with our staff. Later this year, we will be engaging the Department's Audit & Evaluation Division to conduct an independent and objective review of our quality assurance processes and procedures. Any opportunities for improvement that are identified in the review will be fully implemented.

I wish to once again extend my most profound apologies to Veterans, families and stakeholders. I know this situation was deeply upsetting to many of you. Please know that we are taking all the necessary steps to maintain your trust, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Lawrence MacAulay

**Minister of Veterans Affairs
and Associate Minister of National Defence**

**Un message de l'honorable Lawrence MacAulay, ministre des Anciens Combattants et ministre associé de la Défense nationale
À propos de la publication d'un rapport d'Anciens Combattants Canada sur les allégations de conversations inappropriées avec des vétérans sur l'aide médicale à mourir**

Chers partenaires,

Aujourd'hui, nous avons publié le rapport d'Anciens Combattants Canada sur les allégations de conversations inappropriées avec des vétérans au sujet de l'aide médicale à mourir, y compris au Comité permanent des anciens combattants de la Chambre des Communes.

Depuis l'été dernier, lorsque cette situation malheureuse s'est présentée pour la première fois, la priorité absolue de notre Ministère a été de découvrir exactement ce qui s'est passé. C'est pourquoi j'avais demandé au sous-ministre d'entreprendre une enquête complète et approfondie sur cette affaire.

Bien que je reconnaisse l'inquiétude que cette question a suscitée au sein de la communauté des vétérans, je peux vous informer que le rapport a révélé qu'il n'y avait pas de problème généralisé et systémique à Anciens Combattants. Au contraire, après un processus d'enquête complet et approfondi, il a été déterminé qu'un seul employé avait soulevé la question de l'aide médicale à mourir de manière inappropriée auprès de vétérans à quatre reprises. Cette personne n'est plus à l'emploi d'ACC.

Ces actions inappropriées sont le fait d'un seul employé et ne reflètent pas le travail des centaines d'autres employés d'ACC qui interagissent avec les vétérans en faisant preuve d'une bienveillance, d'une compassion et d'un respect sans faille. Je peux vous assurer que notre personnel s'engage pleinement à respecter cette norme avec toute personne qui communique avec le Ministère pour obtenir de l'aide.

À l'avenir, nous continuerons à élaborer et à offrir aux employés une formation obligatoire et claire sur la façon dont ACC peut répondre aux vétérans ou aux membres de leur famille ayant décidé de soulever la question de l'aide médicale

à mourir auprès de notre personnel.

Plus tard cette année, nous demanderons au secteur de la vérification et de l'évaluation du Ministère de procéder à un examen indépendant et objectif de nos processus et procédures d'assurance de la qualité. Toutes les possibilités d'amélioration déterminées lors de l'examen seront pleinement mises en œuvre. Je souhaite une fois de plus présenter mes plus sincères excuses aux vétérans, à leur famille et aux intervenants. Je sais que cette situation a été profondément bouleversante pour beaucoup d'entre vous. Sachez que nous prenons toutes les mesures nécessaires pour maintenir votre confiance, maintenant et à l'avenir.

Sincères salutations,
Lawrence MacAulay

**Ministre des Anciens Combattants
et ministre associé de la Défense nationale**

[Summary - Facts and Figures - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

As of March 31, 2021, VAC estimated the total Veteran population in Canada to be **617,800**, consisting of 25,500 War Service (WS) Veterans and 592,300 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans. Both the WS and CAF Veteran populations are forecasted to decline through the next five years. Veterans served by VA... [See more](#)

Disability Award Increase

- [What is the new maximum amount of the tax-free Disability Award?](#)
- [How was the new maximum amount for the Disability Award determined?](#)
- Is the Death Benefit also increased?
- [Will anyone who received a Disability Award or Death Benefit prior to April 1, 2017, benefit from the increased rate?](#)
- [Will I need to apply?](#)
- [I am eligible for the increase in Disability Award. When should I expect a payment?](#)
- [Do I need to complete a VAC 888 Disability Award Payment Options to receive this additional payment?](#)
- [I received a "Verification of address and Banking Information" form. I have verified the information and/or made my changes on My VAC Account, do I still need to upload the form to My VAC Account? My address and payment instructions are the same, do I still need to send](#)

the form back to VAC, i.e., Matane?

- I had to change banks and did not think to notify VAC of the change as I was not receiving any regular payments. My old account is closed, what will happen to my additional payment?
- I changed my bank account yesterday for personal reasons but my other account is still open, what will happen with my additional payment?
- My spouse and I have separated in the last week and my account with VAC is a joint account but I updated my banking information today. Will my additional payment go to this new account?
- I am a Canadian Armed Forces member/Veteran who has received a Disability Award and have not been contacted yet?
- What do I need to do to get my payment as soon as possible?
- I am a survivor/dependent child who received a Disability Award and/or Death Benefit payment on behalf of a deceased member or Veteran prior to April 1, 2017. Will I benefit from the increased rate?
- My spouse/common-law partner/parent was a CAF member/Veteran who received a Disability Award, but is now deceased. Am I entitled to the additional payment? How do I apply?
- I am an individual who was a dependent child at the time of my parent's death and I am now 18 years of age or older. Will I receive the additional payment directly?
- I am the mother/father/guardian calling on behalf of an individual who was a dependent child at the time of the Veteran's/member's death and she/he is less than 18 years of age. Will I receive the additional payment on their behalf?
- How is this one-time lump sum additional payment calculated?
- I have an outstanding overpayment with VAC. Will the additional payment be used towards this overpayment?
- I noticed an amount was deposited into my bank account and I am wondering if it is the additional payment related to the Disability Award increase. It shows up as Government of Canada deposit and not Veterans Affairs Canada.
- I received a letter saying that I can expect a payment within two weeks but I never applied for anything. Can you explain?
- I received a letter saying that I can expect a payment within two weeks, however it is over that period of time now. Who should I contact?
- I am a survivor of a deceased Canadian Armed Forces member or Veteran and received my letter and my mother is getting 50% of the additional payment and my sister and I are only getting 25% each. Why is it not split equally among all three of us?

- [I have moved since the last time I communicated with VAC. How can I change my address?](#)
- [How can I confirm OR update my bank account information?](#)
- [Will the new rates for the Disability Award be indexed?](#)
- [I previously chose to have annual payments for my Disability Award instead of a lump sum. Will the additional payment that I receive impact my annual payment?](#)
- [Is the additional payment taxable?](#)
- [I am currently receiving a monthly Disability Pension or a Survivor's Pension and I have never received a Disability Award . Am I eligible for an additional payment? Why am I not included in this change?](#)
- [Is there a plan to have the Disability Pension increased in addition to its annual indexing?](#)
- [Prior to May 2012, Disability Pensions were taken into consideration when calculating the Earning Loss Benefit \(ELB\) amount. Will this additional payment create an overpayment for ELB payment?](#)
- [Will individuals who received an ex gratia payment for a sudden service-related death that occurred between May 2005 and April 2006 be eligible to receive the additional payment?](#)
- [How much will my increase be?](#)

Related information on applying for VAC Disability Benefits

[How we review a disability benefit claim - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

[Table of Disabilities - How Benefits are Determined - Disability Benefits - After an illness or injury - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

[Timely disability benefits decisions plan - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

[Assessment and Reassessment of a Disability - Policies - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

[Pain and Suffering Compensation - Policies - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

[Additional Pain and Suffering Compensation - Policies - Veterans Affairs Canada](#)

IN THE MEDIA

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[Vendredi de retrospective — Pont de Peace River](#)

Base/Wing — Newspaper

14 Wing Greenwood — [The Aurora](#)

22 Wing North Bay — [The Shield](#)

4 Wing Cold Lake — [The Courier](#)

CFB Esquimalt — [The Lookout](#)

CFSU Ottawa — [The Guard](#)

CFB Shilo — [The Shilo Stag](#)

19 Wing Comox — [The Totem Times](#)

8 Wing Trenton — [The Contact](#)

CFB Petawawa — [The Petawawa Post](#)

17 Wing Winnipeg — [The Voxair](#)

CFB Halifax — [The Trident](#)

CFB Edmonton — [The Western Sentinel](#)

CFB Valcartier — [The Adsum](#)

CFB Kingston — [Garrison News](#)

CFB St Jean — [The Servir](#)

3 Wing Bagotville — [The Vortex](#)

CFB Borden — [The Citizen](#)

Base Gagetown — [Gagetown Gazette](#)