

Media Report 22 March 2024

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'

NVOC President Report

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or future reference let NVOC use the numbers quoted in the “SAGE” article:

“According to Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), as of March 2020, there were an estimated 629,300 veterans in Canada, which translates to approximately one in 50 Canadians, aged 15 years or older. About 32,100 of those are war service veterans from the Second World War or Korean War. The remaining 597,200 served after Korea. VAC provides services to 187,101 veterans, including war service veterans, Canadian Armed Forces veterans, RCMP veterans and survivors.”

The Veterans Summit [4 to 6 March 2024] was held in Montreal. NVOC had two members invited to attend – all expenses were covered by VAC. Karen and Hammy were our representatives and at the last minute had to cancel attending due to health issues. Did Hammy have an opportunity to observe electronically? VAC will prepare a ROD of the meeting and we will be able to circulate to our members. I have not chatted with veteran advocates who did attend. Perhaps Hammy will be able to hear from his contacts about what the issues were?

I was invited to attend the 15th Anniversary of Kosovo-Canada relations on 28 Feb [Chateau Laurier]. There were about 250 attendees – lots of politicians [three Ministers did give speeches]. There were only two “Veterans” in Blazers/Medals – myself and Wayne McCulloch [Peacekeeping Veterans]. We did meet several Military Attaches and had a chance to spread our NVOC business cards around.

My trip to Philadelphia to the worlds largest indoor flower and garden show was a great experience. On the Friday when Matt was celebrating his Birthday – I was at Longwood gardens – 1000acres created by DuPont [chemicals and industry – early 20th century.]. Temperature plus 71 degrees. The Americans still do some things very well.

Randy
President NVOC.

A Closer Look at NATO Spending

The Brits 2024: *...we now live in a 'pre-war', rather than a 'post-war' world,....As we enter an increasingly dangerous world, it is imperative that our procurement system finally starts to deliver kit on time and on budget- not least as we might actually have to fight with it."*

The Swedes 2024": The Swedish defense officials' concern was prompted by two recent developments: Sweden's expected acceptance into NATO and increased threats from Russian President Vladimir Putin against neighboring NATO nations. Jan 24, 2024. At an annual security and defense conference in Sweden on Jan. 7, the country's civil defense minister, Carl-Oskar Bohlin, told attendees, "There could be war in Sweden." Sweden's chief of defense Micael Bydén echoed Bohlin, saying the Swedish population should mentally prepare for the possibility. Other NATO countries have also warned of a potential Russian attack against member nations. Poland's national security agency said Russia could attack NATO countries in less than three years, while Germany's defense minister said the attack could occur in five to eight years.

Canada 2024: The largest spending reallocations[cuts] will be at the Department of National Defence, with \$810,449,000 in 2024-25, followed by even bigger reallocations of \$851,437,000 in 2025-26 and \$907,539,000 in 2026-27. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/feds-to-reallocate-2-3-billion-in-spending-next-year>

EU plans to boost defense industry and move away from US dependency in the face of Russian threats <https://apnews.com/article/eu-defense-ukraine-war-russia-a3fdb1d6f2ca7bd6a3e7469e5ced66dc>

The European Union on Tuesday[5 March] outlined ambitious plans to boost its defense industry as it responds to the threat posed by [Russia's war on Ukraine](#) and seeks to wean member nations off an over-dependence on the U.S. defense industry.

The plans by the EU Commission center on streamlining the procurement of arms by the 27 EU states and to increasingly produce them within the bloc in a multi-billion-dollar pivot away from the United States.

In the first 16 months since the February 2022 start of the Ukraine war, "member states spent more than €100 billion on defense acquisitions," said EU Commission Vice President Margrethe Vestager. "Almost 80% of that was spent outside of the European Union and the U.S. alone accounted for more than 60% of this spending." "This is no longer sustainable — if it ever was," Vestager said.

For decades, EU nations have slumbered under the protective nuclear cover of the United States through the NATO alliance while their defense spending and crisis preparedness withered.

EU Commissioner Thierry Breton, who is a driving force behind a stronger EU defense industry, said it was essential for the bloc to fall back on its own industrial base.

“Will it be bad news for the U.S. defense industry, the Korean defense industry? I don’t know. What we know is that we need to increase our capacity to produce what is needed. And by the way, today we have to be honest, the U.S. cannot provide what is necessary, especially for ammunitions.” Breton said.

Now, with an increasingly assertive Moscow, the need to beef up defense is becoming ever clearer.

“After decades of underspending, we must invest more on defense, but we need to do it better and together,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. “A strong, resilient, and competitive European defense industry is a strategic imperative.”

The war in Ukraine spurred European nations to hike defense spending, and a lot of money is destined for the U.S. defense industry. Germany, for example, announced a [100 billion-euro \(\\$108 billion\) upgrade](#) of its armed forces, with a big chunk of the funds dedicated to U.S. F-35 fighter jets and transport helicopters.

While production is improving, the EU had aimed to be making 1 million artillery shells annually by now but is only making around half that figure. Officials now say that production could reach 1.4 million shells per year by the end of December.

I did meet the Military Attache from Poland at a function several weeks ago and he spoke of their major investment in Defence....they are getting a lot of weapons from South Korea? Surprised to learn that Poland is investing even more than the US of A in military preparedness.

In a meeting with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, Poland's president advocated that each NATO member increase defense spending to 3 percent of gross domestic product to strengthen the alliance against Russian aggression. NATO faces the challenge of equitably distributing defense costs, centered on the 2 percent GDP spending goal, which was established after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, implementation has been inconsistent, and increased spending does not always enhance NATO's collective capabilities.

In 2023, **Poland exceeded the threshold, allocating over 3 percent of its GDP to defense, primarily on equipment.** Other Eastern European nations along the frontline with Russia have acted similarly. Meanwhile, the U.S. has historically been the largest contributor to NATO defense. But Western Europe, despite its significant contributions to the defense of Europe, has not consistently met the 2 percent objective. Upcoming European Parliament elections may spotlight the necessity for greater European investment in NATO.

Health-related travel expenses

Quick links

1. [About this program](#)
2. [Do you qualify?](#)
3. [How to apply](#)
4. [Additional information](#)
5. [Frequently asked questions](#)

Sometimes you need to travel for healthcare. If you have a VAC Health Identification card you may qualify to have some or all your costs recovered.

About this program

Travel expenses incurred by the Veteran when travelling to receive healthcare services or benefits may be reimbursed by VAC. Health-related travel costs include items such as transportation, parking, meals, lodging, out of province travel and, when required, an escort, meaning someone to accompany you if you are travelling to receive treatment.

In some of these cases, there is a maximum which can be claimed.

Please note the form has been updated on August 13, 2019. You should download the latest copy.

Do you qualify?

We may reimburse health related travel costs to eligible Veterans who received treatment benefits authorized by us.

You must submit a health related travel claim within eighteen (18) months of your medical appointment. If you are enrolled in a VAC rehabilitation program you must submit a health related travel claim within twelve (12) months of your medical appointment.

For help please visit [Health-related Travel Guide](#).

How to apply

Claim online

Apply online through My VAC Account. Applying is easier with a guided form. Sign in or register for My VAC Account.

A rectangular button with a dark green background and white text that reads "My VAC Account". The button is enclosed in a thin green border.

Mail or in person

Download the health-related travel reimbursement form.

- [Health-related travel claim - Veteran](#)
- [Health-related travel claim - escort](#)

For help please visit [Health-related Travel Guide](#).

Then, drop it off at a [VAC Area Office](#). You can also mail your completed form directly to the address listed on the form.

Get help

The staff at any [VAC office](#) can assist you, or call us at **1-866-522-2122**.

Additional information

Find out more

Receipts

Veterans do not need to submit receipts with their travel claims unless VAC asks for them. Veterans must still obtain receipts and appointment verifications and retain these original receipts for one year following the claim submission in case they are requested for review.

Escort fees - Compensation for someone to accompany you when you must travel to receive treatment. [See the current rates for this program](#)

For meals - The amount paid cannot exceed the meal allowances set out by the National Joint Council's [Appendix C](#).

Travel

Travel is defined as transportation, within Canada, by the most convenient and economical means appropriate to the condition of the Veteran between their residence and the appropriate treatment centre nearest to their residence.

For travel in your own private vehicle - VAC can reimburse kilometers at a rate that is two (2) cents more than the kilometric rate set out in the National Joint Council's [Appendix B](#).

For pre-approved overnight travel - Standard commercial accommodations can be paid at a rate no higher than the maximum rate permitted for federal public servants as outlined in the current [Hotel Directory for Government Employees](#) or private accommodations can be paid at a the rate outlined in the National Joint Council's [Appendix C](#).

Related programs

Coverage for services, prescription and devices: Financial support to qualified Veterans for healthcare services, and some travel expenses.

Frequently asked questions

How do I receive VAC pre-approval for my expenses?

You can request pre-approval prior to making travel arrangements using one of the following options:

- Call VAC at 1-866-522-2122 (toll-free) Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time;
- Send us a secure message through [My VAC Account](#); or
- Visit an area office.

Your request for pre-approval should be for specific dates, and you should be prepared to provide the name of the provider.

What type of HRT expenses can I claim?

You may claim the following travel expenses to attend appointments:

- Transportation (examples: kilometres/mileage, taxi, bus, parking, toll, and ferry)
- Meals
- Lodging (must be pre-approved by VAC)
- Escort fee and escort travel expenses, when the need for an escort is medically necessary and has been pre-approved by VAC)

If you are a participant of VAC's Rehabilitation Program and accessing a rehabilitation service approved by VAC, you may also claim:

- Additional dependent care expenses which must be pre-approved by VAC.

I travel to get health-related items, but it is not to attend an appointment with a health care professional or to attend treatment, can I claim these expenses?

No, travel expenses you incur to fill prescriptions or purchase/pick-up other health related items (batteries, supplies, cannabis for medical purposes etc.) are not eligible for reimbursement.

When can I claim a meal allowance?

A meal allowance may be claimed when you purchased a meal due to being away from home because you attended an appointment.

Meal allowances can only be claimed for the time period required to travel to and from your appointment and the time period you wait and attend your medical or rehabilitation-related appointment. If your travel time is extended for reasons not related to your appointment, you are NOT eligible to claim meals. VAC will pay the corresponding meal allowance listed below, if you are required to be away from home for the entire two hour period listed below, based on the time you leave and return home.

- Breakfast 6:30-8:30 a.m.
- Lunch 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Dinner 5:00-7:00 p.m.

If you are travelling with an escort approved by VAC, your escort's meal(s) will be reimbursed based on your own meal(s) claimed.

What is an acceptable appointment verification?

Any written confirmation that you attended the appointment, from the office of your health care professional is accepted for the purposes of verifying your appointment. Examples include:

- Health care professional completes and signs or stamps your claim form (VAC752), Section "B".

- Obtain an appointment card which is signed or stamped by your health care professional and includes the date and time of your appointment, and the health care professional's address.
- A signed letter from your health care professional's office confirming the appointment date, time, and address.

[Read more FAQs](#) about the Guide to the Health-related Travel.

IN THE MEDIA

[Military recruitment processes 'can be improved,' defence minister says](#)

CBC

Defence Minister Bill Blair says dropping an aptitude test is a good first step to improving military recruitment, but he noted there's more to do to improve the process and attract people to military service. [Read More](#)

[Une femme à la tête de l'armée canadienne, possible?](#)

leDroit

Des observateurs soutiennent qu'il est grand temps qu'une femme devienne cheffe des Forces armées canadiennes. [Lire Plus](#)

[1,000 US troops deploying to build offshore port for Gaza aid](#)

Military Times

The Pentagon released details Friday of its plans to construct a temporary pier off the Gaza Strip's coast to help flow more than two million meals a day into the territory, using an

established military capability that officials say can build and deploy the structure without having any American troops on the ground. [Read More](#)

[Les experts sonnent l'alarme devant la menace russe dans l'Arctique canadien](#)

Le Devoir

"Lorsqu'on regarde une carte, l'Arctique, et spécialement la région de l'Alaska, c'est la façon la plus rapide pour nos adversaires de nous atteindre," a prévenu Blaise Frawley, commandant adjoint du NORAD, lors de la Conférence annuelle d'Ottawa sur la sécurité et la défense, vendredi. [Lire Plus](#)

[How Cyprus' Green Line earned its name more than 60 years ago](#)

Forces.net

To many of our readers, the accuracy of this article will be questioned. In terms of UN peacekeeping, the first use of the term 'Green Line' referred to the demarcation line monitored by the UN Truce and Supervision Organization following the 1948 War of Independence and was often used to refer to the pre-1967 borders of Israel. [Read More](#)

[Gone fishing: See how military divers recover an armoured vehicle from a frozen lake](#)

Forces.net

As British Army divers approached the end of an ice-diving course in the Arctic, they faced one last and rather large challenge — recovering an M113 armoured personnel carrier from beneath a frozen lake. [Read More](#)

[Targeting time shrinks from minutes to seconds in US Army experiment](#)

Defense One

Soldiers found targets in a tiny fraction of the normal time by streamlining procedures and speeding up data processing during a recent experiment, Army officials said March 5. [Read More](#)

[Sweden orders more amphibious bridge systems for Army](#)

The Defense Post

Sweden has awarded General Dynamics European Land Systems (GDELS) a contract to provide nine additional Amfibiebro 400 floating bridge systems for the armed forces. [Read More](#)

[DragonFire: New footage of £10-a-shot laser weapon that could be in UK military in five years](#)

Forces.net

A military laser that is super-accurate and costs only £10 per shot could be ready for use by the Armed Forces within the next five years. [Read More](#)

[Replacing the Mexeflote](#)

Think Defence

The Mexeflote is a modular pontoon in service with the British and Australian armed forces and is primarily used to transfer vehicles, stores and equipment from ship to shore. [Read More](#)

[Australian engineers go underground](#)

Contact Air Land and Sea

Integrated firing pits, sleeping sections and an operations room all feature in an underground command post being constructed by 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment (3CER) to hone their trench warfare skills during Exercise Brolga Walk in Townsville. [Read More](#)