

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

2018–19

Departmental Plan

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister
of National Defence

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and Associate Minister of National Defence, 2018

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This document is available in alternative formats upon request.

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Chair's message

I am pleased to present the 2018-19 Departmental Plan for the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

The Board is the independent appeal tribunal for disability benefits decisions made by Veterans Affairs Canada. Our mission is to provide Veterans, members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the RCMP, and their families, with timely, respectful hearings and fair, plain-language decisions.



This Departmental Plan outlines what we aim to achieve for Veterans in the upcoming year, gives us a roadmap of how we will get there and explains how we will measure progress.

The Board's priorities for 2018-19 are:

- To provide Veterans with excellent service
- To maintain a high-performing organization, and
- To be open and accountable about our work

We will pursue a number of initiatives that contribute to these priorities and to our planned results of providing high quality, timely hearings and decisions.

For example, the Board will continue to reduce its reliance on paper documents by using technology that will make our operations more efficient—and our service faster for Veterans. We have made significant progress on this initiative, with Board Members now working in a paperless environment.

Professional development and training is critical to fair and consistent decision-making for Veterans. The Board will continue to enhance its comprehensive development program for Members, with targeted support and resources.

The Board will also publish rules that explain its current practices and procedures for hearings. These rules will provide Veterans and their representatives with clear and detailed information to help them prepare for hearings, avoid delays, and obtain the best possible outcome.

We developed this 2018-19 Departmental Plan with our core values in mind – above all, fairness and service excellence. The priorities outlined within this document will help us to reach a higher level of service for Veterans and their families this year and beyond.

Thomas Jarmyn
Chair, Veterans Review and Appeal Board

Plans at a glance

In 2018-19, the Board will focus on priorities that contribute to its planned results of ensuring applicants receive high quality, timely hearings and decisions.

Excellence in service delivery

Service excellence is a key priority for the Board. The Board is committed to serving Veterans better through continuous improvement and innovation. To be more efficient and save time, it will further integrate technology into its operations and hearings.

High-performing organization

To achieve its objectives, the Board must maintain a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Through strong leadership, innovation and a commitment to openness and engagement, the Board will support its members and staff by giving them the tools and training to deliver a fair and timely appeal process for Veterans.

Transparency and accountability

The Board will continue to implement measures that promote an environment of transparency and accountability.

The Board will ensure excellence, effectiveness and compliance with government-wide initiatives and accountabilities.

For more information on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's plans, priorities and planned results, see the "Planned results" section of this report.

Planned results: what we want to achieve this year and beyond

Core Responsibilities

Core Responsibility title

Appeals

Description

Provide an independent review and appeal program for disability benefits decisions made by Veterans Affairs Canada; ensure Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police members, and their families, receive the benefits they are entitled to under law for service-related disabilities.

Planning highlights

To fulfill its Core Responsibility and deliver on results, the Board is guided by its strategic priorities:

- Providing Veterans with excellent service
- Maintaining a high-performing organization
- Being open and accountable about its work

The initiatives and activities that flow from these priorities directly contribute to the results the Board is trying to achieve, namely that:

- Applicants receive high quality hearings and decisions; and
- Applicants receive timely decisions.

By focusing on results, the Board's ultimate goal is to fulfill its important mandate for Veterans and their families.

The Board considered the government-wide priorities of gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness as part of its planning process. Gender or other identity factors do not impact the delivery of the Board's program. Decision making at the Board is based on each applicant's unique circumstances and whether these establish a relationship between the claimed condition and military/RCMP service.

Priority #1 Excellence in Service Delivery

- The Board is committed to experimenting with new approaches to provide Veterans with better service. In 2017-18, it made significant progress in reducing its reliance on paper documents. The Board will continue to build on this progress and devote resources to further integrating technology into its operations. Specifically, it will develop processes so that applicants can submit evidence electronically and Board Members can sign their decisions electronically. These new processes will make the Board more efficient and help it to process Veterans' applications faster.
- The Board will work towards giving applicants access to their decisions through [My VAC Account](#)ⁱⁱ, a secure web portal which allows Veterans to do business with Veterans Affairs online. These applicants will no longer have to wait to receive their Board decisions by mail.

To further improve service delivery, the Board will look at giving applicants access to information about the status of their applications through My VAC Account.

Priority #2 High-Performing Organization

- In 2017-18, the Board reviewed its work functions and organizational structure to address current and anticipated workload pressures and find efficiencies. The goal was to align resources with priorities and review business processes for opportunities to improve service delivery.

The Board began transitioning to the new organizational structure at the end of 2017-18 and will continue into 2018-19. Work functions will be integrated to eliminate hand-offs, which will make operations more efficient by reducing wait times and enhancing quality for Veterans. There is an initial risk that work will slow down as employees take the time to adapt to change and learn new business processes. The Board has developed strategies to mitigate this risk.

- Quality decisions are essential to the Board's mandate of ensuring applicants receive all the benefits they are entitled to under the law. In 2018-19, the Board will do more to enhance the quality of decisions. One of the areas it will focus on is plain-language decision-writing, so that Veterans' decisions are clear and easy to understand. This will involve providing Members and staff with targeted training so that decisions are written and reviewed through a plain language lens.

To measure quality, the Board will use comprehensive criteria to confirm that decisions are clear and well-reasoned. It will use this information to drive performance feedback for Members, training and development for Members and support staff, and service improvements for Veterans and their families.

- Training for Board Members is a priority and directly contributes to consistent decisions with clear reasons written in plain language. To support Members in making quality decisions for applicants, the Board will continue to enhance the comprehensive professional development program that begins when Members are appointed and continues throughout their term.

Priority #3 Transparency and Accountability

- The Board will publish rules that explain its current practices and procedures for hearings. These rules will explain what the Board needs in terms of evidence and information, so that applicants and their representatives can bring forward the best, most complete cases.

Planned results

Departmental Results	Departmental Result Indicators	Target	Date to achieve target	2014–15 Actual results	2015–16 Actual results	2016–17 Actual results
Applicants receive high quality hearings and decisions	Percentage of applicants who provide positive feedback about their hearing	Baseline year. Target to be developed in April 2019.	March 31, 2020	Not available ¹	Not available ¹	Not available ¹
	Percentage of Board decisions that meet quality standards	Baseline year. Target to be developed in April 2019.	March 31, 2020	Not available ¹	Not available ¹	Not available ¹
	Percentage of Board decisions overturned by the Federal Court	<2%	March 31, 2019	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Applicants receive timely decisions	Percentage of Review decisions issued within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board their case is ready to be heard	≥95%	March 31, 2019	96%	96%	95%
	Percentage of Appeal decisions issued within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board their case is ready to be heard	Baseline year. Target to be developed in April 2019.	March 31, 2020	Not available ¹	Not available ¹	Not available ¹

¹ This performance indicator was revised for fiscal year 2018-19 and prior year data is not available.

Budgetary financial resources (dollars)

2018–19 Main Estimates	2018–19 Planned spending	2019–20 Planned spending	2020–21 Planned spending
10,903,737	10,903,737	10,903,737	10,903,737

Human resources (full-time equivalents)

2018–19 Planned full-time equivalents	2019–20 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents
101	101	101

Financial, human resources and performance information for the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's Program Inventory is available in the [GC InfoBase](#).ⁱⁱⁱ

Internal Services

Description

Internal Services are those groups of related activities and resources that the federal government considers to be services in support of programs and/or required to meet corporate obligations of an organization. Internal Services refers to the activities and resources of the 10 distinct service categories that support Program delivery in the organization, regardless of the Internal Services delivery model in a department. The 10 service categories are: Management and Oversight Services; Communications Services; Legal Services; Human Resources Management Services; Financial Management Services; Information Management Services; Information Technology Services; Real Property Services; Materiel Services; and Acquisition Services.

Veterans Affairs Canada provides some of these internal services to the Board under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This service relationship has been in place since the Board was created in 1995 and continues to capitalize on the efficiencies presented by the Portfolio Department providing internal services to a small Portfolio member.

The Board will continue to work within the MOU for Internal Services developed with Veterans Affairs Canada.

Budgetary financial resources (dollars)

2018–19 Main Estimates	2018–19 Planned spending	2019–20 Planned spending	2020–21 Planned spending
Internal Services to support the operations of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board are provided at no cost to the Board under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Veterans Affairs Canada.			

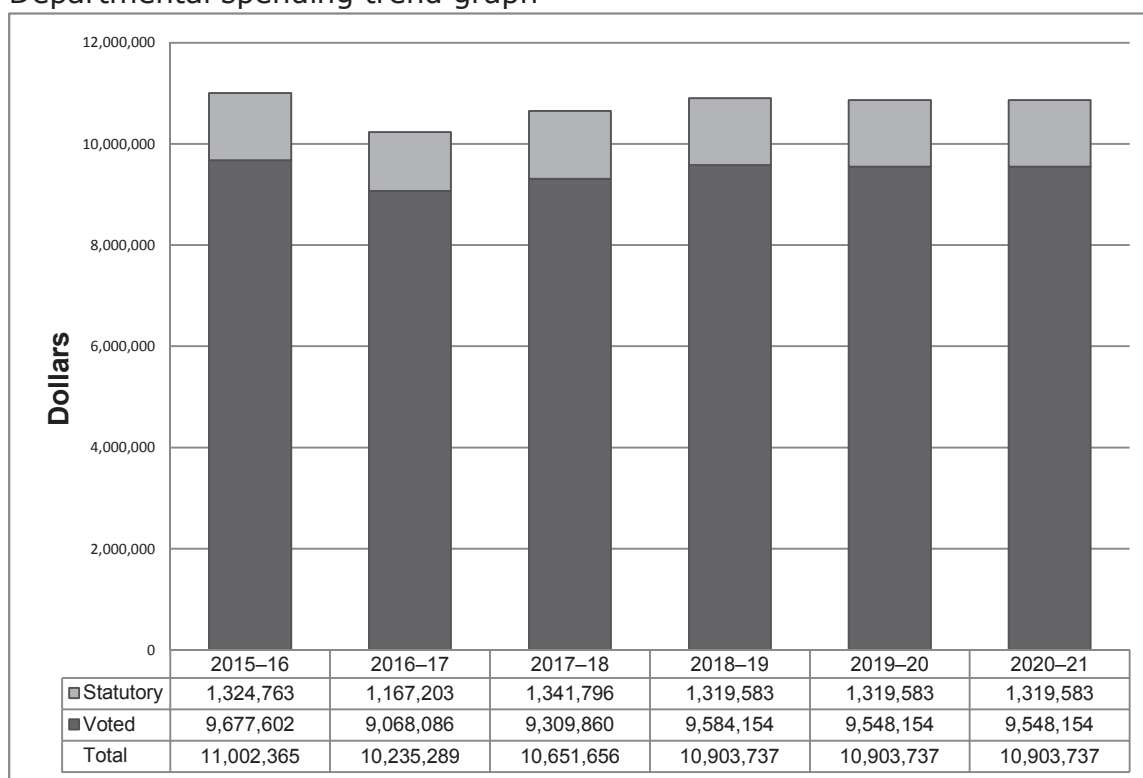
Human resources (full-time equivalents)

2018–19 Planned full-time equivalents	2019–20 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents
Internal Services to support the operations of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board are provided at no cost to the Board under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Veterans Affairs Canada.		

Spending and human resources

Planned spending

Departmental spending trend graph



Budgetary planning summary for Core Responsibilities and Internal Services (dollars)

Core Responsibilities and Internal Services	2015-16 Expenditures	2016-17 Expenditures	2017-18 Forecast spending	2018-19 Main Estimates	2018-19 Planned spending	2019-20 Planned spending	2020-21 Planned spending
Appeals	11,002,365	10,235,289	10,651,656	10,903,737	10,903,737	10,903,737	10,903,737
Internal Services	Internal Services to support the operations of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board are provided at no cost to the Board under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Veterans Affairs Canada.						
Total	11,002,365	10,235,289	10,651,656	10,903,737	10,903,737	10,903,737	10,903,737

Over the planning period 2018-19 to 2020-21, the Board's planned spending is relatively unchanged. With continued efficiencies in its operations, the Board will continue to deliver excellent service to applicants.

Planned human resources

Human resources planning summary for Core Responsibilities and Internal Services (full-time equivalents)

Core Responsibilities and Internal Services	2015–16 Actual	2016–17 Actual	2017–18 Forecast	2018–19 Planned	2019–20 Planned	2020–21 Planned
Appeals	97	92	101	101	101	101
Internal Services	Internal Services to support the operations of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board are provided at no cost to the Board under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Veterans Affairs Canada.					
Total	97	92	101	101	101	101

Planned resources in 2018-19 through 2020-21 are relatively unchanged.

Estimates by vote

For information on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's organizational appropriations, consult the [2018–19 Main Estimates](#).^{iv}

Future-Oriented Condensed Statement of Operations

The Future-Oriented Condensed Statement of Operations provides a general overview of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's operations. The forecast of financial information on expenses and revenues is prepared on an accrual accounting basis to strengthen accountability and to improve transparency and financial management.

Because the Future-Oriented Condensed Statement of Operations is prepared on an accrual accounting basis, and the forecast and planned spending amounts presented in other sections of the Departmental Plan are prepared on an expenditure basis, amounts may differ.

A more detailed Future-Oriented Statement of Operations and associated notes, including a reconciliation of the net cost of operations to the requested authorities, are available on the [Veterans Review and Appeal Board's website](#)^v.

Future-Oriented Condensed Statement of Operations for the year ended March 31, 2019 (dollars)

Financial information	2017–18 Forecast results	2018–19 Planned results	Difference (2018–19 Planned results minus 2017–18 Forecast results)
Total expenses	11,977,252	12,288,737	311,485
Total revenues	0	0	0
Net cost of operations before government funding and transfers	11,977,252	12,288,737	311,485

The planned spending for Veterans Review and Appeal Board as reported on a modified-cash basis for 2018-19 is \$10,930,737. This amount has been adjusted by estimated amounts for services provided without charge (i.e. accommodations, government payments to employee insurance plans, etc.), to arrive at a future-oriented total expense of \$12,288,737 for 2018-19.

Supplementary information

Corporate information

Organizational profile

Appropriate minister: The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, P.C., M.P.

Institutional head: Thomas Jarmyn

Ministerial portfolio: Veterans Affairs

Enabling instrument[s]: [Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act^{vi}](#); [Veterans Review and Appeal Board Regulations^{vii}](#)

Year of incorporation / commencement: 1995

Other: Applications for review and appeal can be made to the Board under the following legislation:

- [Pension Act^{viii}](#);
- [Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act – Part 3^{ix}](#) (New Veterans Charter)¹;
- [War Veterans Allowance Act^x](#);
- [Royal Canadian Mounted Police Pension Continuation Act^{xi}](#); and
- [Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act^{xii}](#).

The Board also adjudicates applications for compassionate awards made under section 34 of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act.

Raison d'être, mandate and role

“Raison d'être, mandate and role: who we are and what we do” is available on the [Veterans Review and Appeal Board's website^{xiii}](#).

Operating context and key risks

Information on operating context and key risks is available on the [Veterans Review and Appeal Board's website^{xiv}](#).

¹ Effective April 1, 2018, the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act will be known as the Veterans Well-being Act.

Reporting framework

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board's Departmental Results Framework and Program Inventory of record for 2018–19 are shown below:

Departmental Results Framework	
Core Responsibility: Appeals	
Departmental Result: Applicants receive high quality hearings and decisions.	Indicator: Percentage of applicants who provide positive feedback about their hearing
	Indicator: Percentage of Board decisions that meet quality standards
	Indicator: Percentage of Board decisions overturned by the Federal Court
Departmental Result: Applicants receive timely decisions.	Indicator: Percentage of Review decisions issued within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board their case is ready to be heard
	Indicator: Percentage of Appeal decisions issued within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board their case is ready to be heard
Program Inventory	
Program: Review and Appeal	

Concordance between the Departmental Results Framework and the Program Inventory, 2018–19, and the Program Alignment Architecture, 2017–18

In April 2018, the Board will transition from its current Strategic Outcome and Program Alignment Architecture (PAA), which was required under the old Policy on Management Resources and Results Structures, to the new Departmental Results Framework (DRF) required by the Policy on Results.

The new DRF focuses on the same key aspects as the previous Strategic Outcome and PAA. It strengthens accountability through enhanced departmental results and results indicators and commits the organization to delivering meaningful results for Canadians.

2018–19 Core Responsibilities and Program Inventory	2017–18 Lowest-level program of the Program Alignment Architecture	Percentage of lowest-level Program Alignment Architecture program (dollars) corresponding to the program in the Program Inventory
Core Responsibility 1: Appeals		
Review and Appeal	Review and Appeal	100%

Supporting information on the Program Inventory

Supporting information on planned expenditures, human resources, and results related to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's Program Inventory is available in the [GC InfoBase](#).^{xv}

Supplementary information tables

The following supplementary information tables are available on the [Veterans Review and Appeal Board's website](#)^{xvi}:

- ▶ Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy
- ▶ Gender-based analysis plus

Federal tax expenditures

The tax system can be used to achieve public policy objectives through the application of special measures such as low tax rates, exemptions, deductions, deferrals and credits. The Department of Finance Canada publishes cost estimates and projections for these measures each year in the [Report on Federal Tax Expenditures](#).^{xvii} This report also provides detailed background information on tax expenditures, including descriptions, objectives, historical information and references to related federal spending programs. The tax measures presented in this report are the responsibility of the Minister of Finance.

Organizational contact information

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

161 Grafton Street
PO Box 9900
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 8V7
Canada
Website : <http://www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca>

Appendix: definitions

appropriation (crédit)

Any authority of Parliament to pay money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

budgetary expenditures (dépenses budgétaires)

Operating and capital expenditures; transfer payments to other levels of government, organizations or individuals; and payments to Crown corporations.

Core Responsibility (responsabilité essentielle)

An enduring function or role performed by a department. The intentions of the department with respect to a Core Responsibility are reflected in one or more related Departmental Results that the department seeks to contribute to or influence.

Departmental Plan (plan ministériel)

A report on the plans and expected performance of appropriated departments over a three-year period. Departmental Plans are tabled in Parliament each spring.

Departmental Result (résultat ministériel)

Any change or changes that the department seeks to influence. A Departmental Result is often outside departments' immediate control, but it should be influenced by Program-level outcomes.

Departmental Result Indicator (indicateur de résultat ministériel)

A factor or variable that provides a valid and reliable means to measure or describe progress on a Departmental Result.

Departmental Results Framework (cadre ministériel des résultats)

The department's Core Responsibilities, Departmental Results and Departmental Result Indicators.

Departmental Results Report (rapport sur les résultats ministériels)

A report on the actual accomplishments against the plans, priorities and expected results set out in the corresponding Departmental Plan.

experimentation (expérimentation)

Activities that seek to explore, test and compare the effects and impacts of policies, interventions and approaches, to inform evidence-based decision-making, by learning what works and what does not.

full-time equivalent (équivalent temps plein)

A measure of the extent to which an employee represents a full person-year charge against a departmental budget. Full-time equivalents are calculated as a ratio of assigned hours of work to scheduled hours of work. Scheduled hours of work are set out in collective agreements.

gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) (analyse comparative entre les sexes plus [ACS+])

An analytical process used to help identify the potential impacts of policies, Programs and services on diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people. The “plus” acknowledges that GBA goes beyond sex and gender differences to consider multiple identity factors that intersect to make people who they are (such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability).

government-wide priorities (priorités pangouvernementales)

For the purpose of the 2018–19 Departmental Plan, government-wide priorities refers to those high-level themes outlining the government’s agenda in the 2015 Speech from the Throne, namely: Growth for the Middle Class; Open and Transparent Government; A Clean Environment and a Strong Economy; Diversity is Canada's Strength; and Security and Opportunity.

horizontal initiative (initiative horizontale)

An initiative in which two or more federal organizations, through an approved funding agreement, work toward achieving clearly defined shared outcomes, and which has been designated (by Cabinet, a central agency, etc.) as a horizontal initiative for managing and reporting purposes.

non-budgetary expenditures (dépenses non budgétaires)

Net outlays and receipts related to loans, investments and advances, which change the composition of the financial assets of the Government of Canada.

performance (rendement)

What an organization did with its resources to achieve its results, how well those results compare to what the organization intended to achieve, and how well lessons learned have been identified.

performance indicator (indicateur de rendement)

A qualitative or quantitative means of measuring an output or outcome, with the intention of gauging the performance of an organization, program, policy or initiative respecting expected results.

performance reporting (production de rapports sur le rendement)

The process of communicating evidence-based performance information. Performance reporting supports decision making, accountability and transparency.

planned spending (dépenses prévues)

For Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports, planned spending refers to those amounts presented in the Main Estimates.

A department is expected to be aware of the authorities that it has sought and received. The determination of planned spending is a departmental responsibility, and departments must be able to defend the expenditure and accrual numbers presented in their Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports.

plan (plan)

The articulation of strategic choices, which provides information on how an organization intends to achieve its priorities and associated results. Generally a plan will explain the logic behind the strategies chosen and tend to focus on actions that lead up to the expected result.

priority (priorité)

A plan or project that an organization has chosen to focus and report on during the planning period. Priorities represent the things that are most important or what must be done first to support the achievement of the desired Departmental Results.

Program (programme)

Individual or groups of services, activities or combinations thereof that are managed together within the department and focus on a specific set of outputs, outcomes or service levels.

Program Alignment Architecture (architecture d'alignement des programmes)²

A structured inventory of an organization's programs depicting the hierarchical relationship between programs and the Strategic Outcome(s) to which they contribute.

results (résultat)

An external consequence attributed, in part, to an organization, policy, program or initiative. Results are not within the control of a single organization, policy, program or initiative; instead they are within the area of the organization's influence.

statutory expenditures (dépenses législatives)

² Under the Policy on Results, the Program Alignment Architecture has been replaced by the Program Inventory.

Expenditures that Parliament has approved through legislation other than appropriation acts. The legislation sets out the purpose of the expenditures and the terms and conditions under which they may be made.

Strategic Outcome (résultat stratégique)

A long-term and enduring benefit to Canadians that is linked to the organization's mandate, vision and core functions.

sunset program (programme temporisé)

A time-limited program that does not have an ongoing funding and policy authority. When the program is set to expire, a decision must be made whether to continue the program. In the case of a renewal, the decision specifies the scope, funding level and duration.

target (cible)

A measurable performance or success level that an organization, program or initiative plans to achieve within a specified time period. Targets can be either quantitative or qualitative.

voted expenditures (dépenses votées)

Expenditures that Parliament approves annually through an Appropriation Act. The Vote wording becomes the governing conditions under which these expenditures may be made.

Endnotes

- i. Veterans Review and Appeal Board Plans and Reports, <http://www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca/Plans-eng.cfm>
- ii. My VAC Account, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/e_services
- iii. GC InfoBase, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html#start>
- iv. 2017–18 Main Estimates, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/planned-government-spending/government-expenditure-plan-main-estimates.html>
- v. Veterans Review and Appeal Board Plans and Reports, <http://www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca/Plans-eng.cfm>
- vi. Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/V-1.6/page-1.html>
- vii. Veterans Review and Appeal Board Regulations, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-96-67/index.html>
- viii. Pension Act, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-6/index.html>
- ix. Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act – Part 3, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-16.8/index.html>
- x. War Veterans Allowance Act, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/W-3/index.html>
- xi. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Pension Continuation Act, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/R-10.6/index.html>
- xii. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/R-11/index.html>
- xiii. Veterans Review and Appeal Board, <http://www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca/>
- xiv. Veterans Review and Appeal Board, <http://www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca/>
- xv. GC InfoBase, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html#start>
- xvi. Veterans Review and Appeal Board, <http://www.vrab-tacra.gc.ca/>
- xvii. Report on Federal Tax Expenditures, <http://www.fin.gc.ca/purl/taxexp-eng.asp>