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OFFICE OF THE VETERANS OMBUD 2021 REPORT CARD



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Introduction

The Office of the Veterans Ombud (OVO) was established by an Order-In-Council in 2007 with essentially two broad lines of responsibility: first, investigate complaints against Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and provide information or referrals to Veterans; and second, investigate systemic gaps and barriers in the benefits and services provided by VAC.

Complaints: In 2020-2021, our Office was contacted by 1354 people with either a complaint or a request for information or referral. Of these, we found unfairness in 347 cases and advocated for a fair resolution.

Systemic Investigations: Since inception, the OVO has completed 19 systemic investigations comprising a total of 93 recommendations. Of these, 17 have become redundant, leaving 76 that the Office continues to track. This Report Card focuses on the progress made by VAC in its implementation of our recommendations.

Since 2017, the OVO has published an Annual Report Card to track the progress by VAC in implementing the recommendations we have made over the course of our systemic investigations. The indication of “Implemented”, “Partially Implemented” or “Not Implemented” against each recommendation in the chart is based on our assessment of VAC’s reported actions. The 2019 Report Card reflected the progress that VAC had made in fully or partially implementing 79% of the still valid 63 recommendations to date. Up to that point, the majority of our recommendations were focused on improvements to Veterans’ financial security and the transition from service to civilian life. While the Office was unable to issue a Report Card in 2020, I am pleased to present our fourth such account, the **2021 OVO Report Card**, comprising an Overview together with a Progress Summary and the detailed Progress Assessment Chart (below).



2021 Overview

As of March 31st, 2021, VAC has fully or partially implemented 68% or 52 of our 76 still valid recommendations. The vast majority of the rest have been made by our Office since 2017, and while most of them would require legislative or regulatory amendments in order to be implemented, the Government needs to do more to fulfill its obligation to those who have served their country. It must review and update regularly legislation and regulations to identify gaps and fix inequities affecting the provision of benefits and services to Veterans and their families who suffer from service-related injuries. In particular, I would highlight our continuing concern about these outstanding recommendations:

Amend New Veterans Charter legislation [*Veterans Well-Being Act*] and regulations to permit a single CAF member with no dependent children to designate a family member to apply for and receive the Death Benefit.¹

- CAF members who are single and without dependents are unable to designate another family member to be the recipient of the Death Benefit in the case of service-related, sudden death.
- The recommendation seeks to eliminate this unfairness based on the definition of “survivor” as it is described in the *Veterans Well-Being Act*.
- **We remain concerned about this inequity** and will continue to press for resolution.

Provide equitable access to timely decisions regardless of factors such as the applicant’s gender and language.²

- Our 2018 investigation into wait times for disability claims found unreasonable delays for Veterans needing access to funded health care treatment for their claimed conditions.
- We also found that women and francophone applicants wait longer than others.
- While VAC is taking steps to reduce the backlog and streamline the adjudication of disability claims, only one of our seven recommendations on this subject has been fully implemented.
- **The number one complaint (43%) received by our Office continues to be about wait times.**

Adjust the eligibility criteria of the Caregiver Recognition Benefit to provide easier access to compensation for caregivers when service-related conditions inhibit a Veteran’s ability to perform Instrumental Activities of Daily Living and childcare.³

¹ [Fair Compensation to Veterans and their Survivors for Pain and Suffering](#)

² [Meeting Expectations: Timely and Transparent Decisions for Canada’s Ill and Injured Veterans](#)

³ [Continuum of Care: A Journey from Home to Long Term Care, 2018](#)

- The Caregiver Recognition Benefit has very narrow eligibility criteria; only caregivers of the most seriously disabled Veterans qualify.
- Many caregivers who support Veterans by taking on their share of the childcare, eldercare, cooking, shopping, laundry, banking, and also arranging appointments and providing psychological support, do not qualify.
- This recommendation has still not been implemented.
- **We are conducting a follow-up investigation focusing on in-home support.**

Ensure that family members, including former spouses, survivors and dependent children, have access to federal Government funded mental health treatment in their own right when the mental health illness is related to conditions of military service experienced by the family member, independent of the Veteran's treatment plan and regardless of whether the Veteran is engaging in treatment.⁴

- When a family member suffers from an illness or injury related to the unique conditions and challenges of military service, they should have access to mental health treatment, independent of the Veteran's treatment or rehabilitation plan.
- Recent research has shown that military service affects the health and well-being of both Veterans and their family members for a number of reasons, including frequent postings and deployments as well as the inherent risk of military service. Therefore, the family member's request for mental health care should be considered regardless of whether the Veteran is engaging in mental health treatment or not.
- **Our Office remains encouraged** both by the Prime Minister's January 15, 2021 supplementary mandate to the Minister of Veterans Affairs "to review mental health programs and services to ensure Veterans, their families, and their primary caregivers receive the best possible mental health supports, including timely access to service"; and by the Minister's January 18, 2021 response to our report, wherein he "fully agreed with the goal of providing Veterans' family members with the mental health support they need, where and when they need it."

2021-22 and Onward

In June 2021, we published a report recommending equitable access to VAC-funded **Peer Support for Veterans who have Experienced Military Sexual Trauma**.⁵ We will publish our next report in January/February 2022 on our investigation into the Additional Monthly Amount benefit.

Going forward, we are currently examining the following issues within our three strategic priorities:

⁴ [Mental Health Treatment Benefits for Family members, in the Own Right, for the Conditions Related to Military Service](#)

⁵ [Peer Support for Veterans who have Experienced Military Sexual Trauma](#)

Building Trust: improved relationships with Veterans through the services we provide and through our recommendations to VAC to eliminate unfairness.

Veteran, Family and Caregiver Health and Well-being: care at home, accessibility and structure of VAC homecare benefits for CAF Veterans, and possible gaps and/or overlaps in programs and services.

Fair and Timely Access to VAC Programs and Services: potential for gender bias and inequity in the VAC adjudication process.

Conclusion







I acknowledge the progress made by VAC in implementing the recommendations we have made up to 2021, and would encourage continuing effort on the remainder. We appreciate that some of our recommendations will require consultation or legislative and/or regulatory change, and that these can take significantly more time. And certainly, the pandemic has had an understandable disruptive effect over the past year. However, the recommendations that have not yet been addressed by VAC serve to shine a light on issues that must be rectified. No Veteran or family member who has a service-related need for care and support should be left behind because of a systemic unfairness.










2021 Progress Summary












The following table provides a summary of the progress made by VAC on our recommendations since our first Report Card issued in 2017. Of note, over time, some of these have become redundant and therefore the percentage fully or partially implemented is based on those that are still valid.

	Recommendations made since 2007	Redundant	Still Valid	Implemented by VAC	Progress
2017 RC	57	0	57	37	65%
2018 RC	74	10	64	46	72%
2019 RC	81	18	63	50	79%
2021 RC	93	17	76	52	68%








2021 Progress Assessment Chart

Year	Report	Recommendation	2021 Status
2021	Mental Health Treatment Benefits for Family members, in the Own Right, for the Conditions Related to Military Service	<p>1. Considering the unique impact of military service on the mental health and well-being of both Veterans and their family members as a result of frequent postings, long and multiple absences, and the inherent risk of military service resulting in illness, injury or death, the Government ensure that family members, including former spouses, survivors and dependent children, have access to federal Government funded mental health treatment in their own right when the mental health illness is related to conditions of military service experienced by the family member, independent of the Veteran's treatment plan and regardless of whether the Veteran is engaging in treatment.</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p> 
		<p>2. That VAC conduct and publish a Gender Based Analysis+ of the accessibility to mental health treatment benefits and services to family members, including spouses, former spouses, survivors and dependent children, to determine if there are barriers which make it difficult for certain groups to access the care they need.</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p> 
		<p>3. VAC continue to demonstrate flexibility to address the urgent mental health needs of family members. Further, we encourage VAC to explore expanding and obtaining additional financial authorities to minimize the significant financial costs of obtaining mental health treatment for family members that some Veterans and their families experience. This may include expanding access to treatment sessions for some family members.</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p> 
2020	Financial Compensation for Canadian Veterans A comparative analysis of benefit regimes	<p>1. Clearly identify the financial outcomes Canada seeks to provide for ill and injured Veterans</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p> 
		<p>2. Harmonize existing financial compensation frameworks to meet identified financial outcomes</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p> 
		<p>3. Pending identification of financial compensation outcomes and to avoid further inequity, ensure that no Veteran with a Diminished Earning Capacity designation who submits their application under Pension for Life is financially disadvantaged compared to those who submitted their application under the Veterans Well-being Act prior to April 1, 2019</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p> 
		<p>4. Compensate Veterans for lost career progression as though the Veteran had served a full military career</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p>







			 Not Implemented
2020	Supplementary Retirement Benefit Payout	1. Review the SRB eligibility start date of all dual CAF-LTD and VAC Veterans released prior to 1 October 2016 and deemed TPI/DEC. Veterans released after this date are assumed to be in receipt of ELB because of the VAC outreach connected to the implementation of the 90% top up of CAF-LTD benefits	 Not Implemented
		2. If a Veteran's SRB eligibility start date is later than the payment commencement date for CAF-LTD, use the latter date as the eligibility start date for calculation of the SRB payout (going back as early as 1 April 2006)	 Not Implemented
		3. From a fairness perspective, and to achieve equitable outcomes, it is recommended that the Minister of Veterans Affairs and VAC recalculate the SRB payable based on the adjusted eligibility date and pay the corrected amount to eligible Veterans	 Not Implemented
2020	Income Replacement Benefit Calculation for Reserve Force Veterans	1. Amend the Veterans Well-being Regulations to ensure that Income Replacement Benefits are fairly calculated for Veterans releasing from any class of Reserve Force service. The OVO suggests the following change to the wording of paragraph 18(1)(b) of the Veterans Well-being regulations (and other relevant sections): . For a Veteran whose final release is from the Reserve Force, select the greater of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Veteran's monthly military salary at the time of release; the Veteran's monthly military salary at the time of release from the class of service wherein the event that resulted in the health problem leading to the release occurred; or the set minimum salary. 	Partially Implemented 
		2. Rectify unintentional systemic bias by applying a Reservist lens in policy development.	 Not Implemented
2018	Meeting Expectations: Timely and Transparent Decisions for Canada's Ill and Injured Veterans	1. Provide clients with a checklist of all required documents on the application form and, upon receipt, immediately return applications if required documents are missing.	 Partially Implemented
		2. Triage applications upon receipt based on health and financial need	 Partially Implemented
		3. Standardize Service Standard Start Dates to improve transparency and equity and facilitate accurate performance reporting	 Partially Implemented









		4. Reimburse all Veterans' health care expenses for approved claimed conditions 90 days prior to their date of application.	Implemented 
		5. Provide equitable access to timely decisions regardless of factors such as the applicant's gender and language	Not Implemented 
		6. When a Veteran dies with a disability benefit application in progress, continue to process the application and permit payment to the estate if the decision is favourable	Not Implemented 
		7. Provide each applicant with an individualized, expected turnaround time for their application, and inform them if the decision will be delayed and why	Not Implemented 
2017	Continuum of Care: A Journey from Home to Long Term Care	1. Follow-up contact with Veterans Independence Program recipients should be made on at least an annual basis and more frequently for those at higher risk (with in-home assessments when necessary) to ensure timely and accurate identification of changing needs as Veterans age	Partially Implemented 
		2. Eliminate the inconsistency in Veterans Independence Program eligibility for housekeeping and grounds maintenance for survivors and spouses so that they may all have access to the services they need, regardless of what the Veteran received or did not receive prior to their death or involuntary separation	Not Implemented 
		3. Adjust the eligibility criteria of the Caregiver Recognition Benefit to provide easier access to compensation for caregivers when service-related conditions inhibit a Veteran's ability to perform Instrumental Activities of Daily Living and childcare	Not Implemented 
		4. Introduce additional financial support that can be used to subsidize assisted living options for Veterans whose needs do not require Long Term Care, but who cannot stay in their own homes	Not Implemented 
		5. Merge the Veterans Independence Program and Long Term Care program into one "Continuum of Care" program such that access is determined once, and criteria are transparent, understandable, and based on the physical and mental health needs of the Veteran	Not Implemented 
		6. Reduce the complexity of 28 different eligibility groups, currently using service type, such that access to continuum of care support is based on the physical and mental health needs of Veterans	Not Implemented 
		7. Develop and publicly communicate a strategy to ensure that the continuum of care needs of all Veterans are being met within the current context of the Canadian Health Care system	Not Implemented 










2017	Improving the New Veterans Charter The Actuarial Analysis – Follow up Report	1. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs, by 1 April 2019, consolidate financial benefits to reduce complexity and better address the financial needs of Veterans and survivors	Redundant
		2. That VAC assess the level of financial support it provides to Veterans who are not TPI to ensure that their financial needs are being met and publish the results of that assessment by 1 April 2018	Redundant
		3. That VAC assess the level of financial support it provides to survivors to ensure that their lifelong financial needs are being met and publish the results of that assessment by 1 April 2018.	Redundant
		4. That VAC review when financial benefits are being delivered to Veterans and their survivors to ensure that their financial needs are being met and publish by 1 April 2018 the benchmarks used to measure that financial support.	Redundant
2016	Veterans' Families: Caring for those who care	1. Provide mental health treatment benefits to family members in their own right	Redundant
		2. Establish a caregiver benefit for families providing care to ill and injured Veterans.	Redundant
2016	Joint Transition Project: Closing the Seam	1. Apply once for all benefits	Partially Implemented 
		2. Reduce CF Pension payment delay	Implemented 
		3. Ensure that all VAC benefits in place at time of release	Partially Implemented 
		4. Provide Members/Veterans/Families with a navigator throughout the transition process	Partially Implemented 
2016	Fair Compensation to Veterans and their Survivors for Pain and Suffering	1. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs provide compensation to Veterans and their survivors under the New Veterans Charter to recognize for the non-economic effects of exceptional incapacity.	Implemented 
		2. That Veterans Affairs Canada develop new eligibility criteria for the non-economic benefit that compensates for exceptional incapacity (i.e. criteria that are not based on a specific minimum disability percentage).	Implemented 
		3. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs amend New Veterans Charter legislation and regulations to permit a single CAF member with no dependent children to designate a family member to apply for and receive the Death Benefit.	Not Implemented 



2014	Supporting Severely Impaired Veterans: A Report on the New Veterans Charter Permanent Impairment Allowance and Permanent Impairment Allowance Supplement	<p>1. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs amends section 40 of the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Regulations</i> to include, “other permanent and severe injury or illness that affect employment and career progression opportunities” in the definition of a permanent and severe impairment.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> 
		<p>2. That the Minister and the Department of Veterans Affairs amend relevant Permanent Impairment Allowance regulations and policy to include specific loss of earning capacity criteria to ensure alignment between the determination of the extent of impairment and the objective of the allowance.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> 
		<p>3. That the Minister and the Department of Veterans Affairs amend the Permanent Impairment Allowance policy and the relevant regulations so that the assignment of grade levels is based on specific criteria (including the number of working years affected) that characterize the impact of a permanent and severe impairment on loss of employment and career progression opportunities.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> 
		<p>4. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs amends legislation to provide the Permanent Impairment Allowance and the Supplement to a survivor at the full rate for a period of one year following the death of the Veteran, if the Veteran was in receipt of the benefits at the time of death.</p>	<p>Redundant</p>
2013	Investing in Veterans' Vocational Training	<p>1. It is recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs develop appropriate program measurements to effectively monitor Veterans' progression and success in completing their Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plan, including subsequent employment</p>	<p>Redundant</p>
		<p>2. It is recommended that the Minister of Veterans Affairs amend the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Regulations</i> to ensure that all costs associated with post-secondary education are paid.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> 
		<p>3. It is recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs Canada amend its policies relating to vocational rehabilitation and assistance to ensure that the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Regulations</i> are liberally interpreted with regard to the cost and duration of an Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plan.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> 
		<p>4. It is recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs Canada amend its policies relating to vocational rehabilitation and assistance to ensure that the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Regulations</i> are liberally interpreted to allow more flexibility for Veterans to acquire new skills and higher education while also taking into consideration the Veteran's aptitude and</p>	<p>Implemented</p> 







		motivation in the development of an Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plan.	
2013	Improving the New Veterans Charter: the Report	Financial Support – Economic Benefits 1. Providing additional financial support after age 65 to eligible totally and permanently incapacitated Veterans to ensure that their monthly benefits are no less than 70 percent of their indexed pre-release salary;	Implemented 
		2. Increasing the Earnings Loss Benefit to 90 percent of pre-release salary	Implemented 
		3. Providing the same Earnings Loss Benefit to former part-time Reserve Force members whose injury or illness is related to service	Implemented 
		4. Calculating the annual cost of living adjustment to the Earnings Loss Benefit based on actual annual increases in the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index	Implemented 
		5. Providing the Permanent Impairment Allowance and Permanent Impairment Allowance Supplement benefits to all totally and permanently incapacitated Veterans who are in receipt of a Disability Award and an approved rehabilitation plan for the condition that is causing the total and permanent incapacity	Redundant
		Financial Support – Non Economic Benefits 6. As a first step, increasing the maximum amount of the Disability Award to the maximum judicial cap for non-pecuniary damages awarded by Canadian courts	Implemented 
		7. Conducting a comprehensive review, including consultations with Veterans' stakeholders, to determine what the appropriate maximum amount should be to fairly compensate Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans for pain and suffering resulting from an injury or illness in service to Canada	Redundant
		8. Reviewing the adequacy of the \$500 provided for financial counselling	Implemented 
		Vocational Rehabilitation and Assistance Support 9. Instructing the Department to develop appropriate program measurements to effectively monitor Veterans' progression and success in completing their Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plan, including subsequent employment	Redundant
		10. Amending the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Regulations</i> to ensure that all costs associated with post-secondary education are paid	Implemented 
		11. Instructing the Department to amend its policies relating to vocational rehabilitation and assistance to ensure that the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment</i>	Implemented 

		and Compensation Regulations are liberally interpreted with regard to the cost and duration of an Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plan	
		12. Instructing the Department to amend its policies relating to vocational rehabilitation and assistance to ensure that the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Regulations are liberally interpreted to allow more flexibility for Veterans to acquire new skills and higher education while also taking into consideration the Veteran's aptitude and motivation in the development of an Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plan;	Implemented ✓
		13. Increasing partnership opportunities to better help Veterans obtain good paying civilian jobs, in collaboration with the Minister of National Defence	Implemented ✓
		14. Undertaking an independent review of the dual SISIP Financial Services and Veterans Affairs Canada income support and vocational rehabilitation programs to determine whether the current construct is effective, in collaboration with the Minister of National Defence	Not Implemented ✗
		Family Support	Implemented
		15. Providing proper counselling, information, communications and outreach to families	✓
		16. Extending access by families to Military Family Resource Centre programs after the medical release of the Canadian Forces member, in collaboration with the Minister of National Defence	Implemented ✓
		17. Harmonizing Canadian Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada financial assistance provided to families	Redundant
		18. Developing a caregiver compensation program to compensate the spouse or family member who acts as the primary caregiver to a seriously disabled Veteran	Implemented ✓
		19. Providing the same access to the Treasury Board Pensioner Dental Service Plan to Veterans and their families as that provided to them by Veterans Affairs Canada under the Public Service Health Care Plan	Not Implemented ✗
		20. Eliminating the time limit for surviving spouses to apply for vocational rehabilitation and assistance services	Implemented ✓
2012	Veterans' Right to Fair Adjudication: Analysis of Federal Courts decisions pertaining to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board	1. That the Veterans Review and Appeal Board report to Parliament on its performance using the <i>percentage of Federal Court judgments that uphold Board decisions</i> as an indicator of fairness in the redress process, and on remedial measures to attain the 100 percent target.	Implemented ✓
		2. That the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, Veterans Affairs Canada, and the Bureau of Pensions Advocates establish a formal mechanism to review each Federal Court decision rendered in favour of the Veteran or other applicant,	Redundant

		for the purpose of remedial action to procedures and adjudication practices.	
		3. That the Veterans Review and Appeal Board provide reasons for its decisions that clearly demonstrate that its obligation to liberally construe the legislation has been met, as well as its obligations under Section 39 of the <i>Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act</i> to draw every reasonable inference in favour of applicants, to accept credible uncontradicted evidence, and to give applicants the benefit of evidentiary presumptions (benefit of the doubt).	Implemented 
		4. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs ensure that the Veterans Review and Appeal Board is sufficiently resourced so that the Board may publish all of its decisions on its Web site and all Federal Court judgments pertaining to Board decisions.	Implemented 
		5. For the Minister of Veterans Affairs to mandate the Bureau of Pensions Advocates to represent applicants on judicial review of decisions of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in the Federal Court.	Not Implemented 
		6. For the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and the Bureau of Pensions Advocates to review their processes and service standards for the priority treatment of cases returned by the Federal Courts for rehearing.	Implemented 
		7. For the Minister of Veterans Affairs to put forward the necessary legislative and regulatory amendments to allow Veterans to be compensated retroactively to date of application under the <i>Pension Act</i> and the <i>Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act</i> .	Implemented 
2012	Honouring and Connecting with Canada's Veterans: a National Veterans Identification Card	1. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Safety, amend the current definition of a <i>veteran</i> for commemoration purposes to include former members of the RCMP.	Redundant
		2. That Veterans Affairs Canada broadly publicize and make prominent on its Web site and in appropriate publications the definition of a <i>veteran</i> for commemorative purposes.	Implemented 
		3. That the Minister of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Safety, pursue, as a priority, the development of a <i>National Veterans Identification Card</i> that meets the standards for a government-issued identity document.	Redundant
		4. That Veterans Affairs Canada, in consultation with the Canadian Forces and the RCMP, pursue a strategy for the issuance of a <i>National Veterans Identification Card</i> to Veterans and releasing members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP.	Implemented 



2012	Veterans' Right to Disclosure - A Matter of Procedural Fairness	1. That Veterans Affairs Canada modify the current procedure to retrieve service and health records by providing applicants with a copy of the records and all other information that will be considered by adjudicators in making decisions on disability benefit applications, along with a notice advising applicants of the importance of reviewing the information and notifying the Department of any errors or omissions	Redundant
		2. That Veterans Affairs Canada clarify how service and health records required to process disability benefit applications will be obtained and by whom; and that this be included in a policy available to applicants.	Implemented ✔
		3. That Veterans Affairs Canada more clearly inform applicants of its intent to retrieve service and health records upon receipt of the application, and the types of records that will be retrieved, and notify applicants that, notwithstanding the actions deemed to be authorized by the consent form, applicants remain responsible for the accuracy of the information.	Implemented ✔
		4. That service and health records recovered by Veterans Affairs Canada in support of disability benefit applications be sent directly to disability adjudicators intact and without input by employees who do not have the delegated authority to render decisions on applications.	Redundant
2011	Veterans' Right to Know Reasons for Decisions: A Matter of Procedural Fairness	1. For Veterans Affairs Canada to improve the mechanisms by which disability benefit assessment letters are generated to make sure essential information is captured for inclusion in letters. This information should be presented in a form that is understandable and is in relation to the decision made. An explanation of how this information has been used to arrive at the decision is required. The Department should also ensure that a notice of the right to appeal is contained in every disability benefit decision letter.	Implemented ✔
		2. For reasons for decisions to be written in plain language. Any legal, medical, or administrative terms used should be explained. A separate brochure or other companion piece would serve this purpose and could be included with decision letters.	Implemented ✔
		3. For procedure manuals and training modules to be examined to ensure that adjudicators are aware of the minimum information to be provided in letters and what is needed to substantiate the reasons for their decisions.	Implemented ✔
		4. For quality assurance procedures to be put in place to ensure decision letters fully comply with standards for adequacy of reasons for decisions.	Implemented ✔
2009	Serve with Honour Depart with Dignity: An	1. That the ceiling for Veterans funeral and burial expenses be raised to reflect industry standards and that an indexing	Implemented ✔

Administrative Review of the Funeral and Burial Assistance Program for Veterans Affairs Canada	<p>formula be introduced to ensure that the rates keep up with the economic increases.</p>	
	<p>2. That the administration of funeral and burial benefits be simplified by using a discretionary lump sum approach for reimbursable expenses rather than the present itemized approach.</p>	<p>Implemented </p>
	<p>3. That Veterans Affairs Canada extend the Funeral and Burial Program to all Veterans.</p>	<p>Implemented </p>
	<p>4. That eligibility related to the Funeral and Burial Program be extended to include Veterans who suffer from multiple pensioned conditions where the total aggregate suffering and weakening of their body may contribute to the cause of death.</p>	<p>Implemented </p>
	<p>5. That the estate exemption (surviving spouse) for the means test be increased and aligned with present-day income and cost levels.</p>	<p>Implemented </p>
	<p>6. That Veterans Affairs Canada engage in a proactive multi-faceted communications campaign to raise awareness of the Funeral and Burial Program.</p>	<p>Implemented </p>
	<p>7. That Veterans Affairs Canada be more flexible and allow for extraordinary circumstances to be considered when the established timeframe is exceeded.</p>	<p>Implemented </p>

