



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Emmanuel Dubourg, Chair

**OCTOBER 2023
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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**Emmanuel Dubourg
Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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has the honour to present its

TWELFTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the National Strategy for Veterans Employment After Service and has agreed to report the following:

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

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That Veterans Affairs Canada launch a qualitative research program targeting groups of Veterans most likely to experience career transition challenges. 14

Recommendation 2

That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada put in place an individualized support program beginning as soon as a Canadian Armed Forces' member in a higher-risk category begins their release process..... 14

Recommendation 3

That Veterans Affairs Canada explore ways in which it could expand the eligibility of some of its education and career programs to the spouses of Veterans. 15

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That the Department of National Defence index the Service Income Security Insurance Plan's vocational rehabilitation program to inflation to address the rising cost of living..... 16

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Recommendation 13

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Recommendation 14

That Veterans Affairs Canada lead by example in Veteran employment and set recruitment targets to increase the proportion of Veterans that it employs, ensure that these targets are set with a written and accessible plan to meet them, establish a clear means of determining whether these targets are being met, and if needed implement an action plan to improve these targets. 27

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada explore ways to give preference in federal public service hiring to the spouses of Veterans and serving military members. 27

Recommendation 16

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence establish criteria of recognition for and publicize a list of companies committed to priority hiring, retention and accommodation of Veterans..... 29

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That the Government of Canada implement the recommendations made in the report published by the True Patriot Love Foundation entitled *Supporting Veterans through their transition to civilian employment in Canada*. 33

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That Veterans Affairs Canada establish a permanent working table on training and career transition for Veterans and their family members. 34

Recommendation 20

That Veterans Affairs Canada, as part of the vocational component of its Rehabilitation Program, as well as for its career transition initiatives, ensure that ambassadors are put in place who are responsible for creating strategic partnerships for Veterans with Canadian companies. 35

Recommendation 21

That the Government of Canada encourage Veteran employee resource groups and peer support networks in workplaces where Veterans are employed. 35

Recommendation 22

That Veterans Affairs Canada direct more effort toward increasing retention amongst Veterans in civilian positions. 35

Recommendation 23

That the Government of Canada, when developing its national strategy for Veterans' employment, encourage a dialogue between employers and Veterans in order to further mutual understanding and respect..... 37

Recommendation 24

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence develop the National Employment Strategy for Veterans based on principles that place the overall personality of each Veteran at the centre of the strategy, so as to allow each Veteran to take ownership of his or her career path rather than restricting opportunities to a specific match between certain skills and certain jobs. 38

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Recommendation 28

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Recommendation 29

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in developing the National Veterans Employment Strategy, propose initiatives to support and guide Veterans wanting to become entrepreneurs. 45

Recommendation 30

That Veterans Affairs Canada draw inspiration from the American program *The Mission Continues* and implement an initiative highlighting volunteer and community service opportunities for Veterans making a career transition. This should include opportunities for peer support and mentorship of fellow Veterans. 46



NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

“What motivates Veterans transitioning to civilian life isn’t salary, rewards and benefits, but rather their desire to accomplish the mission and create a positive impact within their work environment. When a Veteran becomes a member of a work team, the concept of serving remains a top priority.”¹

“[O]ur experience shows that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to employing Veterans, simply because Veterans have multiple needs in transition.”²

INTRODUCTION

In his [mandate letter of 16 December 2021](#), the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, to “[l]aunch a National Veterans Employment Strategy, with a goal of ensuring all Veterans find meaningful work on release from the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), leveraging skills and qualifications acquired while in service. This includes working to improve qualification recognition.”

In its [Departmental Plan 2023–2024](#), Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) identified employment as one of its “core responsibilities” under the heading “Veterans have a sense of purpose.” The Departmental Plan explains that the National Veterans Employment Strategy is one of the ways VAC is working to achieve that objective:

1 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. André Thivierge (Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Major (Ret’d), City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force), 1550.

2 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Captain(N) (Ret’d) Paul Guindon (Chief Executive Officer, Commissionaires Ottawa, Canadian Corps of Commissionaires), 1835.



Accordingly, we will continue developing a National Veterans' Employment Strategy which seeks to increase meaningful employment opportunities for Veterans, promote their well-being, and support their success as they make the transition to civilian life. The strategic objectives of this strategy will include private sector job development, increased opportunities for careers in the federal public service, measures to improve Veteran workforce retention and the development of a Veteran-friendly community of practice.

When he appeared before the Committee, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Service Delivery Branch at VAC, said that many partners are involved in supporting Veteran employment, including "stakeholders, employers, advocates, non-governmental organizations, and municipal and provincial governments. The aim of our strategy is to bring many of these components under a unified vision that best serves Veterans and their families."³

Between 19 September and 31 October 2022, VAC engaged in online consultations with Veterans and employers to help develop the National Veterans Employment Strategy. In total, 1,016 respondents participated through the "[Let's Talk Veterans](#)" platform, of which 945 responded in English and 71 in French. The key takeaways of these consultations were as follows:

- While some Veterans transition to civilian work right away, others feel they aren't given enough time to be ready to enter civilian workplaces. In that latter case, they may be excluded from resources because they do not meet time-related eligibility criteria.
- Some Veterans want to do work that is new and unrelated to their military experience. Others would like to do similar work, but are frustrated that their military occupations don't translate well into civilian work, and want civilian equivalencies to be easier to obtain.
- Many Veterans feel they are seen as either too young to obtain senior positions, or too old for companies to be interested in hiring them.

These findings are nothing new. Since the New Veterans Charter was adopted in 2005, and then amended and renamed the *Veterans Well-being Act*, various reports by parliamentary committees, the Veterans Ombud, the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman, and consultative committees, as well as reports commissioned or prepared by the Government of Canada, have proposed a long list of

3 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, 1540.

recommendations to ease the career transition from the military to the civilian workforce. The present report will be added to their number. Despite the long list of many sourced recommendations, the issue remains one the government must tackle.

This report seeks to support VAC's efforts in developing a national strategy for Veterans' employment, which the department confirms is "in the very early stages."⁴ VAC explained that one reason for this timeline is that the data it uses for its Life After Service Studies (LASS) are limited to Veterans released after 1998. With the new question added to the 2021 census, there will be data available for all Veterans on the seven domains of well-being, including employment. The results of these analyses are expected by the fall of 2023,⁵ at which point VAC will be able to report on them.

The Committee's report is divided into four parts. The first part provides statistics on the employment status of Canadian Veterans by the numbers, using data collected from surveys on life after military service. The second part provides a summary of employment support programs offered by the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada. The third part outlines the programs available through the private sector and the community sector. The fourth part analyzes the key issues identified in the previous sections of the report.

What stands out from the Committee's study is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for Veterans who experience difficulties with employment. As the contents of the report will show, making a career transition is more challenging for some groups of Veterans than others. Research, intervention and follow-up should focus on these groups first, which include medically released Veterans, women Veterans, combat Veterans and Veterans with fewer years of service.

In total, 19 organizations participated in this study, and 34 witnesses appeared during the six meetings the Committee dedicated to this study. The Committee members

4 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret'd) Chris Hutt (CD, Director, Transition and Program Support, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1600.

5 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Nathan Svenson (Director, Research, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1550. The question asked in the [2021 Census](#) is the following:

11. Has this person ever served in the Canadian military?

Canadian military service includes service with the Regular Force or Primary Reserve Force as an Officer or Non-Commissioned Member. It does not include service with the Cadets (COATS), the Supplementary Reserve or the Canadian Rangers.

Mark "x" one circle only.

Yes, currently serving in the Regular Force or the Primary Reserve Force

Yes, but no longer serving in the Regular Force or the Primary Reserve Force

No



sincerely thank those who contributed and hope that the contents of this report will do their contributions justice.

CAREER STATUS OF VETERANS MOST AT RISK

According to Mr. Harris, on average, about 8,500 CAF members release from service every year, and roughly half of them seek second careers.⁶ While the unemployment rate for Veterans is 4.5%, compared to the Canadian average of 6.6%, Veterans are more likely to report dissatisfaction with not being employed to their full potential. Women Veterans face additional barriers, and it takes them longer before their income is comparable to what they earned in the CAF.

According to Ms. Mary Beth MacLean, a PhD candidate at Queen's University who has participated in VAC research studies on life after military service, a number of variables affect the career status of Veterans. For instance:

- job satisfaction increases based on rank, with officers being the most satisfied (90% job satisfaction rate, compared with less than 50% for privates and cadets), likely because it is easier for officers to feel that their skills are being used to their full potential;
- Veterans who previously served in combat units have the lowest labour market earnings, partly because combat arms is the least transferable skill to the civilian workplace;
- employment rates are lower among women Veterans;
- employment rates are lower among medically released Veterans;
- female Veterans earn 58% of what male Veterans earn, in all industries except for the mining industry;
- during their first year post-release (voluntary or medical), approximately 10% of Veterans report that they are unable to find work due to a disability;

6 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, 1535.

- more than half of Veterans changed employers during the first three years post-release;
- Veterans' post-release incomes matched their pre-release incomes after three years and continued to rise for the next 10 years; and
- three-quarters of Veterans who participated in the Veterans Affairs Canada rehabilitation program recovered their pre-release earnings.⁷

The data show that Veterans are not a homogenous group. They have vastly different career transition needs, which cannot be met by applying the same solution for everyone. Debbie Lowther, of Veterans Emergency Transition Services, provided a clear explanation:

[T]he strategy would have to be very flexible, because Veterans come in all shapes and sizes. We've supported Veterans who are indigenous, they're African Canadian, they're from the LGBTQ community, so the military has the same demographics as Canadians. Just picture trying to make an employment strategy that fits all Canadians. It would be the same sort of thing. It needs to be quite flexible because the needs of every Veteran are different.⁸

However, despite this observation, there are groups of Veterans that deserve special attention: medically released Veterans, women Veterans, lower-ranking Veterans in combat trades and Veterans with fewer years of service. These criteria are not mutually exclusive, and their effects could be compounded, which may increase the risks associated with making a career transition.

Carolyn Hughes, of the Royal Canadian Legion, said she was particularly concerned about young Veterans released for medical reasons, but whose injuries are not severe:

7 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Mary Beth MacLean (PhD Candidate, Queen's University, As an Individual), 1705.

8 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Veterans Emergency Transition Services), 1925. See also *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 1955; and *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. Oliver Thorne (Executive Director, Veterans Transition Network), 1600.



The Veterans with a short period of service are always the most difficult to help. When there's a severe injury, it's easy, because it's easy to see. They get the help through Veterans Affairs, and they're entitled to different benefits, but when Veterans leave the forces after three or maybe six years, maybe they too have an injury. Maybe they have a mental health injury, and they just never identified it before they left the military. That happens quite often.⁹

She said that Veterans of the reserve force also face challenges: "There were many of them who went to Afghanistan. They came back and basically went back to their civilian jobs and were kind of forgotten about. Those are the ones who are really hard to get to in terms of outreach."¹⁰

To date, these more vulnerable groups of Veterans have not received special attention from VAC. The department is still waiting for the census data before it identifies the solutions that will be included in the strategy. According to Jane Hicks, VAC's Acting Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management:

We're still doing the analysis. As we identify additional information from the census survey and from the consultation, then we can do some more focused consultation. However, at this stage, we have not focused specifically on individual groups.¹¹

The groups of Veterans most likely to have trouble transitioning to a civilian career have been identified, but more research is needed to know exactly why. Until more is known about why these groups are more vulnerable, it is difficult to identify solutions adapted to their needs.

That said, it is important not to overlook those who were not medically released. As Harold Davis, of Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada, explained, VAC clients tend to be injured Veterans. Those who do not have a disability are less likely to seek help from the department, and if their transition difficulties are not caused by an injury, it is possible that their needs may appear to be less of a priority for VAC.¹²

With regard to Veterans losing the sense of purpose they had in military life when they are released, there is very little data on the topic, so witnesses discussed the matter in

9 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 2010.

10 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 2010.

11 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Jane Hicks (Acting Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1605.

12 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Harold Davis (President, Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada), 2020.

generalities. According to Ms. MacLean, beyond having financial security from an income or government benefits, “having a purpose in work and life provides a sense of identity and social integration that is essential for a successful transition to civilian life.”¹³ This existential aspect of the life of Veterans has been noted many times in previous Committee reports. It appears to be associated with the sense of serving higher values, of being invested in a meaningful mission that goes beyond collecting a paycheque.

Military service fills that need, and when CAF members learn they will be medically released, the subsequent loss of mission sends them on a journey of looking for meaning. If releasing CAF members or new Veterans do not quickly find a way to serve higher values in some way, their mental health may suffer, making the transition even more painful. That is why Ms. MacLean explained as follows:

[P]eople experiencing disability should be encouraged and supported to remain in or re-enter the workforce as soon as possible. In this regard, a program such as individual placement and support has been found to be more effective than traditional rehabilitation in improving employment rates and earnings among Veterans with PTSD and spinal cord injuries.¹⁴

In other words, individualized placement and support programs should be put in place as soon as a CAF member learns they will be medically released. When we know that, for people suffering from a disability, the risk of no longer holding a remunerative job increases in proportion to the period of inactivity, the career break should be as short as possible to ensure that Veterans can experience the sense of serving higher values even when they are no longer in the military.

However, these explanations are based on incomplete research. Good quantitative data is available on Veterans in general, and it is fairly clear which groups of Veterans face bigger challenges, such as women, members of combat units, those who were medically released, and particularly those who were medically released after fewer years of service or without making it to the rank of officer. However, very few qualitative analyses provide insight into why these groups face more difficulties. According to Ms. MacLean, “[t]hat doesn’t usually come from any kinds of open consultations that require people to

13 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Mary Beth MacLean (PhD Candidate, Queen’s University, As an Individual), 1645.

14 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Mary Beth MacLean (PhD Candidate, Queen’s University, As an Individual), 1645.



come forward. The most vulnerable groups are the least likely, in any research or any types of outreach efforts, to come in. They need to be targeted quite specifically.”¹⁵

To address these gaps, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada launch a qualitative research program targeting groups of Veterans most likely to experience career transition challenges.

Recommendation 2

That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada put in place an individualized support program beginning as soon as a Canadian Armed Forces’ member in a higher-risk category begins their release process.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS

VAC has provided employment support programs since the *Veterans Well-being Act* (New Veterans Charter) came into force in April 2006. The Canadian Armed Forces provide similar services through the Service Income Security Insurance Plan (SISIP).

The Veteran Family Program

When CAF members serve, their families serve too. When members become Veterans this interdependence carries on in all aspects of the wellbeing of the whole family, including the challenges that Veterans’ spouses must face in their professional life. This VAC program gives Veterans’ family members access to some of the services provided by CAF’s [Military Family Resource Centres](#). However, it is available only to the families of medically released CAF members. The program seeks primarily to provide information resources to ease the transition for medically releasing Veterans and their family members. It includes the following:

- practical guides for caregivers looking after those with operational stress injuries (OSIs);
- mental health first aid training; and

15 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Mary Beth MacLean (PhD Candidate, Queen’s University, As an Individual), 1720.

- the COPE program (Couples Overcoming PTSD Everyday) designed for couples.

Such resources are certainly welcome, but VAC could do more to support the professional transition of family members. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3

That Veterans Affairs Canada explore ways in which it could expand the eligibility of some of its education and career programs to the spouses of Veterans.

Canadian Armed Forces Transition Centres

There are [32 Transition Centres](#) grouped into nine regional transition units within the Canadian Armed Forces – Transition Group. These centres were established in an effort to decentralize transition services, giving releasing CAF members access to a one-stop service centre. According to Ms. Hughes, what makes this new approach unique is that these centres are available to all Veterans, when before they were accessible only to medically releasing CAF members:

They're a stop on their way out of the military where they can get help, whether that is to get in touch with a case manager, to put in disability claims or to make sure their pensions are straightened out when they're going to get out of the military. They're sort of one-stop shops. Everything is there for questions to be asked and answers to be gotten.

Basically, right now, there are only two or three across the country, but they're planning on expanding them right across, on all the major bases. In the past they were on every base, but the services weren't as extensive as they are now.¹⁶

The Service Income Security Insurance Plan

The Service Income Security Insurance Plan (SISIP) provides income replacement and vocational transition programs to medically released CAF members, whether or not the medical condition is related to their military service. Since 1999, [its primary characteristics](#) have been as follows:

16 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 1950.



- SISIP provides medically released Veterans long-term disability benefits equal to 75% of their CAF salary for 24 months following their release.
- If, after 24 months, a determination is made that the Veteran is unable to obtain gainful employment of any kind, this benefit of 75% of their income will continue until the Veteran reaches the age of 65.
- In the six months preceding their medical release, and in the 24 months following their release, the CAF member/Veteran has access to vocational rehabilitation services.
- These vocational rehabilitation services are intended not to help Veterans acquire new skills, but rather to enhance the transferable skills acquired during their military service and provide recognition for them.
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program covers the cost of tuition and books up to \$32,000, and also provides a number of monthly allowances for supplies, dependent care, Internet, travel assistance and dual residency for the duration of the program.
- SISIP does not provide any medical or psychosocial readaptation services.

To offer more flexibility in the training offered to Veterans who were medically released, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 4

That the Department of National Defence index the Service Income Security Insurance Plan's vocational rehabilitation program to inflation to address the rising cost of living.

Vocational Component of Veterans Affairs Canada's Rehabilitation Program

According to [VAC data](#), among the 142,033 VAC clients in December 2021, about one in ten (14,685) was participating in the Rehabilitation Program. These Veterans have more complex cases and receive support from departmental case managers.

Pursuant to section 8(1) of the [Veterans Well-being Act](#), rehabilitation services may be provided to a Veteran "who has a physical or a mental health problem resulting primarily from service in the Canadian Forces that is creating a barrier to re-establishment in civilian life." Serving CAF members can apply for it in the months

leading up to their release, but the rehabilitation program will not begin until they are released.¹⁷ Vocational assistance services may be offered to spouses if it is determined that the rehabilitation measures available to the Veteran will not lead them to be gainfully employed. Vocational assistance may also be offered to Veterans' survivors.

If the health issue for which the medical or psychosocial rehabilitation service was provided creates barriers to returning to the workplace, a vocational rehabilitation component will be added to the Veteran's rehabilitation plan. However, Veterans are not eligible for these services if they are receiving SISIP rehabilitation services (see section 1). For medically released Veterans, the vocational component of VAC's Rehabilitation Program is available to them only after the 24-month SISIP eligibility period has elapsed, if the barriers to re-establishment in civilian life are still a factor. This 24-month waiting period does not apply to eligible Veterans who were not released for medical reasons.

When a rehabilitation plan is approved by VAC, the Veteran becomes eligible for the Income Replacement Benefit. Since October 2016, this benefit has provided Veterans with 90% of their pre-release income for the length of their rehabilitation plan. If VAC determines that they do not participate actively in their rehabilitation program, Veterans can lose that benefit. Medically released Veterans are already eligible for 75% income replacement under SISIP. In those cases, VAC covers the difference, which is 15%. Before 2016, both SISIP benefits and VAC benefits covered 75%. Since 2016, in order to benefit from the 15% top-up provided through the Income Replacement Benefit, medically released Veterans receiving SISIP benefits have had to demonstrate that their medical release was related to their military service. This determination, which is made by VAC and not CAF, is partly responsible for the increase in the number of applications and backlogs that followed.

In some circumstances, the Income Replacement Benefit may continue to be paid out after the rehabilitation plan has been completed. In that case, the Veteran must establish "[diminished earning capacity](#)," meaning that "the Veteran is incapacitated by a permanent physical or mental health problem that prevents them from performing any occupation that would be considered to be suitable gainful employment," according to VAC's [document 995](#), which outlines the department's policies for its rehabilitation and vocational services.

Marc-André Dufour is the Regional Manager of March of Dimes Canada, an organization that used to be a member of the consortium of subcontractors that provided the

17 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Jane Hicks (Acting Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1545.



vocational component of VAC’s rehabilitation services before the contract was awarded to the Partners in Canadian Veterans Rehabilitation Services (PCVRS). As he explained, individualized services were provided as part of that contract, but services could be offered only once CAF members had already been released.

[O]ur role was to serve Veterans who have left the Canadian Forces for medical reasons. Our mandates were to assess Veterans’ functional capacity, provide recommendations for a possible vocational rehabilitation path or a possible diminished earning capacity status and, when appropriate to do so, support Veterans throughout the entire process as they reintegrate into the workforce, which can take several years in some cases.¹⁸

According to Mr. Dufour, VAC’s rehabilitation program is “very well designed”¹⁹ and offers Veterans a wide variety of resources. The key issue is that the department is unable to offer this program to CAF members when they would need it most.

CAF members undergoing an assessment of their capacity to serve may remain in the Canadian Armed Forces for many years, doing tasks that have little to do with their primary skill sets, while they wait to hear whether they will be medically released. VAC cannot provide a vocational rehabilitation plan until two years after release, after the Veteran has completed their SISIP rehabilitation program. This means that, by the time the CAF member is able to proceed with the vocational part of VAC’s rehabilitation plan, several years have gone by, maybe even as many as five or six years, since they first learned they would be medically released.

For medically releasing CAF members, the challenge of finding adequate health care once they no longer have access to CAF services is compounded by the overlap and complexity of the various programs. The solution to this added challenge involves handing over a Veteran’s medical file from CAF to VAC. Echoing many Veterans before him, Mr. Davis said: “When the medical release happens, that should be automatically kicked over to VAC. Let VAC start with all the medical requirements, the doctor’s notes and stuff like that.”²⁰ This issue has been raised many times over the years and was raised again by Ms. Hughes in a subsequent study: “There is a process, when you release, to obtain your records, but it is a very, very slow, long process right now. If it’s for help with a disability claim or an appeal, it’s usually much faster for us to get the

18 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Marc-André Dufour (Regional Manager, March of Dimes Canada), 1835.

19 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Marc-André Dufour (Regional Manager, March of Dimes Canada), 1910.

20 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Harold Davis (President, Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada), 2000.

records than it is for a Veteran, because we have an MOU with Veterans Affairs.”²¹ It will continue to be a major barrier until medical files are digitized or an automatic transfer system is established.

To ensure that those Veterans most likely to face vocational challenges upon release can get the help they need as quickly as possible, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 5

That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada establish a system that grants Veterans control over their medical records and allows them to be shared seamlessly with civilian doctors, Veterans Affairs Canada and service providers at the Veterans' discretion.

The first recommendation of this Committee's [2014 report on the implementation of the New Veterans Charter](#) was that:

Military members seriously disabled as a result of service not be medically released until the following conditions are met:

- The individual is in a stable medical condition.
- The individual's medical records have been transferred to Veterans Affairs Canada in accordance with privacy legislation, an official copy of the medical files has been given to the Veteran, and the initial application for services and financial benefits provided under Part 2 of the *New Veterans Charter* has been adjudicated by Veterans Affairs Canada.
- The individual's file has been assigned to a Veterans Affairs Canada case manager who has already established contact with the individual.
- The healthcare and rehabilitation professionals who will be supporting the individual during transition have been identified in the area where the Veteran is planning to live once medically released and their respective responsibilities have been defined.

Committee members believe that most elements of this recommendation are still valid, but they wish to insist on the importance of a medical doctor as a key support and reaffirm:

21 ACVA, *Evidence*, 8 May 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 1640.



Recommendation 6

That Veterans Affairs Canada has a role in supporting the releasing military members and finding civilian medical professionals and should work closely with the Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group on this matter.

Recommendation 7

That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada harmonize their respective vocational rehabilitation programs to better enable a seamless transition.

These vocational rehabilitation programs have overlapped for years, and the Committee has made recommendations about them before. In its [2010 Report](#) on the initial results of the implementation of the *New Veterans Charter*, Recommendation 3 stated:

That VAC collaborate with the Department of National Defence and the Service Income Security Insurance Plan in order to make its programs more consistent, to prevent overlap and to intervene directly with members from the moment the decision is made to release them for medical reasons.

Little progress has been made in this area. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 8

That the Office of the Auditor General conduct a review of all career transition programs offered by the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada.

Career Transition Services

Veterans not participating in the VAC Rehabilitation Program still have access to career transition services. These services have been available in some form since 2006, but various aspects have changed over time: the current program has been in place since 2019. According to [VAC's policies](#), which were reviewed in April 2023, what sets this iteration of the Career Transition Services (CTS) program apart is that it clearly states how serving CAF members are eligible and that Veterans are eligible “not only on their initial transition out of the CAF, but also at any point where they may be faced with the transition from one type of employment to another.” These services include three components:

- labour market information;
- career counselling; and

- job-finding assistance.

Agilec is the subcontractor that has provided these services since 2018. The services are offered virtually. According to Tara Jones, who manages the contract with VAC:

[M]ore than 5,200 individuals have accessed career transition services, with roughly 700 individuals participating at any given time. ... When someone enters transition services, their journey begins with an assessment of their career transition needs. The continuum of services ranges from exploration—of self, of employment possibilities, of training or education requirements—through career and education decision-making to transition planning. Plans that focus on employment may include such supports as job search skills training, resumé writing, interview preparation and job development. Plans that focus on training or education may include assistance with training and institution selection and support for accessing available funding, including the education and training benefit.

Our employment coaches collaborate one-on-one with each candidate, providing support that matches each person’s needs and comfort. ... Of the participants who have engaged career transition services, 60% have set goals focused on employment and 40% have set goals focused on education or training. ... To date, of participants who have completed our satisfaction survey, 91% report being satisfied with the support they receive from their employment coach.²²

The results of this satisfaction survey are very different from those obtained as part of a recent evaluation of the CTS program, which found as follows:

Client satisfaction with CTS would suggest that delivery is not meeting needs. Indeed, an overall satisfaction rating of 56% among CTS clients (or CTS and ETB clients) for services received from the third-party service provider (and a 55% satisfaction rating for VAC services) would suggest that delivery is not meeting expectations. The most poorly rated aspects of CTS delivery were: self-marketing (31%); labour market information and research techniques (31%); interview skills and techniques (32%); job finding and placement assistance (34%); job search techniques and supports (37%); and employment transition support (45%). This is in contrast to quite high satisfaction ratings reported by the third-party service provider based on their client satisfaction survey they issue shortly after a file is closed.

According to Ms. Hughes, of the Royal Canadian Legion, the contract with Agilec was renewed, despite the low satisfaction rates.²³ In light of the findings of this evaluation, the Committee recommends:

22 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Ms. Tara Jones (Contract Manager, Agilec), 1830.

23 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 1945.



Recommendation 9

That Veterans Affairs Canada review its Career Transition Services program and the terms of the contract with its supplier to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans and members of their families receive these services at the level of quality they are entitled to.

Another issue associated with this program is that its services are not available to Veterans in VAC's Rehabilitation Program. In other words, Veterans with the most serious disabilities and most complex needs cannot take advantage of these services before they leave the Canadian Armed Forces and, in the case of the vocational component of the Rehabilitation Program, they need to go through the SISIP program first, which has more restrictive criteria.

In addition, the new version of the program seems to make it more difficult for employers to contact Veterans directly. Jason Wahl, of Veterans Staffing Canada, was disappointed that some aspects of the previous version of the program had been changed:

[W]e found [the previous program] very beneficial. It had resources, so we were able to connect with Veterans directly. They had a website on which they posted resumes and profiles we could reach out to. When that program was cancelled and VAC transitioned to the new program, we lost the ability to connect with Veterans directly. I think that was something of a misstep in the last term.²⁴

Mr. Wahl added the following:

Organizations, be they public or private, no longer have the ability to reach out to these individuals specifically. That's definitely a shortcoming, in our minds. ... The current CTS program provides valued resources to Veterans, ... but it doesn't provide support to the employers for sourcing Veterans. That's the area we need to focus on, if you're looking at a new transition program.²⁵

A number of companies, such as GardaWorld, have developed their own portals,²⁶ but there is no platform that brings them all together in one place. Ms. Hicks, a VAC representative, said that the department's employment strategy was intended to provide "a cohesive framework or a portal, so [Veterans] know where to go to get

24 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. Jason Wahl (Founder and Director, Veteran Staffing Canada), 1555.

25 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. Jason Wahl (Founder and Director, Veteran Staffing Canada), 1555.

26 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Simon Bernier (National Director, Innovation and Technologies, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1630.

assistance when they need it, in terms of employment.”²⁷ In order to promote direct contact between Veterans and employers, the Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 10

That Veterans Affairs Canada establish a platform where employers can contact Veterans seeking employment opportunities directly.

Education and Training Benefit

Since 2018, the Education and Training Benefit (ETB) has given Veterans who were released after 1 April 2006, and who are not already participating in the VAC Rehabilitation Program, access to funding to help pay for tuition, course materials, related fees and living expenses. Similar benefits were available previously, but eligibility was restricted to Veterans already participating in the Rehabilitation Program or medically released Veterans. The maximum amount is \$46,196 for Veterans who served between 6 and 12 years and \$92,392 for Veterans who served for 12 years or more. Unlike the similar SISIP benefit available during the 24 months following a medical release, Veterans are eligible for the ETB up to 10 years after their release, with no restriction based on the type of release. According to the [Public Accounts of Canada](#), 2,219 Veterans received this benefit in 2021–2022, for a total cost of \$25.7 million, which was lower than the forecasted amount.

The same VAC report that found low satisfaction rates with the Career Transition Services program found that the Education and Training Benefit “is largely meeting Veterans’ expectations,” and that “[p]rogram delivery for ETB appears to be functioning well.”

However, Ms. MacLean, referring to the findings of a study conducted in the United Kingdom, noted that the program requirement of a minimum of six years of service to be eligible could be unfair for Veterans who released before reaching that threshold:

What I would say is that, whatever strategy is put in place, it shouldn’t require so many years of service in order to provide benefits. As I was saying, the younger Veterans with the shorter terms of service are the most likely to be unemployed following release from the military.²⁸

27 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Jane Hicks (Acting Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1550.

28 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Ms. Mary Beth MacLean (PhD Candidate, Queen’s University, As an Individual), 1705.



To ensure that Veterans who had to leave the Canadian Armed Forces prematurely, particularly those who were medically released, can receive the training they want, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 11

That, acknowledging that the uptake of the education and training program is lower than expected, Veterans Affairs Canada review the program and expand the eligibility criteria, particularly to include Veterans who are released for medical reasons before they accumulated the required six years of service.

Recommendation 12

That eligible Canadian Armed Forces members who have transferred from the Regular Force to the Primary Reserve Force can receive the Education and Training Benefit while they are still serving in the Primary Reserve Force.

In addition, according to Serge Blais, Executive Director of the University of Ottawa's Professional Development Institute, who oversees the Coding for Veterans program, CAF members who already know they will be released in the near future cannot access the ETB while they are still serving.²⁹ If they were able to, they could obtain their certification while they are still serving, and then could begin their new career as soon as they become civilians. CAF members who know in advance that they will be medically released can start taking training funded through SISIP six months before their release, but the program criteria are more restrictive. SISIP-funded training must be directly related to the skills the CAF member acquired during their military service. It does not cover new skills in an unrelated field.

In order to ensure that the career transition process can begin as soon as possible, while CAF members are still serving, the Committee recommends:

²⁹ ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Serge Blais (Executive Director, Professional Development Institute, University of Ottawa), 1715.

Recommendation 13

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence harmonize the criteria for training eligible for funding through the Education and Training Benefit and the Service Income Security Insurance Plan and ensure that medically releasing Canadian Armed Forces members can receive the Education and Training Benefit when they are still serving.

Public Service Priority Hiring

Since the [Veterans Hiring Act](#) came into force in July 2015, Veterans have had hiring priority for federal public service jobs. According to the [Public Service Commission of Canada](#), which is responsible for overseeing hiring priorities, 330 Veterans were appointed out of a total of 64,796 public service hires in 2021–2022. These hiring priorities take three forms:

- Veterans who are medically released for reasons attributable to service have a “statutory priority entitlement.” This entitlement takes precedence over all other forms of entitlements and means that Veterans who qualify for a position will be the first to be hired.³⁰ Veterans who are medically released for reasons not attributable to service benefit from a “regulatory entitlement” for five years after their release. At that level, they are in direct competition with six other regulatory entitlements: public service employees who become disabled; Royal Canadian Mounted Police members discharged for medical reasons; former employees being reinstated at their previous level; spouses or common-law partners of public servants who were relocated; surplus employees from another federal institution; and surviving spouses or common-law partners of a public servant if their death is attributable to their job. In 2021–2022, 153 Veterans were appointed under the statutory and regulatory entitlements category.
- Veterans who were honourably released after at least three years of military service benefit from a “preference for appointment” for five years following their release date in job competitions open to the general public. This preference does not apply unless there are no candidates in

30 See the 2019 [OGGO report](#).



the statutory or regulatory priority entitlement categories. In 2021–2022, 85 Veterans were appointed using this preference.

- While current and former CAF members are not part of the “public service” according to the Public Service Employment Act, honourably released Veterans who served in the military for at least three years can, under a “mobility provision,” apply for positions normally restricted to public servants in the five years following their release. In 2021–2022, 92 Veterans were appointed using this mechanism.

According to Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Chris Hutt, a VAC representative, the length of the application process to join the public service is an obstacle when it comes to hiring Veterans:

It’s one of those that if you’re transitioning out of the military, a long application process to get into the public service isn’t necessarily what you’re looking for. ... We are actively partnered with the Public Service Commission, DND and the Canadian Armed Forces, working on ways to better implement the provisions that were made within the *Veterans Hiring Act*, and to operationalize and smooth out some of those friction areas and challenges within the hiring processes that are done across the public service. That will be integral to the national Veterans employment strategy as well.³¹

As of 1 September 2021, 171 VAC employees self-identified as being current or former CAF members, or 4.9% out of a total of 3,455 full-time equivalents. Mr. Harris said that the department prioritized Veteran hiring for all its employment opportunities and that it would “continue to recruit folks from past military life and service in order to add their expertise to the work that we do.”³² However, Mr. Harris acknowledged that VAC did not have a specific target for hiring Veterans.³³

As André Thivierge of the City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force noted, the low percentage of Veterans working for VAC is likely to affect the perception that CAF members and

31 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret’d) Chris Hutt (CD, Director, Transition and Program Support, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1620.

32 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, 1545.

33 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, 1600.

Veterans have of the department: “We have to go into that. ... I agree that more experienced military members should be part of VAC.”³⁴

Recommendation 14

That Veterans Affairs Canada lead by example in Veteran employment and set recruitment targets to increase the proportion of Veterans that it employs, ensure that these targets are set with a written and accessible plan to meet them, establish a clear means of determining whether these targets are being met, and if needed implement an action plan to improve these targets.

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada explore ways to give preference in federal public service hiring to the spouses of Veterans and serving military members.

Right of First Refusal for the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires

Debate arose during the Committee’s study about a contract that has been in place since World War II that gives the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires the right of first refusal for Government of Canada security contracts. When this contract was renegotiated in 2006, 60% of hours worked on these contracts had to be filled by Veterans. However, in recent years the percentage has been approximately 38%.

According to Jean-Luc Meunier, President and Chief Operating Officer of GardaWorld, the right of first refusal excludes all other competitors and costs the government money. It creates “a virtual monopoly on the protection of federal buildings.”³⁵ GardaWorld argued that private companies could fill a similar role as the Commissionaires, and that the right of first refusal no longer has a place and is distorting the market.

Mr. Meunier suggested the “modernization” of the right of first refusal for guard services, since in his view the Corps of Commissionaires is “unable to meet its mandate.”³⁶ As an alternative, he proposed implementing an accreditation system that would give companies that hire Veterans the opportunity to present opportunities

34 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. André Thivierge (Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Major (Ret’d), City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force), 1645.

35 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Jean-Luc Meunier (President and Chief Operating Officer, Security Services, Canada, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1555.

36 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Jean-Luc Meunier (President and Chief Operating Officer, Security Services, Canada, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1555.



directly to Veterans.³⁷ Colleen Arnold, another GardaWorld representative, suggested that this accreditation could extend the right of first refusal to all companies that are accredited.³⁸ That would expand the “standing offer” principle where accredited businesses would be included on a registry that lists their requirements, and then the government would choose a company as if it were selecting a product from a catalogue, based on the characteristics described in the catalogue, rather than proceeding with a request for proposals.

Ms. Arnold also said that the right of first refusal enabled the Corps of Commissionaires to charge about 15% more than market rates, which was costing the Government of Canada approximately \$45 million each year.³⁹ Her comment was further to a [statement made before the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs on 23 November 2011](#) by Vincent Robitaille, of Public Works and Government Services Canada. Mr. Robitaille described the rates the government paid to the Commissionaires as follows:

It is based on the contract cost principle that we have agreed to. It is based on the cost that the Commissionaires incur in providing the services, so we are focusing on that. Our understanding is that the cost is approximately 15 per cent more than what the private sector provides.⁴⁰

At that same Senate Subcommittee meeting, Pablo Sobrino, then the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister at Public Works and Government Services Canada, explained that these costs took into account the contractual agreement between the government and the Commissionaires ensuring that “Any increases for wages for Commissionaires are based on the consumer price index or the annual provincial average wage increase for that particular year.”⁴¹

However, the Commissionaires remain an employer of choice for Veterans, and it remains their primary mission, despite the decrease in the proportion of hours worked by Veterans. Furthermore, Veterans are also involved at every level of management in

37 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Jean-Luc Meunier (President and Chief Operating Officer, Security Services, Canada, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1555.

38 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Ms. Colleen Arnold (Vice-President, Corporate Affairs, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1610.

39 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Ms. Colleen Arnold (Vice-President, Corporate Affairs, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1610.

40 Vincent Robitaille, Senior Director, Professional Services Procurement Directorate, Acquisitions Branch, Public Works and Government Services Canada, *Evidence*, Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, 23 November 2011.

41 Pablo Sobrino, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Acquisitions Branch, Public Works and Government Services Canada, *Evidence*, Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, 23 November 2011.

the company. Veterans with physical or mental health issues are given a range of opportunities, while companies such as GardaWorld have far fewer opportunities for injured Veterans. As Mr. Meunier explained:

For people with problems, usually we have programs in the system to support these people. Usually when we hire them, in theory they don't have problems, but sometimes their problems occur after the fact. Then we have programs to take care of them afterward, when we notice these types of issues with these people.⁴²

Ms. Lowther said that “the most success we have had with getting some of our Veterans employed has been with the Commissionaires, because they are flexible and are willing to meet the needs of different Veterans. That’s been our biggest measurement of success, I guess.”⁴³

However, providing accreditation for companies that wish to hire Veterans is an interesting idea in its own right, regardless of what happens with the right of first refusal, and it could be extended to every sector of the economy, not just the security sector. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 16

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence establish criteria of recognition for and publicize a list of companies committed to priority hiring, retention and accommodation of Veterans.

Other Initiatives

Between 2019–2020 and 2021–2022, 81 projects were funded through the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund, which helps implement non-permanent, non-profit initiatives. According to Mr. Svenson, a VAC representative, since the Fund was established in 2018, 14 of the projects have focused on Veteran employment and retraining, totalling \$6 million.⁴⁴

42 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Jean-Luc Meunier (President and Chief Operating Officer, Security Services, Canada, GardaWorld Security Corporation), 1635.

43 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Veterans Emergency Transition Services), 1925.

44 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Nathan Svenson (Director, Research, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1630.



According to Mr. Harris,⁴⁵ VAC has also implemented other initiatives to support Veterans' employment:

- launching a LinkedIn group to connect Veterans with employers. The group has approximately 3,000 members, of which three-quarters are Veterans;⁴⁶
- hosting a series of webinars focused on employment opportunities for Veterans, with over 2,500 people registered, including 100 employers;
- creating a one-stop job bank where employers can contact Veterans; and
- supporting stakeholders that support Veteran employment.

Ms. Lowther said that these services are useful, but VAC needs to publicize them better:

For example, my staff and I were not aware that VAC had an entire Veteran employment unit. We weren't aware that VAC had a "Hire Veterans" LinkedIn page. We weren't aware that VAC hosted a webinar series focused on employment opportunities for Veterans, and we also were not aware that VAC had a one-stop job bank for Veterans. ... [I]t doesn't matter what significant initiatives and services VAC provides if Veterans aren't aware of them.⁴⁷

In addition, according to Ms. Hughes, there seems to be a lack of coordination between VAC and the CAF in telling Veterans about these services particularly during the transition interview that takes place a few months before a CAF member is released.⁴⁸

According to Ms. Lowther, Veterans are not given the full list of VAC programs available, neither during their transition interview, nor when they submit their first applications following their release. In the latter case, Veterans do not know which programs they need, so they do not know to ask about them, and since the service officers and case managers do not know all the Veterans' needs, they inform Veterans only about those

45 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, 1540.

46 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, 1540.

47 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Veterans Emergency Transition Services), 1840.

48 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Carolyn Hughes (Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters, The Royal Canadian Legion), 1955.

they believe are relevant.⁴⁹ In order to ensure that Veterans know about all the programs they could be eligible for, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 17

That, at the first one-on-one meetings with releasing Canadian Armed Forces members or recently released Veterans, Veterans Affairs Canada implement a process that systematically presents every one of its programs and the needs each program fills.

ISSUES RAISED BY WITNESSES

Reinventing The Wheel

Many times during the Committee’s study, it became apparent that solutions have already been identified to address the difficulties Veterans face when their careers are in transition, that various committees have made numerous recommendations on this topic, and that the only missing piece is simply to implement them.

Nick Booth, Chief Executive Officer of the True Patriot Love Foundation, gave an eloquent example:

In January 2013, recognizing that many releasing members struggle in making the transition to civilian employment, the then-minister of Veterans affairs requested that True Patriot Love develop a report to identify the hurdles that may be impeding a successful transition. In response, we formed the Veterans transition advisory council, which brought together representation across the charitable sector and the government. This report, entitled “Supporting Veterans through their transition to civilian employment in Canada,” produced a series of recommendations. Many of those issues remain the same today.⁵⁰

Its [report](#), commissioned by VAC with input from approximately 100 stakeholders representing governments, large companies and small businesses, was published in 2017. It presented recommendations on the operationalization of five resources:

- “A one-stop-shop web portal to centralize Veteran transition supports;

49 ACVA, *Evidence*, 2 February 2023, Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Veterans Emergency Transition Services), 1925.

50 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Nick Booth (Chief Executive Officer, True Patriot Love Foundation), 1945.



- A marketing campaign to help acquire and activate private sector employers in the mission to hire Veterans;
- A mentorship program to offer peer-to-peer support to transitioning military members and Veterans;
- A certification program to recognize military training as education and trade equivalencies in response to VTAC's interim report, the minister for Veteran affairs requested that the council also address the specific challenges for transitioning ill and injured Veterans, and therefore VTAC added a fifth recommended resource:
- An employment transition program to address the unique needs of ill and injured Veterans."⁵¹

While many of its recommendations echo recommendations made in other reports, the True Patriot Love report was the first to recommend creating a one-stop-shop for all military transition services, which led to the most significant change made to transition programs in the last 10 years. This recommendation led to the creation of transition centres that are currently being implemented. The True Patriot Love report includes most of the findings outlined in the present report and sketches the broad strokes of a national employment strategy for Veterans.

Mr. Booth said that the challenges facing Veterans as they transition to civilian employment are both cultural and structural. From a cultural perspective, businesses need to understand that Veterans "bring extraordinary skills and talents, but may also struggle to adapt to the new civilian work environment." Businesses also need to understand that Veterans "are not a homogenous group and, worse, that they are not all broken or unwell. Businesses that embrace this through initiatives such as Veteran employee resource groups or buddy systems will do a better job at attracting and retaining Veteran talent."⁵²

From a structural perspective, Mr. Booth's recommendations are in line with those already made in the present report:

51 True Patriot Love Foundation, *Veteran Transition Advisory Council: Final Report. Supporting Veterans through their Transition to Civilian Employment in Canada*, p. 13.

52 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Nick Booth (Chief Executive Officer, True Patriot Love Foundation), 1945.

We need to make sure that the educational qualifications achieved during military service are accepted and understood in the private or academic sectors and start earlier to prepare our military members for their transition. Having an easy way to connect Veterans to community programs and information about employment through an online hub would also help.⁵³

Mr. Booth's summary of the situation stems from his role as the head of the True Patriot Love Foundation and its 2017 report, which was commissioned by VAC. Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada implement the recommendations made in the report published by the True Patriot Love Foundation entitled *Supporting Veterans through their transition to civilian employment in Canada*.

Coordinating Efforts

The National Association of Career Colleges represents 450 private career colleges in Canada. Michael Sangster, its Chief Executive Officer, said that Veterans are left to their own devices when it comes to identifying educational institutions that can provide them with a training program that leads to a job that matches their skills. He strongly recommended establishing a permanent training table that would bring together representatives from Veterans' associations, educational institutions, employers and relevant government institutions. In his view, it would ensure that information about available programs could be shared quickly and that the training needs of Veterans and their families could be identified.⁵⁴ Some career colleges have implemented programs, but there is no coordinated approach, which makes it more difficult to inform Veterans about them. For example, Willis College in Ottawa has a scholarship fund for family members of Veterans whose education program is part of a VAC transition program.⁵⁵

Mr. Dufour also said that coordination was needed between stakeholders that may have different priorities:

53 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Nick Booth (Chief Executive Officer, True Patriot Love Foundation), 1945.

54 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Michael Sangster (Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Career Colleges), 1555.

55 ACVA, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023, Mr. Michael Sangster (Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Career Colleges), 1645.



Managing a national rehabilitation program involves the participation of several interdependent entities, for example case managers from Veterans Affairs, service providers such as doctors, psychologists, ergonomists and vocational rehabilitation experts, Veterans Affairs Canada as an institution and partner companies that are in charge of service delivery. There are many entities from various backgrounds that have to work together toward a common objective, the well being of Veterans and their family. In order to maximize the quality of services provided to Veterans, it is critical to ensure that all the players in this process understand service provision under the program as a whole as well as their respective roles within it.

It is also important for the program to be presented to the Veterans and discussed with them in a common and consistent language. This may seem simple, but from an operational point of view, this is very complex. It is a challenge that every entity must meet on a daily basis.⁵⁶

In an effort to support initiatives that help Veterans make a successful career transition, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 19

That Veterans Affairs Canada establish a permanent working table on training and career transition for Veterans and their family members.

According to Mr. Dufour, job developers, meaning “ambassadors responsible for representing Veterans in Canadian companies,” are needed to ensure an ongoing and cohesive link between Veterans and employers.⁵⁷ He said that the former VAC subcontractor for vocational rehabilitation services established this type of role, and it had an immediate impact on the placement rate of participating Veterans:

The role of these ambassadors was to support more directly Veterans actively looking for work and especially to create a multitude of connections with Canadians with a view to creating strategic partnerships to encourage the hiring of this skilled labour.

The presence of these job developers, in our opinion, is critical to such a program and suitable within any type of vocational reintegration initiative for Canadian Veterans.⁵⁸

56 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Marc-André Dufour (Regional Manager, March of Dimes Canada), 1835.

57 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Marc-André Dufour (Regional Manager, March of Dimes Canada), 1835.

58 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Marc-André Dufour (Regional Manager, March of Dimes Canada), 1835.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 20

That Veterans Affairs Canada, as part of the vocational component of its Rehabilitation Program, as well as for its career transition initiatives, ensure that ambassadors are put in place who are responsible for creating strategic partnerships for Veterans with Canadian companies.

While it's vital to help Veterans transition to civilian jobs, it's equally important that employers provide them with a work environment that will ensure their retention. According to Mr. Booth:

Veterans don't stick around. They don't stay in those jobs. It's often because they're worried about finding that first job post service to feed their family—to give themselves some economic security—but it isn't a job that gives them the same well-being and fulfillment psychologically that they had when they were in service.⁵⁹

In his view, the organization's culture needs to put in place supports and resources that make Veterans feel welcome: “Often, if Veterans have that sense of purpose and service they so proudly displayed while they were in uniform, we believe those other community supports around Veterans will give them those psychological benefits.”⁶⁰ The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 21

That the Government of Canada encourage Veteran employee resource groups and peer support networks in workplaces where Veterans are employed.

Recommendation 22

That Veterans Affairs Canada direct more effort toward increasing retention amongst Veterans in civilian positions.

59 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Nick Booth (Chief Executive Officer, True Patriot Love Foundation), 1950.

60 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Nick Booth (Chief Executive Officer, True Patriot Love Foundation), 1950.



Addressing Misperceptions

Over the last 25 years, a growing awareness of mental illnesses has helped overcome a number of prejudices. For Veterans, that has led to better services and an acknowledgement that there is a link between military service and operational stress injuries. However, regarding career transitions, this awareness has occasionally led to a concern that Veterans with OSIs may pose a risk to their employer. Worse still, some people make the assumption that it is not possible to deploy and participate in combat operations or humanitarian crises without suffering from OSIs. However, American studies have shown that even in the worst cases, for example in Iraq and Afghanistan, no more than 20% of Veterans deployed in combat operations suffer from an OSI severe enough to affect their daily activities and prevent them from obtaining gainful employment.⁶¹

Mr. Thivierge, of the City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force, described how this perception of Veterans creates barriers:

Within the community of employers, there continue to be certain stigmas when it comes to seeing Veterans as future employees, all of them related to the idea that Veterans struggle with mental health problems. ... However, Veterans also harbour certain perceptions and believe certain stigmas about employers. For example, a Veteran may act with the belief that employers don't understand Veterans, because they may believe that employers have a negative perception of military service and Veterans as candidates for a job. These perceptions pose barriers to employment for the Veteran and to recruitment for the employer.⁶²

Some organizations, such as The Pendulum Foundation in Quebec City, work to address misperceptions that Veterans may face in a professional capacity.⁶³ Some companies, such as Prévactions, help other companies create work environments suitable for Veterans with OSIs.⁶⁴

61 See, for example, Dr. Barbara O. Rothbaum, Executive Director, Emory Healthcare Veterans Program and Associate Vice Chair of Clinical Research, Department of Psychiatry, Emory School of Medicine, As an Individual, VEAC, *Evidence*, 27 April 2022, 3–4.

62 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. André Thivierge (Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Major (Ret'd), City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force), 1550.

63 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Guy Riel (Founding President, The Pendulum Foundation), 1940.

64 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Alexandre Tremblay (Chief Executive Officer, Safety and Health, Prévactions), 2005.

In an effort to address the harmful effects of misperceptions about mental health problems that Veterans may experience, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 23

That the Government of Canada, when developing its national strategy for Veterans' employment, encourage a dialogue between employers and Veterans in order to further mutual understanding and respect.

Showcasing Veterans' Soft Skills

One of the most significant findings that emerged from the Committee's study is that employers are looking more for Veterans' soft skills than for specific technical knowledge. Major-General (Retired) Paul Bury, Director of Transition Services at Helmets to Hardhats, explained as follows:

[T]he business leaders and the unions will seek out Veterans for the soft skills—the leadership, the discipline—that they bring. The trade-specific skills can be taught. They can get that experience and move forward. What we find in the testimony and information we get back from the employers is that they seek out these individuals because of those skills. They can teach trade-specific skills, but they want the Veterans for all the other assets they bring to the work site.⁶⁵

Challenge Factory is a research agency and workforce consultancy. According to Lisa Taylor, President, thanks to funding through the Veteran and Family Well-being Fund, it was able to publish [The Canadian Guide to Hiring Veterans](#), develop an online masterclass for employers and produce the [Hidden Talent](#) podcast, in which Veterans and employers discuss the challenges of career transitions.⁶⁶

According to Ms. Taylor, existing programs often try to match Veterans with specific jobs instead of helping them develop skills that can be useful in a wide variety of fields.

Recommending Veterans into specific jobs is not sound career development. It doesn't put the Veteran at the centre, and it sets them up with a weak foundation for solving future career challenges, despite having great skills.

Direct job matching from military to civilian environments has led us to today, when Veterans transition with an initial awareness of exactly four types of work. These are the

65 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Major-General (Ret'd) Paul Bury (Director, Transition Services, Helmets to Hardhats), 1850. See also Mr. Mike Mueller (President and Chief Executive Officer, Aerospace Industries Association of Canada), ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, 1850.

66 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Ms. Lisa Taylor (President, Challenge Factory), 1700.



public sector—as if that’s a singular job—security, coding and cyber, and starting a business.⁶⁷

As Ms. Taylor explained, work engagement is not necessarily directly correlated to the acquisition of specific skills:

Job satisfaction and retention involve how roles and organizational culture align with personal motivation and reward. For example, a Veteran may have the skills for security work, but the reason they thrived in the military, where they learned those skills, was the camaraderie, collective understanding of a mission and continued opportunity to learn. These key elements may not be present in the civilian job market.⁶⁸

This is the approach taken by the organization Quatre-Chemins, a non-profit organization whose mission, according to its Executive Director, Cassandra Poudrier, “is to transform the transition experience of people coming from fields in which great importance is placed on performance, such as elite sport, the armed forces, business, and the performing arts.”⁶⁹

Skills acquisition is still important, but the overall aspect of job satisfaction and how to achieve it must be left to Veterans. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 24

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence develop the National Employment Strategy for Veterans based on principles that place the overall personality of each Veteran at the centre of the strategy, so as to allow each Veteran to take ownership of his or her career path rather than restricting opportunities to a specific match between certain skills and certain jobs.

This does not mean that other approaches are not useful in individual cases. However, many CAF members, particularly those who are being medically released, will have to consider vocational rehabilitation that goes beyond acquiring technical skills in a short period of time.

A rapid career transition could be appropriate for Veterans who are interested in continuing to work in a similar field. That is the type of training that is offered by ReTrain Canada, for instance, which was established in 2017 to provide rehabilitation services for claimants through provincial workers’ compensation boards. Its objective was to ensure

67 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Ms. Lisa Taylor (President, Challenge Factory), 1700.

68 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Ms. Lisa Taylor (President, Challenge Factory), 1700.

69 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Ms. Cassandra Poudrier (Executive Director, Quatre-Chemins), 1705.

that people could return to the workforce as quickly as possible. Jeannine Adams, the Chief Executive Officer, said that is why “all of our courses are incredibly focused.”⁷⁰ Some CAF members in transition will be looking for this type of solution, and the national strategy must ensure that they can access it.

According to Ms. Taylor, the other difficulty is that there is a great deal of emphasis on large companies, even though 90% of jobs are in small businesses. However, small businesses often do not know how to reach Veterans, and Veterans often do not know that small businesses would like to hire them. This observation reaffirms the importance of Recommendation 10, which seeks to establish a platform where employers and Veterans can connect.

Early Intervention

According to Mike Mueller, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, the aerospace industry contributes \$24 billion each year to the economy and provides 200,000 highly skilled, well-paying jobs across the country.⁷¹ As is the case for many other economic sectors, it is facing challenges in recruiting qualified employees, with an estimated 58,000 new workers needed in the next five years in the civilian sector of the industry. According to Mr. Mueller, Veterans have many qualities that make them excellent candidates, but Veterans are often not aware of the career opportunities in the aerospace industry. Given how long it takes to acquire the technical skills required, if CAF members have not already considered the aerospace industry before they are released, the training time becomes a barrier. The present report has demonstrated repeatedly that it is important to intervene early in the career path of CAF members to ensure that their career transition goes smoothly. That is why the aerospace industry encourages Air Cadets to consider a career in the aerospace industry even before they enrol in the Canadian Armed Forces. Going forward, they will be more likely to make strategic choices and acquire the skills they need along the way.⁷²

70 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Ms. Jeannine Adams (Chief Executive Officer, ReTrain Canada Incorporated), 1845–1850.

71 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Mike Mueller (President and Chief Executive Officer, Aerospace Industries Association of Canada), 1840.

72 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Mike Mueller (President and Chief Executive Officer, Aerospace Industries Association of Canada), 1855.



Recognition of Prior Learning

Major-General (Ret'd) Bury described the national organization as follows: "Affiliated with the 14 Canadian building trades unions representing over 60 occupations, [Helmets to Hardhats (H2H)] focuses on assisting armed forces Veterans, serving reservists and our other select clients in finding rewarding civilian career opportunities in the building and construction industries across Canada."⁷³ According to Mr. Bury, since H2H was founded in 2012, 2,300 Veterans have found jobs in skilled construction trades.

The primary challenge H2H faces is that skills acquired in the military do not always equate to civilian trades. Although efforts have been made to ensure that military qualifications can be used to take equivalency tests for Red Seal interprovincial certifications, military qualifications and experience are not directly equivalent to those acquired in the civilian construction sector.⁷⁴

One of the recommendations in the True Patriot Love Foundation's report was to establish an equivalencies system so that post-secondary institutions could assign education credit for skills acquired in the military. The University of British Columbia has implemented this type of system through its *Institute for Veterans Education (IVET)*. Oliver Thorne, of the Veterans Transition Network, explained the program as follows:

It is a specialized program, the aim of which is to make UBC a Veteran-friendly campus. The idea is that for those leaving the military and accessing the education and training benefits, they can go through this program, receive academic credit for some of their experience and service in the military, and essentially move along a fast track towards a certificate. ...

There's a similar program at the B.C. Institute of Technology, called the Legion military skills conversion program. There are other programs like this across Canada.⁷⁵

Alexandre Tremblay, of Prévactions, provided the following explanation:

In the armed forces, standards and training are much more stringent and advanced than civilian ones. Infantry or armed forces adjutants are managers. And yet, once back in civilian life, there is no recognition for their skills even if they've been a manager

73 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Major-General (Ret'd) Paul Bury (Director, Transition Services, Helmets to Hardhats), 1835.

74 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Major-General (Ret'd) Paul Bury (Director, Transition Services, Helmets to Hardhats), 1845. See also Mr. Oliver Thorne (Executive Director, Veterans Transition Network), ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, 1600.

75 ACVA, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023, Mr. Oliver Thorne (Executive Director, Veterans Transition Network), 1615.

responsible for 30 or 100 people. It's as if all of the managerial expertise acquired had disappeared when they left the military. ...

Here's the best possible example: the training of a master corporal is spread over numerous hours under the worst possible conditions. A master corporal learns how to teach in the classroom and prepare lesson plans, among other things. In civilian life, it would be equivalent to training as an instructor or teacher. And yet, even though these people would like their experience to be recognized in civilian life, they would not be able to become a teacher because all they have is an advanced leadership or instructor diploma from the Canadian Armed Forces. In civilian life, their skills are not recognized.⁷⁶

To encourage post-secondary institutions to recognize skills acquired by Veterans during their military service, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 25

That the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada, in collaboration with post-secondary institutions, implement a program that recognizes prior learning, including skills and training received in the Canadian Armed Forces, so that Veterans can acquire credits toward a civilian certification, diploma or degree.

Ms. Adams explained that the disconnect between military professions and civilian professions makes Veterans feel like what they know has no actual value.⁷⁷ Mr. Davis believes that the Canadian Armed Forces do not do enough to ensure that training and certification gaps are addressed before release.⁷⁸ The H2H program tries to find ways to bridge that gap. Its representatives visit military bases and offer services to CAF members before their release.⁷⁹

Once again, it is clear that transition programs are most successful when action is taken early on, when CAF members are still serving. The key to early intervention is the Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) seminars, which are available to CAF members being released. H2H participates in SCAN seminars, which provide an overview of a wide range of programs, but in nearly every case CAF members do not have access to these programs until they have left the service and become Veterans. Many of the

76 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Alexandre Tremblay (Chief Executive Officer, Safety and Health, Prévauctions), 2005. See also Mr. Harold Davis (President, Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada), ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, 2015.

77 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Ms. Jeannine Adams (Chief Executive Officer, ReTrain Canada Incorporated), 1920.

78 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Harold Davis (President, Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada), 1945.

79 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Normand Trépanier (Deputy Director, Helmets to Hardhats), 1855.



organizations that offer training for Veterans, including H2H, called for training to be available before release to minimize career gaps. Normand Trépanier, Deputy Director of H2H, was clear:

I would also like us to be able to have access to service members who are going to be starting their transition to civilian life in the near future and who [...] are waiting to leave the Canadian Armed Forces. If we could take them on and provide them with the training they need, they could start working in the trade they have chosen right away after being demobilized.⁸⁰

Further to the previous recommendation on funding for training, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 26

That the Department of National Defence, together with the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada, work to improve the transferability of military skills and training to civilian careers.

Recommendation 27

That the Department of National Defence, together with the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada, ensure that training programs to acquire new skills that are under one year can be offered to releasing members.

Transferring Security Clearances

The Coding for Veterans program, which is part of the University of Ottawa's Professional Development Institute, seeks to train Veterans that would like to work in cybersecurity by building on the skills and abilities they acquired during their military service. The program has three streams (software development, network security and cybersecurity architecture), each of which takes 650 hours of training. Participants can work at their own pace with tutorial support, but it typically takes them eight months to complete the training, which is offered in both official languages. Graduates of the program receive a professional development certificate, which prepares them to write industry-recognized certificates. Mr. Blais commented as follows:

80 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Normand Trépanier (Deputy Director, Helmets to Hardhats), 1900. See also Ms. Kathleen Kilgour (Senior Program Manager, Operation Entrepreneur, Prince's Trust Canada), ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, 2015.

We work closely with key actors within the industry, such as Cisco, Amazon, LinkedIn and CompTIA to offer the program. We do this because firstly, we want to give our students experience that is real and practical. Secondly, working with the industry increases employability. Often, participants in the program are offered a job before even having finished their studies.

The average age of our participants is 39 years, which is not very old. That means that they still have many years of service ahead of them: 80% of our participants are men and 20% are women.⁸¹

After its first two years, the program has trained close to 200 who are now employed, and is currently training an additional 200 students. After completion, the employment rate is 90%.⁸² Many of the Veterans who register for this program receive the Education and Training Benefit.⁸³ As has been noted above, the fact that CAF members cannot receive this benefit while they are still serving delays the entry of Veterans to the labour market. Mr. Blais also noted issues with transferring security clearances when CAF members are released:

Unless the student starts a job the very next day following his or her release, he or she loses their security clearance. This causes a delay and a problem in terms of employability, because students who have completed the program successfully have to make a new request for security clearance. That process can often take nine or 10 months, even a year. I have been told that there is a system that allows security clearance to be temporarily extended. It would indeed be useful to extend that clearance while the student takes the course and that another security clearance be issued as soon as the person accepts an offer of employment.⁸⁴

Mr. Davis Veteran said he had experienced this himself:

I didn't understand that the military security clearance and the civilian security clearance, although they're all done by most of the same people in the RCMP, don't roll over. I had already carried a "secret" security clearance within the military, but I had to wait another four months for them to do a security clearance check so that I could get another "secret" clearance.⁸⁵

81 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Serge Blais (Executive Director, Professional Development Institute, University of Ottawa), 1655.

82 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Serge Blais (Executive Director, Professional Development Institute, University of Ottawa), 1715.

83 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Serge Blais (Executive Director, Professional Development Institute, University of Ottawa), 1705.

84 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Mr. Serge Blais (Executive Director, Professional Development Institute, University of Ottawa), 1715.

85 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Harold Davis (President, Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada), 2000.



In order to accelerate the career transition of releasing CAF members, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 28

That the Department of National Defence, together with Public Safety Canada and the other federal institutions involved, develop a way to fast-track the acquisition of security clearances for Veterans who recently held clearances in the past with an aim to reducing the administrative burden on the Canadian Armed Forces member upon release and transition.

Developing Entrepreneurship Among Veterans

According to Kathleen Kilgour, Senior Program Manager at Prince’s Trust Canada, approximately 10% of releasing CAF members want to become entrepreneurs.⁸⁶ That is why the Prince’s Trust implemented the “Operation Entrepreneur” program. It offers one-day, in-person workshops on site at military bases, as well as online workshops. Ms. Kilgour said that, over the 10 years the program has been running, approximately 5,000 people have used their services. In total, 60% of participants were medically released and 25% were women.

The Prince’s Trust also developed the online platform [buyVeteran.ca](#), which highlights 745 Veteran-owned businesses across Canada. It is immediately apparent why it is useful to have a portal that gives clients the opportunity to select a business simply because it is owned by a Veteran.

Erin Copeland, owner of [Tall Tree Bakery](#) in Squamish, British Columbia, and Patrick Lamothe, founder of a number of businesses, including [Altitude Gym](#), extolled the benefits of the Operation Entrepreneur program. This program, as well as the directory [buyVeteran.ca](#), would gain visibility if a platform as described in Recommendation 10 could integrate them, becoming an employment and professional development marketplace for Veterans.

The leadership skills developed during military service are a great asset for Veterans who want to become entrepreneurs. However, such skills are often not sufficient, and entrepreneurs could benefit from the advice and support from other entrepreneurs. As Mr. Tremblay, of Prévactions, explained:

86 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Ms. Kathleen Kilgour (Senior Program Manager, Operation Entrepreneur, Prince’s Trust Canada), 1935.

Entrepreneurship has its benefits, but it can be extremely difficult from the mental, moral and family standpoints. It's easy to fall into a trap.

... There are mentors, like retired former entrepreneurs who have had very successful careers and who would be willing to help people who want to start their own business. That form of collaboration would be excellent.⁸⁷

The Prince's Trust Canada has implemented a mentorship program similar to what he described.⁸⁸ VAC has not developed many initiatives promoting entrepreneurship among Veterans. According to Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret'd) Hutt:

We are looking at that entrepreneurial space as part of our analysis, but we don't know what tools... We're still trying to figure out if there are, in fact, gaps. We have some of the anecdotal... In the consultations, we heard some of the same things. There were statements made about barriers or frictions in the entrepreneurial space. We don't have them quantified, so we don't know exactly what levers we need to pull.

When I say "we," it's not necessarily going to be Veterans Affairs. The strategy has to be national in scope and include both governmental and non-governmental agencies. We need to create some alignment or suite of tools that respond to that need, but we don't know what that is yet.⁸⁹

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 29

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in developing the National Veterans Employment Strategy, propose initiatives to support and guide Veterans wanting to become entrepreneurs.

International Comparisons

All of Canada's allies have faced similar challenges in promoting career transitions for military members returning to civilian life. Since the Committee did not have the opportunity to hear from representatives of these countries, it is difficult to determine what programs have been implemented based solely on publicly available documents. A

87 ACVA, *Evidence*, 9 February 2023, Mr. Alexandre Tremblay (Chief Executive Officer, Safety and Health, Prévactions), 2030.

88 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Ms. Erin Copeland (Captain (Ret'd), Program Ambassador, Prince's Trust Canada), 2015.

89 ACVA, *Evidence*, 30 January 2023, Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret'd) Chris Hutt (CD, Director, Transition and Program Support, Service Delivery Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs), 1625.



summary table is provided in the appendix that provides links to the main career transition programs that are in place.

However, Mr. Booth, of the True Patriot Love Foundation, was involved with an American program entitled “The Mission Continues.” It was established in response to a report identifying that one of the most successful ways of supporting Veterans’ transition to civilian life involves service opportunities with community organizations:

The Americans embraced that and built out The Mission Continues, which became a campaign—as well as a not-for-profit organization at the centre of it—to help provide volunteering and service opportunities for American Veterans and their families. ...

It’s a conversation that we’ve been endeavouring to push forward with Veterans Affairs and others in Canada. I think that a focus on volunteering and service will help not only the long-term mental health of our Veterans, but also their willingness to remain in different corporate roles that may not give them that same sense of purpose but do give them economic security.⁹⁰

Recognizing that many Veterans in transition value being part of a mission that gives back to their community, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 30

That Veterans Affairs Canada draw inspiration from the American program *The Mission Continues* and implement an initiative highlighting volunteer and community service opportunities for Veterans making a career transition. This should include opportunities for peer support and mentorship of fellow Veterans.

CONCLUSION

In December 2021, the Government of Canada announced its intention to implement a national strategy for the employment of Veterans. This strategy aims to increase meaningful employment opportunities for Veterans, promote their well-being and support their successful transition to civilian life.

The testimonies highlighted the wide diversity of Veterans’ transition needs, making it difficult to create a solution applicable to all. According to the data presented, there is no homogeneous portrait of the veteran population. The studies also revealed that certain Veterans have difficulty preparing for the civilian job market, particularly

90 ACVA, *Evidence*, 16 February 2023, Mr. Nick Booth (Chief Executive Officer, True Patriot Love Foundation), 1955.

Veterans who have been discharged for medical reasons, women Veterans, Veterans who were non-commissioned soldiers in combat occupations, and Veterans with few years of service, the majority of whom are young. The causes of the vulnerability of these groups are still unknown, and the fact that a Veteran belongs to several of these groups reinforces the risks associated with transition. Consequently, the research, intervention and monitoring efforts deployed by the strategy will need to prioritize these groups. More specifically, it is recommended that the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada implement such an individualized career coaching program for Veterans belonging to at-risk groups.

There are many measures to be implemented, and this report can only attempt to outline the main ones in order to help the government develop its strategy. VAC and the Canadian Armed Forces offer a number of programs designed to help Veterans readapt to civilian life or find employment. Some are available to medically-releasing members, such as the Service Income Security Insurance Plan's Vocational Rehabilitation Program, or to those facing complex transition challenges, such as the vocational component of VAC's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. These programs provide financial assistance for education and training, as does the Education and Training Benefit, which is available to military personnel who have served at least six years. Both departments also offer other career transition programs, some of which are also available to family members. The result is a tangled web of programs with distinct objectives, and eligibility criteria that attempt to match the diversity of these objectives. The resulting duplication and complexity are major obstacles, and have long been recognized. Not to mention the additional delays resulting from difficulties in transferring medical records. The Committee therefore recommends once again that vocational rehabilitation programs be harmonized and that a system of automatic transfer of medical records be introduced. This issue is sufficiently complex and long-lasting for the Committee to ask the Office of the Auditor General to conduct a complete review of all these programs.

Veterans benefit from various types of hiring priority in the federal civil service. Figures for veteran appointments in 2021–2022 show that only 330 appointments were made under these hiring priorities out of 64,796 hires made for the entire public service. The slowness of the application process to enter the public service appears to be a barrier to hiring Veterans. Moreover, of the 3,500 full-time equivalents employed by VAC, only 171 are Veterans. The Committee therefore recommends that the government and VAC adopt much more elaborate strategic plans to increase the hiring of Veterans in the public service.

The solutions to the difficulties encountered by Veterans during their career transition are well known, and many recommendations have been made over the past fifteen



years. The True Patriot Love Foundation had even developed a strategy in response to a request from the Minister of Veterans Affairs in 2013. This report was instrumental in the creation of the newly deployed transition centers, and its other recommendations are still valid responses to the issues raised in this study. It explains that cultural and structural challenges in the professional transition of Veterans include the need for companies to understand that Veterans have extraordinary skills and talents, but may have difficulty adapting to a new civilian work environment. So it's important to ensure that degrees earned during military service are accepted, and that the skills acquired are understood in the private sector and academia. We also need to start preparing military personnel for their transition earlier.

Witnesses stressed the need for concerted efforts between the various bodies involved in the vocational transition programs for Veterans, including Veterans' associations, educational institutions, employers and relevant government institutions. To maximize the quality of services offered, it is crucial to ensure that all players in the process understand them globally, as well as their respective roles within it. The committee therefore recommends the creation of a permanent working table on training and career transition for Veterans and their family members, as well as the presence of Veterans' ambassadors who could build strategic partnerships with Canadian companies.

Employers are interested in Veterans' intangible skills such as leadership and discipline, rather than specific technical skills. Current programs need to be reviewed to help Veterans develop skills that are transferable to various fields of activity. The national strategy must therefore prioritize the overall personality of each Veteran, rather than restricting government initiatives to a precise match between certain skills and certain jobs.

This is not to say that matching military and civilian skills is no longer an issue. Several witnesses recommended the introduction of an equivalency system that would allow educational institutions to award credits for skills acquired during military service. However, the success of such initiatives depends on early intervention, i.e., they must start being offered while military personnel are still serving. VAC must also support Veterans who wish to become entrepreneurs, and the organizations that help them overcome this challenge.

This study confirmed the variety of needs Veterans have when faced with the challenges of career transition. Committee members were convinced of the commitment of all the players involved in facilitating this process. However, we must reiterate that government programs, perhaps by their very nature, often lack the flexibility to adapt to the changing multiplicity of these needs. We must also reiterate the importance of preparing

and equipping military personnel before the day of their release, especially those whose needs are likely to prove complex. They must have access to the programs and resources offered by Veterans Affairs Canada while they are still serving. A closer partnership between the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada to intensify efforts, harmonize programs, coordinate their implementation and facilitate this early intervention could be a turning point in the transition process for Veterans. Such hopes have been voiced many times, but what has emerged so far has not lived up to what Veterans deserve. Let's hope this time will be different.

APPENDIX A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS IN SELECT COUNTRIES

| Jurisdiction | Program | Overview |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Australia | Prime Minister's National Veterans' Employment Program | A multi-component, multi-departmental program offering transitional support, skills assessment and training, career counselling, job search advice, self-employment assistance, etc. The program maintains and provides access to 'Veteran friendly' employers that support the program. |
| Australia | VetPaths | An initiative of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defence and the Australia Public Service Academy to match Veterans to work in the public service. It includes formal training, mentor system with family inclusion. |
| France | Défense Mobilité | A national program run by the Human Resources Department of the French Ministry of the Armed Forces. It supports military personnel and their spouses in their career transition. |
| New Zealand | No <u>apparent</u> gov official programs. Appears to be third party (eg., RSA , Ventia , Veolia) as signatories of the Australian initiative (see above) | Some <u>web-based</u> advice/guidance. Some <u>vocational rehabilitation</u> support available to a limited number of disabled Veterans which is assessed on a case-by-case basis. |
| United Kingdom | Career Transition Partnership | Ministry of Defence partnership with a career development group offering a resettlement program including transition support, retraining, family support services and assistance for up to two years for employment support services. Includes <u>initiatives</u> to recruit Veterans and their spouses into the Civil Service. |

| Jurisdiction | Program | Overview |
|----------------------|---|---|
| United States | Department of Defence— Transition Assistance Program | A statutory program delivered by the DoD Military-Civilian Transition Office in partnership with several federal departments and agencies to provide information and training for members within a year of their leaving the military to transition out of active duty. Each branch of the military executes TAP to ensure that members meet Career Readiness Standards prior to leaving the active duty. |
| United States | Department of Veterans Affairs— Veteran Readiness & Employment, Personalized Career Planning and Guidance | A statutory program for Veterans with service-related disabilities and dependent family members to find employment options and provide training if necessary. Statutory program that offers free education and career guidance, planning and resources to eligible Veterans and family. |
| United States | Department of Labor— Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) | The Department of Labor’s VETS offers several programs for Veterans and their spouses. Programs include transition assistance, homeless reintegration and training. VETS also offers a range of employment services programs . |
| United States | Department of Commerce— Vets First Verification Program | Through the Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization, the program provides Veteran-owned small businesses with certain benefits when bidding for government contracts. |
| United States | Department of the Interior— Veterans Employment Programs | Through the Office of Veterans Employment Programs and the use of special hiring authorities available for Veterans, the DOI promotes the recruitment, employment, training and development of Veterans in the department. |

APPENDIX B LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

| Organizations and Individuals | Date | Meeting |
|--|------------|---------|
| <p>As an individual</p> <p>Mary Beth MacLean, PhD Candidate, Queen's University</p> | 2023/01/30 | 33 |
| <p>Department of Veterans Affairs</p> <p>Steven Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Branch</p> <p>Jane Hicks, Acting Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management</p> <p>Chris Hutt, CD, Director, Transition and Program Support, Service Delivery Branch</p> <p>Nathan Svenson, Director, Research</p> | 2023/01/30 | 33 |
| <p>University of Ottawa</p> <p>Serge Blais, Executive Director, Professional Development Institute</p> | 2023/01/30 | 33 |
| <p>Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada</p> <p>Gordon MacEachern, Dominion Vice President and Chairman Advocacy Committee</p> | 2023/02/02 | 34 |
| <p>Canadian Corps of Commissionaires</p> <p>Paul Guindon, Chief Executive Officer, Commissionaires Ottawa</p> <p>Harry Harsch, Chief of Staff, Commissionaires National Office</p> | 2023/02/02 | 34 |
| <p>The Royal Canadian Legion</p> <p>Carolyn Hughes, Director, Veterans Services, National Headquarters</p> | 2023/02/02 | 34 |

| Organizations and Individuals | Date | Meeting |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| Veterans Emergency Transition Services Debbie Lowther, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder | 2023/02/02 | 34 |
| City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force André Thivierge, Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Major (Retired) | 2023/02/06 | 35 |
| Garda World Security Corporation Colleen Arnold, Vice-President, Corporate Affairs Simon Bernier, National Director, Innovation and Technologies Jean-Luc Meunier, President and Chief Operating Officer, Security Services, Canada | 2023/02/06 | 35 |
| National Association of Career Colleges Michael Sangster, Chief Executive Officer | 2023/02/06 | 35 |
| Aerospace Industries Association of Canada Mike Mueller, President and Chief Executive Officer | 2023/02/09 | 36 |
| Helmets to Hardhats Paul Bury, Director, Transition Services Normand Trépanier, Deputy Director | 2023/02/09 | 36 |
| Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada Harold Davis, President | 2023/02/09 | 36 |
| Prévactions Alexandre Tremblay, Chief Executive Officer, Safety and Health | 2023/02/09 | 36 |
| Challenge Factory Lisa Taylor, President | 2023/02/13 | 37 |
| City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force André Thivierge, Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Major (Retired) | 2023/02/13 | 37 |
| Quatre-Chemins Cassandra Poudrier, Executive Director | 2023/02/13 | 37 |

| Organizations and Individuals | Date | Meeting |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| Veteran Staffing Canada Jason Wahl, Founder and Director | 2023/02/13 | 37 |
| Veterans Transition Network Oliver Thorne, Executive Director | 2023/02/13 | 37 |
| Agilec Tara Jones, Contract Manager | 2023/02/16 | 38 |
| March of Dimes Canada Marc-André Dufour, Regional Manager | 2023/02/16 | 38 |
| Prince's Trust Canada Erin Copeland, Captain (Retired), Program Ambassador Kathleen Kilgour, Senior Program Manager Patrick Lamothe, Sergeant (Retired), Program Ambassador | 2023/02/16 | 38 |
| ReTrain Canada Incorporated Jeannine Adams, Chief Executive Officer | 2023/02/16 | 38 |
| The Pendulum Foundation Guy Riel, Founding President | 2023/02/16 | 38 |
| True Patriot Love Foundation Nick Booth, Chief Executive Officer | 2023/02/16 | 38 |

APPENDIX C LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Canadian Corps of Commissionaires

Challenge Factory

City of Ottawa Veterans Task Force

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 33 to 38, 42, 60 to 64](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Emmanuel Dubourg
Chair

