

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER REPORT ON DISABILITY BENEFITS PROCESSING AT VAC

- It is of the utmost importance to Veterans right now for Veterans Affairs Canada to reduce wait times and deal with the volume of disability benefit applications.
- We understand why Veterans and their families are frustrated, and we are making changes to make faster decisions and address their concerns head on.
- In June, we introduced a strategy to reduce wait times for Veterans.
- The Government has invested more than \$10 billion in new programs and services to help Veterans and their families; our renewed focus is ensuring that they are delivered as quickly and as simply as possible.

BACKGROUND - Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) Report on Disability Benefits Processing at Veterans Affairs Canada

The Parliamentary Budget Office released on Mon 28 September 2020 a report on Disability Benefits Processing at Veterans Affairs Canada. The report focuses on Public Service Capacity requirements to eliminate the backlog of applications that are beyond the 16 week service standard.

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We understand why Veterans and their families are frustrated, and we are making changes to make faster decisions and address their concerns head on.

In June, we introduced a strategy to reduce wait times for Veterans. The strategy outlines four lines of effort: Public Service Capacity, Integration, Process Innovation and Digital solutions.

There is no one-size-fit-all solution to this issue. While investing in public service capacity is necessary, we are tackling this problem from a number of different angles...from how our teams are organized, to making better use of technology, to removing steps from the process.

We've invested in increasing public service capacity to help reduce wait times. In Budget 2018 we committed \$42.8 million to hire temporary employees and in the latest fiscal update we committed \$192 million in additional funding to put this part of the plan into action.

The Government of Canada has invested more than \$10 billion in new programs and services to help Veterans and their families; our renewed focus is ensuring that they are delivered as quickly and as simply as possible.

While the volume of disability benefit applications coming in has increased significantly in recent years (by more than 90 percent since 2015 for first applications), recent changes are reducing the pace at which the backlog is growing.

Our commitment to Veterans as we work to address this, priority number one, is that we will communicate openly and transparently. This includes publishing real-time data, improving access to an accurate estimate of when your claim will be processed, and regularly letting Canadians know how we are doing through social media and our website.