



## **QUESTIONS OF NOTE BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**



**William Amos**

(Pontiac, QC – Liberal)

### **Committee Questions**

- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 – Subject Matter of Supplementary Estimates (B) 2019-20**

**Subject: Correlation between lesser backlog and number of beneficiaries**  
**Question Directed to: DM General (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“Going back to the backlog issue, I wonder if you could just help paint a picture because I think sometimes we focus on specific cases, and it's important to focus on specific cases because they can speak to a broader set of challenges or truths. However, is the reason that there was a lesser backlog in past years directly correlated with the fact that there were lesser benefits and fewer beneficiaries? Are we dealing with a circumstance where we have far more ability to be compassionate, greater ability to be supportive of a veteran and of their family, and we're finding ourselves in a position where we're transitioning from a place where there were far fewer resources for the department to deliver those benefits, to a place where we're delivering more benefits to more beneficiaries and bringing on board all those institutional resources that enable delivery?”

- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Subject: Shifting of organizational culture**

**Question Directed to: DM General (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“I want to reference testimony from two years ago by you, Mr. Natynczyk, in which you said there was an organizational culture that needed to shift. I want to invite you to connect the dots for me a bit. You testified previously that during the Harper mandate, the staff at Veterans Affairs was cut back to 2,300 overall. It is now back to 2,900. It takes time to build that cohort back, but there was also an organizational culture, as I understand it from testimony from the Senate subcommittee two years ago, that didn't necessarily give claimants the benefit of the doubt, and there needed to be a shift towards a presumption of benefits required. I wonder if there's a connection between that organizational cultural shift that was required and the fact that the complement of Veterans Affairs officials was diminished so much that there wasn't the ability to treat all of the files that were being requested.”



**Rachel Blaney**

(North Island-Powell River, BC – NDP)

### **Question Period**

- **October 7, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP**

**Subject: PBO Report and Backlogs**

“Mr. Speaker, the veterans minister seems to be okay telling 45,000 veterans in this country that they can wait another two and a half years to see their disability applications completed. Last week, the PBO provided a plan to get this done in one year and make sure this never happens again to our veterans. Instead of focusing on helping them, the Liberals spent over \$200,000 in legal fees defending a Liberal minister and attacking a veteran. When will the government stand up for veterans and make sure that it is spending the money on the people who stood up to protect us in this country?”

- **September 28, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP**

**Subject: PBO Report and Backlogs**

“Mr. Speaker, today the PBO reported that even with the 300 new hires in June, over 40,000 veterans will continue to be left on the wait-list over the next two and a half years. An NDP motion in this House, supported unanimously in 2018, required that the government reinvest every penny back into the veterans department. That did not happen. The Liberals shortchanged veterans of \$100 million last year alone. Today's report shows that if the Liberals had spent that money on veterans, that backlog would be addressed in one year. The Conservatives started the cuts with their government and the current government is continuing the trend. When will the Canadian government stand up for Canadian veterans?”

- **September 25, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP**

**Subject: 40,000 Veterans in Backlog**

“Madam Speaker, over 40,000 veterans in Canada are on a wait-list for benefits that they are owed. Some have waited months and some have waited well over a year. How many times were they mentioned in the Speech from the Throne?”



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Zero. Now veterans are reaching out to my office because they have applied for CERB and hope they are eligible as they simply have nothing else.

Could the government finally take some action quickly for these veterans? They stepped up for all of us as Canadians. When will the government step up for them?"

- **February 3, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP**

**Subject: Unspent funds at towards Veterans**

"Mr. Speaker, this House unanimously passed an NDP motion to help veterans by automatically carrying forward unspent funds to the following year. This did not happen. Last year alone, the Liberal government shortchanged veterans by \$381 million. While the department is facing staggering backlogs of disability claims and failing on more than half of its service standards, veterans are struggling to get their basic needs met. Why is the government breaking promises to our veterans?"

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"Mr. Speaker, over \$100 million this year alone was left on the table. When we know veterans are struggling every day to get some of their key supports met, we know that we have to see the government do better.

I want to repeat that there was a unanimous motion where we all agreed, across every party in the House, to take care of veterans who we know are on wait-lists, waiting for the immediate services that they need now. We know that the service standards are not even close to meeting their targets, and we know that workers are getting burnt out every single day. Why does this money continue to be left on the table?"

## House Debate

- **September 30, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP - *Adjournment Proceedings***

**Subject: PBO Report and unspent funding at VAC**

"I want to let everybody across Canada know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer also confirmed that an investment of \$128 million between now and 2025 would get rid of that backlog within one year and then maintain that level of service. Therefore, veterans who are now going through the process will not be part of a big backlog and having to wait a significant amount of time. Last year alone, \$103 million were unspent in Veterans Affairs and that money did not get reinvested. Think what it could have done. The government needs to account for that." [Full Intervention](#)



## QUESTIONS OF NOTE

- **September 30, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP - Adjournment Proceedings**

**Subject: PBO Report and Disability Benefit Backlogs**

“Madam Speaker, for the member to say in the House that veterans are the most important relationship that the government has, well, add them to the list.

The reality is that the Parliamentary Budget Office was very clear. With the work that the government has done, veterans will still be waiting two and a half years for just this 40,000 to be addressed, and not the other people who are climbing on board and doing their applications. I still do not understand why the government did not follow the motion that the Liberals unanimously supported in the House to take the money that was left and reinvest it, and there was no answer on CERB. What about veterans for CERB?

We have to stand up for Canadians. We have to stand up for the people who stood up for us, and that is what veterans did. I will not stop until this is addressed.”

- **September 25, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP - Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne**

**Subject: Absence of Veterans from Speech from the Throne; Support for Legions**

“Madam Speaker, one of the major concerns that I have is the lack of mention of this country's veterans in the throne speech. This is very concerning.

It is also very concerning because the Royal Canadian Legion has come forward and talked about the many legions across Canada that are struggling to make ends meet during this time. In my riding there are 11 legions that perform a very fundamental service to the veterans in our region. I just want to hear from the member whether she shares that concern with me.”

- **February 19, 2020 – Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River, BC) – NDP - Adjournment Proceedings**

**Subject: NDP Motion on unspent funds**

“The minister said that he would always want more money. There was a motion in the House saying that if there were unspent dollars at the end of the fiscal year, we would forward them and put them into the next year's fiscal year. That was the NDP motion, and we all voted for it in this House unanimously. Then we realized that the 2018-19 allotment for veterans affairs was actually \$127 million less than the year before, and at the end of that same 2018-19 period, over \$100 million was left unspent.” [Full Intervention](#)



## Committee Questions

- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 –Subject Matter of Supplementary Estimates (B) 2019-20**

**Subject: Transfer of funds away from operations towards programming and Veterans wait times**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Lawrence MacAulay**

“The wait times are a huge concern for me, and I'm happy to hear that they are for you as well. In fact, we've heard again and again from the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, from department staff and from veterans themselves that this is the biggest issue and the issue that keeps coming up over and over again.

When I look at the supplementary estimates, it looks to me as though there's a bit of a transfer from the VAC operations to other programming. I understand the value of programming, and I think whenever we can give resources to the veterans, that's really important. However, I'm concerned about the fact that the wait times are a challenge. If you're taking money from operations and moving it to programming, I'm wondering how that is a strategy to address the wait times.”

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“Thank you, Minister, but really it's the backlog I want to touch on. I think you said the wait time can be up to 32 weeks.”

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“That's an extensive amount of time. I'm really trying to understand. I understand there are problems with paperwork and all of those issues, but we really need to get on top of this. I understand what you're saying. I ran an organization for a lot of years, and when money goes away from administration, that can be a problematic thing because it means the services are not being delivered to the same extent. When it's going into programs, how is that going to fix the backlog?”

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“My concern is that if people are waiting then they're not getting access to many of those programs, so I'm excited to hear what you have to say.”

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“When you're hiring them, are they staying on permanently, or is this something that you're doing specifically to get caught up on the backlog?”

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“I hear what he's saying. I'm sorry. I'm interrupting, but I have one more minute, not even that. You say it's multi-faceted, so have all of the places where it's not working been identified? What are the multi-faceted solutions that you're moving toward to get this addressed?”



- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Subject: Transfer of funds away from operations towards programming and Veterans wait times**

**Question Directed to: DM General (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

"I appreciate your talking to us about this really important issue of how many veterans are waiting. My first question goes back to human resources. When the Conservatives were in power there was a decrease in the number of people working at Veterans Affairs. With the great number of people who are applying now, and with the backlogs, how close are you to getting back to the original numbers before the cuts that came at that time? Does anyone know that?"

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"According to the wait times tool on the department's website, we know as of the 19th of this month that the disability claim benefit response time for hearing loss, for example, was 17 weeks, or about four months. For post-traumatic stress disorder, a single condition, it is 33 weeks, which is about eight months. Multiple conditions are about nine months. It just shows you how long people are waiting. That is your tool.

We also know that the veterans ombudsperson has stated that the most frequent complaints in his office are issues around wait times and backlog. One thing he has talked about is that clear action plan. Can you tell us what the clear action plan is? I also want to note that the longer average turnaround times are for the francophone and women claimants. I would like to know why that is the case.

I heard as well that lack of communication is a challenge, particularly with respect to the process of prioritizing cases. What is the triage model when people come in and make claims, so that you can assess where the urgency is? If you have these huge backlogs, I certainly hope the people with the biggest concerns that are most urgent would be moved to the top of the list, while understanding that we need something to change. I don't want any of our veterans at the bottom of the list. That's a big question, but I have a limited amount of time and I want you to give me a perfect answer, so good luck with that."



## John Brassard

*Vice Chair*  
(Barrie-Innisfil, ON – Conservative)

### Question Period

- **October 7, 2020 – John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, ON) – Conservative**

**Subject:** \*redacted\*

**October 7, 2020 – John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, ON) – Conservative**

**Subject:** \*redacted\*

### House Debate

- **October 1, 2020 – John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, ON) – Conservative -**  
*Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply to the Speech From the Throne*

**Subject: Honesty with Veterans**

“Madam Speaker, the way we move forward, frankly, is to stop lying to veterans. Veterans have dealt with a generation of lies from successive governments, and I will blame us, as a Conservative government, for that as well. Stop the lies, and tell them the truth. What we can do, we tell them we will do, and what we cannot, we tell them why. That is how we deal with veterans in this country: no more crap.”

- **October 1, 2020 – John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, ON) – Conservative -**  
*Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply to the Speech From the Throne*

**Subject: Wait Times / PBO Report**

“The last thing I want to talk about are veterans. In its boldness and ambitiousness, the one thing that was neglected in the throne speech were veterans. Not one word of veteran was in the throne speech. Earlier this week, we heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer about case loads approaching 50,000 that had to be adjudicated and they had yet to be processed. That means 50,000 veterans and their families are living with additional anxiety. I would hope the government would announce a plan to help fix that. Two years ago the NDP suggested a plan to help alleviate some of those backlogs, and we supported it. The government needs to ensure that is fixed. As shadow minister for Veterans Affairs, I will do everything I can to hold the government to account to have those backlogs fixed.”



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- **September 30, 2020 – John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, ON) – Conservative -**  
*Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply to the Speech From the Throne*

**Subject: Wait Times / PBO Report**

“Madam Speaker, I am looking for a sincere answer to this question. I know during the throne speech the word “veteran” was not mentioned once, and on the heels of the throne speech, the Parliamentary Budget Officer came out and said that the caseload within Veterans Affairs for adjudication and claims is approaching 50,000. A couple of years ago, all parties supported an NDP motion that would call on any money that was left on the table in Veterans Affairs to be used to work on that backlog of claims. What plan, based on the throne speech or any other plan, is there to reduce the backlog within the system and get those veterans and their families the claims they deserve?”

- **September 30, 2020 – John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, ON) – Conservative -**  
*Debate on COVID-19 Response Measures Act*

**Subject: Lapsed Spending / Wait Times**

“Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my friend for his passion and advocacy on the part of Canada's veterans. I know just how sincere he is in that advocacy. We did support the motion from a few years ago that called on the government to use lapsed spending to improve the case loads, which were already mounting two years ago. Of course, we found out from the Parliamentary Budget Officer just yesterday that the case load is now at 50,000. That is 50,000 veterans, and their families, who are waiting for adjudication and for those claims to be processed. Part of my responsibility, since I was named three weeks ago today, has been to reach out to those families, and many of them are quite concerned about the status of VAC claims. We absolutely, 100% supported it then, and we continue to support the use of that lapsed spending to hire people to help veterans and their families with those claims.”

## Committee Questions

- **ACVA - December 6, 2018 – Appearance of the Minister of Veterans Affairs on the Supplementary Estimates (A) 2018-2019**

**Subject:** \*redacted\*

**Question Directed to: Hon. Seamus O'Regan**

“Minister, during the last election the Prime Minister said that no veteran shall have to fight the government in court for the benefits that he or she deserves. However, during the period between 2016 and 2018, \*redacted\*”

**Subject: Service Dogs**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Seamus O'Regan**



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“I want to focus on service dogs for a second. Minister, there was an efficacy study that was done by Université Laval. In almost every circumstance—I would suggest that in every circumstance—it was shown that service dogs improved the lives of veterans and their families. That study has been on your desk, from what I understand, yet on April 18, just eight months ago, your spokesman, Alex Wellstead, was quoted by CBC as saying, “We’re working to put in place standards, rapidly, so that veterans have access to properly trained psychiatric service dogs”. It’s been over three years since you took office, eight months since the process collapsed and this renewed commitment was made. This study shows there is efficacy with respect to service dogs and the effect that it has on veterans. When will those standards be introduced?”

**Subject: Service Dogs / PTSD**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Seamus O’Regan**

“I’m going to take 30 seconds, and then I’m going to pass it over to Mr. Kitchen. Minister, will you do me a favour and send a message to the Prime Minister? Will you do that for me? Tell him next time he tweets about \$50 million to Trevor Noah to think about the impact that has on veterans in this country who are fighting with their government for service dogs, who are living day by day with PTSD, their lives literally in the balance, and tell him to think about that next time he sends an irresponsible tweet like that. Maybe that money can be better spent on veterans and service dogs.”

**Subject: Ste. Anne’s Hospital / Transfer Agreement**

**Questions Directed to: Michel Doiron, ADM, Service Delivery**

“What was your understanding when the transfer agreement was made between the federal government through Veterans Affairs and the provincial government with respect to the level of service to our veterans?”

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“Right, so on October 2, the day after the Quebec election, Mr. McColeman wrote a letter to Premier François Legault because of complaints of veterans within the Ste. Anne’s Hospital. I actually visited it. As I said to the minister, I visited the hospital back in June. As fate would have it, I spent about an hour there. I talked in particular to \*redacted\* and others as well about the level of care and how it has diminished over the years with fewer employees.

As fate would have it, as I left the hospital to take an Uber ride back to my hotel, the driver of the Uber was a long-term employee. He had spent 35 years at Ste. Anne’s. We started talking about the reason for my visit, and he told me that the level of care has diminished to a point where the safety and security of our veterans are at stake. What are you doing about that?”

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“It’s not just food. There is dental care for which the service levels have diminished. There is property care where the service levels have diminished. There is physical care where the service has diminished. For doctor visits, the services have diminished, at least they had in June, so if you’re telling me that they’ve improved since June to this point, then that’s good news. But the reports



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we're getting are that the service levels are still significantly lower than what the expectation was when that transfer agreement was made.”

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“The fact that \*redacted\* veterans have to take Veterans Affairs to court should be a wake-up call to Veterans Affairs as to the level of service, or the lack of service that is going on at that facility.”

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“Can I ask you quickly, then, what type of audit system is in place in that transfer agreement between VAC and the Quebec government to ensure that those levels of service—the money that's being funded to maintain those levels of service—are used? What sort of audited services do you use in order to show that?”



**Colin Carrie**

(Oshawa, ON - Conservative)

No interventions of note on Veterans issues by Mr. Carrie in House debates or Question Period.



**Sean Casey**

(Charlottetown, PE - Liberal)

### **Question Period**

- **February 19, 2020 – Sean Casey (Charlottetown, ON) – Liberal**

**Subject: Veteran and Family Wellbeing Fund**

“Mr. Speaker, the veteran and family well-being fund is a crucial tool that our government has introduced that helps veterans, their families and veteran organizations across Canada. This program provides grants and contributions to organizations to conduct research and implement projects that support the well-being of veterans and their families, and it will have a lasting impact on the veteran community.

Can the Prime Minister tell us about recent projects our government has funded through this important program?”

### **Committee Questions**

- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 – Subject Matter of Supplementary Estimates (B) 2019-20**

**Subject: Reductions in Operating Expenditures**

**Question Directed to: DM Gen (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“In the supplementary estimates, we have increases to grants and contributions of \$2.5 million, but a decrease to operating expenditures of \$4.2 million. I want to focus on that number. You did address it in your last answer, General, but I'd like to hear more about it. You can understand my concern as someone who lived through the Harper cuts, the downsizing at Veterans Affairs, and saw what that did to the people who serve our veterans, not to mention what it did to veterans, including the cutbacks to staff, the closure of offices and whatnot.

I trust you will understand that I will be very vigilant in terms of ensuring that the operating expenditures of the department, the resources available to the department, are there because of what these folks have been through. It also ties in to Mr. Ruff's question about where we are focused. Your number one priority is the backlog, yet in these estimates we see a decrease to the operating expenditures. What is the nature of those reductions and what do you anticipate the impact will be, given the history within the department?”



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- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Subject: History of backlog coming out of the deficit reduction action plan**

**Question Directed to: DM Gen (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“I want to start with a bit of history. Everyone acknowledges that having a backlog is not a desirable situation. We all acknowledge that you're working hard to resolve it. The ombudsman has shone quite a light on it. I know what the morale of the department was, and I know what the situation was for the people who were serving veterans through the deficit reduction action plan. Can someone give me a bit of history on what the backlog looked like coming out of the deficit reduction action plan? What has been the progress, or lack of, since then? I know that the ombudsman went back so far. I'm asking you to go back a little further.”



**Luc Desilets**

*Vice Chair*

(Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, QC – Bloc Québécois)

## **Committee Questions**

- **COVI – June 11 2020 – Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020**

**Subject: Benefits Backlog**

“Mr. Chair, last Saturday was Canadian Armed Forces Day, which annually honours current and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I'd like to recognize the courage and sacrifice of these women and men who work every day to protect our democracy and our values.

I would add that the current crisis has accelerated the need to review the Veterans Affairs disability claims system. Indeed, the complexity and administrative burden means that, as of today, 20,233 files exceed the normal response time of 12 weeks, which corresponds to 19,223 veterans. This is a 17% increase from March 31.

I therefore call on the government to provide a war effort for our veterans by pre-approving all backlogged files. They fought for us, and now it is up to us to fight for them.”

- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 – Appearance of the Minister of Veterans Affairs on the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2020**

**Subject: Departmental Funding**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Lawrence MacAulay**

“My question has to do with a concern I think all of us around the table share—actually, I'm sure we all do. I'm talking about access to services.

Even though I don't have a lot of experience, my sense is that veterans face the same challenge as users of the health care system in terms of gaining access to services. In other words, once a person enters the system, they can access the services they need. The money seems to be there, in my humble opinion. In fact, these are sizable amounts. However, my question remains the same. Even if the problem can't be solved outright, what can be done to improve access to services, whether it be by adding resources or funding?”



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- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs 2020**

**Subject: Complaint Filing**

**Question Directed to: Michel Doiron, ADM, Service Delivery**

“Last week, I was at the Veterans Appeal and Review Board, and what I saw really struck me. The same person was filing different complaints or, rather, different applications for review. As I listened to him, it sounded as though he had been asked to submit the same report umpteen times. I have a problem with that. Logically, things should be a wee bit more advanced than that.

You answered my initial question quite well. However, it's difficult for a veteran who has experienced trauma and is suffering from post-traumatic stress to return to the country and have to sit down and prepare a claim. I know there are people in your department and in community centres who can help with that, but wouldn't integrating the systems save these people some trouble?”



**Andy Fillmore**

(Halifax, NS - Liberal)

## **Committee Questions**

- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 – Subject Matter of Supplementary Estimates (B) 2019-20**

**Subject: Veteran Identification Card**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Lawrence MacAulay & DM Gen (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“Thank you, Minister, for joining us today, and thanks to the team as well for being here. I wanted to ask about the veteran identification card. This is a program that was deleted under the previous Conservative government. As a result of some good intentions on the part of the team at Veterans Affairs, and a petition originating from two veterans in Halifax, \*redacted\*, they helped to reinstate the veteran ID card. Could you provide a bit of an update on the rollout of the card, any details around uptake and the reaction from veterans' communities to the return of this really important piece of ID that veterans carry with them?”

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“You made a good segue there to the My VAC Account. I wonder if you might be able to touch on the rollout of that program and the uptake. The questions are similar but are in regard to that program.”

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“Those two programs, the veteran's NDI 75 and the My VAC Account, from what I hear in my veterans community in Halifax, have gone a tremendous distance in re-engaging the veterans community after a period of unfortunate disengagement from the federal government. I can see the benefits every day when I speak to the veterans. Thank you for that re-engagement and for reconnecting, not just with veterans who previously had been engaged but also with all of the veterans who had never engaged before and who are now seeing the benefits of engaging in this program.”

- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Subject: Demand of VAC services in relation to backlogs**

**Question Directed to: Gen (Ret'd) Walt Natynzyck**

“As you know, Walt, I represent Halifax. Not only are we home to the east coast navy, 5th Canadian Division, the Mighty Maroon Machine, but across the harbour



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is 12 Wing Shearwater. I think we have in the Halifax area among the highest, if not the highest, concentration of veterans living anywhere in the country. This is a very important issue to me and veterans not just in Halifax but across the country.

First of all, I want to say thank you for your clarification with your water line analogy around the budget surplus at the end of the year. There have been some cynical efforts to frame that as a failure. Of course, any one of us would run our household accounts in the same way. To hear that those surplus monies, thin though they are, are turned back into the budget the following year is a good clarification.

I want to go after another cynical line of attack, which is that the backlogs are a sign of a failure. I believe that any successful organization or service is in demand. If there were no one lined up at the door, I would be more worried that perhaps VAC wasn't providing the services that are needed. I want to test that attempt to frame the backlog as a failure.

You've given us some metrics already around budget, hiring and all that, but you see where I'm going with this. I wonder if you could paint a picture, drawing on whatever programs or services you provide, whether they are the family resource centres, programs to transition to post-service life, or any of the suite, to help explain the popularity of the programs now. That could help explain why you're so much more busy and why you're so much more successful and that accounts for the increased demand."



**Marie-France Lalonde**

(Orléans, ON - Liberal)

### **Question Period**

- **December 9, 2019 – Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, ON) – Liberal**

**Subject: Veterans Identification Card**

“Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Many veterans in my riding have told me how disappointed they were when the previous government cancelled the veteran's service card. The card is a way to recognize our brave men and women for their sacrifices and their service to our country. Thanks to their advocacy, our government reintroduced the veteran's service card last year. Could the minister please update the House on the status of the card?”

### **Committee Questions**

- **ACVA – March 12, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veteran Affairs**

**Subject: Recommendations for reducing the benefits backlog**

**Question Directed to: Christopher McNeil**

“As the member for Orléans and having a few military and veterans, I want to say thank you for being here. Thank you also to all of the people who serve. It's always an honour for me to meet with you.

A lot of questions were asked, but I wanted to leave a little more of an open floor to you. We are talking about backlog. We're hearing some, I would say, fairly positive stories about the work you are doing. Are there any recommendations or things you would like to share with us—both of you, from both organizations—in terms of how we can help the Government of Canada and Veterans Affairs, particularly on the issues of backlog?

I heard that there was an influx of military being discharged in a very short time and then we have all these new programs. We have a new direction from all of you. I want to leave the floor open actually. Tell us what we can do. What would you recommend?”



- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 – Subject Matter of Supplementary Estimates (B) 2019-20**

**Subject: Veterans Emergency Fund**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Lawrence MacAulay**

“One thing I'm very particular about is numbers. I like numbers, and I was reviewing a lot of the internal transfers taking place. I would certainly appreciate it if you could provide a little more insight as to.... One in particular was about the veterans emergency fund. We collectively would agree that when a veteran is in need, we need to be there. Sometimes as we can see, there are areas without information. Could you please tell us a little more about the emergency fund, the impact it has had on the lives of our veterans and the flexibility of the department to help possibly more veterans?”

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“Thank you. The emergency fund is probably helping reduce homelessness, I hope. This is very dear to my heart. Just outside our community in Orléans we have received funding to build 40 units. I know you refer to tiny houses. I don't know this one. I know the project in our community is the multifaith housing initiative to help veterans with addictions or personal problems to find lodging. Can you please explain to me a little more about this one? I think it's in Alberta.”

- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 – Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Subject: Access to housing**

**Question Directed to: DM Gen (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today. I know this isn't entirely related to the backlog issue, but it could have an effect. The minister's mandate letter refers to a partnership to help our homeless veterans.

I am from Orleans. I represent a stronghold of veterans and military personnel, and I'm very proud to be on this committee. I wanted to give you an opportunity as we're looking at mental health and support for families and our veterans. Access to housing is very important. We worked very hard in Ottawa on one particular case for 40 units. What's the future plan for this?”



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**Bryan May**

*Chair*

(Cambridge, ON – Liberal)

No interventions of note on Veterans issues by Mr. May in House debates or Question Period.



## QUESTIONS OF NOTE



**Kyle Seeback**

(Dufferin-Caledon, ON - Conservative)

No interventions of note on Veterans issues by Mr. Seeback in House debates or Question Period.



**Cathay Wagantall**

(Yorkton-Melville, SK - Conservative)

## **Question Period**

- **July 21, 2020 - Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton-Melville, SK) – Conservative**

### **Subject: Impact of COVID-19 on Legions**

“Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs depends on our legions to help with the transition of veterans. Legions also coordinate school visits, teaching our children about the cost of our freedom. For many, legions are a safe place to find community. There are 157 legions facing a risk of permanent closure due to restrictions on their fundraising efforts and there has been no flexibility to include them in the COVID-19 economic response plan.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs says that he hopes to have more on this shortly. When did the minister begin to think about the impact of the pandemic on Canada's legions?”

## **House Debate**

- **July 22, 2020 - Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton-Melville, SK) – Conservative**

### **Subject: VAC Policy**

“Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleague something that happened right here as I was asking questions.

I was asking the Minister of Veterans Affairs if he was aware that flags were being placed on the files of veterans. He said that he was unaware, yet he sent a letter to a veteran, explaining concerns about that.

All my questions were simple, requiring quick yes or no answers. Was he aware? Are veterans informed when that happens? Are veterans services and funding impacted when there is a flag on a file? Can a flag be removed when it is clear that there was no wrongdoing? Does a veteran have to hire a lawyer to get that flag off? I asked all kinds of questions like this. Over and over again, the response from the minister was that this was not the place to discuss these issues. I sense that the attitude of the Prime Minister is permeating everywhere, that ministers do not want to have to respond to real, sincere, succinct questions for which they are accountable.

I am wondering if you would like to comment on that as well.”



## **Committee Questions**

- **ACVA – March 10, 2020 – Appearance of the Minister of Veterans Affairs on the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2020**

**Subject: Policy Changes**

**Question Directed to: Hon. Lawrence MacAulay**

“Minister, I'm just going to read a portion of your mandate letter. I'm sure you're aware of it. It says that your mandate is to: Improve transparency and communications so that Veterans and their families have clarity about and predictability of available benefits and services.

Minister, in December on the floor of the House of Commons I asked you a specific question on behalf of a veteran whose spouse had come home from her mental health appointment having been told by the doctor that in the new year those benefits would no longer be available to her. Your response to me was that there's been no change to policy and that they would continue to get benefits if it helped the veteran. Believe me; veterans are helped by their family members getting the care they need because they see their lives falling apart because of their health issues.

What concerns me, sir, is that you indicated there was no change of policy, but the veterans ombudsman went on to reveal that new restrictions were imposed not through a change in policy but more subtly through a reinterpretation of the existing rules of that bureaucracy.

Sir, I find this very disturbing, as do veterans. You know that there are more and more coming forward and concerned because of the semantics that were used to deal with this issue. I would like to know who flagged this policy for review.”

**Subject: Defining “Veteran”**

**Question Directed to: Gen. (Ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“I appreciate that, but my question then would be this. I've heard over and over again that we have to define what affects the veteran. The veteran's well-being needs to be improved, so who's making those decisions? That veteran, more than anybody, should be able to determine whether their care is improved and whether they're being impacted by the care that is given to family members. Are they asked?”

- **ACVA – February 27, 2020 –Backlog of Disability Benefit Claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs 2020**

**Subject: Benefits Backlog**

**Question Directed to: Gen. (ret'd) Walter Natynczyk**

“Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Deputy Minister, we're dealing with a backlog question here. As I'm sure you've heard lately, there is a great deal of concern in the veterans community in regard to support and treatments for mental health for family members. I brought this up



## QUESTIONS OF NOTE

in December in question period, and the minister assured me that there's no change in policy and everything would continue. Now we understand that there is a change in interpretation in that policy, and there's a sense out there that there are changes that are impacting veterans.

I know of a specific instance where the doctor informed the spouse that it was good she was here because her services would no longer be available in the future. There's a great deal of angst about this. The ombudsman has indicated that, in regard to psychological care, this is something that we should be processing far faster than we are.

Can you please clarify for us exactly what is happening with that program? You indicate here that they will assist them in locating other resources if they need long-term care. Is that a change? I ask because she's been having treatment for a long time and now all of a sudden her funding is in question."