

2024–25 DEPARTMENTAL PLAN

- Our 2024–25 Departmental Plan (published February 29, 2024) lays out our priorities for the year and provides an outline of the important work that we will undertake:

Benefits, Services and Support:

- Our **key priority** continues to be **reducing wait times for disability decisions** with various initiatives such as: **i)** funding to keep trained staff, **ii)** using digital solutions, and **iii)** streamlining processes to expedite decision-making.
 - While we have made significant progress, more work is underway.
- We will continue to evolve our services through **digitization and process improvements**.
- Through the implement of the **National Veterans Employment Strategy**, we support Veterans as they take on new challenges.
- We continue with our commitment to safe and adequate housing through continued collaboration with Infrastructure Canada on the **Veteran Homelessness Program**.

- Our **Gender Based Analysis Plus Strategy** emphasizes a cultural shift, heightened awareness, and integration of GBA Plus into the design of all initiatives.

On the **Commemoration front**, we will:

- Continue to **lead and support commemorative efforts in Canada and internationally** by celebrating:
 - 100th year of the Royal Canadian Airforce
 - 10th Anniversary of the End of Canada's mission in Afghanistan
 - Repatriation of the Newfoundland Unknown Soldier
 - 80th Anniversaries of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, and the Italian Campaign
 - 60th Anniversary of Peacekeeping in Cyprus
 - 30th Anniversary of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda II
- We will also celebrate the courage and spirit of Veterans and service members from around the world at the first Winter **Invictus Games** in 2025.
- Preservation and modernization efforts are a top priority, with more funding dedicated to renewing

monuments, infrastructure, and visitor experiences at **memorial sites**.

- We remain committed to working with Veterans and our partners to learn how to **best support our most vulnerable Veterans**.
- We will continue to **honour the significant contributions** of all our Veterans. We recognize **the diversity of our Veterans and their experiences**, and will continue to work together to deliver commemorative activities and events which reflect that.

When Pressed:

Q1 – What is Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) doing to address processing times?

We know the current processing times for disability benefits have been unacceptable and reducing them remains our top priority. We have made progress, but we know there is more work to do.

As of December 2023, we have reduced the number of applications over the turnaround time indicated in the service standard (i.e., the "backlog") by 77% since 2020.

While this reduction represents significant progress, we will continue to reduce the number of applications waiting past the service standard by continuing to leverage existing research, learning from our partners, modernizing the tools used by decision-makers, and continuing to develop computer-assisted processes to improve the transfer and input of information.

With the additional funding announcement, \$109.2M of the funding is dedicated to keeping trained temporary employees who process disability benefits decisions until 2026. This will allow for continued progress addressing the backlog to ensure that Veterans and members/former members of the RCMP receive their decisions in a timely manner.

We will simplify and create further efficiencies in decisions, reduce hand-offs in the processing of applications, and support reduced processing times.

We have made progress and have a better understanding of the challenges in processing disability benefits. We are continually looking for ways to accelerate the decision-making process.

Q2 – Has VAC been able to eliminate the backlog?

Since the spring of 2020, we have reduced the backlog by 77%. As of 30 December 2023, there are 5,054 applications waiting longer than our service standard.

Q3 – Why has the Department replaced the Life after Service Survey (LASS) with the Canadian Veteran Health Survey (CVHS)?

A key limitation with LASS was that its findings were not applicable to the entire Veteran population, only Veterans who were released since 1998. After consulting with Statistics Canada, we decided to launch the CVHS to replace the LASS, which was last completed in 2019. The CVHS was first conducted in 2022, launching in October and running through December. It provides better representation of all Veteran groups and aligns closely with the content covered in the CCHS 2022, allowing increased

comparability with the broader Canadian population. Going forward, the intent is to conduct the CVHS every two years, with the next iteration coming later in 2024.

Many of our DRF indicators did not use the LASS as a data source and therefore were not implicated in the change to CVHS. For those that were implicated, all but one of the indicators derived from the CVHS are identical to their counterparts from the LASS, as the survey questions are the same. However, the Veteran population surveyed differs between the two surveys; the LASS covered Regular Force Veterans released from 1998 on, while CVHS covers all Veterans who were released up to May 2021. As such, indicators based on CVHS (from 2022 on) cannot be directly compared to those from LASS.

BACKGROUND – 2024–25 DEPARTMENTAL PLAN

The 2024–25 Departmental Plan (the Plan) tells a clear, straightforward, and balanced story of the actual results we seek to achieve, while continuing to provide transparency on how taxpayers' dollars will be spent. Plans are tabled in Parliament, on or before March 31 each year, by the President of the Treasury Board on behalf of Ministers of the departments and agencies identified in the Financial Administration Act. The Plans are a component of the Estimates process, along with the Departmental Results Reports.

The Plan is published annually on GC InfoBase under [Planned results](#). Note that the tabs are changed to “actual results” by fiscal, once the correlating Departmental Results Report is tabled and published approximately 18 months later. The Plan is also published on VAC's external website here - [Departmental Plan - Veterans Affairs Canada](#).

The highlights of the Plan include:

Benefits, Services and Support:

- Increased funding to ensure that Veterans receive access to benefits quicker and when they need them.
- Part of the increased funding will support our key priority of reducing processing times for disability benefits allowing us to retain temporary employees to reduce disability benefit application backlogs and retain and hire case managers.
- Continue to address the backlog with various initiatives such as: funding to keep trained staff, modernizing the tools used by decision-makers, and developing computer assisted processes to improve the transfer and input of information.
- Evolve our services through digitization and process improvements.
- Continue to implement the National Veterans' Employment Strategy
- Continue to provide help for Veterans to reduce homelessness and assist in finding safe and affordable places to live.
- Ongoing implementation of the VAC Gender-Based Analysis Plus Strategy to fully integrate GBA Plus into our work at all stages.

Commemoration:

- Continue to lead and support commemorative efforts in Canada and internationally:
 - 100th year of the Royal Canadian Airforce;
 - 10th Anniversary of the End of Canada's mission in Afghanistan;
 - Repatriation of the Newfoundland Unknown Soldier;
 - 80th Anniversaries of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, and the Italian Campaign;
 - 60th Anniversary of Peacekeeping in Cyprus;

2024–25 Departmental Plan

Source: Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Date: 2024/11/22

- 30th Anniversary of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda II
- Ensure sound stewardship of memorial sites through increased funding.

Veterans Ombudsperson :

- Implement call recording for quality assurance purposes to ensure that exemplary services are provided to all clients who contact the Office of the Veterans Ombud (OVO).
- Establish a Complaint Review Committee and enhance awareness of its services within the Veterans' community.
- Continually improve internal processes and develop skills within OVO staff to address unfairness at the lowest level possible - speeding up complaint resolution and lessening the impact on clients.
- Increase awareness of the services of the OVO within the Veteran community through the delivery of virtual Town Hall style meetings and in-person outreach events.
- Continue to connect with Veterans through social media, ensuring they understand VAC programs and benefits.

Internal Services:

- Continue to optimize the delivery of core services and pursue continual improvement of our corporate services.
- Improve our integrated approach to service delivery through close collaboration with internal and external partners, while also continuing our digital transformation.
- Enhance Access to Information and Privacy services to the public by introducing digital solutions that support automation of processes.
- Focus on providing accessible, timely, accurate, clear, and objective communications services and products to Veterans, their families, and Canadians in both official languages.
- Apply a strategic approach to achieving and exceeding targets for procurement from Indigenous businesses.
- Sustain our commitment to maintaining a diverse and inclusive workplace that empowers and develops employees.
- Use our website, social media platforms, advertising, and other digital communications tools to share information about our programs and services, and to commemorate and recognize Veterans, with a focus on modern-day and under-represented communities.