

Disability Benefits Processing Times & Action Plan

Issue

Between 2015-2016 and 2023-2024, Veterans Affairs Canada experienced a 78% increase in the number of applications received for disability benefits. One of our priorities is reducing disability benefits processing times for Veterans and their families. Our service standard target for disability benefits is for 80 percent of decisions to be made within: 16 weeks for First Applications and Reassessments (review as to whether the condition has worsened); and 12 weeks for Departmental Reviews (review to confirm or change an original decision). Our service standard accounts for the fact that some files are very complex and take longer to process. Therefore, we will always have a small percentage of applications in the backlog.

Context

On November 3, 2023, to ensure the Department continues the momentum gained in reducing the backlog, the Government announced additional funding of \$164.4 million. Part of this investment will ensure Veterans Affairs Canada is able to retain existing temporary employees, dedicated to processing disability benefit applications, for an additional two years, until March 2026.

Key Data and Milestones

Veterans Affairs Canada has reduced the backlog (i.e., applications over the service standard) of disability benefit applications by 72% since the Spring of 2020 from 22,138 to 6,246 as of September 30, 2024.

This fiscal year-to-date (April to September), the average turnaround time for first applications is 19.4 weeks, down from previous results where the average turnaround times were 20.2 weeks in 2023-2024, 28.1 weeks in 2022-2023, 39.7 weeks in 2021-2022, and 48.8 weeks in 2020-2021.

In the second quarter of 2024-2025, we met the service standard for first applications 51% of the time. This is a slight decline from 2023-2024 results where we met the service standard for first applications 69% of the time.

Intake of applications continues to rise. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the average intake was 6,700 applications per month (80,000 for the year and 73,000 for 2022-2023). The fiscal year-to-date (April to September) average intake is 7,000 applications per month.

We have made great progress recently, but there is still more work to be done.