



Christopher McNeil

Chairperson, Veterans Review and Appeal Board
Post Office Box 9900
Charlottetown, PE C1A 8V7

March 23, 2025

Dear Mr. McNeil,

I am writing on behalf of Veterans with Cancer Inc. to seek your support for a key recommendation in our enclosed policy paper, *Doing More with Less: How Veterans Affairs Canada Can Exceed Service Standards Despite Budget Cuts: the creation of an **Early Dispute Resolution (EDR)** program under the authority of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.*

As you know, Veterans Affairs Canada has failed to meet disability benefit service standards for over a decade. While a significant proportion of decisions are overturned on appeal, most denied veterans never pursue that right. With recent reductions to the Bureau of Pension Advocates, more veterans will arrive at your Board with less support and more complex cases—placing additional strain on VRAB resources.

The EDR model offers a practical solution. A small, independent team of trained facilitators could intervene between the initial VAC decision and a formal Review hearing, resolving many disputes earlier and more efficiently. Comparable programs in other jurisdictions have resolved the majority of cases without adjudication, and VAC's own early resolution efforts have demonstrated similar potential.

For this model to succeed, it must be independent. A VAC-administered program would lack credibility with veterans and fail to address the underlying structural issues. The VRAB is uniquely positioned to lead this initiative. Its arm's-length status, adjudicative expertise, and established trust with veterans provide the legitimacy required for early resolution to work.

An EDR program under your leadership would deliver faster outcomes for veterans, reduce the volume of cases proceeding to formal Review, and allow the Board to focus its resources on the most complex claims. It aligns directly with VRAB's mandate and with the more accessible, responsive approach you have advanced during your tenure.

We are asking for your support in advancing this proposal. Specifically, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how an EDR program could be developed within the VRAB framework.

Veterans are waiting too long for fair outcomes. With your leadership, this initiative offers a realistic path to delivering them sooner.

Respectfully,

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Enclosures (2):