



Paul Ledwell

To: ★ Jim Hutton Cc: Steven Harris, Chris McNeil, Anthony Saez & 9 more

Jun 11, 2025 at 7:01 AM

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## Re: Improving Assessment Consistency for Veterans

Jim,

Thank you for your email and for sharing your research paper regarding the current assessment process of Veterans' Disability Benefit applications. We acknowledge the significance of these issues and appreciate the opportunity to share an update on our ongoing efforts and progress in enhancing the accuracy of disability application assessments.

We are committed to ensuring that all decisions regarding disability benefits are fair, consistent and in alignment with our legislative authorities—the *Pension Act* and the *Veterans Well-being Act*. Every application is reviewed on a case-by case basis, with all reliable information carefully considered. If the evidence received is evenly balanced, we give the benefit of the doubt to the applicant. Each decision is made on the specific details of the case and are not precedent-setting.

Your recommendation to enhance communication between Veterans and assessors aligns with our modernization efforts. We are currently reviewing the Entitlement Eligibility Guidelines (EEGs) and the Table of Disabilities (TODs), including the Quality of Life (QOL) chapter, to ensure that they reflect current medical evidence and support decisions that are clear, fair and consistent. While the QOL rating is an important component, it is the Medical Impairment rating that drives the final Disability Assessment, which in turn forms the basis for any review or appeal.

Regarding quality assurance, I am pleased to note that VAC has internal controls in place and gives decision-makers access to Subject Matter Experts for support on complex cases. Since 2015–2016, **disability benefit applications have increased by 92%**, and our main focus has been on making timely decisions while ensuring they remain fair and accurate. We're also working with the Government of Canada to secure long-term resources for continued quality improvements and will keep your recommendations in mind as part of that effort.

You also highlight the importance of assessor feedback and ongoing learning. A common challenge in the adjudication process is receiving incomplete or insufficient evidence. Veterans who later obtain new evidence are encouraged to request a departmental review, which allows an adjudicator to reconsider the case and often results in a revised decision. Through the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, veterans and their advocates can also provide oral testimony, supporting documents, and witnesses to strengthen their case.

Finally, your suggestion for a more structured and informal way to resolve issues echoes the intent of Section 77 of the *Veterans Well-being Act*, which encourages decisions be made as informally and as quickly as possible, while keeping fairness at the forefront. Veterans seeking further guidance can receive help through the Bureau of Pensions Advocates, who provide free legal assistance and help ensure that veterans have every opportunity to present a full and compelling case.

While we continue to make progress to improve the assessment accuracy of disability applications, we remain dedicated to streamlining our processes to ensure that Veterans receive fair and timely decisions.

Thank you once again for your insight and continued support. We remain dedicated to putting Veterans first and will continue to take action to improve their experience with VAC's services.

Paul

Paul Ledwell  
Deputy Minister