



Government of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada

Veterans Ombud

Ombud des vétérans

# Annual Report 2025-2026



Veterans  
*Ombud*  
des vétérans

Canada 



# Table of CONTENTS

- 3 LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**
- 4 MESSAGE FROM THE VETERANS OMBUD**
- 6 THE OFFICE OF THE VETERANS OMBUD**
- 7 SHARING, LISTENING AND CONNECTING**
- 8 TRUST MATTERS – SPEAKING UP FOR VETERANS**
- 9 FEATURED CASES**
  - Physiotherapy for Tinnitus Finally Approved
  - Reimbursement Approved for Glucose Monitoring Device
- 10 OUR CLIENTS**
- 14 REPORTING ON SYSTEMIC UNFAIRNESS AND SIMPLIFYING INFORMATION**
  - The Veterans Affairs Canada Internal Review Process
  - Spotlight 2025
  - How to Access the Services you need from Veterans Affairs Canada
  - How Your Income Replacement Benefit is Calculated
- 16 DIGITAL PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT**
- 17 VETERANS OMBUD COMMENDATIONS**
  - 2025 recipients
- 18 VETERANS OMBUD ADVISORY COUNCIL**
  - 2025-2026 Members
- 19 LOOKING AHEAD**

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Office of the Veterans Ombud (OVO) acknowledges that the lands on which we live, work, and gather are on the traditional territories of many Indigenous Nations. Our Charlottetown office is located on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People who have occupied the island of Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island) for over 12,000 years. Our Ottawa office is situated on the unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation whose presence there reaches back to time immemorial.

As part of our commitment to reconciliation, the OVO supports education on the past and present relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian Government, including training on cultural awareness, bias, and Indigenous perspectives. We continue to engage and connect with members and representatives of Indigenous Veteran communities and organizations.





## Message From **THE VETERANS OMBUD**

I am pleased to submit the fiscal 2025-2026 Annual Report of the Office of the Veterans Ombud.

We continue to hear both encouraging feedback and serious concerns from Veterans, serving members, Survivors, and their families across the country. These experiences speak not only to the importance of available benefits and services, but also to the gaps that remain. Their voices continue to guide our work, inform our recommendations, and reinforce the role of our Office in promoting fairness, transparency, and trust.

### **TRUST MATTERS**

Over the past five years of my tenure as the Veterans Ombud, it has become abundantly clear to me that when Veterans seek benefits and services from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), most of them do so from a place of trust in this Department that is, in their minds, there to take care of them when they have been injured or suffered illness as a result of their service. But, if they feel they have been treated unfairly, or from their perspective, they see other Veterans being treated unfairly, they interpret it as a betrayal of the sacred trust with which they have given their service to Canada.

While Veterans often tell me, quietly, that they are satisfied with the benefits they receive from VAC, other Veterans tell me more loudly that they are dissatisfied with how the Department communicates with them. From the website design to letters to MyVAC, Veterans Affairs needs to communicate with Veterans using plain English and French, with the most important information easy to find and understand. Truly Veteran-centric communications would go a long way to rebuild trust with the Veteran community.

This past year, Veterans' trust in Government and the Department was overtly challenged by two things. The issuance of overpayment letters just prior to Christmas caused significant distress to both recipients and the entire Veteran community. Similarly, the Veteran community was shocked by the Government's deliberate action in the *Budget Implementation Act* to retroactively amend the *Veterans Health Care Regulations* in a manner that effectively legitimized past overcharges to Canada's most disabled and elderly Veterans in long-term care.

### **ACCESS TO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE**

The lack of access to primary health care is probably the most acute issue facing Veterans today. Without a diagnosis, a Veteran cannot complete a disability claim, which is a significant gateway to accessing VAC benefits for injuries or illness related to service. VAC has made a positive step by providing all new Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans and their families access to two years of paid telemedicine service upon release. But there are many existing Veterans who have lost their family doctor and are completely stuck with no way to get a diagnosis, no way to renew complex prescriptions, no way to get prescribed recommended medications by other specialists. Government must not forget these Veterans.

“Our Office seeks to provide a path for a Veteran or their family members to reconnect with and to regain trust in the Department that they rely on for benefits that affect their well-being. Our recommendations are entirely based on this focus to resolve unfairness in the Department’s decisions, policies, or even legislation.”

Colonel (Retired) Nishika Jardine  
Veterans Ombud

## SUPPORTING VETERANS' FAMILIES

Veterans’ families need more than words. It is not enough to say, “when the member serves, the family also serves”. Our 2021 recommendation for VAC-funded mental health treatment for family members in their own right for service-related mental health needs remains outstanding. Government must go beyond words to action.

Our 2024 recommendation that VAC must stop asking Veterans’ families to take on the home upkeep tasks that their ill or injured Veteran can no longer do also remains outstanding. Our recommendation highlights the important role families play, and it is time for Government to demonstrate that they understand the burden of service on the families who support their members in uniform.

## FAIRNESS IN THE REVIEW AND APPEALS PROCESS

We completed our systemic review into whether the National First and National Second Level Appeals (N1LA and N2LA) are providing fair recourse to Veterans. Among other issues, what we found is that the N1LA and N2LA response letters often do not meet the requirement for fair reasons set out by the Supreme Court of Canada. We have made three new recommendations to the Minister to resolve the unfairness we identified.

## SUMMARY

This past year has highlighted both the strengths of existing supports and the very real gaps that continue to affect Veterans and their families. What we have heard reinforces the importance of fairness, clear communication, and meaningful action on long-standing issues.

Our Office seeks to provide a path for a Veteran or their family members to reconnect with and to regain trust in the Department that they rely on for benefits that affect their well-being. Our recommendations are entirely based on this focus to resolve unfairness in the Department’s decisions, policies, or even legislation. We care deeply about this work we do. I am proud of and thankful for each and every member of our Office for their painstaking efforts to offer VAC a way to resolve individual and systemic unfairness for Canada’s Veterans and their families.



Colonel (Retired) Nishika Jardine  
Veterans Ombud

# THE OFFICE OF THE VETERANS OMBUD

The OVO investigates complaints and challenges the policies and decisions of VAC where we find individual or systemic unfairness. We strive to be an independent and respected voice for fairness and a champion for the well-being of Veterans and their families.

## WHAT WE DO

The OVO's work is guided by independence, impartiality, and a client-centered approach.

Specifically, we:

- Act independently and impartially in our reviews and investigations
- Listen carefully to the experiences and concerns of our clients
- Review client files and help them understand the process and their next steps
- Identify and review emerging and systemic issues related to VAC programs and services
- Support access to VAC programs and services by providing information, guidance and referrals

## OUR PRIORITIES

In respect of VAC programs and services for Veterans, former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), serving members, their families and Survivors, our priorities are:

1. To advocate for fair treatment, fair process, and fair outcomes.
2. To build and repair trust in government.
3. To provide information.

## OUR ORGANIZATION

The OVO consists of the Veterans Ombud, the Deputy Veterans Ombud and Executive Director, and four directorates:

- Intervention Services
- Strategic Review and Analysis
- Communications
- Corporate Services

The OVO maintains a strong national presence, with offices located in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and Ottawa, Ontario. During the 2025-2026 year, our skilled and dedicated workforce was comprised of 31 employees, including 22 employees based in OVO offices, and nine team members teleworking from communities across Canada. Our geographically diverse team enables the OVO to remain responsive to the needs of Veterans and their families from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

## PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

Excellence is at the core of everything we do, and we actively invest in the knowledge, skills, and professional development that support high-quality Ombud services. The OVO is a proud member of both the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO), leveraging the insight, collaboration, and community these organizations provide. To support employee development and ensure a shared foundation of knowledge and best practices, all OVO employees complete the *Essentials for Ombuds* training program, delivered by the FCO in partnership with Osgoode Professional Development.

## WHY SHOULD VETERANS CONTACT US?

Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, dignity, fairness, and courtesy when seeking or receiving services and/or benefits from VAC, as set out in the Veterans Bill of Rights. When individuals believe these rights have not been upheld or a decision has been applied unfairly, they have the right to bring their concern(s) and make a complaint to our Office.

# SHARING, LISTENING AND CONNECTING

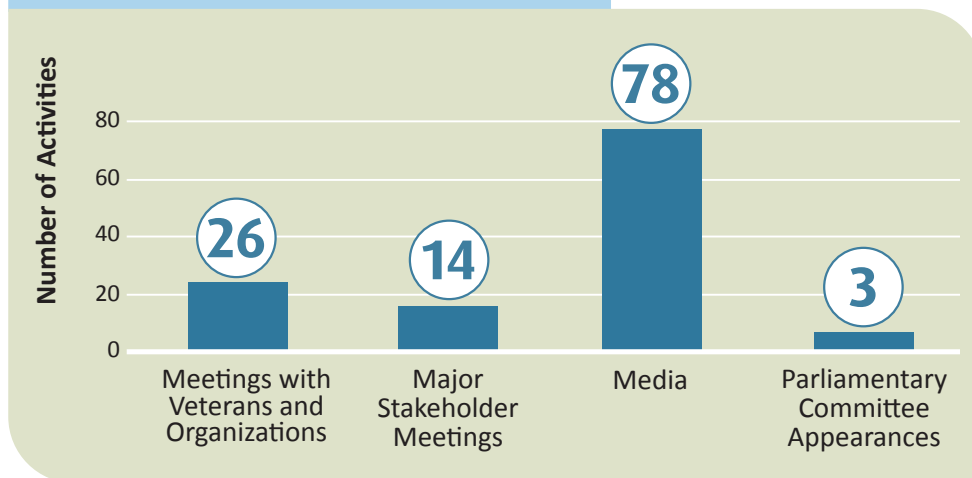
Across the country, meaningful engagement with Veterans and their families, key Veteran stakeholders, and advocates remained a central pillar of our outreach efforts this year. We met with Indigenous Veterans, community representatives, and organizations such as Rainbow Veterans of Canada to better understand their lived experiences and the distinct barriers they face in accessing VAC's programs and services. These engagements helped ensure that a broad range of perspectives informed our work.

We also hosted virtual stakeholder briefings in support of our latest systemic report, providing space for meaningful dialogue, feedback, and shared learning. In addition, the OVO contributed

to national and international discussions by sharing its insights at conferences and events, including an in-person engagement in Norway and a virtual presentation to the International Association of Ombuds of the Armed Forces Conference in South Africa. Throughout the year, the Veterans Ombud and Deputy Ombud appeared before Parliamentary Committees on three occasions.

Collectively, these engagements across the country and internationally strengthened our understanding of individual and systemic issues, increased awareness of the OVO's mandate, and supported informed discussion on matters affecting Veterans and their families.

## 2025-2026 Outreach Activities



“ It took four years, but we completed our outreach goal to visit every major Canadian Armed Forces Base and Wing and conduct town halls for CAF and RCMP members, Veterans, Survivors, and their families.”

Colonel (Retired)  
Nishika Jardine  
Veterans Ombud

## Cross-Canada Outreach

Where we engaged with Veterans, families, Survivors, stakeholders, and interest groups in 2025-2026

### In Canada

- Yukon
- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Manitoba
- Ontario
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Nova Scotia
- Prince Edward Island

### Internationally

- Norway



# TRUST MATTERS – SPEAKING UP FOR VETERANS

The Veterans Ombud and Deputy Ombud appeared before Parliamentary Committees in the House of Commons on three occasions during the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Key highlights from these appearances are outlined below.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS (ACVA)

### BRIEFING BY THE VETERANS OMBUD – SEPTEMBER 2025

- Highlighted expanded national outreach efforts, which increased awareness of the Office and contributed to a 35% rise in complaints, while noting that most Veterans report positive experiences with VAC.
- Identified key systemic challenges, including access to primary health care upon release, benefit wait times, and fairness issues affecting women Veterans and families.
- Reinforced the Office’s role in rebuilding trust through transparency, addressing unfairness, and advocating for improved communication and support – particularly for families impacted by service.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE (FINA)

### BILL C-15, AN ACT TO IMPLEMENT CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE BUDGET TABLED IN PARLIAMENT ON NOVEMBER 4, 2025—FEBRUARY 2026

- Welcomed Budget 2025 investments aimed at reducing disability benefit wait times, while highlighting persistent gaps, including the absence of dedicated mental health supports for Veterans’ families.
- Raised concerns regarding retroactive provisions in Bill C-15 affecting long-term care accommodation and meals contributions. The Veterans Ombud had formally written to the Minister on December 12, 2025, warning that these measures would legitimize past overcharges and deny compensation to affected Veterans.
- Asked the government to remove these provisions to ensure fairness and accountability; however, the legislation ultimately passed in April 2026, reinforcing the need to rebuild trust with Veterans.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS (ACVA)

### MONITORING OF THE REHABILITATION SERVICES CONTRACT AWARDED TO PCVRS – MARCH 2026

- Reported that complaints to our Office related to the rehabilitation services contract remain low and largely case-specific, with no evidence of systemic issues to date.
- Noted recurring concerns from Veterans regarding communication challenges, delays, and the burden of repeated assessments, particularly for those with traumatic experiences.
- Emphasized ongoing monitoring of the program, raising broader questions about its effectiveness and outcomes, while reaffirming a commitment to act if systemic issues emerge.

# FEATURED CASES

Featured cases are real examples of complaints brought to the OVO by Veterans, Survivors, or family members who experienced unfair treatment, errors, or unreasonable delays in their interactions with VAC. These cases highlight how we investigated individual concerns, identified administrative or systemic unfairness, and how VAC resolved matters so that Veterans and their families received the benefits, services, or decisions they were entitled to.



## PHYSIOTHERAPY FOR TINNITUS FINALLY APPROVED<sup>1</sup>

**ISSUE:** VAC refused to cover physiotherapy treatment for a Veteran suffering from service-related pulsatile tinnitus - which is tinnitus with a rhythmic, pulsing, or whooshing sound that aligns with one's heartbeat. It is often caused by issues with blood vessels in the head and neck.

The Veteran had intense ear and neck pain that often interrupted their sleep. Both the specialist and the audiologist believed the condition was linked to jaw and neck issues and recommended physiotherapy, which VAC would not cover, so the Veteran chose to pursue it at their own expense.

After nine sessions, the Veteran had significant improvements in posture, mobility, and tinnitus symptoms. VAC continued to deny the request for coverage, saying that physiotherapy was not a recognized treatment for pulsatile tinnitus.

**ACTION:** The Veteran reached out to us for assistance. Upon review, we found the denial of coverage to be unfair. Health professionals had prescribed the treatment, and the Veteran had made real, documented progress. We pointed out the unfairness to VAC and asked for reconsideration of the decision.

**RESULT:** VAC reviewed the case and changed its decision. The Veteran now receives full coverage for physiotherapy to help manage their pulsatile tinnitus.

## REIMBURSEMENT APPROVED FOR GLUCOSE MONITORING DEVICE<sup>2</sup>

**ISSUE:** A Veteran living with Type 2 diabetes contacted us after VAC denied their request for a Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM), which was prescribed by their doctor for severe nighttime hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. A CGM is a wearable device that tracks blood sugar every few minutes on a constant basis. The Veteran needed a CGM because it would alert them if their blood sugar level fell too low while they were sleeping at night. Their request was denied by VAC because a CGM is generally prescribed for people with Type 1 diabetes.

**ACTION:** We found that the Veteran's request was missing some important information. We encouraged them to ask their doctor to provide an explanation as to the medical necessity for a CGM. When the doctor provided that additional information, we sent a reconsideration request to VAC.

**RESULT:** VAC reviewed the case with the additional medical information and approved the Veteran's request to be reimbursed for the CGM. This decision recognized the Veteran's need for continuous glucose monitoring to protect their health.



To read more about how we've made a difference in the lives of Veterans and their families, visit the Featured Cases [section](#) on our website.

<sup>1</sup> Published August 8, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Published November 16, 2025.

# OUR CLIENTS

During the year, the Intervention Services Directorate received 2,257 complaints and information requests; the highest volume recorded since the OVO was established in 2007, and an increase of 409 files over the previous year. This reflects not only growing demand for our services, but also the confidence and trust clients place in the Veterans Ombud to help resolve their concerns.

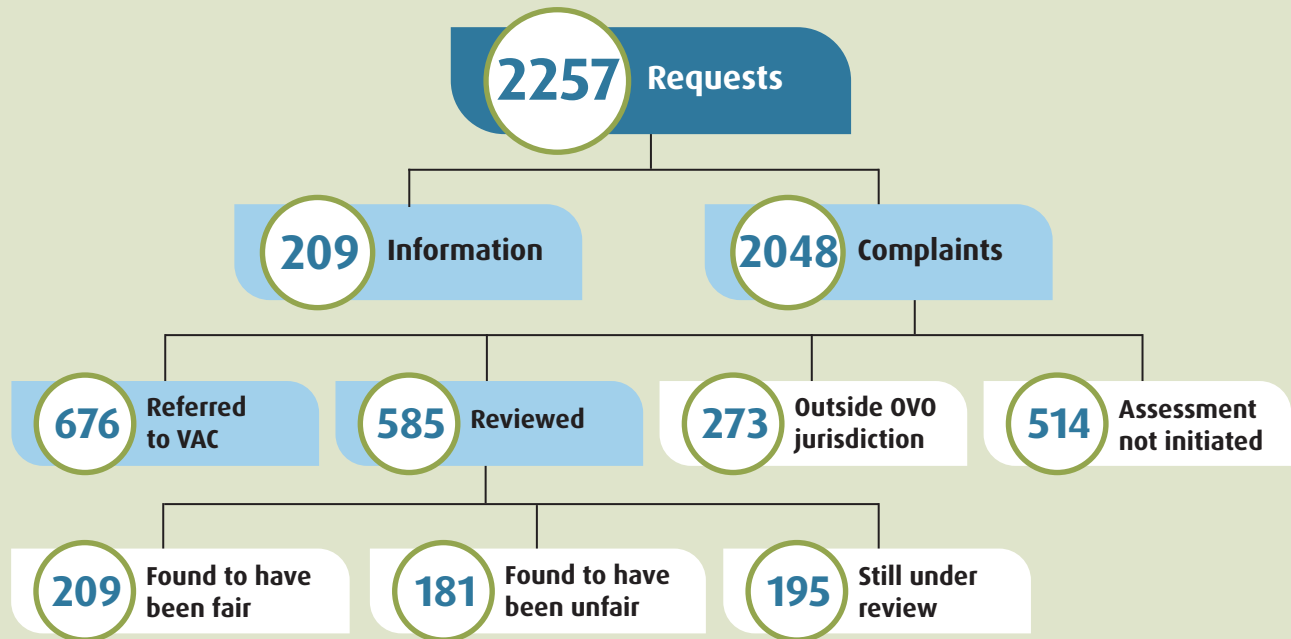
While this increased volume placed additional pressure on service delivery, the OVO investigated 81% of complaints within 60 working days, slightly below the established service standard of 85%. The complaints and information requests received continue to span the full range of VAC programs and services.

The most common concerns raised by clients related to treatment benefit decisions, disability benefit wait times, and communication issues associated with rehabilitation and case management services.

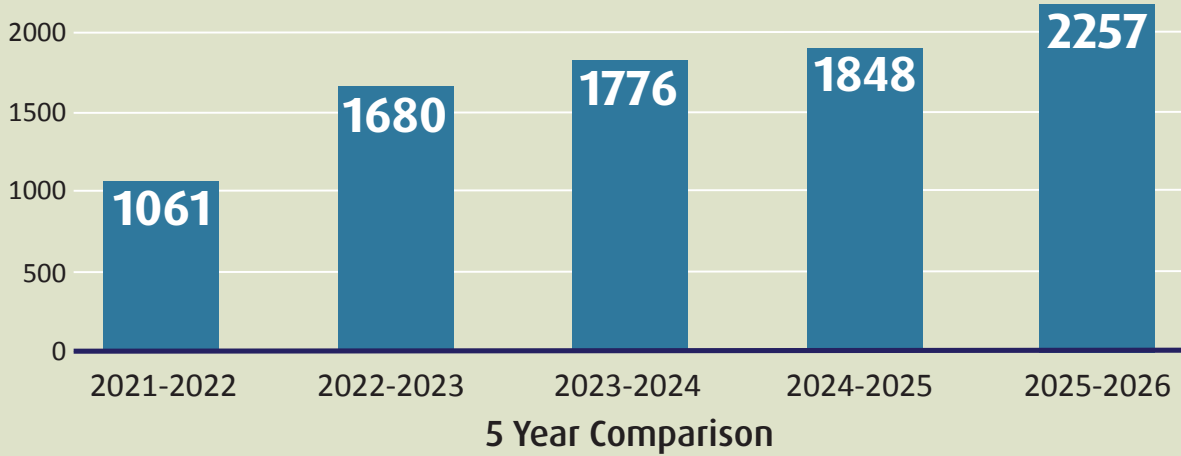
## Intervention by Numbers

### Frontline Service Statistics April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026

Service Complaint Investigation **85%** Service Standard 60 working days **81%** Achieved



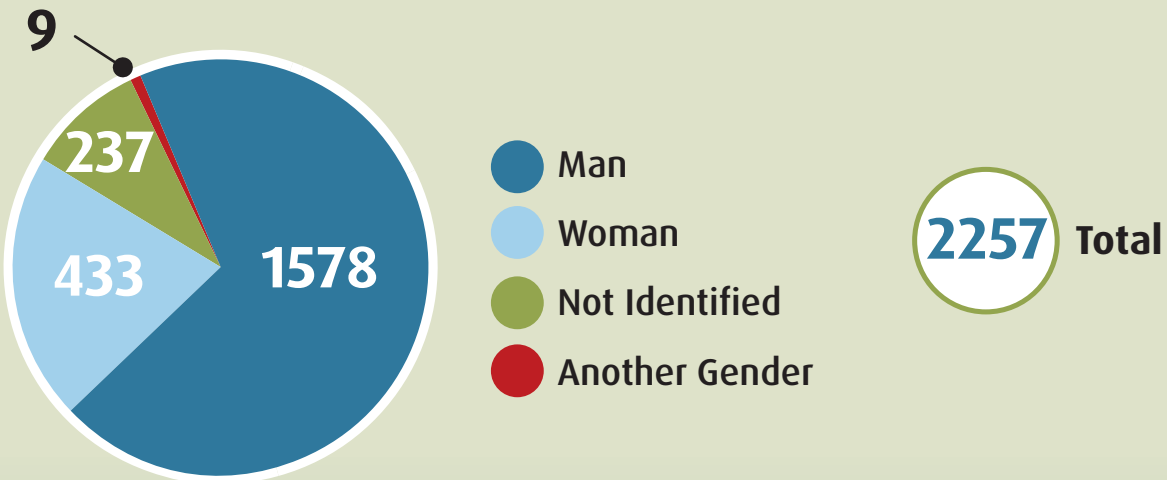
## Number of Complaints and Information Requests



“ I believe we have made strong progress in increasing awareness of the Office, reflected in the steady year-over-year rise in calls and complaints since 2022. ”

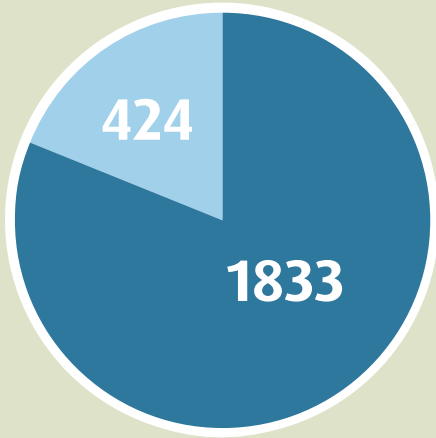
Colonel (Retired) Nishika Jardine  
Veterans Ombud

## Clients by Gender<sup>3</sup>



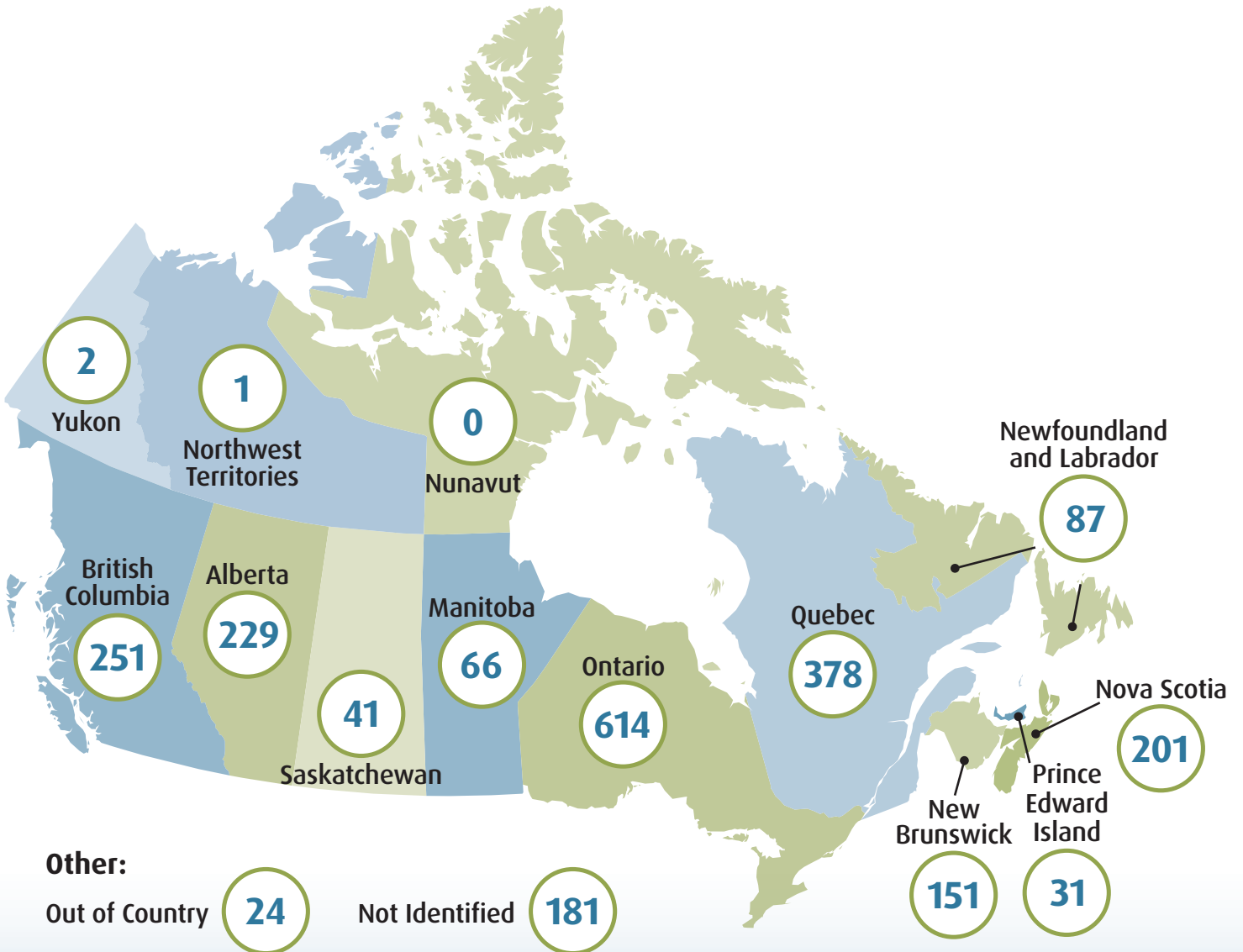
<sup>3</sup> Client complaints by gender breakdown.

## Preferred Language<sup>4</sup>



**2257** Total

## Client Complaints/Inquiries by Province and Territory<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Client complaints by preferred language.

<sup>5</sup> These are complaints and inquiries by geographical location. There may be more than one complaint per client, therefore not necessarily indicative of total clients.

## Complaints by Client Category<sup>6</sup>

Allied Veteran	5	Former Regular Force	1285	Serving Regular Force	73
Civilian	36	Former Reserve Force	198	Serving Reserve Force	29
Former RCMP Civilian	1	Merchant Marine	2	Survivor/Family	64
Former RCMP	75	Police – Peacekeeping Missions	1	Traditional Veteran	7
Serving RCMP	35	Serving RCMP Civilian	6	Unknown	440
					<b>2257</b> Total

## Clients by Age<sup>7</sup>

Under 20	0	50-59	538	90-99	13
20-29	27	60-69	476	100-109	3
30-39	266	70-79	130	Not Identified	290
40-49	462	80-89	52		

<sup>6</sup> Complaints and inquiries by client category, as opposed to individual numbers of clients. Some duplication may occur if a complaint is made by a client whose service falls into different categories.

<sup>7</sup> Client complaints by age breakdown of complainant.

# REPORTING ON SYSTEMIC UNFAIRNESS AND SIMPLIFYING INFORMATION

In 2025-2026, our Strategic Review and Analysis team continued its efforts to identify systemic unfairness in VAC programs and services. Where systemic unfairness was found, we put forward recommendations to address them. We also continued to ask the Department to implement our outstanding recommendations, which are outlined in our annual [Spotlight](#) report.

During the year, we released a systemic report on the Veterans Affairs Canada internal review process, which included three new recommendations. In addition, we published two educational resources designed to support Veterans navigating VAC's programs and services.

## REPORTS

### THE VETERANS AFFAIRS INTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS

We launched this [review](#)<sup>8</sup> to assess whether the Veterans Affairs Canada internal review process is fair. This internal review process applies to appeals of decisions under the *Veterans Health Care Regulations* as well as Parts 1, 1.1, 2, and 3.1 of the *Veterans Well-being Act*. VAC provides two levels of review for these decisions.

Our review found systemic unfairness in two areas of the VAC Internal Review Process. We found that the reasons provided in decision letters often did not meet the requirements for fair reasons set out by the Supreme Court of Canada. We also found certain differences in the rules for reviewing decisions depending on the benefit and the level of appeal, and VAC policy and other guidance to decision makers are unclear on some of these differences.

“Veterans tell me, “I don’t even understand why I have been denied.” In many cases, the letters did not even address the points raised by the Veteran in their request for review. VAC must do a better job to earn Veterans’ trust that their concerns will be addressed fairly and properly and in a timely fashion.”

Colonel (Retired) Nishika Jardine  
Veterans Ombud

<sup>8</sup> Published December 3, 2025.

## Recommendations

- 1 Ensure National First Level Appeals (N1LA) and National Second Level Appeals (N2LA) decision letters contain reasons for the decision that:
  - a) show that the decision maker considered all relevant client submissions;
  - b) follow an understandable chain of reasoning from the evidence to the decision outcome in the context of the applicable rules; and
  - c) explain how any competing evidence was weighed.
- 2 Clarify in policy and training that the first level review authority for decisions under Part 1, Part 1.1, Part 2 and Part 3.1 of the *Veterans Well-being Act* is broader than its second level review authority, and instruct that the first level review decision maker should take a fresh look at the evidence rather than narrowly verify that the decision under review was free from error.
- 3 Add a Minister's own motion authority to the *Veterans Health Care Regulations*.

## SPOTLIGHT 2025

[Spotlight 2025](#)<sup>9</sup> continued our annual practice, since 2017, of tracking the Department's progress toward implementing our systemic recommendations.

We also continued the practice, introduced in 2023, of reporting on whether VAC has accepted each outstanding recommendation.

Spotlight 2025 highlighted progress that the Department has made, including advancing gender equity in certain areas of disability benefit adjudication. At the same time, the report underscored a number of longstanding recommendations that remain unimplemented and require further action.

Among these, we reiterated the importance of VAC addressing our 2021 recommendation to provide mental health treatment benefits for family members in their own right, when their mental health has been impacted by their family member's service.

## RESOURCES

### HOW TO ACCESS THE SERVICES YOU NEED FROM VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

Accessing VAC services can be an overwhelming process. If you are a former RCMP member or CAF Veteran seeking assistance from VAC, there are options available to help connect you to the services you need. We designed this [resource](#)<sup>10</sup> to help connect Veterans and their families with the services they need, when they need them.

### HOW YOUR INCOME REPLACEMENT BENEFIT (IRB) IS CALCULATED

Our Office receives complaints and inquiries related to the IRB regularly. This [resource](#)<sup>11</sup> was designed to help Veterans and their families understand this complex benefit, particularly the factors that determine the amount of the income replacement benefit they may receive.

<sup>9</sup> Published September 4, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Published May 21, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Published July 10, 2025.

## DIGITAL PRESENCE & ENGAGEMENT

Our website remains a trusted resource for Veterans and their families to access information and submit complaints and inquiries. In 2025-2026, we recorded 76,809 visitors to our website, more than double the number of visitors from last year. Visitors accessed the website from every Canadian province and territory, as well as from countries around the world. The highest levels of web traffic originated from Ontario and Quebec.

The majority of visits continued to be to the English-language pages, with approximately 7% of active users accessing the French-language content. Our systemic reports and resource guides drew the most attention. The significant increase in website traffic observed this year reflects growing awareness of our Office and increased demand for information and support services.

### Web Users By Language

English	<b>68,474</b>	Spanish	<b>77</b>
French	<b>5,115</b>	Other	<b>1,240</b>
Chinese	<b>1,903</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>76,809</b>

### Top 5 Pages Visited on our Website

[Care at Home-Resource Guide](#)




[Full and Fair Payment of Pain and Suffering Compensation](#)

[Submit an Inquiry or Complaint](#)

[Adjudication of Sexual Dysfunction Claims Consequential to an Entitled Psychiatric Condition](#)

[How Your Income Replacement Benefit is Calculated](#)

### Social Media

Platform			
Total followers	<b>9,486</b>	<b>2,916</b>	<b>3,269</b>
Page and profile reach	<b>1,042,974</b>	<b>67,216 people</b>	<b>N/A<sup>13</sup></b>
Post visibility <sup>12</sup>	<b>1,070,346</b>	<b>70,757 people</b>	<b>13,795 impressions<sup>14</sup></b>

<sup>12</sup> The primary metric to measure visibility on X is impressions, whereas Facebook and Instagram measure visibility with reach. Reach is defined as the number of unique accounts (people) who saw the content.

<sup>13</sup> X does not provide a directly comparable page/profile reach metric; post impressions are reported instead.

<sup>14</sup> Impressions are defined as the number of times a piece of content is displayed or shown to users, whether or not they interact with it.

# VETERANS OMBUD COMMENDATIONS

The annual Veterans Ombud Commendations recognize outstanding individuals and groups who demonstrate a strong commitment to the Veteran community through their dedication and selfless service. Recipients are nominated by their peers in recognition of their exceptional contributions to improving the lives of Veterans and their families. In November 2025, we had the honour of recognizing seven individuals and one local organization during a virtual ceremony.

## 2025 RECIPIENTS

### Lifetime Contribution

Alexander Tsang (1947-2025)  
Brian Forbes (1948-2024)

### Individual Contribution

Sandra Conlin  
Lisa Cyr  
Stan Dewar  
David Mushing  
Vivienne Stewart

### Local Organization

ANAVETS Bras d'Or Unit #381



# VETERANS OMBUD ADVISORY COUNCIL (VOAC)

The VOAC provides advice to the Veterans Ombud on matters related to the OVO's mandate. Drawing on the varied backgrounds and experiences of its members, the Council offers perspectives from across the Veteran community on issues and topics relevant to the Office's work. During the year, Council members shared insights on emerging issues and contributed observations to OVO's activities. VOAC members supported awareness of the OVO and its mandate within the Veteran Community through their networks and engagement.

## MEMBERS 2025-2026

**Beth Basinger** has been trained as a registered nurse and has been with her retired CAF spouse for 34 years through 11 postings and four deployments. They have moved their family to four provinces and one US state throughout his military career. She has actively supported military families at each posting and has been involved with both Military Family Services (MFS) and the Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC).

**Jane Hall** (née Greenwood) was born on Wolfe Island, Ontario and received a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education before joining the RCMP where she served 21 years from 1977-1998. Post-service she authored *The Red Wall: A Woman in the RCMP*. Jane has been a member of the RCMP Veterans Association since 1998 in addition to serving as co-chair of the Women in Leadership: Public Safety Leadership Development Consortium 2009-2013, Chair of the RCMP Veteran Women's Council 2013-present, past president of Police Futurists International (PFI) 2018-19, and a member of Women Veterans Research Network (WREN) 2019-present. She is currently a lecturer for the Law Enforcement Institute of Texas (LEMITE) program on Police Organizational Culture. Jane has been the recipient of the RCMP Long Service Medal (1997), Paul Harris Fellow for Humanitarian work with Rotary International, shortlisted for the Edna Stabler Award for Creative Non-Fiction, Sir Wilfrid Laurier University, and 2025 recipient of the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation.

**Wendy-Anne Jocko** joined the CAF in 1979 and served for 23 years. Throughout her career she served in Edmonton, Calgary, Chilliwack, Petawawa, and completed two tours in Bosnia and Croatia. Wendy-Anne is currently the Indigenous Liaison with Innovation7, and a committee member with the Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council. Prior to this she was the Chief of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, leading them through the COVID-19 pandemic and on to a Treaty and Self-Government.

**Brigitte Laverdure**, retired Airframe Technician, was born in Magog, Québec, and joined the CAF in 1980. Medically released after 19 years of service, she and her spouse have been helping Veterans obtain benefits from Veterans Affairs Canada. Brigitte received a Veterans Ombud Commendation in 2020 for her work supporting and advocating for Veterans in the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

**Jay Milne** Major General John (Jay) Milne (retired), MSM, CD, served 38 years in the CAF as a Signal Officer in the Regular Force and as an Armoured Officer in the Primary Reserve. He has commanded the troop, squadron, unit, and brigade levels, and has served in different capacities at the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ). Before releasing in 2018, he served as special advisor to the Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs.

**Fern Taillefer** began his military journey as an Army Cadet with the 204 Algonquin Cadet Corps in North Bay, Ontario, where he spent four years, attaining the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major. Fern served in the CAF from 1974 to 1996, and since his retirement, he has dedicated his life to serving those who served. In 2022, Fern received a Veterans Ombud Commendation for his longstanding commitment to Veterans.

**Stephen Walker** Staff Sergeant Stephen Walker (retired) served 31 years in the RCMP. Throughout his career, he served in the province of Manitoba as a police officer in rural and Indigenous communities. He was posted to Detachments, Major Crime, Organized Crime units, and was a Staff Relations Representative for the RCMP in Manitoba. He has also served on various committees and boards of directors during and since his service with the RCMP.

# LOOKING AHEAD

As we look ahead, we expect demand for our services to remain strong, reflecting increased awareness of our Office and ongoing systemic issues affecting those VAC serves.

Over the next fiscal year we anticipate publishing a Survivors Resource Guide, a guide to help widows and widowers navigate the complexities of benefits offered by VAC and a systemic report on exceptional treatment benefits.

We will continue to attend select in-person events, while expanding our virtual outreach to better connect with Veterans and their families across Canada and abroad – especially those who are not able to meet us in person. We will continue to share how we can support Veterans and their families, while just as importantly, create space to listen – hearing directly from Veterans, their families, and stakeholders about their experiences with VAC benefits and services.



JUNE 2026

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as represented by the Minister of Veterans Affairs, 2026

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