



Veterans Review and
Appeal Board Canada

Tribunal des anciens combattants
(révision et appel) Canada

Minister's Transition Book

January 2025



Minister’s Transition Book

Veterans Review and Appeal Board
Submitted on behalf of Christopher J. McNeil, Chairperson
January 2025

Table of Contents

- Minister’s Quick Reference Lines 3
- General Overview..... 3
- Briefing Notes..... 9
 - VRAB BUDGET 2023 FUNDING 9
 - VETERAN WAIT TIMES 11
- Governor in Council Appointment Process for Board Members 13
- Board Member Biographies..... 16
 - New Board Members 23
- Key Contacts..... 28
- Annex A – Governor in Council Quasi-Judicial (GCQ) and Orders in Council (OIC) 29

Minister's Quick Reference Lines

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

- The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring Veterans receive the benefits they are entitled to for service-related disabilities.
- The Veterans Review and Appeal Board plays an important role in the disability benefits system: it ensures Veterans and other applicants have an independent avenue of Appeal for their disability benefits decisions.
- The Board is an independent organization, operating at arm's length from the Department.
- For this reason, I am unable to comment on the decisions or other adjudicative affairs of the Board.
- Questions related to Board decisions and policies should be directed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

General Overview

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) provides Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members and their families with an independent Appeal process for disability benefits decisions made by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC, the Department). The Board operates at arm's length from the Department/Minister to ensure a fair and independent Appeal process for applicants.

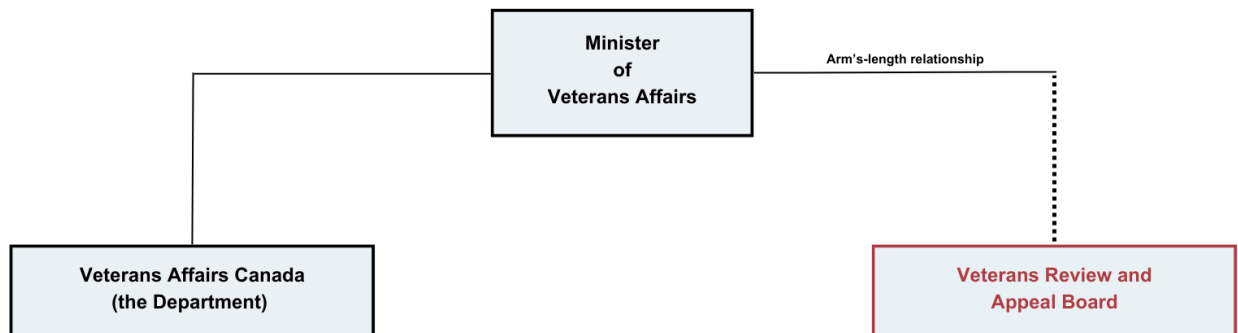
Veterans who are not satisfied with a VAC decision on disability benefits have the right to two levels of redress at the Board: a Review Hearing and an Appeal Hearing. At both levels of redress, applicants may bring forward new information and present arguments at their Hearing, where no one is arguing against them. Applicants who are still not satisfied with an Appeal decision can apply to the Board for a Reconsideration if certain conditions exist. All applicants have access to free legal representation by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA). Some Veteran organizations, like the Royal Canadian Legion, also offer advice and representation.

The Board's program is governed by the *Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act* and delivered by staff from our head office in Charlottetown, and by Board Members across the country. The Chair of the Board is accountable for the delivery of the Appeal program and reports directly to Parliament through the Minister of Veterans Affairs. The Minister may require the Chair to report on performance and on the use of the Board's resources; however, the Board operates at arm's length with respect to all adjudicative matters.

What we do for Veterans

- Ensure that Canada's Veterans receive the disability benefits to which they are entitled
- Provide timely, respectful and Veteran-centric Hearings
- Deliver fair, plain-language, and timely decisions with well explained reasons

An Independent Board



Our Organization

- Quasi-judicial administrative tribunal led by a Chair (Deputy Head), supported by a Deputy Chair, that operates independently of the Minister and/or Veterans Affairs Canada
- Reports directly to Parliament through the Minister
- Board Members are appointed by the Governor in Council through a merit-based selection process, and hold Hearings at locations across the country
- The Board's program is delivered by more than 100 staff from its head office in Charlottetown, PE.

Member Overview

There is a diversity of professional experience among the current Members of the Board. Members qualify for appointment through a selection process managed by the Privy Council Office and are appointed by the Governor in Council on recommendation from the Minister of Veterans Affairs. All Members undergo a comprehensive training program. The Board also supports Members in making fair and well-reasoned decisions through ongoing training, quality review of decisions, and performance feedback.

- As of January 31, 2025 there are 35 Board Members, including the Chair and Deputy Chair
- 15 of the current Board Members joined the Board in January 2025.
- 11 of these Board Members have been given 2-year temporary appointments, as part of the Board's Budget 2023 funding
- Eight Board Members work in Charlottetown and 27 are deployed across Canada

- Regional representation:
 - Eastern: 12 Members (34%)
 - Quebec: 6 Members (17%)
 - Ontario: 13 Members (37%)
 - Western: 4 Members (11%)
- Board Members have varied professional experience, including Veterans (CAF and RCMP), lawyers and law enforcement, and public service
- Gender representation:
 - Male: 20 Members (57%)
 - Female: 15 Members (43%)
- Bilingual:
 - 22 Members (63%)
- Employment Equity representation (Indigenous and/or Visible Minority and/or Disability(ies))
 - 12 Members (34%)

Member Appointment Process

- Applicants are screened and assessed against merit-based criteria:
 - Written assessment, interviews and reference checks
- A roster of qualified candidates is established and recommended to the Minister of Veterans Affairs
- The Board Chair advises the Minister of appointment needs in terms of operational requirements, location, language, gender, diversity and experience
- Minister recommends candidates for appointment by the Governor in Council
- High priority is placed on appointments to ensure there is a sufficient complement of Members to provide timely Hearings and decisions

Guiding Legislation

- Applications for Appeal are made to the VRAB under the [*Pension Act*](#), the [*Veterans Well-being Act - Part 3*](#), the [*War Veterans Allowance Act*](#) and other Acts of Parliament
- All matters related to Appeals are authorized under the [*Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act*](#)
- The VRAB also receives Appeal applications for on duty-related pension cases made under the [*Royal Canadian Mounted Police Pension Continuation Act*](#) and the [*Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act*](#)

Avenue for Redress

The Board provides an independent avenue of Appeal for VAC decisions relating to:

- Disability Pensions

- Disability Awards
- Pain and Suffering Compensation
- Additional Pain and Suffering Compensation
- Critical Injury Benefit
- Detention Benefit
- Survivor's Pension
- War Veterans Allowance
- Compassionate Award
- Special Awards (Exceptional Incapacity Allowance; Attendance Allowance; Clothing Allowance)

Applications to the Board

In general, the Board receives two kinds of applications:

- those for entitlement to benefits based on the relationship between the claimed disability and/or condition and service; and
- those related to the level of assessment based on the extent or severity of the disability.

In 2023-24, 76 percent of the cases that came to the Board were for new/increased entitlement, while 24 per cent of cases that came to the Board were for assessment increases.

Top 5 medical conditions based on applications received by the Board in 2023-24:

- Tinnitus
- Hearing loss
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Low back conditions
- Knee conditions
- Other examples include anxiety/depressive disorders, neck conditions, etc.

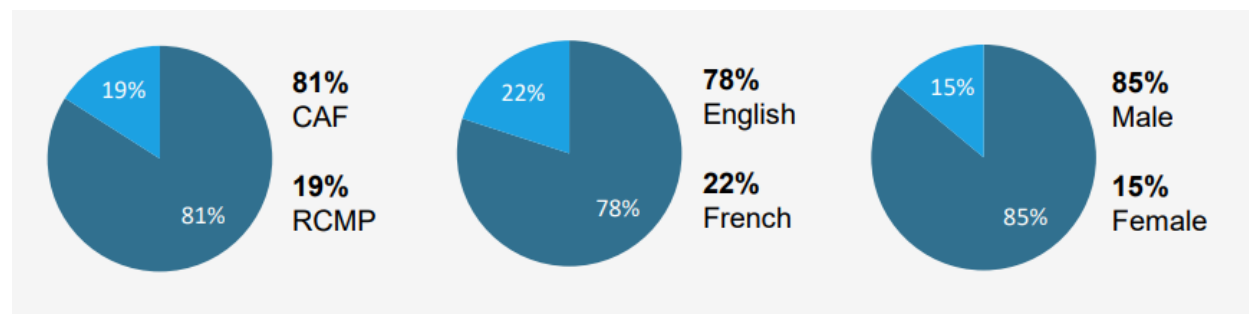
Our Workload in Context

Veterans who are dissatisfied with their VAC disability benefits decision can apply to the Board for an independent review of that decision, and to the BPA for free legal representation before the Board.

The Board's workload is primarily correlated with that of the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA). In 2023-24, approximately 32 per cent of the BPA's work proceeded to the Board.

Client Demographics (2023-2024)

The following provides further information on the demographics of the clients that applied to the Board in 2023-24.



Our Decisions (2023-2024)

Volume:

- 5,795 total decisions of which, 4,755 were Review, 666 Appeal and 374 Reconsideration
- The Board awarded new or increased benefits (a favourable decision) to 87 per cent of the cases it heard
- Ability to rule favourably often due to:
 - New evidence (e.g. testimony, medical opinions)
 - Arguments by representative
 - Application of benefit of the doubt and most liberal interpretation

Hearing Process

- As stated above, Veterans have the right to two levels of redress if they are dissatisfied with a VAC decision: a Review Hearing and an Appeal Hearing
- No time limits or amount of times a claim may be appealed are placed on these rights
- Fresh new look at their application and the opportunity to submit written statements and new evidence
- Informal Hearings - no one opposes the Veteran
- All Veterans have access to free legal representation by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates
- Some Veterans' organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, also offer free advice and representation
- Veterans may also access private legal representation (out of pocket)
- Veterans can bring witnesses and/or support person(s) with them

Review Hearing

- Veteran's only opportunity to present oral testimony and share their story
- Hearings are conducted by panels of two Board Members and held across Canada
- Veteran is present with their representative (in-person or via teleconference)
- Veteran is affirmed before the Hearing starts
- Board Members explain the Hearing process
- Board Members may ask questions to better understand the case
- Non-oppositional process, with only one Member needed to make a favourable decision

Appeal Hearing

- If the Veteran is not satisfied with the Review decision, an Appeal Hearing is another opportunity to provide evidence and arguments through a representative to a new panel of three Board Members
- Held by video or teleconference
- No oral testimony from the Veteran
- Opportunity for Veteran to have a Reconsideration Hearing if there is an error of fact or law, or new evidence is established
- Veteran has the right to apply for a Judicial Review under the *Federal Courts Act* if all Appeal options have been exhausted

Evidence

- Health Evidence
 - Health documentation (e.g. medical exams and surgery reports)
 - Expert opinions (e.g. report on the status and origins of the disability)
- Documentary Evidence
 - Service records
- Witness Statement(s)
 - Opportunity to confirm circumstances or describe incidents
- Testimony
 - Personal testimony provided at the Review Hearing that describes the disability, incident or military service
 - New evidence that Veterans Affairs Canada did not have

For more information, visit our [website](#) or check out our [informational videos](#).

Briefing Notes

VRAB BUDGET 2023 FUNDING

January 6, 2025

PURPOSE

To provide information on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's Budget 2023 funding.

SUMMARY

- As of September 2023, there were five times more Veterans waiting for a VRAB decision than there were in fiscal year 2019-20.
- Prior to 2022, the Board had not seen an increase in its annual budget in more than a decade.
- Through Budget 2023, the Board secured \$59.9 M over five years and \$3.7M ongoing.
- In addition to increasing the number of Board staff, this funding has allowed for the hiring of temporary Board Members to support the Board in hearing more cases and issuing more decisions on behalf of Veterans.
- Budget 2023 funding has also provided operating funding that will allow the Board to invest in employee training, travel, and equipment.

BACKGROUND

- As a result of the significant increase in Veterans Affairs Canada's (VAC's) processing of applications in recent years to address its backlog, the Board has seen an increase in the amount of applications received since 2020. As of September 2023, there were five times more Veterans waiting for a VRAB decision than there were in fiscal year 2019-20.
- The Board was successful in its Budget 2022 Treasury Board submission and received two years (2022-23 and 2023-24) of temporary funding (\$8.5M). This funding allowed the Board to add temporary resources focused on increased decision-making for Veterans.
- In 2022, the Board received direction to work with VAC and the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA) to develop a long-term strategy to reduce wait times for Veterans. This strategy, the Budget 2023 Treasury Board submission, was also successful, and saw the Board secure \$59.9M over five fiscal years (2023-24 through 2027-28) and \$3.7M ongoing.

CURRENT STATUS

- As of January 1, 2025, the Board has rendered a total of 8,986 (approximately 28%) of the target of 32,386 decisions to be achieved over the five years of funding.
- In January 2025, the Board added four new permanent and 11 new temporary Board Members. This will increase the Board's decision-making capacity each year by more than 20%, ultimately reducing the Board's backlog.
- The Board has filled the permanent positions funded through Budget 2023. As of January 1, 2025, approximately 78% of the temporary positions have been filled; this number fluctuates due to attrition.
- Since receiving Budget 2023 funding, the Board has seen improvements in its 16-week service standard. As of November 30, 2024, the percentage of decisions issued in 2024-25 within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board their case was ready to be heard was 89%, up from 57% one year prior.

ISSUES

- The new temporary Board Members approved via Budget 2023 were forecasted to begin rendering decisions in 2024-25. Due to delays in the Governor in Council appointment process, they will begin to hear cases in 2025-26. The temporary funding for the majority of these Members ends at the end of 2026-27, placing the goal of reaching the decision target at risk.

NEXT STEPS

- The Board will continue to implement its Budget 2023 project and monitor impacts on decision volumes and service standards, all to continue service improvements for Veterans.

VETERAN WAIT TIMES

January 6, 2025

PURPOSE

To provide information on Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) wait times for Veterans.

SUMMARY

- The Board has seen a significant increase in the amount of applications received since 2020.
- Through Budget 2023, the Board secured \$59.9 M over five years and \$3.7 M ongoing to support the Board in hearing more cases and issuing more decisions on behalf of Veterans. The Board has made significant improvements to wait times and service standards since receiving this additional funding. *(See the included “VRAB Budget Funding 2023” briefing note for more information.)*

BACKGROUND

- As a result of a significant increase in applications processed by VAC in recent years, the Board has seen a 45% increase in the amount of applications received since 2020.
- In 2018-19 the Board had 1,500 pending cases. In 2023-24 the Board reached 7,742 pending cases.
- To mitigate these workload pressures, the Board explored new ways of working and sought additional funding to support the long-term effective delivery of its program. Through Budget 2023, the Board secured \$59.9 M over five years and \$3.7 M ongoing. In addition to increasing the number of Board staff, this funding has allowed for the hiring of temporary Board Members to hear more cases and issue more decisions on behalf of Veterans.
- The Board has service standards related to wait times, including:
 - to issue decisions within six weeks of the Hearing, and
 - to issue decisions within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board that the case is ready to be heard.

CURRENT STATUS

- The Board has made improvements in regard to its six week service standard since receiving Budget 2023 funding. As of November 30, 2024, 94% of decisions issued in 2024-25 were within six weeks of the Veteran’s case being heard. This was up from 46% as of November 30, 2023.

- Similarly, the Budget 2023 funding allowed for significant improvements in regard to the Board's 16 week service standard. As of November 30, 2024, the percentage of decisions issued in 2024-25 within 16 weeks of the applicant/representative notifying the Board their case was ready to be heard was 89%, up from 57% one year prior.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Despite improvements in service standards, the number of pending cases continues to rise. This increase can be attributed to several factors, including the delayed start of temporary Board Members. These new Members will begin to hear cases in 2025-26.
- While the influx in funding from Budget 2023 has allowed the Board to hire a significant amount of additional staff and Members, the majority of this funding is temporary.
- In 2023-24, the Board, together with the Bureau of Pensions Advocates, launched its Early Resolution Process. This process helps to resolve simple/single issue claims through an informal and streamlined process. The Board continues to use the Simplified Hearing Model to increase the volume of cases that can be heard and support timelier decisions. These initiatives have contributed to a 72% increase in the number of hearings held for Veterans over the past few years (4,640 in 2023-24, compared to 2,704 in 2020-21).
- Historically, turnaround times have been longer for female applicants. For instance, in 2023-24 the average turnaround time from when a case was registered with the Board until the decision was issued was 7 weeks longer for female applicants than male applicants. This might be owing to additional burdens and disadvantages women face when dealing with the medical system.
- Similarly, turnaround times for French clients have historically been longer than those for English clients. As an example, in 2023-24, the average turnaround time from when a case was registered with the Board until the decision was issued was nearly 22 weeks longer for French clients than English clients. However, with the hiring and retention of critical French and bilingual staff and Members, it is expected parity will be achieved between Francophone and Anglophone applicants.

NEXT STEPS

- The Board will continue to explore opportunities to improve the time within which it delivers decisions, including through the remaining implementation of Budget 2023.

Governor in Council Appointment Process for Board Members

Recruitment Advertisement

- Merit based criteria and vacancies are advertised through:
 - GIC appointments website
 - VRAB website
 - Social media channels
 - Gazette (quarterly)

Screening

- Past practice included the following as Members of the Selection Committee: VRAB Chair or Deputy Chair and representatives from PMO, OMVA, PCO, and VAC.
- Committee reviews applications against pre-determined education and experience criteria and recommends candidates for written assessment.

Written Assessment

- The Screening Committee recommends candidates to be interviewed based on assessment results.
- Administered by the VRAB and completed online by candidates.

Interviews

- Selection Committee assesses candidates through oral interviews and reference checks.

Establish Roster of Qualified Candidates

- Selection Committee uses results of written assessment, oral interview and reference checks to determine if candidates meet the qualification criteria and can be placed in the roster of qualified candidates.
- Chair recommends the roster of qualified candidates to the Minister.

VRAB Appointment Needs

- Chair advises the Minister of the Board's appointment needs in terms of operational requirements, location, language, gender, diversity and experience.

Appointment Process

- Candidates who meet the VRAB's appointment needs are drawn from the roster of qualified candidates for consideration by the Minister.
- Minister recommends candidate(s) for appointment by the Governor in Council.
- A representative of the Minister's Office and VRAB work together to prepare/obtain appointment documentation package for PCO.

Member (GIC) Reappointment Context/Process

Background

The selection process for GIC appointments reflects the fundamental role that more than 1,500 Canadians play in our democracy as they serve on commissions, boards, Crown corporations, agencies and tribunals across the country.

Following a selection process, a roster(s) of qualified candidates is established from which Ministers make appointment recommendations for positions within their respective portfolios. The new strategy results in the recommendation of high-quality candidates that reflect the gender balance and diversity of Canadian society.

- The Board should consist of up to 25 permanent Members and any number of temporary Members based on the workload of the Board
- All Members work full-time
- A permanent Member can be appointed for a term not exceeding 10 years and is eligible to be reappointed
- A temporary Member can be appointed for a term not exceeding two years and is eligible to be reappointed for one additional two-year term
- Permanent Members can be reappointed as temporary Members, and temporary Members can be reappointed as permanent Members

Context

Permanent Members have typically been appointed for terms of three to five years. To ensure high-quality, consistent decisions for Veterans, the Board must maintain a cadre of experienced Members alongside newly-appointed Members; it takes at least one year for a new Member to be comfortable in their role as an adjudicator and benefit from the mentorship of more experienced Members.

In order to ensure timely Hearings and decisions for Veterans, appointments and reappointments must be timely and coordinated with the Board's needs. It is useful to maintain a membership that reflects diversity, military, policing, health, and legal backgrounds, as well as lay people, to reflect Canadian society. The number, location, and language proficiency of Member appointments should align with the Board's workload and budget.

Reappointment Process

- **One year prior to the expiry of a Member's term:** The VRAB Chair notifies the Minister; the position then goes on PCO Vacancy Report.
- **Six months before a Member's term expires:** The Chair provides the Minister with a report on the Member's performance, as well as the Board's appointment needs for the next six to 12 months by taking into consideration performance, backgrounds, gender, language, diversity, geographic location and workload.
- **Six months before a Member's term expires:** The Minister makes a decision to reappoint a Member or not, and notifies them in writing of their decision.

Appointment Documentation

The Minister recommends candidate(s) for reappointment to the Governor in Council. At the request of the Minister's Office, the Board obtains and prepares appointment documentation to support the recommendation, including the draft Orders in Council. To ensure a timely new appointment or reappointment, appointment documents should be sent to PCO at least two months before the Member's term expires.

Board Member Biographies

Christopher J. McNeil, CHAIR

Christopher (Chris) McNeil was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in April 2015. He was appointed as Chairperson in July 2018 and reappointed in July 2023.

Mr. McNeil spent more than 30 years serving with the Halifax Regional Police before retiring in 2013 as Deputy Chief. Mr. McNeil has extensive public sector leadership experience. In the course of his career, he also acted as a workplace rights coordinator and adjudicator in discipline matters. In addition to his policing career, Mr. McNeil worked as a solicitor for the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

Mr. McNeil holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Saint Mary's University and a Law Degree from Dalhousie University.

Jacques (Jack) Bouchard, DEPUTY CHAIR

Jacques (Jack) A. Bouchard was appointed to the Board in July 2017. He was appointed as Deputy Chairperson in July 2018 and reappointed in July 2023.

Mr. Bouchard is a Veteran, with 36 years of service in Canada and abroad, and was deployed to Afghanistan. He is a Member of the Order of Military Merit.

Richard Boughen, BOARD MEMBER

Richard Boughen was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in July 2017. He was reappointed in July 2022.

Mr. Boughen brings more than 26 years of experience in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, during which he gained a wealth of expertise in leadership, human resource development, and policy creation.

Mr. Boughen holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba and a Master of Leadership and Management from Charles Sturt University.

Patrice Carrière, BOARD MEMBER

Patrice Carrière was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in August 2019. He was reappointed in August 2024.

Mr. Carrière is a Veteran with 32 years of service in the Canadian Armed Forces, having attained the rank of Commander. He has served with the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Medical Service and has been posted to various Navy, Army and Air

Force bases across Canada. His career includes specialization in health services administration and significant experience in military personnel management.

Mr. Carrière holds a Certificate in Health Care Administration from the University of Saskatchewan, a Bachelor of Arts from the Royal Military College of Canada and a Master of Arts from Central Michigan University.

Mylène Fortier, BOARD MEMBER

Mylène Fortier was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in July 2024.

Ms. Fortier worked as an Occupational Therapist for 15 years before becoming an advisor with Slogar in 2014, and eventually accepting the position of Associate Director in 2018. She went on to occupy the role of Senior Manager of Disability and Workplace Injuries with Bell Canada. Ms. Fortier has previous experience working as a Member for the Social Security Tribunal of Canada from 2023-24.

Ms. Fortier received her Bachelor in Occupational Therapy at the University of Laval. She also completed a Microprogram in Medical Insurance and Expertise at the University of Montreal.

Gabrielle F. Fortin, BOARD MEMBER

Gabrielle Fortin was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Ms. Fortin served in the Canadian Armed Forces before working as a regulated immigration consultant and as a director on the board of a national regulatory body. Ms. Fortin then worked as Executive Director for a non-profit organization with a mandate to promote bilingualism in Canada. More recently, Ms. Fortin worked for the Government of Canada on the project to modernize the *Official Languages Act*.

Ms. Fortin holds a Certificate in Immigration Law, Policies and Procedures, a B.A. in Public Affairs and International Relations and an Executive Master of Business Administration from Laval University.

Zine El Abidine (Zine) Ghediri, BOARD MEMBER

Zine Ghediri was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Mr. Ghediri has worked as a legal consultant for TRIAL International in Switzerland, a non-governmental organization that fights the impunity of international crimes and supports victims. Most recently, he worked as a Corporate Law Advisor for Thomson

Reuters and as an administrative decision maker for the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST). In 2022, he was appointed by the Minister of Public Safety as a part-time independent Chairperson of the Federal Penitentiary Disciplinary Tribunals in the Quebec region. His diverse professional experiences at the international and national levels have provided him with a solid background in interpreting and applying laws and decision-making.

Mr. Ghediri holds a Bachelor in Law from the Private University of Applied Sciences in Jordan, a Master's in International Law from the University of Nice in France, and a Certificate in Law from the University of Montreal.

Jason Glover, BOARD MEMBER

Jason Glover was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Mr. Glover has more than 15 years of experience in the public sector. He worked as a Probation and Parole Officer for the Ministry of Solicitor General in Ontario and as a Tribunal Member for the Employment & Social Development Canada Social Security Tribunal. Mr. Glover has held roles on numerous boards, including as Vice President of the Society of Ontario Adjudicators & Regulators, as President of the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTS) Alumni Association and as a Trustee on the Board of Directors for OPTrust.

Mr. Glover earned a Bachelor of Arts from UTS and has since completed the Director Education Program at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, and he has earned ICD.D Designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors. Prior to commencing his post-secondary education, Mr. Glover spent time as an Armoured Crewman with the Canadian Forces Primary Reserve.

Wilfred Jephson, BOARD MEMBER

Wilfred Jephson was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in October 2014. He was reappointed in October 2022.

Mr. Jephson spent 25 years in the RCMP. He has a strong operational background as an investigator, and gained experience in administrative and Human Resources support functions. During his career, he was posted in Manitoba, Nunavut, British Columbia and he finished his career in Ottawa at National Headquarters. He worked with international law enforcement partners while in Ottawa, and had the opportunity to work closely with the Canadian Armed Forces on a number of occasions including the Red River flood in 1997 and the 2010 Olympics. He also spent six years as a Staff Relations Representative (SRR) advocating for the well-being of RCMP members at both the Provincial level as well as the National level.

Mr. Jephson holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Manitoba and a Master of Arts in Conflict Analysis and Management from Royal Roads University.

Ann Lavallée, BOARD MEMBER

Ann Lavallée was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in July 2017. She was reappointed in July 2022.

Prior to joining the Board, she spent 32 years in the Canadian Armed Forces, retiring as a senior leader at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The last 14 years of her career were spent specializing in the fields of tuition benefits, healthcare and personnel management. Outside of her work, Ms. Lavallée has volunteered in her community, most recently with the Special Olympics of Ontario.

Ms. Lavallée holds a Bachelor of Arts from the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean and a Master of Business Administration from the Royal Military College of Canada.

Sean Layden, BOARD MEMBER

Sean Layden was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Mr. Layden brings 25 years of experience practicing law as a Partner for Boyneclarke LLP, and later as an Associate for Lenehan Musgrave LLP.

Mr. Layden earned a Bachelor of Arts from St. Francis Xavier University before graduating with a Bachelor of Law from Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law. He has been involved in various groups throughout his community, including serving as President of the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia. Mr. Layden was awarded the Queen's Counsel designation in 2011.

Mélanie Leduc, BOARD MEMBER

Mélanie Leduc was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in July 2017. She was reappointed in July 2022.

Ms. Leduc brings more than 15 years of experience with the federal government in the field of immigration. This work has given her a strong background in the interpretation and application of legislation and in decision-making.

Ms. Leduc holds a Bachelor of Criminology and a Bachelor of Law from the University of Montreal.

Christine Lewis Cossette, BOARD MEMBER

Christine Lewis Cossette was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Ms. Lewis Cossette has worked as a lawyer and advisor for more than 20 years. She began her career in a private law firm as a general practitioner before joining the federal public service in 2002. She has since occupied positions of policy analyst, legal counsel and administrative litigator in various areas within the federal public service. Ms. Lewis Cossette is a skilled advisor with outstanding communication and client service skills.

Ms. Lewis Cossette holds a Bachelor of Arts from Ottawa University and an LL.B in Civil Law from l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Melanie Malchuk, BOARD MEMBER

Melanie Malchuk was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in August 2019. She was reappointed in August 2024.

Ms. Malchuk worked as an Independent Hearing Adjudicator with the Correctional Services of Alberta and is a 20-year Veteran of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. After her RCMP service, Ms. Malchuk was an Officer with the Alberta Human Rights Commission and with Elections Alberta.

Ms. Malchuk holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Great Falls, a Law Enforcement Diploma from Lethbridge Community College and a certificate in conflict resolution.

Corrado Micalef, BOARD MEMBER

Corrado Micalef was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Mr. Micalef began his career in federal public service with Public Works and Government Services of Canada (Europe) while in Germany. In 2013, he joined the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman and most recently was Manager of Operations. Prior to joining the public service, Mr. Micalef was a professional hockey player and coach in Canada, the USA, and Europe. He played in the NHL with the Detroit Red Wings from 1981-86. He is still involved in hockey with the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League as the current Director of Recruitment for the Maritimes.

Mr. Micalef holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree and Alternative Dispute Resolution Certificate from the University of Prince Edward Island.

Nancy Miller, BOARD MEMBER

Nancy Miller was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Ms. Miller began her career serving with the Canadian Armed Forces as a Military Police Officer, achieving the rank of Master Corporal. In 2019, she received the Canada Pride Citation, acknowledging unjust policies of the past. Ms. Miller spent more than 35 years in communications, educational media, and video production. Ms. Miller also served on the Alberta Community and Social Services Appeal Panel delivering fair and unbiased hearings for citizen appeals related to support programs.

Ms. Miller has a diploma in Journalism Arts from SAIT Polytechnic, a diploma in Broadcasting from Mount Royal College, and a diploma in New Media Production and Design from SAIT Polytechnic.

Alex Robert, BOARD MEMBER

Alex Robert was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in June 2019. He was reappointed in June 2024.

Mr. Robert is a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) and he joins the Board following a successful career with Veterans Affairs Canada in a range of capacities in Internal Audit, Finance, Legislative Services, and, more recently, with Service Delivery. His extensive work experience, especially in Legislative Services supporting the advancement of government legislative and regulatory measures, has given him a strong background in the interpretation and application of legislation. He also brings from his previous public service career an understanding of Veterans' issues and a commitment to the overall well-being of Veterans and their families.

Mr. Robert served in a number of capacities with the CPA Association, where he developed experience in the management and regulation of professions, notably further to his tenure on the Discipline Committee. Mr. Robert is a native of Compton (Quebec). He received a diploma in Pure and Applied Science from Champlain College (Lennoxville), and holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Bishop's University. He was also awarded the title of Fellow CPA in recognition of career achievements.

Constance Robinson, BOARD MEMBER

Constance Robinson was first appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in August 2018. She was reappointed in August 2023.

Ms. Robinson is a lawyer with more than 20 years of experience in workplace law, labour relations, and human resources in both the public and private sectors. Most recently, she was the Director of Labour and Industrial Relations for the Department of

Workforce and Advanced Learning of Prince Edward Island, and has worked for Health PEI as an Integrated Disability Management Coordinator.

Ms. Robinson holds a Master of Arts from the University of Calgary and a Bachelor of Laws from Dalhousie Law School.

Sundeep Singh, BOARD MEMBER

Sundeep Singh was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Mr. Singh has spent the past decade providing poverty law advocacy services at the Sources Newton Resource Centre, providing advice and representation to injured workers and their dependents for the Workers' Advisers Office and as a Workers Compensation Board/Long Term Disability representative for the Hospital Employees' Union.

Mr. Singh earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of British Columbia, after which he went on to pursue Juris Doctor in the United States.

Richard Thibault, BOARD MEMBER

Richard Thibault was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in December 2020.

Mr. Thibault is a 35-year Veteran of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. During his career, he was deployed in missions with United Nations Mission in Haiti and with the Canadian International Development Agency in Jordan. He received his Commission in 2011. Following a distinguished career with the RCMP, Mr. Thibault worked for Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) as a Security Coordinator with Vimy Centennial. Since 2018, he has worked with VAC's Human Resources department. Mr. Thibault also spent three years with the Canadian Armed Forces as a Reservist with the Fusiliers du Saint Laurent, Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec. Mr. Thibault has received many honours including the RCMP Exemplary Long Service Medal, the Canadian Peacekeeping Medal, Queen Jubilee, and Queen Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Mr. Thibault has been involved with various community initiatives including Habitat for Humanity in Regina, Saskatchewan, Rotary Club of Stratford in Prince Edward Island and serving as the Vice-Chair and Secretary for the Charlottetown Military Family Resource Centre.

New Board Members

In January 2025, 15 new Board Members joined the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, including 11 temporary Members and four permanent Members.

Newly Appointed Members as of January 2025

Jane Barriault, BOARD MEMBER

Jane Barriault was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. Barriault has worked in the legal and human rights fields for over eight years, including with various provincial Human Rights Commissions conducting legal work, investigations, and education activities, as well as with a legal information not-for-profit organization. In addition to this, Ms. Barriault has also worked in the Indigenous law field and for an international human rights organization.

Ms. Barriault holds a Bachelor of Civil Law from Université Laval and a Juris Doctor from Université de Moncton.

Audrey Blanchet, BOARD MEMBER

Audrey Blanchet was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. Blanchet has a diverse legal background, both as a litigator and as an adjudicator. She has served as a decision-maker for the provincial courts of Quebec, where she carried out the duties of special clerk and bankruptcy registrar. Most recently, she served at the Federal Court of Appeal. In addition, Ms. Blanchet has gained expertise in workplace harassment prevention and resolution while with the Canada Border Services Agency. These experiences have provided her with a strong background in the application of legislation and decision-making involving vulnerable individuals or those in crisis.

Ms. Blanchet holds a Bachelor of Laws from Laval University and is a member of the Quebec Bar.

Adam Bruce, BOARD MEMBER

Adam Bruce was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Bruce served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 28 years in several positions as both an Air Combat Systems Officer on the CP-140 Aurora and as a Legal Officer with the Office of the Judge Advocate General. He also worked as Legislative Counsel for the Department of Justice.

Mr. Bruce holds a Bachelor of Arts in Politics and Economics from the Royal Military College of Canada and a Juris Doctor from Queen's University. He is currently working toward a Master of Laws from the University of Ottawa.

Isabelle Chartier, BOARD MEMBER

Isabelle Chartier was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. Chartier brings significant experience in the legal profession, having worked as counsel for the Federal Department of Justice for over 25 years in different Legal Services Units. Most recently, she worked as counsel in the Legal Services Unit of the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada.

Ms. Chartier holds a Bachelor of Laws (Civil Law) from Université de Montréal, a Bachelor of Laws (Common Law) from University of Ottawa, and a Master of Law from the University of Cambridge.

Jean Cormier, BOARD MEMBER

Jean Cormier was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Cormier retired from the Officer rank of the RCMP with 33 years of experience at both the domestic and international level. Most recently, he was director of security in the private sector, dealing with regulatory matters under the Government of Canada Contract Security Program.

Mr. Cormier holds a diploma in Business Administration and Management from Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, which he also furthered at the Université de Moncton.

Valérie Deschênes, BOARD MEMBER

Valérie Deschênes was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. Deschênes has diverse experience in law as both a Litigator and Legal Advisor. She served as a lawyer for the Military Police Complaints Commission of Canada and

the Police Ethics Commissioner, where she provided legal advice, litigated cases in court, and wrote administrative decisions in contexts involving vulnerable clients, police, and current or former members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Ms. Deschênes holds a Bachelor of Civil Law from the University of Ottawa and is a member of the Quebec Bar.

David Duggins, BOARD MEMBER

David Duggins was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Duggins is a Canadian Armed Forces veteran with 30 years of service. He was an infantry officer in the Regular Force and Primary Reserve Force, and then a Regular Force legal officer. He has deployed on international and domestic operations in both occupations.

Mr. Duggins holds a Bachelor of Arts from the Royal Military College of Canada, a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Manitoba, and a Master of Laws from the University of Ottawa.

Martin Forget, BOARD MEMBER

Martin Forget was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Forget has over 35 years of experience working in criminal courts, federal administrative tribunals, and federal courts. He started his career as a private litigation advocate for refugees and then became a Substitute for the Attorney General of Quebec. During the sixteen years prior to his appointment, he worked as the Principal Advisor and Appeals Officer for the Ministry of Transports representing the Minister in front of the Transportation Appeal Tribunal of Canada.

Mr. Forget holds a Bachelor of Laws from Université de Montréal, and a Diploma of College Studies in Human Sciences with Mathematics from Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne.

Derek Grant, BOARD MEMBER

Derek Grant was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Grant brings experience as an Inmate Appeals Officer with the Ministry of the Attorney General, a Mediator and Settlement Officer with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, and, most recently, as an adjudicator with the Licence Appeal Standards Tribunal of Ontario.

Mr. Grant holds a Bachelor of Arts (Law) degree from Carleton University and a Paralegal Diploma from the Centennial College of Applied Arts and Technology. He is trained in dispute resolution with York University and holds an Arbitrator Certification from the ADR Institute of Ontario.

Murielle Henri, BOARD MEMBER

Murielle Henri was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. Henri has extensive experience in legal advisory roles across the federal government, including Finance Canada, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, the Public Service Commission and most recently, the RCMP External Review Committee. Ms. Henri also worked with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, where she held several key roles, including Coordinating Member and Acting Assistant Deputy Chairperson.

Ms. Henri holds a Bachelor of Arts from the Université du Québec à Montréal and a Bachelor of Civil Law from the University of Ottawa.

Lloyd Hogan, BOARD MEMBER

Lloyd Hogan was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Hogan has served in the Canadian Armed Forces Primary Reserve, and later joined the RCMP as a Police Officer. Mr. Hogan is a lawyer having operated his own practice in Membertou First Nation, focusing on Administrative Law, Aboriginal Law and Indigenous Law.

Mr. Hogan holds a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Technology from Cape Breton University, a Certificate in Beekeeping from Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus, and a Juris Doctor from the Schulich School of Law.

Bradley LeBlanc, BOARD MEMBER

Bradley LeBlanc was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. LeBlanc served as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces for over 10 years, after which he went into public accounting as an associate at Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Most recently, he held the role of National Vice-President, UN/NATO Veterans Canada.

Mr. LeBlanc holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Saint Mary's University and an Electro-Mechanical Engineering Diploma from Memorial University.

Deanna Lennox, BOARD MEMBER

Deanna Lennox was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. Lennox brings significant experience to the Board, including service with the RCMP and as the founder of a non-profit organization focused on assisting the Canadian Armed Forces and First Responders. She also worked as a Peer Support Facilitator with the Mood Disorders Society of Canada. Most recently, she worked as a Workplace Investigator with Veritas Solutions and as a Municipal Code of Conduct Investigation/Governance Review Specialist at Strategic Steps. Inc in Sherwood Park. In addition, as part of the Professional Conduct department, she acted as an Associate Complaints Director & Program Manager, Investigations at the College of Physician and Surgeons of Alberta in Edmonton.

Ms. Lennox holds a certificate in Pharmacy Technology from Red Deer College and a diploma in Criminal Justice from Lethbridge Community College, as well as numerous certificates and accreditation.

Vinessa West, BOAD MEMBER

Vinessa West was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Ms. West worked as a Case Manager for Veterans Affairs Canada, and then as an Agent Supervisor with Conflict and Complaint Management at the Department of National Defence. Most recently, she worked with the Canadian Armed Forces Grievance Transformation Project and as a Grievance Analyst. Ms. West has 18 years of experience in the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves.

Ms. West holds a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Regina and a Master of Arts in Conflict Analysis and Management from Royal Roads University.

Shawn Williamson, BOARD MEMBER

Shawn Williamson was appointed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in January 2025.

Mr. Williamson served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 32 years. During this time, he worked as an Air Combat Systems Officer, flight instructor and as the Commanding Officer of 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron.

Mr. Williamson holds a Bachelor of Military Arts and Science from the Royal Military College. He also holds a certificate in the Joint Command and Staff Programme from Canadian Forces College and a Funeral Director's and Embalmer's Certificate from the Canadian College of Funeral Service.

Key Contacts

Name	Title	Mobile	Email
Christopher J. McNeil	Chair	902-403-0685	Chris.McNeil@vrab-tacra.gc.ca
Jacques Bouchard	Deputy Chair	902-314-2651	Jacques.Bouchard@vrab-tacra.gc.ca
Stephanie Adams	Director General (Acting)	902-401-2243	Stephanie.Adams@vrab-tacra.gc.ca
Laura Steeves	Manager of Communications	782-377-3874	Laura.Steeves@vrab-tacra.gc.ca

Mailing Address:

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

Annex A – Governor in Council Quasi-Judicial (GCQ) and Orders in Council (OIC)

Governor in Council Quasi-Judicial (GCQ)							
Name	Appointment Expiry Date	Date of Appointments	Length of term (per OIC)	Location	Level	M / F	English / French
McNeil, Christopher J. Chair	01 July 2026 01 July 2023	02 July 2023 02 July 2018 13 April 2015	3 5 5	Charlottetown	GCQ6	M	English
Bouchard, Jacques Deputy Chair	01 July 2025 01 July 2023	02 July 2023 02 July 2018 31 July 2017	2 5 5	Charlottetown	GCQ4	M	French (B)
Boughen, Richard Member	23 July 2027 23 July 2022	24 July 2022 24 July 2017	5 5	Ottawa	GCQ3	M	English
Burm, Sundeep Member	13 December 2025	14 December 2020	5	Surrey	GCQ3	M	English
Carrière, Patrice Member	18 August 2024	19 August 2019	5	Ottawa	GCQ3	M	French (B)
Fortier, Mylène Member	7 July 2029	8 July 2024	5	Longueuil	GCQ3	F	French (B)
Fortin, Gabrielle F. Member	13 December 2025	14 December 2020	5	Quebec	GCQ3	F	French (B)
Ghediri, Zine Member	13 December 2025	14 December 2020	5	Montreal	GCQ3	M	French (B)
Glover, Jason Member	13 December 2025	14 December 2020	5	Toronto	GCQ3	M	English
Jephson, Wilfred Member	19 October 2027 19 October 2022 19 October 2019 19 October 2017	20 October 2022 20 October 2019 20 October 2017 20 October 2014	5 3 2 3	Charlottetown	GCQ3	M	English (B)
Lavallée, Ann Member	30 July 2027 30 July 2022	31 July 2022 31 July 2017	5 5	Ottawa	GCQ3	F	French (B)

Layden, Sean Member	13 Decembre 2025	14 Decembre 2020	5	Halifax	GCQ3	M	English
Leduc, Mélanie Member	30 July 2027 30 July 2022	31 July 2022 31 July 2017	5 5	Montreal	GCQ3	F	French (B)
Lewis-Cossette, Christine Member	13 Decembre 2025	14 Decembre 2020	5	Quebec	GCQ3	F	French (B)
Malchuk, Melanie Member	18 August 2024	19 August 2019	5	Edmonton	GCQ3	F	English
Micalef, Corrado Member	13 December 2025	14 December 2020	5	Charlottetown	GCQ3	M	French (B)
Miller, Nancy Member	13 December 2025	14 Decembre 2020	5	Calgary	GCQ3	F	English
Robert, Alex Member	09 June 2024	10 June 2019	5	Charlottetown	GCQ3	M	French (B)
Robinson, Constance Member	6 August 2028 6 August 2023	07 August 2023 07 August 2018	5 5	Charlottetown	GCQ3	F	English
Thibault, Richard Member	13 December 2025	14 Decembre 2020	5	Charlottetown	GCQ3	M	French (B)
Newly appointed Members as of January 2025							
Barriault, Jane Member	19 January 2027	20 January 2025	2	St John's	GCQ3	F	English
Blanchet, Audrey Member	15 January 2030	16 January 2025	5	Gatineau	GCQ3	M	French
Bruce, Daniel Adam Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Gloucester	GCQ3	M	English
Chartier, Isabelle Member	15 January 2030	16 January 2025	5	Ottawa	GCQ3	F	French
Cormier, Jean Member	15 January 2030	16 January 2025	5	Orleans	GCQ3	M	English
Deschênes, Valérie Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Longueuil	GCQ3	F	French
Duggins, David Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Lyndhurst	GCQ3	M	English

Forget, Martin Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Saint-Andre-Avelin	GCQ3	M	French
Grant, Derek Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Milton	GCQ3	M	English
Henri, Murielle Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Gatineau	GCQ3	F	French
Hogan, Lloyd Member	15 January 2030	16 January 2025	5	Membertou	GCQ3	M	English
LeBlanc, Bradley Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Hammonds Plains	GCQ3	M	English
Lennox, Deanna Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Fort Saskatchewan	GCQ3	F	English
West, Vinessa Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Orleans	GCQ3	F	English
Williamson, Shawn Member	15 January 2027	16 January 2025	2	Suffolk	GCQ3	M	English