

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA
Departmental Results Report 2020–21



The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, PC, MP
Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence

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From the Minister

There's no disputing that 2020–21 was a challenging year. The global pandemic changed the way we operate internally as well as how we interact—with our clients, partners and stakeholders across the country.

What didn't change was our commitment to honour and serve Canada's Veterans and their families. I am proud to say that our employees have risen admirably to the challenges faced due to the pandemic to provide crucial services to Veterans. They have improved the way we deliver benefits and programs and streamlined our processes.

The following pages detail some of the progress we've made over the last fiscal year. This includes:



- funding 23 initiatives through the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund (VFWF) to improve the lives of Veterans, including those who are homeless or at risk;
- hiring more than 300 temporary employees to help reduce the time it takes to make disability benefit decisions;
- launching new tools and processes to help employees make faster benefits decisions;
- marking significant military anniversaries—the Liberation of the Netherlands/end of the Second World War in Europe, Victory over Japan, and Veterans' Week—virtually, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- making repairs to over 8,000 war graves;
- working with Statistics Canada to secure a Veteran identifier question on the 2021 short form Census; and
- establishing a \$20M Veterans' Organization Emergency Support Fund to help Veterans' organizations maintain operations during the pandemic.

Even with our successes, there is still more to be done. Reducing processing times continues to be our top priority and we continue to work with partners across government to position ourselves to meet the needs of our Veterans and their families.

In a year of necessary isolation, cancelled events and physical distancing, we continued to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Canadians who have served in uniform.

We completed projects to preserve and restore war memorials overseas and here at home and we also consulted with Canadians and came up with innovative new approaches to commemorate Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and Veterans.

The coming years will present many opportunities to improve our services, the way we deliver them, and the lives of Veterans and their families.

I am confident that with the dedicated, professional team at Veterans Affairs, and with the ongoing support of our partners, we will continue to enhance supports for the Veteran community in Canada.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, PC, MP
Minister of Veterans Affairs and
Associate Minister of National Defence

Results at a glance



- We published the *Timely disability benefits decisions: Strategic direction for improving wait times* report and made progress on putting our plan into action.
- We decreased the number of applications waiting more than our 16 week service standard by 31%.
- We provided financial support through the Veterans Emergency Fund on 787 occasions for 622 Veterans and their families.
- We marked significant military anniversaries virtually and introduced the Faces of Freedom podcast series.
- We established a \$20M Veterans' Organization Emergency Support Fund to help Veterans' organizations maintain operations during the pandemic.
- We rolled out the new Service Health Record Search Tool and the Case Management Assessment Tool.

For more information on our plans, priorities and results achieved, see the “[Results: what we achieved](#)” section of this report.

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Results: what we achieved

Core responsibilities

Benefits, Services and Support

Description: Support the care and well-being of Veterans and their dependents or survivors through a range of benefits, services, research, partnerships and advocacy.

RESULTS

While 2020–21 was a challenging year for all Canadians, we ensured Veterans and their families were cared for and had what they needed, when they needed it. We quickly adapted to ensure Veterans continued to receive benefits and services with as little interruption as possible.

Under this Core Responsibility, we continued to work on improving our benefits and services to Veterans and other clients through various initiatives. Below we have listed efforts toward achieving each of our goals, also known as Departmental Results (DR), and highlighted where the results were driven by [Mandate Letter Commitments \(MLC\)](#).^{1,i}

Departmental Result: Veterans are physically and mentally well.

Health is broader than just physical health or the absence of disease. Chronic physical and mental health problems are common challenges to well-being among Veterans, especially when they occur together. In 2020–21, we achieved the following to support this result:

- We provided funding to 81,709 Veterans, their caregivers and survivors through the Veterans Independence Program (VIP) to help ensure they were able to access the home care and support services they need to remain in their homes and communities.
- We worked with the Mental Health Commission of Canada with the initial relevance review of projects submitted in the Catalyst grants competition of the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR). After a peer review process, [six research projects](#)^{2,ii} were chosen and will be co-funded by our Department. Projects will explore the impacts of cannabis use on Veteran mental health, as well as the benefits and harms of therapeutic cannabis use, and investigate alternative healthy lifestyle interventions.

¹ The Prime Minister updated the Mandate Letter Commitments during the fiscal year to add the Supplementary Mandate Letter; therefore, MLCs may be tagged from either list.

² Actual projects will launch in 2021–22.

- The [Centre of Excellence on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Related Mental Health Conditions](#)ⁱⁱⁱ entered into 21 formal agreements with various organizations,^{iv} while the [Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence](#)^v partnered with six other organizations. *[MLC: contribution agreements]*
- We funded 23 initiatives through the [VFWF](#)^{vi} to conduct research and implement projects that support the well-being of Veterans and their families. These initiatives help us learn and address issues regarding homelessness, mental health, difficult transition to life after service, employment and challenges faced by women Veterans. *[MLC: expand and enhance VFWF; post-service transition support for underrepresented groups]*
- We launched a new assessment tool to simplify case management to better serve our Veterans.
- We provided case management services to more than 16,000 Veterans who face complex challenges, helping them achieve their highest level of independence, health and well-being. Among them, approximately 14,000 are also using the rehabilitation and vocational assistance services to help them adjust to post-military life.
- We published the fourth cycle of the Life After Service Survey, which is a tool used to measure the well-being of the Canadian Veteran population.
- To better understand Veteran demographics and well-being across a range of identity factors including gender, sex, race, Indigenous status, we worked with Statistics Canada to secure a Veteran identifier question on the 2021 short form Census.

Departmental Result: Veterans and their families are financially secure.

Financial status, one of the seven domains of well-being, is recognized as one of the key factors in Veterans' ability to succeed post-service. Higher levels of income and financial stability are associated with greater independence, health, access to health services, quality of housing, family stability, and greater control and choice in managing life's challenges in general. In order to help ensure that Veterans and their families had the financial resources they need:

- We provided direct financial benefits, through our War Veterans Allowance program, Income Replacement Benefit, and Canadian Forces Income Support program to 26,425 Veterans and other qualified individuals to support their health and well-being;
- More than 130,000 Veterans and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) received a [one-time payment for persons with disabilities](#)^{vii} in recognition of the extraordinary expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic through our work with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA);

- We conducted a [study of Veterans' incomes](#)^{viii} as they released from military service to understand how well Veterans integrate into the labour force; and
- We completed research with Statistics Canada to better understand survivors' needs that will help us address any gaps in service to this population.

Departmental Result: Veterans have a sense of purpose.

Having a sense of purpose is the motivation that drives someone toward a satisfying future and is integral to well-being. Participating in fulfilling activities contributes to one's health, social integration, fundamental sense of meaning and identity, and provides structure to day-to-day life. In 2020–21, the following activities contributed to this departmental result:

- To build research partnerships that focus on achieving a successful transition to life after service for Veterans and their families, we provided \$2.5M through the Research Funding Program to the [Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research](#).^{ix} *[MLC: contribution agreements]*
- To provide jobs to Veterans via the Hire a Veteran initiative, we strengthened relationships with private sector companies seeking. *[MLC: employment and training support services]*
- Through the VFWF, we provided funding to [The Canadian Guide to Hiring Veterans](#),^x which educates employers about the skills and experience Veterans offer as part of a diverse workforce talent pool. *[MLC: expand and enhance VFWF]*
- To improve Veterans' awareness of opportunities to join the public service we worked with government partners. We supported both the City of Ottawa and Province of Ontario in their efforts to promote Veteran and Reservist employment in provincial and municipal staffing roles; we provided client relations support to approximately 600 members interested in public service employment. *[MLC: employment and training support services]*
- We built relationships with numerous not-for-profit Veteran-friendly organizations that work to help Veterans transition into the civilian workforce. This included participating in employment-related workshops, promoting activities via social media, as well as offering guidance to organizations that help CAF members with this transition. *[MLC: employment and training support services]*
- Because of the pandemic, we took a different approach to career fairs. We worked with a variety of organizations and supported virtual engagements with companies that hire Veterans, focusing on both private and public sector jobs.
- We provided funding of \$23.4M to 1,244 Veterans through the Education and Training Benefit, helping them achieve educational goals and pursue activities that contribute to their purpose.

Departmental Result: Veterans are able to adapt, manage, and cope within post-service life.

Releasing from the military is a major transition in a Canadian Armed Forces member's life. This departmental result focuses on the skills, knowledge and abilities required for "managing life," which includes coping with stress and adapting to change. We achieved the following in 2020–21 to make progress on this departmental result:

- We completed a three-year longitudinal study³ of CAF members as they transitioned out of military service, to understand their mental health and well-being during the process and the effectiveness of supports. *[MLC: improving client experience]*
- We continued to collaborate with the CAF to help Veterans transition to post-service life through initiatives. For example:
 - Our Department now automatically receives notifications of pending releases from the CAF through a secure file transfer, which includes relevant data, such as proof of service, to trigger an automatic file creation and associated work items in our systems. This allows us to reach releasing members early in the process of transition. We continue to improve the release notification process, and are starting to develop a web service that truly automates the data transfer and improves data integrity. *[MLC: automation; streamlining; improving client experience]*
 - We developed the "My Transition 101" core curriculum, and conducted three pilots within the Borden Transition Trial in order to validate the content. Feedback was incorporated into the course materials and the improved product will be included in the upcoming Transition Trial in 2021–22. *[MLC: streamlining]*
 - The Borden Transition Trial expanded its target audience to include all non-medically releasing members in CFB Borden; however, there was reduced activity due to COVID-19 and related restrictions. Nevertheless, significant progress was made in developing tools and business processes to support the transition process.
 - In partnership with CAF and Department of National Defence (DND), we implemented the trial at CFB Petawawa in February 2021. The second location will allow us to validate the process against a different demographic and on a base focused on force generation and operational deployments, providing results that will be instrumental to preparing for a national rollout. The trial should end in the winter of 2021–22 and roll out nationally between 2022-2024. *[MLC: streamlining; improving client experience]*
- We implemented the Member Transition Task List to My VAC Account, which is an interactive checklist provided as part of a CAF member's release process. It helps to guide the member through the administrative tasks they need to

³ The study will be available online, but was not available during the writing of this report.

complete as they transition to post-service life, thus alleviating some stress.
[MLC: streamlining; improving client experience]

- By the end of 2019–20, releasing CAF members were able to request a review of their treatment benefits from Medavie Blue Cross to see what may be covered by our treatment benefits upon their release. In March 2021, this process was updated to an online fillable form – streamlining the process.
[MLC: streamlining; improving client experience]
- We established a \$20M Veterans’ Organization Emergency Support Fund to help Veterans’ organizations maintain operations during the pandemic; many were at risk of closure due to a lack of fundraising ability during the year. We supported 42 organizations, including Royal Canadian Legion branches across the country. This enabled organizations to continue carrying out critical support to Veterans and their families, playing a crucial role in their lives and communities, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic in areas like Veteran homelessness.

Departmental Result: Veterans are living in safe and adequate housing.

Those who have served our country in uniform deserve a safe place to call home; one homeless Veteran is one too many. Our staff members across the country continue outreach efforts to engage and support homeless Veterans and those at risk of homelessness.

We know that these efforts are most effective when we collaborate with others. That is why we work in partnership with community organizations, other levels of government, and other federal government departments and agencies to address Veteran homelessness. In 2020–21, we achieved the following to support this result:

- We funded [23 initiatives through the VFWF](#)^{vi} to conduct research and implement projects, which specifically include six initiatives to help us learn and address issues regarding homelessness. *[MLC: expand and enhance VFWF; post-service transition support for underrepresented groups]*
- We launched an internal working group on Veteran homelessness to share knowledge and best practices. Members include staff from area offices across Canada, as well as policy and communications specialists.

We continued collaborating with the Canadian Municipal Housing Corporation (CMHC) and ESDC who lead the files on housing and homelessness. This led to a recent [Budget 2021 announcement of \\$45M over two years for ESDC to lead the development of a Veteran homelessness pilot program](#).^{xi} It will include rent supplements and services such as counselling, addiction treatment, and help finding a job.

- Before the funding from other emergency assistance programs became available, we provided financial support to Veterans through the Veterans Emergency

Fund. We offered the service 787 times, which included 100 homeless Veterans. We also followed up with recipients to ensure they received necessary referrals to our other programs and benefits and to other community/provincial supports to address any long-term needs.

Departmental Result: Veterans are satisfied with the services they receive.

We are constantly working to make our programs more effective by measuring Veterans' health and well-being and satisfaction with service delivery, which helps us determine our next steps. In 2020–21, the following activities contributed to this departmental result:

- We advanced the “tell us once” approach in an effort to provide end-to-end digital service delivery via My VAC Account. Many enhancements to My VAC Account were ongoing and based on user testing and feedback. For example:
 - we updated a number of high-use guided web forms to provide better service to Veterans. This streamlines the application process and allows us to leverage data; it makes accessing benefits easier and leaves less room for errors in the application process; and
 - we added the Member Transition Task List in My VAC Account in December 2020. This initiative combined many analog checklists into a single, digitized and interactive tool, which enables CAF members, Veterans and their families to manage their own transition more effectively.

[MLC: streamlining; improving client experience]

- The Bureau of Pension Advocates (BPA) collaborated closely with VRAB to implement a teleconference pilot project for [Red Zone](#) and Review claims in light of the pandemic suspending all in-person hearings. This evolved into videoconference hearings. The pandemic also accelerated the widespread adoption of electronic evidence packages for these hearings, which will greatly help overall service delivery. *[MLC: streamlining; improving performance]*
- We worked on automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) by looking for ways to use technology to reduce administrative work and repetitive tasks, as well as to improve information sharing and client experience. For further details on one of our specific initiatives, please refer to the Service Health Record Search Tool under the [Experimentation section for CR1: Benefits, Services and Support](#). *[MLC: automation; improving performance]*

Digital @ VAC

Our Innovation Hub started the process of validating the vision that we are working towards to achieve end-to-end digital services, including, understanding the digital needs of staff and clients and potential barriers to successful adoption of “digital first”.

- We published the *Timely disability benefits decisions: Strategic direction for improving wait times*^{xiii} report, which outlines efforts in Public Service Capacity, Integration, Process Innovation and Digitization. The Government committed to more than \$192 million over two years in additional funding (2020–21 and 2021–22) with a portion of these funds dedicated to putting our plan into action.

In 2020–21,
our pay staff
processed
52,097
claims,
totaling
more than
\$1 billion.

This additional funding is being used to extend the disability adjudication resources provided in Budget 2018 to keep pace with incoming applications. We hired 300 temporary staff to work on the most common disability benefit applications and hired an additional 50 temporary staff to provide further support. The decision-makers have been trained on various Evidence Informed Decision Models that were created to provide more timely decisions. This allows decision-makers to render entitlement decisions on a variety of medical conditions using different scenarios that a CAF Member or RCMP Member may be exposed to over the course of their careers; therefore, requiring less additional evidence. All staff completed their training and started making disability benefit decisions. *[MLC: improving performance and client experience]*

- We reduced the number of applications waiting more than our 16-week service standard by 31% from 22,138 on 31 March 2020 to 15,214 on 31 March 2021. *[MLC: improving performance and client experience]*
- Another key initiative to stem from the *Strategic direction for improving wait-times* is to simplify the Entitlement Eligibility Guidelines, providing decision-makers with additional information to link medical conditions to service. Updating the Guidelines will acknowledge that military service can cause certain conditions and help us design faster decision processes for entitlement. A comparison of Canadian Guidelines and Australian Statement of Principles is complete and we are working on a recommendation for the development of the first Guidelines. *[MLC: improving performance and client experience]*
- Designated VAC staff will be using the Canadian Forces Health Information System to access personal health information required to adjudicate on benefits in a timely manner. The pandemic caused delays in account creation and equipment distribution due to restrictions; regardless, we had two users with access by the end of the fiscal year, and there will be close to 50 users by the end of 2021. *[MLC: improving performance and client experience]*
- The original *VAC National Client Survey (VNCS)*^{xiii} fieldwork was postponed due to the pandemic, but we finalized the report in January 2021 and posted it to Library and Archives Canada and our website. As planned, we are running a secondary review of the results that will provide insight into satisfaction levels, help improve service delivery, and support further research on the needs of Veterans. *[MLC: improving client experience]*

Gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus)

Throughout the fiscal year, we continued to implement and consider all aspects of GBA Plus with a view to recognize, mitigate and eliminate biases that may contribute to inequities. *[MLC: post-service transition support for underrepresented groups]*

- We introduced the GBA Plus Strategy outlining the process for mainstreaming GBA Plus across our programs, policies and services, and ensures initiatives can be designed with equity, diversity, and inclusion in mind.
- We completed the “Road Towards Inclusion,” where we have mapped our practices and crafted plans to modernize our sex and gender information practices pursuant to the Treasury Board Policy Direction to Modernize the Government of Canada’s Sex and Gender Information Practices.
- We contracted and facilitated the delivery of LGBTQ2 Cultural Competency Training that delivered ten sessions in the fiscal year to more than 1,000 employees.
- We hosted the 2nd Annual Women Veterans Forum and first LGBTQ2+ Veteran Roundtable virtual series. These events included four separate sessions with approximately 150 participants, including international participation, at each event, and provided an opportunity for us to continue the dialogue from the first Women Veterans Forum held in May 2019. The recordings of the three sessions and the Roundtable are available through our website at [Women and LGBTQ2+ Veteran Engagement](#).^{xiv}
- Our [Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans](#)^{xv} led the Modernization of Sex and Gender Information Practices policy direction, *Building Gender Inclusive Services* departmental project. This included creating a *Roadmap for Change* with actionable items to advance gender inclusion within the Department.
- We worked with Statistics Canada to implement a permanent database of military members and Veterans by combining data from several sources, such as Census 2021, military pay and pension records, VAC client records, and other historical military records. This will support disaggregated data on factors such as race, sex, gender, and Indigenous status. This database will support much more detailed analyses than simply the one-time snapshot and demographic breakdown from the Census.
- We formally adopted the principles of Sex and Gender Equity in Research to ensure meaningful representation in research for women and gender diverse Veterans.
- We worked with the University of Manitoba to investigate the prevalence of Military Sexual Trauma and identify risk factors for moral injury in female service members.
- We are applying a GBA Plus lens to the work being completed through Processing Time Reduction Initiatives as part of the Strategic Direction. For example, for our Table of Disabilities Modernization initiative, a GBA Plus review was included to

provide evidence-based decisions that are reflective of sex, gender, and intersectional groups.

- The work to review all Entitlement Eligibility Guidelines has started and includes a focus on inclusivity and the needs of GBA Plus.

Experimentation

- We have developed a Service Health Record Search Tool for Hearing Loss & Tinnitus. Tests were developed in which current users of digital records conducted searches manually and then again with the Search Tool to compare the results of the time taken with each and the quality of the search returns.

A side-by-side comparison was conducted of the results of the manual and automated searches to assess time savings, accuracy and confidence that the tool is finding the same results. The automation saved decision makers an average of 3-4 minutes per application and helped address the backlog of these claims.

This work was presented to senior management with a recommendation on a way forward based on the evidence gathered through this experiment which showed that changing this step in the process to use the Search Tool would provide a time savings, and could potentially be effective with other health conditions following further experimentation. Based on the results identified, the initiative was approved at governance tables. The tool has been implemented and is gradually being rolled out to staff who adjudicate Hearing Loss & Tinnitus applications.

[MLC: automation; improving performance]

- In our Departmental Plan, we committed to experimenting with technologies specific to the limitations of BPA's paperbound system. Although the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the thorough review of our business processes, it accelerated digitization efforts and the creation of a BPA scanning team that digitized 1,974 BPA client files.

BPA also expanded the claim bundling pilot project into a specialized Veterans Excellence Team of 52 entirely digital employees that specialize in simplified claims types at the Review level. This allowed junior lawyers to gain experience and expertise on simpler cases while reducing BPA's overall backlog.

Both teams became fully operational in March 2021. Preliminary results indicate a 22% decrease in costs per claim, and projections show completion of an additional 6,000 files (40% of BPA's current backlog) by the end of the project in March 2022. The outcomes will provide better information on the impacts of remote work on client satisfaction, determine whether simplified submissions can later include additional conditions, and provide a stronger framework for a digital workforce post-pandemic. *[MLC: streamlining; automation; improving performance]*

- The Case Management Assessment Working Group collaborated extensively on the assessment, content and development of the Case Management Assessment Tool. The new assessment provides consistency, improves the entire case management process, and provides access to improved data-driven insights into

Veterans' health and well-being. [*MCL: streamlining; improving performance; improving client experience*]

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Good health and Well-being

- Our assessments for Veterans are based on our Well-Being Surveillance Framework, which assesses Veterans' seven domains of well-being: health, culture and social environment, housing and physical environment, life skills, social integration, finances and purpose. Our interdisciplinary Veteran-centric team approach creates a sustainable model for delivering Case Management Services by building on the strengths of all the team members while providing high quality service to Veterans and their families, ensuring Veterans get the right level of care at the right time.
- As referenced in our Results section, we published the *Timely disability benefits decisions: Strategic direction for improving wait times*^{xiii} report that outlines four lines of effort: Public Service Capacity, Integration, Process Innovation and Digitization. We have made progress in a number of initiatives and continue to improve our services by changing the way we work to make faster disability benefits decisions.

SDG 5: Gender equality and SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

- We conducted targeted outreach and engagement with women and LGBTQ2+ Veterans and stakeholder groups. We are also part of the Department of National Defence Sexual Misconduct Response Centre's External Advisory Council, GBA Plus Interdepartmental Committee, LGBTQ2 Federal Action Plan Working Group, and the Canadian Military Sexual Trauma Community of Practice, while supporting the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and strong institutions

- BPA provided access to seek justice for all Veterans or clients dissatisfied with a decision rendered by VAC by representing clients before the Veterans Review and Appeal Board in support of them receiving the benefits for which they may be eligible.

Results achieved⁴ (footnotes relating to this table are found on the following page)

Departmental Results	Performance indicators	Targets	Date to achieve targets	2018–19 Actual results	2019–20 Actual results	2020–21 Actual results
Veterans are physically and mentally well.	% of Veterans who report that their health is very good or excellent*	50%	31 March 2023	46%	39%	
	% of Veterans who report that their mental health is very good or excellent*	60%	31 March 2023	56%	48%	
	% of Veterans accessing national network of Operational Stress Injury Clinics reporting improved overall mental health ⁵	30%	31 March 2021	47%	47%	50%
	% of Veterans who report they need help with an activity of daily living*	20% ⁶	31 March 2023	20%	25%	
Veterans and their families are financially secure.	% of Veterans whose household income is below the low income measure*	5% ⁶	31 March 2023	4%	6%	
	% of Veterans who are satisfied with their financial situation*	70%	31 March 2023	69%	72%	
Veterans have a sense of purpose.	% of Veterans who are satisfied with their job or main activity*	75%	31 March 2023	74%	71%	
	% of Veterans who are employed*	70%	31 March 2023	65%	60%	
Veterans are able to adapt, manage, and cope within post-service life.	% of Veterans who report an easy adjustment to post-service life*	55%	31 March 2023	52%	45%	
	% of Veterans who have completed a post-secondary education*	55%	31 March 2023	54%	58%	
	% of Veterans who have high level of mastery of their life skills*	40%	31 March 2023	n/a ⁷	26%	
Veterans are living in safe and adequate housing	% of Veterans who are in core housing need	3%	31 March 2023	3.6%	n/a ⁸	
	% of Veterans Affairs Canada clients 65 years and older living in their own homes that report satisfaction with their housing ⁹	97%	31 March 2021	97% ¹⁰	n/a ¹¹	90%
Veterans are satisfied with the services they receive.	% of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the quality of service delivery they receive from Veterans Affairs Canada	85%	31 March 2021	81% ¹⁰	n/a ¹¹	81%
	% of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the quality of Veterans Affairs Canada's programs and services offered	85%	31 March 2021	81% ¹⁰	n/a ¹¹	80%

The Department is reviewing what next steps can be taken to determine why some of the results are not meeting their targets and ways to improve. The [Research Summary for the Life After Service Study \(LASS\) 2019](#)^{xvi} is now available on our website and the full report is available on the [Government of Canada’s catalogue of publications](#).^{xvii}

Budgetary Financial Resources (dollars)

2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Difference (Actual spending minus Planned spending)
5,106,760,246	5,106,760,246	5,288,431,616	4,660,494,971	(446,265,275)

Human Resources (full-time equivalents)

2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Difference (Actual full-time equivalents minus Planned full-time equivalents)
2,070.3	2,549.7	479.4

Fluctuations in spending are normal, given that initial forecasting is typically done many months in advance of the reporting period and adjusted throughout the year. A full analysis of the budgetary financial resources and Full-time Equivalents (FTEs) is available in the “[Analysis of trends in spending and human resources](#)” section of this report. This includes explanations of variances between planned and actual resources.

Complete framework methodologies, as well as financial, human resources and performance information for the Program Inventory are available in [GC InfoBase](#).^{xviii} This also includes explanations of variances between program-level planned and actual resources.

⁴ Indicators identified with an asterisk (*) are measured using data from the LASS. The 2018–19 results are derived from the 2016 LASS and the 2019 LASS results are shown under 2019–20 and carried forward until the next survey.

⁵ Results are based on data for respectively 10% (2018–19 fiscal year), 15% (2019–20 fiscal year), and 10% (2020–21 fiscal year) of total number of clients served each year in the VAC-funded Network of Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinics. Based on these samples, the yearly percentage of clients demonstrating significantly improved mental health (47% in fiscal years 2018–19 and 2019–20, and 50% in fiscal year 2020–21) are higher than the 30% of mental health treatment outcome monitoring improvement reported in the scientific literature. CROMIS 2.0 training is being rolled out in 2021–22 with the aim of increasing participation in the OSI Clinic-wide standardized treatment outcome monitoring program.

⁶ These represent maximum targets. In other words, the lower the result, the better the outcome for Veterans.

⁷ This indicator was not included in the 2016 LASS, but was included in the 2019 edition.

⁸ The results were not available as the Canadian Housing Survey was delayed due to COVID-19.

⁹ The results used for this indicator are derived from a secondary analysis of disaggregated data that is not broken down in the final VNCS report.

¹⁰ This result was carried over from the 2017 VAC National Client Survey, as a follow up survey was delayed in 2018–19.

¹¹ The results from the 2020 VAC National Client Survey were not available at that time. We suspended fieldwork for this on 20 March 2020 because of public health measures.

Commemoration

Description: Pay tribute to the sacrifices and achievements of those who served in Canada’s military efforts.

RESULTS

Veterans want Canadians to understand the price of freedom. They are passing the torch to the people of Canada, so that the memory of their sacrifices will continue, and the values they fought for will live on.

With this in mind, we will continue to support the Government of Canada in its duty to pay tribute to the contribution and sacrifice of all who have served, and continue to serve, Canada in times of war, military conflict and peace. Below we have listed how we are working through various initiatives and the Minister’s MLCs to achieve our goals.

Departmental Result: Veterans and those who died in service are honoured.

We lead commemorative and recognition activities to promote and encourage everyone to honour the one and a half million brave Canadians who served, and continue to serve, our country at home and abroad. We strive to honour them now and to keep doing so for many years to come. In 2020–21, the following activities contributed to this departmental result:

In response to limitations imposed by COVID-19

We marked significant military anniversaries virtually

The Liberation of the Netherlands/end of the Second World War in Europe, Victory over Japan, and Veterans’ Week.

- We continued to work closely with Canadian Heritage and the National Capital Commission on the next steps for the creation of a National Monument to Canada’s Mission in Afghanistan.
- We ensured the preservation and presentation of Canada’s 14 war memorials overseas, including two national historic sites (the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial). The reduced number of visitors due to the pandemic allowed for the completion of large projects, including:
 - significant repairs and improvements to the St. Julien Canadian Memorial;
 - renovation of the residence at Beaumont-Hamel; and
 - tree planting in support of ongoing efforts to renew the forests surrounding our two largest sites.
- We completed 8,185 repairs (14.3% of the total 57,179 repairs) in year three of a five-year project to address Veteran grave maintenance items.

- We also collaborated with our Innovation Hub to explore the challenge of enabling Canadians to experience overseas commemoration sites from home. This initiative used Human-centred Design (HCD) approaches and involved consultation with Canadians. This highlighted ideas that we could explore and develop based on insights uncovered by talking to program staff and the public. Potential opportunities include pop-up tours, podcasts, and walkabouts, as well as concepts for the classroom that would allow students to learn and participate. *[MLC: improving client experience]*

Departmental Result: Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service.

Veterans want Canadians to understand the price of freedom. They are passing the torch to the people of Canada, so the memory of their sacrifices will continue, and the values they fought for will live on in all of us. As a department, we work to engage Canadians of all ages in paying tribute to Veterans and those who died in service so their legacy is preserved and their tremendous contributions to peace and freedom are remembered for generations to come. In 2020–21, the following activities contributed to this goal:

- We held online discussion panels on commemoration in November and February, the first two in a series of consultations.
- We provided funding for 157 commemorative projects through the Commemorative Partnership Program.
- We consulted with Canadian educators to gather their views, in order to identify new and interesting ways for young Canadians to express their appreciation to all those who served Canada.
- We introduced the [Faces of Freedom podcast](#)^{xix} series to help Canadians remember and commemorate those who served.
- We enhanced our [remembrance content on veterans.gc.ca](#),^{xx} the primary source of commemorative information.
- We worked with our Innovation Hub to explore ways to reduce the time and effort required to process and report on Commemorative Partnership Program applications and how to best support the intake of complex applications. Using HCD, the Hub designers developed blueprints for service improvements and identified opportunities on how to improve the application form to:
 - support the applicants when applying for funding; and
 - minimize the amount of manual reporting completed by our program staff.

[MLC: improving performance and client experience]

Gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus)

- We ensured the inclusion of numerous identity factors in our approach to developing, delivering and evaluating initiatives. We also ensured diverse representation at ceremonies and events. For example, we:
 - began discussions on how to enhance our web feature on the contributions of women in times of war, military conflict and peace, and also to create new learning resources about the contributions and sacrifices of LGBTQ2+ service members over the years;
 - continued the ongoing process of reviewing existing content and creating new materials to ensure they use appropriately inclusive language;
 - continued consultation and collaboration process with VAC's Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans regarding opportunities to expand, develop and improve our learning products to ensure we are providing balanced and sensitive material; and
 - developed questionnaires for upcoming focus group discussions with the goal of evaluating current education products and opportunities in order to improve them. Planning included attention to exploration of gender balance as well as how materials supported diverse cultural, ethnic and regional backgrounds.
- When developing learning resources and overseas visitor centre exhibits (The Faces of Freedom Exhibit), we ensured gender balance as well as ensuring diverse cultural, ethnic and regional backgrounds were reflected in the stories told. Among those highlighted were:
 - Binaaswi Francis Pegahmagabow - an Indigenous First World War Veteran and leader in the Indigenous rights movement in Canada;
 - Jessie Scott & Christine MacDonald- First World War nurses;
 - Adeline Bowland, Maxine Bredt & Molly Mulholland - Second World War nurses who served in the Italian Campaign or the Battle of Normandy;
 - Laura Wong - a Chinese-Canadian teletype operator during the Second World War who was among the first Chinese Canadians to receive citizenship in 1947;
 - Lester Brown - a Black Canadian who served during the Second World War;
 - Annie Tétreault - a French Canadian critical care nurse who supported missions in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Haiti; and
 - Jen Wildman - a new CAF recruit trained as an artillery gunner.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

We contributed to SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, by recognizing Veterans through commemorative initiatives, which support overall well-being, especially mentally and socially.

Results achieved

Departmental Results	Performance indicators	Targets	Date to achieve targets	2018–19 Actual results	2019–20 Actual results	2020–21 Actual results
Veterans and those who died in service are honoured.	% of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the way Veterans Affairs Canada's commemorative initiatives honour Veterans and those who died in service	80%	31 March 2021	76% ¹²	n/a ¹³	71%
	# of visits to Canadian Virtual War Memorial	2,000,000	31 March 2021	2,175,446	2,659,840	2,261,122
	# of visitors to the overseas memorials, Vimy and Beaumont-Hamel	900,000	31 March 2021	904,249	815,291 ¹⁴	168,317 ¹⁵
Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service	% of Canadians who indicate they make an effort to appreciate Veterans and those who died in service	75%	31 March 2021	74%	75%	71%
	# of Canadians who participated in community engagement activities financially supported by Veterans Affairs Canada	200,000	31 March 2021	436,969	548,512	1,546,859

The Department is reviewing what next steps can be taken to determine why some of the results are not meeting their targets and ways to improve.

¹² Carried over this result from the 2017 VAC National Client Survey due to a delay with the follow up survey in 2018–19.

¹³ The results from the 2020 VAC National Client Survey were not yet available. We suspended fieldwork for this project (including data collection) on 20 March 2020 after halting all VAC Public Opinion Research projects because of COVID-19 Public Health measures. The project's fieldwork and data collection will resume later (TBD).

¹⁴ Visitation to Vimy and Beaumont-Hamel declined because large-scale commemorations marking 100th anniversaries of various First World War milestones finished in 2018–19; in addition, COVID-19 impacts began in February 2020.

¹⁵ The reduced numbers were a result of multiple lock-downs, travel restrictions and public health guidelines due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. It drastically affected the number of international travellers, even from neighbouring Belgium. Also, periods of lockdown in France limited visitors to a very small radius.

Budgetary Financial Resources (dollars)

2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Difference (Actual spending minus Planned spending)
42,966,357	42,966,357	45,713,337	42,205,327	(761,030)

Human Resources (full-time equivalents)

2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Difference (Actual full-time equivalents minus Planned full-time equivalents)
92.6	70.0	(22.6)

A full analysis of the budgetary financial resources and FTEs is available in the “[Analysis of trends in spending and human resources](#)” section of this report. This includes explanations of variances between planned and actual resources.

Complete framework methodologies, as well as financial, human resources and performance information for the Program Inventory are available in [GC InfoBase](#).^{xviii} This also includes explanations of variances between program-level planned and actual resources.

Veterans Ombudsperson

Description: Provide an independent and impartial review of complaints and issues related to programs and services delivered by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio and uphold the *Veterans Bill of Rights*.

RESULTS

The Office of the Veterans Ombud (OVO) investigates complaints and challenges policies and decisions of Veterans Affairs Canada where individual or systemic unfairness is found.

Departmental Result: Veterans and their families have access to a timely review of complaints about the programs, services and support delivered by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio.

The Office committed to improve the general awareness of the OVO as a fairness-based, Ombud organization, as well as help the Veteran community understand the services it can provide and encourage those who do not believe that they have been treated fairly to contact the office. In 2020–21, the OVO:

- conducted five virtual outreach activities with key audiences to inform them about the office;
- published three volumes of its e-newsletter to inform key stakeholders (total reach of 1,600 [impressions](#));
- launched an ongoing monthly awareness campaign for its services across social media platforms ([social media engagement](#) increased by 4,000 activities¹⁶ over the past year);
- placed three ad campaigns promoting its services and contact information; and
- conducted 40 outreach meetings with Veterans, Veteran stakeholders, Parliamentarians, and other federal Ombud offices to identify issues and gaps within the Veteran community. This activity supported the creation of new strategic priorities for the OVO.
- fully integrated its online complaint service with its internal case management system, thus creating further efficiency in the management of its complaint handling.

¹⁶ Activities include clicks, likes and shares from the OVO's Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Departmental Result: Issues about the programs, services and support provided to Veterans and their families by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio are identified for resolution.

In 2020–21, the Office worked with the Veteran community, stakeholders and Parliamentarians to identify issues, challenges and concerns faced by Veterans and their families by:

- organizing a Women Veterans Outreach activity to better understand issues of concern and how to better engage; and
- appearing before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (February 2021) to discuss gaps in mental health care treatment benefits for Veterans’ families. The Ombud shared recommendations, which were considered in the committee’s subsequent report to Parliament, *Caregivers: Taking Care Of Those Who Care For Veterans*.^{xxi}

The Office monitored recommendations made to VAC on individual complaints concerning the Department’s programs and services. They tracked whether these were implemented by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio. In 2020–21:

- most complaints investigated by the OVO were addressed at the first point of contact with VAC; 15 complaints were raised to the Assistant Deputy Minister, the Deputy Minister and the Minister. Twelve of the recommendations were resolved in favour of the Veteran while three were declined.
- the OVO conducted reviews and investigations focussing on:
 - Women Veterans and families of Veterans by:
 - initiating a literature review of research related to women Veterans; and
 - analyzing data regarding favourability rates for women Veterans access to VIP benefits.
 - the financial support provided to Veterans and their families, including any impacts of Pension for Life. They published the impacts of the Pension for Life changes to the *Veterans Well-being Act* entitled: *Financial Compensation for Canadian Veterans*.^{xxii}
 - the service experience of Veterans and their families when dealing with VAC and published the following:
 - *Supplementary Retirement Benefit (SRB) Payout Micro-Investigation*;^{xxiii}
 - *Access to Mental Health Treatment for Family Members in their Own Right, for Conditions Related to Military Service Report*;^{xxiv} and
 - *Spouses Supporting Transition Study*.^{xxv}

The OVO continued monitoring recommendations and their subsequent acceptance and implementation.

- Initiated work for the public release of the 2021 Annual Report Card (planned for fall 2021). Although the Office did not publish a formal report card in 2020–21, it still requested a progress report from the Department regarding the implementation status of all outstanding recommendations (implemented, partially implemented or not implemented), all of which will be included in the upcoming report.

Gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus)

- All systemic investigative reports included a GBA Plus Analysis section as part of the analysis; they listed recommendations regarding the need for VAC to conduct and make public its GBA Plus analysis of its programs and services.

Results achieved

Departmental Results	Performance indicators	Targets	Date to achieve targets	2018–19 Actual results	2019–20 Actual results	2020–21 Actual results
Veterans and their families have access to a timely review of complaints about the programs, services and support delivered by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio.	% of complaints closed within 60 working days	75%	31 March 2021	68%	89%	90%
Issues about the programs, services and support provided to Veterans and their families by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio are identified for resolution.	% of Office of the Veterans Ombudsperson recommendations related to individual complaints implemented by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio	100%	31 March 2021	Data available starting 2020–21 ¹⁷		80%
	% of Office of the Veterans Ombudsperson recommendations related to systemic issues which the Veterans Affairs Portfolio seeks resolution	85%	31 March 2021	Data available starting 2020–21 ¹⁷		72%

Budgetary Financial Resources (dollars)

2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Difference (Actual spending minus Planned spending)
5,483,671	5,483,671	5,686,723	5,193,514	(290,157)

Human Resources (full-time equivalents)

2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Difference (Actual full-time equivalents minus Planned full-time equivalents)
38.0	34.2	(3.8)

¹⁷ As this specific indicator was not previously measured, no historical information is available.

A full analysis of the budgetary financial resources and FTEs is available in the “[Analysis of trends in spending and human resources](#)” section of this report.

Complete framework methodologies, as well as financial, human resources and performance information for the Program Inventory, are available in [GC InfoBase](#).^{xviiiiviii}

VAC Internal Services

Description: Internal Services are those groups of related activities and resources that the federal government considers to be services in support of programs and/or required to meet corporate obligations of an organization. Internal Services refers to the activities and resources of the 10 distinct service categories that support Program delivery in the organization, regardless of the Internal Services delivery model in a department. The 10 service categories are:

- Acquisition Management Services
- Communications Services
- Financial Management Services
- Human Resources Management Services
- Information Management Services
- Information Technology Services
- Legal Services
- Materiel Management Services
- Management and Oversight Services
- Real Property Management Services

RESULTS

Our internal services continued to help advance the Minister’s MLCs, all outcomes identified in our Departmental Results Framework (DRF), and Government of Canada priorities. By providing corporate support, we ensured that our program areas have the tools and resources needed to deliver results to Veterans and their families, as well as Canadians.

Our internal services directly or indirectly contribute to **all Departmental Results** identified in the Departmental Results Framework.

We continued evolving how we work, ensuring continuity of operations and increasing our resilience. Although the COVID-19 pandemic posed a number of challenges, it also provided a unique opportunity to advance key objectives aimed at modernizing our systems, infrastructure, and business practices to better support our Department over the long term:

- We rolled out the new Case Management Assessment Tool in March 2021. The design simplified case management for Veterans and our employees—it helps Case Managers assess, measure and monitor how Veterans can meet their case plan goals. Available both online and offline, it increases efficiency by removing paper copies, auto-populating information for re-assessments, syncing GCcase Client Plans to avoid duplication and providing access to all information in one place. *[MCL: streamlining; improving performance; improving client experience]*
- We supported a major department-wide shift to remote work allowing employees to quickly resume working on files and providing benefits to our Veterans and their families. We applied lessons learned from our experiences into our GC Workplace implementation plans, taking into account new methods of work. We

also developed and implemented innovative practices to transition our Human Resources (HR) Operations to a remote work environment. This included implementing interim processes to allow access to sensitive information from a distance so we could continue operating. Using technology, we modernized several routine activities, such as: automating letters of offer, online [onboarding](#), and using e-signatures. *[MLC automation; streamlining]*

- We prepared to replace our legacy financial systems with a Treasury Board Secretariat approved Systems Applications and Products (SAP) solution on 1 April 2021. This change will improve our financial management and better align us with the Government of Canada’s direction for financial management transformation.
- We continued implementing the VAC Information and Data Strategy. As a result of this work, we identified eight key initiatives with a focus on establishing clear roles and responsibilities, as well as creating the processes that will govern how we collect, manage, and use data.
- We developed a program to derive analytics from print media to support communications activities. *[MLC: improve communications]*

Maintaining an inclusive, safe and supportive workplace was, and remains, a priority:

- We helped to mitigate and manage the impact of the pandemic by implementing a [Workplace Wellness Promotion Plan](#).^{xxvi} This resulted in a reference tool for employees and managers to access resources, supports and training. While many of the resources were pre-existing, we developed new content and the tool brought all sources together in one place.
- We entered into a partnership with the Canadian Innovation Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace to provide national support to employee mental health and wellness.
- We conducted an external review of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program resulting in increased resources, an expansion of the National OHS Policy Committee, and the development of training and education products, including a new OHS website.
- We adapted to the changing work environment and enabled staff to continue to meet performance expectations and develop their skills by:
 - Supporting knowledge transfer and ensuring bilingual service.
 - Promoting career development through acting appointments, personalized coaching services, and additional training activities.
 - Piloting a Personnel Administration Group (PE) Development Program.

We strengthened communications activities so that Veterans and their families have clarity about and predictability of available benefits and services.” These include:

- increasing opportunities to learn about VAC’s programs and services while commemorating Veterans using online platforms open to all Canadians. This

provided increased access to our events, announcements and commemorative ceremonies;

- engaging key stakeholders to ensure that our work and decisions support the well-being of Veterans and their families;
- developing and promoting Canadian Veteran profiles, which evidence shows are an effective way to reach the Veteran and stakeholder community; and
- introducing our new consultation platform, [Let's Talk Veterans](#),^{xxvii} and modernizing [Salute!](#)^{xxviii} to a new e-newsletter format.

[MLC: improving transparency and communications]

We increased the capacity of the Innovation Hub to meet demand and ensure consistency in our approach to Human-centred Design (HCD) initiatives. Some of the work this year included:

- developing a roadmap for training that will raise focus on building the capacity and knowledge of HCD for Hub staff and raise awareness and build ambassadors for HCD among our employees and managers;
- starting the work to achieve end-to-end digital services as previously mentioned in Core Responsibility 1. Staff developed a service design proposal to better understand our current digital state and the needs of staff and clients. We will also use this scan to identify key digital opportunities for subsequent efforts;

[MLC: streamlining; improving client experience]

- developing the Innovation Hub framework which established the scope of the Hub activities and terms of engagement with partners; and
- developing the Innovation Design Toolkit, containing standard HCD tools and products.

Gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus)

- Updates continued on HR letter templates and electronic communication tools for exchanges with clients, employees or providers to ensure they align with GBA Plus.
- Our Innovation Hub's previously mentioned HCD approach uses a GBA Plus lens when engaging users creating opportunities to design solutions that are both innovative and inclusive. In support of this, the Hub engaged resources with experience in performance measurement who work with the designers and core teams to ensure GBA Plus considerations occur when developing key performance indicators for initiatives.

Experimentation

- Veterans speak to us every day through a variety of media channels. We are listening, but in order to make informed decisions about how we answer their

enquiries and communicate about our programs and services, we need more than anecdotal evidence from these conversations. That is why we started working on evidence-based communications.

We conducted an experiment using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to develop sentiment analysis, topic detection, and processing times models to gain insights and analytics from our public facing social media channels.

We reviewed more than 9,000 comments on VAC’s Facebook ‘Services’ channel and built a fully tagged, categorized and organized archive, one that serves as a model of what can be done. It took two people almost one year to complete this. By using AI, taught and applied “machine learning”, we now have an automated system that can analyze large bodies of text. This means months of manual work can now be in days — even hours.

Now that we can organize and store data from multiple text-based sources and we have quantitative data we can use to inform and align our communications, to offer decision makers the right information at the right time. *[MLC: improving communications]*

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

- We identified a senior designated official responsible for employment equity, diversity and inclusion;
- We reviewed and refocused the work of the National Diversity and Inclusion Advisory committee;
- We expanded our data analysis to look at the diversity of the workforce to better inform management’s decision making and improving our overall workforce portrait in relation to workforce availability and government-wide objectives;
- We promoted or provided training for employees (i.e. Workplace Inclusion for Gender Diversity LGBTQ2+, Canada School of Public Service Anti-Racism series, etc.); and
- We continued our participation as a standing member in a joint working group within the public service to look into hiring practices and recruitment of persons with disabilities.

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy and SDG 13: Climate Action

- We contributed to the improvement of energy efficiency and combatting climate change in various ways, for example:
 - We successfully participated as a pathfinder in the Digital Communications Project with Shared Services Canada and were the first GC department to migrate email from the previous hosted email service to the new cloud-based M365 email service; and
 - We successfully implemented MS Teams and made it available to all staff on their laptops and smartphones thus greatly reducing the need for employee travel.

SDG 5: Gender equality and SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

- Our Innovation Hub works to find solutions to problems and opportunities to optimize services while working with their partners on initiatives. For these solutions to succeed, we must understand the clients that use the program or services, and their perspectives and needs. The Innovation Hub aims for representative user groups (including female and gender diverse Veterans) to ensure inclusive design solutions.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- We increased the capacity of our Innovation Hub to meet demand and ensure consistency in our approach to HCD initiatives. This included:
 - Developing the Innovation Hub framework which established the scope of the Hub activities and terms of engagement with partners.
 - Developing the Innovation Design Toolkit, containing standard HCD tools and products.
 - Expanding the Innovation Hub core team in order to decrease reliance on external contractors.

Budgetary Financial Resources (dollars)

2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Difference (Actual spending minus Planned spending)
82,491,980	82,491,980	131,335,908	128,739,691	46,247,711

Human Resources (full-time equivalents)

2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Difference (Actual full-time equivalents minus Planned full-time equivalents)
707.4	801.3	93.9

A full analysis of the budgetary financial resources and FTEs is available in the “[Analysis of trends in spending and human resources](#)” section of this report. This includes an explanation of the variances between planned and actual expenditures.

Analysis of trends in spending and human resources

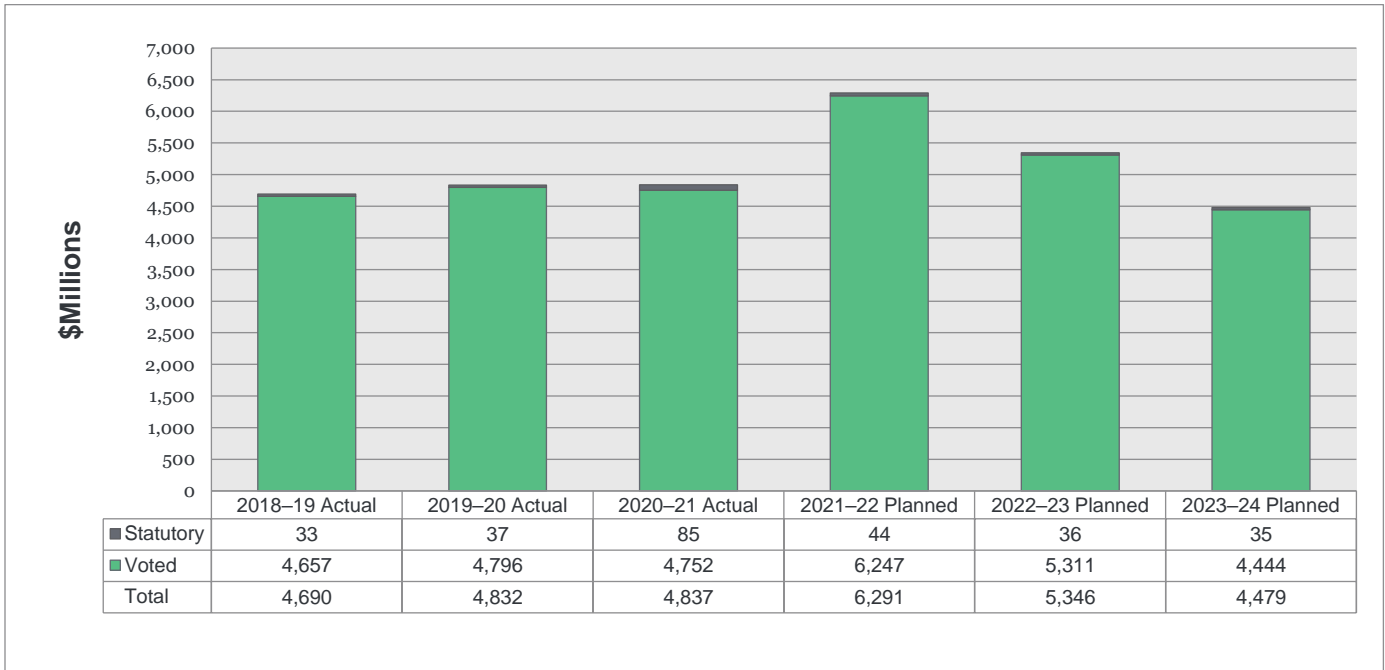
Actual expenditures

We build our annual budget to respond to Veterans in need of benefits and services. A key part of this process is forecasting, which helps ensure there is enough funding for all eligible Veterans who are likely to need help in a given year. Our annual budget fluctuates each year due to the demand-driven nature of our programs—based on Veterans’ needs and entitlements. In other words, a Veteran who is entitled to a benefit or service receives it, whether 10 or 10,000 come forward.

While forecasting helps ensure enough funding is available, expenditures are only incurred for Veterans who in fact come forward to use the program or service. The design of the Government’s budget process accounts for these fluctuations, which is why there will be changes to both forecasted and actual spending from one year to the next. Fluctuations in spending are normal, given that initial forecasting is typically done many months in advance of the reporting period and adjusted throughout the year based on actual results. In addition, due to timing, new spending announced in Budget 2020 is not included in the planned spending figures.

In the midst of a global pandemic, we maintain our commitment to meeting the needs of all Veterans and providing the benefits and services our clients so rightly deserve. Despite the impact COVID-19 has had on the current environment, we continue to deliver benefits and services to our Veterans and their families.

Departmental spending trend graph¹⁸



Budgetary performance summary for Core Responsibilities and Internal Services (dollars)

Core Responsibilities and Internal Services	2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2021–22 Planned spending	2022–23 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2018–19 Actual spending (authorities used)	2019–20 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)
Benefits, Services and Support	5,106,760,246	5,106,760,246	6,148,513,828	5,218,769,515	5,288,431,616	4,528,562,537	4,625,183,299	4,660,494,971
Commemoration	42,966,357	42,966,357	44,896,867	41,833,215	45,713,337	45,032,805	81,485,684	42,205,327
Veterans Ombudsperson	5,483,671	5,483,671	5,605,796	5,605,779	5,686,723	3,735,430	4,115,574	5,193,514
Subtotal	5,155,210,274	5,155,210,274	6,199,016,491	5,266,208,509	5,339,831,676	4,577,330,772	4,710,784,557	4,707,893,812
Internal Services	82,491,980	82,491,980	91,955,946	80,016,670	131,335,908	113,132,181	121,589,799	128,739,691
Total	5,237,702,254	5,237,702,254	6,290,972,437	5,346,225,179	5,471,167,584	4,690,462,953	4,832,374,356	4,836,633,503

¹⁸ Some totals may not add due to rounding.

Variance between 2020–21 Actual Spending and 2020–21 Planned Spending

As shown in the tables, we spent \$4.8 billion in 2020–21, over 90% of which came in the form of payments to Veterans, their families, and other program recipients. Our actual spending for fiscal year 2020–21 was \$401 million lower than what we had planned to spend, due mainly to the following:

Benefits, Services and Support

- ▶ Demand for certain programs was less than forecasted. The pandemic impacted the number of clients applying for certain health services, which require an in-person aspect such as dental, audio (hearing services), health-related travel and special equipment purchases.
- ▶ Payments made during the year for the correction of indexation of Disability Pensions were less than anticipated due to fewer estate applications than forecasted.

Commemoration

- ▶ Actual clients and average costs were less than expected for the Last Post Fund.

Internal Services

- ▶ Increased spending to continue our efforts to increase capacity in order to continue to reduce processing times and improve the delivery of services and programs to Veterans and their families.
- ▶ Payments made during the year for compensation adjustments for newly signed collective agreements.

Planned spending 2021–22 to 2023–24

Over the next three years, planned spending will fluctuate due to increased demand for certain programs and services, while temporary funding for certain initiatives concludes.

Budget 2020 brought with it two years of “Service Excellence,” the Government of Canada’s commitment of more than \$192 million over two years in additional funding in 2020–21 and 2021–22 to put this plan into action. This initiative allowed us to temporarily increase the workforce by approximately 480 resources (approximately 23%) in Benefits, Services and Support with a goal of improving services by reducing processing times through four lines of effort: [Public Service Capacity, Integration, Process Innovation and Digitization](#).^{xxix}

Planned spending for fiscal year 2021–22 is increasing when compared to actual spending in 2020–21. This increase is attributable to the forecasted increase in demand for benefits and services, specifically those related to the Pension for Life suite of programs and primarily attributable to an increased capacity to work on our backlog, resulting in more spending.

The forecast shows a decrease in our budget for 2022–23 and 2023–24. This decrease is attributed to the conclusion of temporary funding received in 2021–22 related to addressing the backlog and improving the delivery of services and programs, as we are forecasting less spending for some of our programs and services as operational capacity normalizes. In the future, this budget will be updated through the Estimates process to align with the latest forecast of client demand and expenditures. Programs continue to be monitored in advance of future investments to support the needs of Canada’s Veterans.

Actual human resources

Human resources summary for Core Responsibilities and Internal Services (full-time equivalents)¹⁹

Core Responsibilities and Internal Services	2018–19 Actual	2019–20 Actual	2020–21 Planned	2020–21 Actual	2021–22 Planned	2022–23 Planned
Benefits, Services and Support	2,076.4	2,326.4	2,070.3	2,549.7	2,681.7	2,032.7
Commemoration	86.0	90.0	92.6	70.0	92.6	92.6
Veterans Ombudsperson	34.3	32.5	38.0	34.2	38.0	38.0
Subtotal	2,196.7	2,448.9	2,200.9	2,653.9	2,812.3	2,163.3
Internal Services	671.0	749.1	707.4	801.3	834.6	750.6
Total	2,867.7	3,198.0	2,908.3	3,455.2	3,646.9	2,913.9

As a result of the Service Excellence Initiative, we retained and hired more term employees dedicated to making decisions and reducing processing times. At the same time, we explored innovative measures to process future applications more efficiently. Internal services also saw an increased number of resources to support this initiative.

In the area of Commemoration, we experienced a temporary decrease in FTEs due to the global pandemic, which impacted the number of interpretive guides at commemorative sites in Europe.

The number of employees within the Veterans Ombud core responsibility was slightly lower than planned for fiscal year 2020–21 due to delays in planned staffing but was on par with FTE levels in prior years.

Financial and human resources information for our Program Inventory is available in [GC InfoBase](#).^{xviii}

Expenditures by vote

For information on our organizational voted and statutory expenditures, consult the [Public Accounts of Canada 2020–21](#).^{xxx}

Government of Canada (GC) spending and activities

Information on the alignment of our spending with the GC's spending and activities is available in [GC InfoBase](#).^{xviii}

¹⁹ Some totals may not add due to rounding.

Financial statements and financial statements highlights

Financial statements

Our financial statements (unaudited) for the year ended 31 March 2021 are available on our [website](#).^{xxxix}

Financial statements highlights

Condensed Statement of Operations (unaudited) for the year ended 31 March 2021 (dollars)

Financial information	2020–21 Planned results	2020–21 Actual results	2019–20 Actual results	Difference (2020–21 Actual results minus 2020–21 Planned results)	Difference (2020–21 Actual results minus 2019–20 Actual results)
Total expenses	5,257,579,961	4,844,917,429	4,723,863,087	(412,662,532)	121,054,342
Total revenues	–	32,491	20,727	32,491	11,764
Net cost of operations before government funding and transfers	5,257,579,961	4,844,884,938	4,723,842,360	(412,695,023)	121,042,578

Our total expenses were approximately \$412.7 million lower than planned in 2020–21. This is mainly related to lower than expected payments within the Disability Benefits and Health Care Benefits programs. Our annual budget is heavily influenced by the demand forecast for our programs. Our actual expenditures have a high correlation to the actual number of Veterans we serve annually and their personal circumstances and experiences while serving that determine which program entitlements these Veterans will access.

When comparing our overall actual expenditures for 2020–21 against those for the previous year, expenses increased by \$121 million. This increase is because of additional capacity to process disability applications, funded through Service Excellence and the increased payments made to Veterans and their families.

Condensed Statement of Financial Position (unaudited) as of 31 March 2021 (dollars)

Financial information	2020–21	2019–20	Difference (2020–21 minus 2019–20)
Total net liabilities	235,031,407	178,562,746	56,468,661
Total net financial assets	209,914,003	183,109,620	26,804,383
Departmental net debt	25,117,404	(4,546,875)	29,664,279
Total non-financial assets	11,573,019	12,728,633	(1,155,614)
Departmental net financial position	(13,544,385)	17,275,508	(30,819,893)

There was an increase of \$56.5 million in total net liabilities when compared to 2019–20. This variance is due to an increase in the accrued liabilities and payables at year end.

In 2020–21, total net financial assets increased by \$26.8 million when compared to 2019–20, due to an increase in accounts receivables with other government departments.

Departmental net debt, which is the difference between net liabilities and net financial assets as shown above, increased by \$29.7 million in 2020–21 compared to 2019–20.

Total non-financial assets decreased in 2020–21 by \$1.2 million when compared to 2019–20 due to the amortization of tangible capital assets.

Corporate information

Organizational Profile

Appropriate Minister: The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, PC, MP

Institutional Head:

- ▶ General (retired) Walter Natynczyk, CMM, MSC, CD, Deputy Minister (for 2020–21)
- ▶ Paul Ledwell, Deputy Minister (as of May 2021)

Ministerial Portfolio: Veterans Affairs

Enabling Instruments:

- ▶ *Department of Veterans Affairs Act*^{xxxii}
- ▶ *Veterans Well-being Act*^{20, xxxiii}
- ▶ *Pension Act*^{xxxiv}

Year of Incorporation / Commencement: 1923

Our Raison d’être, mandate and role: who we are and what we do

Our Raison d’être, mandate and role are available on [our website](#).^{xxxv}

Veterans Ombud’s Mandate

The mandate for the Veterans Ombud is available on the [Ombud’s website](#).^{xxxvi}

Operating context

Information on operating context is available on [our website](#).^{xxxvii}

²⁰ The *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act* (The New Veterans Charter) was renamed as of 1 April 2018.

Reporting framework

Shown below is a diagram of our DRF and Program Inventory of record for 2020–21:

#1 Core Responsibility: Benefits, Services and Support		
DEPARTMENTAL RESULTS	INDICATORS	PROGRAM INVENTORY
Veterans are physically and mentally well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans who report that their health is very good or excellent ▪ % of Veterans who report that their mental health is very good or excellent ▪ % of Veterans accessing national network of Operational Stress Injury Clinics reporting improved overall mental health ▪ % of Veterans who report they need help with an activity of daily living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver Recognition Benefit
Veterans and their families are financially secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans whose household income is below the Low Income Measure ▪ % of Veterans who are satisfied with their financial situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Benefits • Health Care Benefits
Veterans have a sense of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans who are satisfied with their job or main activity ▪ % of Veterans who are employed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support • Long Term Care
Veterans are able to adapt, manage, and cope within post-service life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans who report an easy adjustment to post-service life ▪ % of Veterans who have completed a post-secondary education ▪ % of Veterans who have high level of mastery of their life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and Innovation • Transition Services
Veterans are living in safe and adequate housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans who are in core housing need ▪ % of Veterans Affairs Canada clients 65 years and older living in their own homes that report satisfaction with their housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans Emergency Fund
Veterans are satisfied with the services they receive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the quality of service delivery they receive from Veterans Affairs Canada ▪ % of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the quality of Veterans Affairs Canada’s programs and services offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans Independence Program • War Veterans Allowance
#2 Core Responsibility: Commemoration		
DEPARTMENTAL RESULTS	INDICATORS	PROGRAM INVENTORY
Veterans and those who died in service are honoured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Veterans Affairs Canada clients who are satisfied with the way Veterans Affairs Canada’s commemorative initiatives honour Veterans and those who died in service ▪ # of visits to the Canadian Virtual War Memorial ▪ # of visitors to the overseas memorials, Vimy and Beaumont-Hamel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada Remembers Program • Funeral and Burial Program
Canadians remember and appreciate Veterans and those who died in service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Canadians who indicate they make an effort to appreciate Veterans and those who died in service ▪ # of Canadians who participated in community engagement activities financially supported by Veterans Affairs Canada 	
#3 Core Responsibility: Veterans Ombudsman		
DEPARTMENTAL RESULTS	INDICATORS	PROGRAM INVENTORY
Veterans and their families have access to a timely review of complaints about the programs, services and support delivered by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of complaints closed within 60 working days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans Ombudsman
Issues about the programs, services and support provided to Veterans and their families by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio are identified for resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of Office of the Veterans Ombudsman recommendations related to individual complaints implemented by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio ▪ % of Office of the Veterans Ombudsman recommendations related to systemic issues which the Veterans Affairs Portfolio seeks resolution 	
INTERNAL SERVICES		

Supporting information on the Program Inventory

Financial, human resources and performance information for our Program Inventory is available in [GC InfoBase](#).^{xviii}

Supplementary Information Tables

The following supplementary information tables are available on [our website](#).^{xxxviii}

- ▶ Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy
- ▶ Details on transfer payment programs of \$5 million or more
- ▶ Gender-based analysis plus
- ▶ Response to parliamentary committees and external audits

Federal tax expenditures

The tax system can be used to achieve public policy objectives through the application of special measures such as low tax rates, exemptions, deductions, deferrals and credits. The Department of Finance Canada publishes cost estimates and projections for these measures each year in the [Report on Federal Tax Expenditures](#).^{xxxix} This report also provides detailed background information on tax expenditures, including descriptions, objectives, historical information and references to related federal spending programs, as well as evaluations and GBA Plus of tax expenditures.

Organizational Contact Information

Veterans Affairs Canada

161 Grafton Street
P.O. Box 7700
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 8M9

Toll free: **1-866-522-2122**
www.veterans.gc.ca

Veterans Ombud

134 Kent Street
P.O. Box 66
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 7K2

Toll free: **1-877-330-4343**
www.ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca

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Appendix: Definitions

appropriation (*crédit*)

Any authority of Parliament to pay money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

budgetary expenditures (*dépenses budgétaires*)

Operating and capital expenditures; transfer payments to other levels of government, organizations or individuals; and payments to Crown corporations.

core responsibility (*responsabilité essentielle*)

An enduring function or role performed by a department. The intentions of the department with respect to a core responsibility are reflected in one or more related departmental results that the department seeks to contribute to or influence.

Departmental Plan (*plan ministériel*)

A report on the plans and expected performance of an appropriated department over a 3-year period. Departmental Plans are usually tabled in Parliament each spring.

departmental priority (*priorité*)

A plan or project that a department has chosen to focus and report on during the planning period. Priorities represent the things that are most important or what must be done first to support the achievement of the desired departmental results.

departmental result (*résultat ministériel*)

A consequence or outcome that a department seeks to achieve. A departmental result is often outside departments' immediate control, but it should be influenced by program-level outcomes.

departmental result indicator (*indicateur de résultat ministériel*)

A quantitative measure of progress on a departmental result.

departmental results framework (*cadre ministériel des résultats*)

A framework that connects the department's core responsibilities to its departmental results and departmental result indicators.

Departmental Results Report (*rapport sur les résultats ministériels*)

A report on a department's actual accomplishments against the plans, priorities and expected results set out in the corresponding Departmental Plan.

experimentation (*expérimentation*)

The conducting of activities that seek to first explore, then test and compare the effects and impacts of policies and interventions in order to inform evidence-based decision-making, and improve outcomes for Canadians, by learning what works, for whom and in what circumstances. Experimentation is related to, but distinct from innovation (the trying of new things), because it involves a rigorous comparison of results. For example, using a new website to communicate with Canadians can be an innovation; systematically testing the new website against existing outreach tools or an old website to see which one leads to more engagement, is experimentation.

full-time equivalent (*équivalent temps plein*)

A measure of the extent to which an employee represents a full person-year charge against a departmental budget. For a particular position, the full-time equivalent figure is the ratio of number of hours the person actually works divided by the standard number of hours set out in the person's collective agreement.

gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus) (*analyse comparative entre les sexes plus [ACS Plus]*)

An analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people experience policies, programs and services based on multiple factors including race ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability.

government-wide priorities (*priorités pangouvernementales*)

For the purpose of the 2020–21 Departmental Results Report, those high-level themes outlining the government's agenda in the 2019 Speech from the Throne, namely: Fighting climate change; Strengthening the Middle Class; Walking the road of reconciliation; Keeping Canadians safe and healthy; and Positioning Canada for success in an uncertain world.

horizontal initiative (*initiative horizontale*)

An initiative where two or more federal organizations are given funding to pursue a shared outcome, often linked to a government priority.

impressions (*impressions*)

Impressions are defined by the total number of people your content is visible to as opposed to reach that refers to the number of people who choose to see your content and engage with it through likes, comments, or shares.

non-budgetary expenditures (*dépenses non budgétaires*)

Net outlays and receipts related to loans, investments and advances, which change the composition of the financial assets of the Government of Canada.

onboarding (intégration)

The process of integrating a new employee with a company and its culture, as well as getting a new hire the tools and information needed to become a productive member of the team.

performance (*rendement*)

What an organization did with its resources to achieve its results, how well those results compare to what the organization intended to achieve, and how well lessons learned have been identified.

performance indicator (*indicateur de rendement*)

A qualitative or quantitative means of measuring an output or outcome, with the intention of gauging the performance of an organization, program, policy or initiative respecting expected results.

performance reporting (*production de rapports sur le rendement*)

The process of communicating evidence-based performance information. Performance reporting supports decision making, accountability and transparency.

plan (*plan*)

The articulation of strategic choices, which provides information on how an

organization intends to achieve its priorities and associated results. Generally, a plan will explain the logic behind the strategies chosen and tend to focus on actions that lead to the expected result.

planned spending (*dépenses prévues*)

For Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports, planned spending refers to those amounts presented in Main Estimates.

A department is expected to be aware of the authorities that it has sought and received. The determination of planned spending is a departmental responsibility, and departments must be able to defend the expenditure and accrual numbers presented in their Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports.

program (*programme*)

Individual or groups of services, activities or combinations thereof that are managed together within the department and focus on a specific set of outputs, outcomes or service levels.

program inventory (*répertoire des programmes*)

Identifies all the department's programs and describes how resources are organized to contribute to the department's core responsibilities and results.

Red Zone claim (*demandes de désignation zone rouge*)

A Red Zone claim is a claim that is treated as an urgent request if it meets the following criteria: medically at risk (palliative or advanced age older than 80) or unmet health needs.

result (*résultat*)

A consequence attributed, in part, to an organization, policy, program or initiative. Results are not within the control of a single organization, policy, program or initiative; instead they are within the area of the organization's influence.

social media engagement (*mobilisation dans les médias sociaux*)

Social media engagement measures the public shares, likes and comments for an organization's online social media efforts.

statutory expenditures (*dépenses législatives*)

Expenditures that Parliament has approved through legislation other than appropriation acts. The legislation sets out the purpose of the expenditures and the terms and conditions under which they may be made.

target (*cible*)

A measurable performance or success level that an organization, program or initiative plans to achieve within a specified time period. Targets can be either quantitative or qualitative.

voted expenditures (*dépenses votées*)

Expenditures that Parliament approves annually through an appropriation act. The vote wording becomes the governing conditions under which these expenditures may be made.

Endnotes

- i. 2019 Mandate Letter Commitments, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/archived-minister-veterans-affairs-and-associate-minister-national>
- ii. Cannabis & Mental Health Research Projects, <https://hiddenheroes.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/cannabis-mental-health-research-projects>
- iii. Centre of Excellence on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Related Mental Health Conditions, <https://veteransmentalhealth.ca/about-us/>
- iv. Formal agreements with various organizations, <https://veteransmentalhealth.ca/about-us/partnerships/>
- v. Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence, <https://www.veteranschronicpain.ca/about>
- vi. Helping Veterans through the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund, <https://www.canada.ca/en/veterans-affairs-canada/news/2021/03/helping-veterans-through-the-veteran-and-family-well-being-fund.html>
- vii. One-time payment for persons with disabilities, <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/covid19-emergency-benefits/one-time-payment-persons-disabilities.html>
- viii. Pre- and post-release income of regular force veterans : life after service studies 2019, <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.897565/publication.html>
- ix. Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, <https://cimvhr.ca/>
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- xi. Ending Homelessness (Budget 2021), <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/report-rapport/p2-en.html#136>
- xii. *Timely disability benefits decisions: Strategic direction for improving wait times*, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/addressing-wait-times/wait-time-strategic-direction>
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- xvi. Research Summary for the Life After Service Study (LASS) 2019, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/research/research-directorate/publications/reports/lass-well-being-2020>
- xvii. Government of Canada's catalogue of publications, <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.889617/publication.html>
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- xix. Faces of Freedom podcast, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/commemorative-events/netherlands-ve-day/podcast>
- xx. Remembrance content, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance>
- xxi. *Caregivers: Taking Care Of Those Who Care For Veterans*, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/ACVA/report-7>

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- xxii. Financial Compensation for Canadian Veterans, <https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/en/publications/reports-reviews/financial-compensation-analysis>
- xxiii. Supplementary Retirement Benefit (SRB) Payout Micro-Investigation, <https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/en/publications/reports-reviews/supplementary-retirement-benefit-payout>
- xxiv. Access to Mental Health Treatment for Family Members in their Own Right, for Conditions Related to Military Service Report, <https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/en/publications/reports-reviews/mental-health-treatment-benefits-for-family-members>
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- xxvi. Workplace Wellness Promotion Plan, <https://duyxryp8txy49.cloudfront.net/pdf/info-vac-staff-covid-19/wellness-promotion-plan.pdf>
- xxvii. letstalkveterans.ca, <https://letstalkveterans.ca/>
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- xxxii. Department of Veterans Affairs Act, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/V-1/index.html>
- xxxiii. Veterans Well-being Act, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-16.8/>
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