



Veterans Review and
Appeal Board Canada

Tribunal des anciens combattants
(révision et appel) Canada

Annual Report

2024-2025



Veterans Review and Appeal Board

2024-2025 Annual Report

Chairperson's Message

I am pleased to share the Veterans Review and Appeal Board's (the Board, VRAB) 2024-2025 Annual Report.


Over the past year, the Board has remained focused on initiatives that support the four key priorities of our [2023-2028 Strategic Plan](#): access to justice, productivity, innovation, and people. These priorities continue to guide the Board as we aim to ensure Veterans, and their families, receive the benefits they are entitled to.

In 2024-2025, the Board received 9,412 applications, an increase of nearly 40% compared to the 6,727 applications received in 2023-2024. Although the amount of applications continues to rise, we have adjusted the way we work to improve productivity and consistency in decision-making, as well as streamline our processes to better meet the evolving needs of Veterans and their families. We have also seen the appointment of new Board Members and staff throughout this past year, which has further contributed to the reduction of wait times and addressing the existing backlog.

The Board has continued to uphold its mandate of providing fair and timely hearings for Veterans and their families. In 2024-2025,

the Board held a total of 6,123 hearings, 4,924 of which were reviews, 673 of which were appeals, and 526 of which were reconsiderations. Through initiatives to improve efficiency, there was a 32% increase in the number of hearings held over the past year (6,123 in 2024-2025, compared to 4,640 in 2023-2024). This past year, 89% of the Veterans who had cases heard received additional benefits for their service-related disabilities.

The 2024-2025 Annual Report highlights the work and accomplishments of Board staff and Members to ensure Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members, and their families receive the benefits they are entitled to for service-related injuries.



Christopher J. McNeil

Chairperson



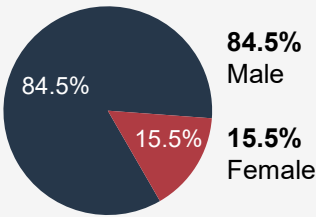
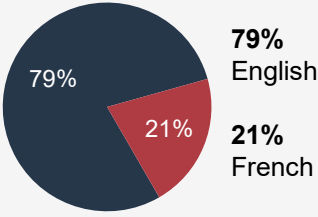
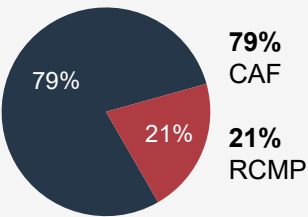
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Client demographics for 2024-2025

The following provides further information on the demographics of the clients who applied to the Board in 2024-2025.

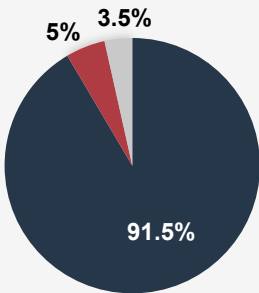
7,660
Total applicants



Number of applications for 2024-2025

In 2024-2025, the volume of applications received by the Board **increased by 40% from 2023-2024.**

9,412
Total applications



91.5%
8,608 Review
increase of 50% from 2023-2024

5%
475 Appeals
decrease of 21% from 2023-2024

3.5%
329 Reconsideration
decrease of 14% from 2023-2024

Review Hearings are the first level of review.

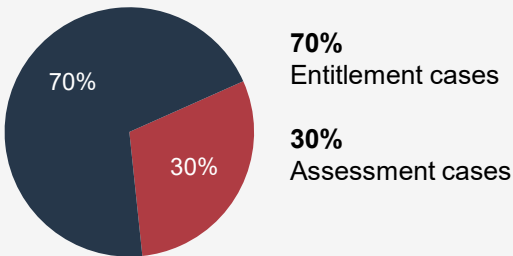
Appeal Hearings are the second level of review

Veterans who are not satisfied with an Appeal decision can apply to the Board for a Reconsideration if certain conditions exist.

Nature of applications for 2024-2025

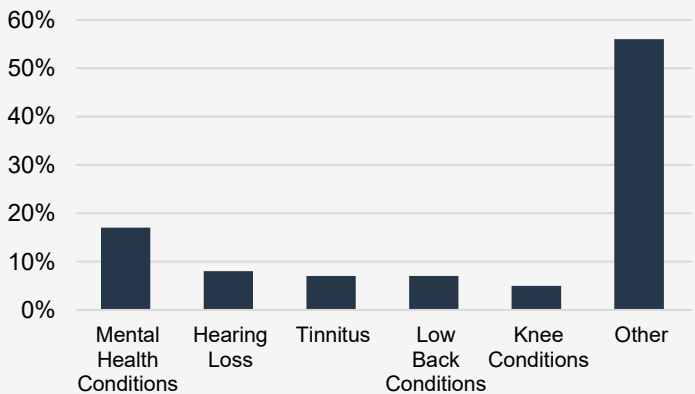
In general, the Board receives two kinds of applications:

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



Top conditions for 2024-2025

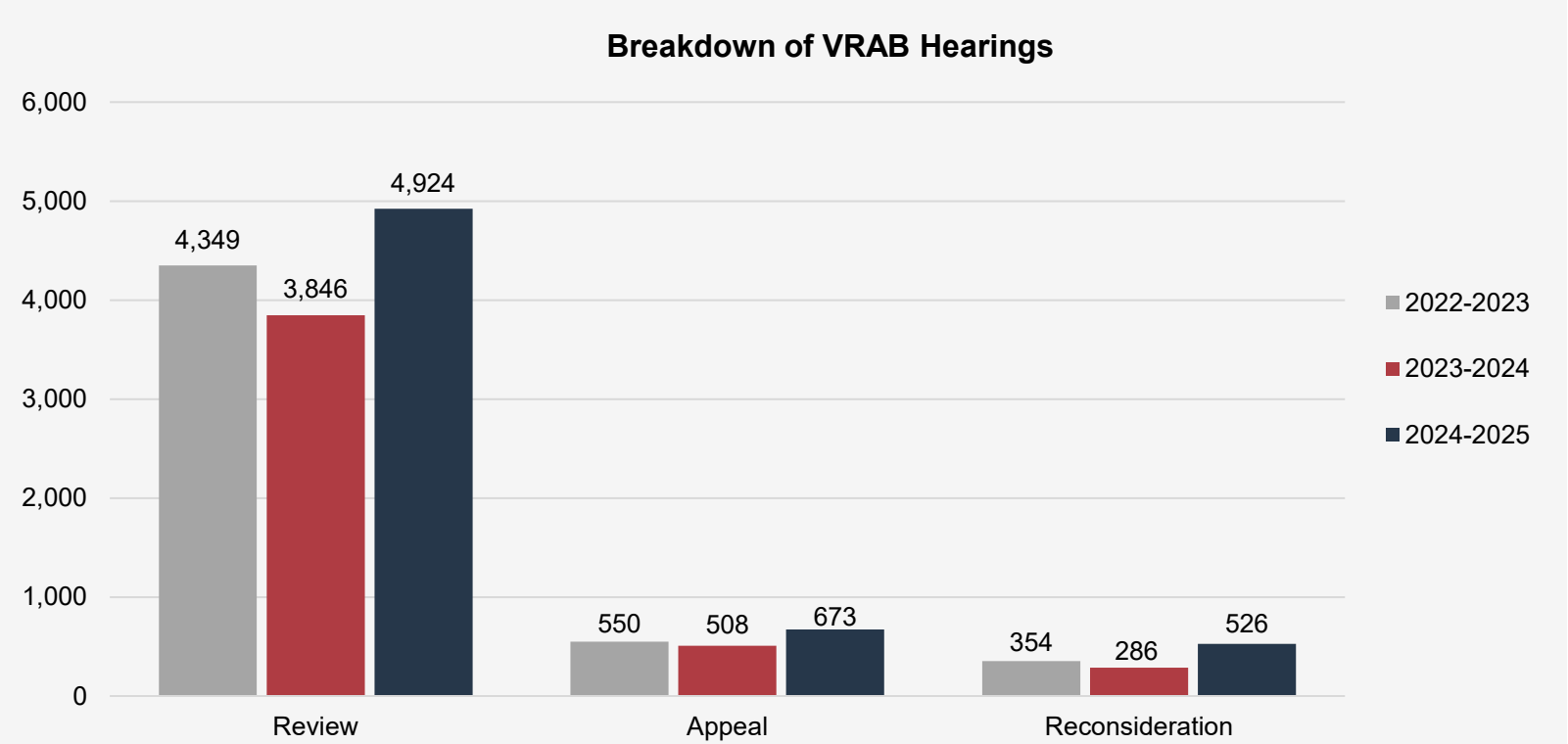
- Mental Health Conditions (17%)
- Hearing Loss (8%)
- Tinnitus (7%)
- Low Back Conditions (7%)
- Knee Conditions (5%)
- Other (56%) – Examples include neck conditions, sleeping disorders, feet conditions, GERD, etc.



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The following table outlines the hearing types held in 2024-2025, compared to the last two fiscal years.



Did you know?

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board is an independent organization operating at arm's length from Veterans Affairs Canada to ensure all applicants have access to a fair review or appeal process.

Applicants may bring forward new information, and present evidence in support of their application for disability benefits. The Board's appeal process is non-adversarial, which means that no one is arguing against the Veteran.

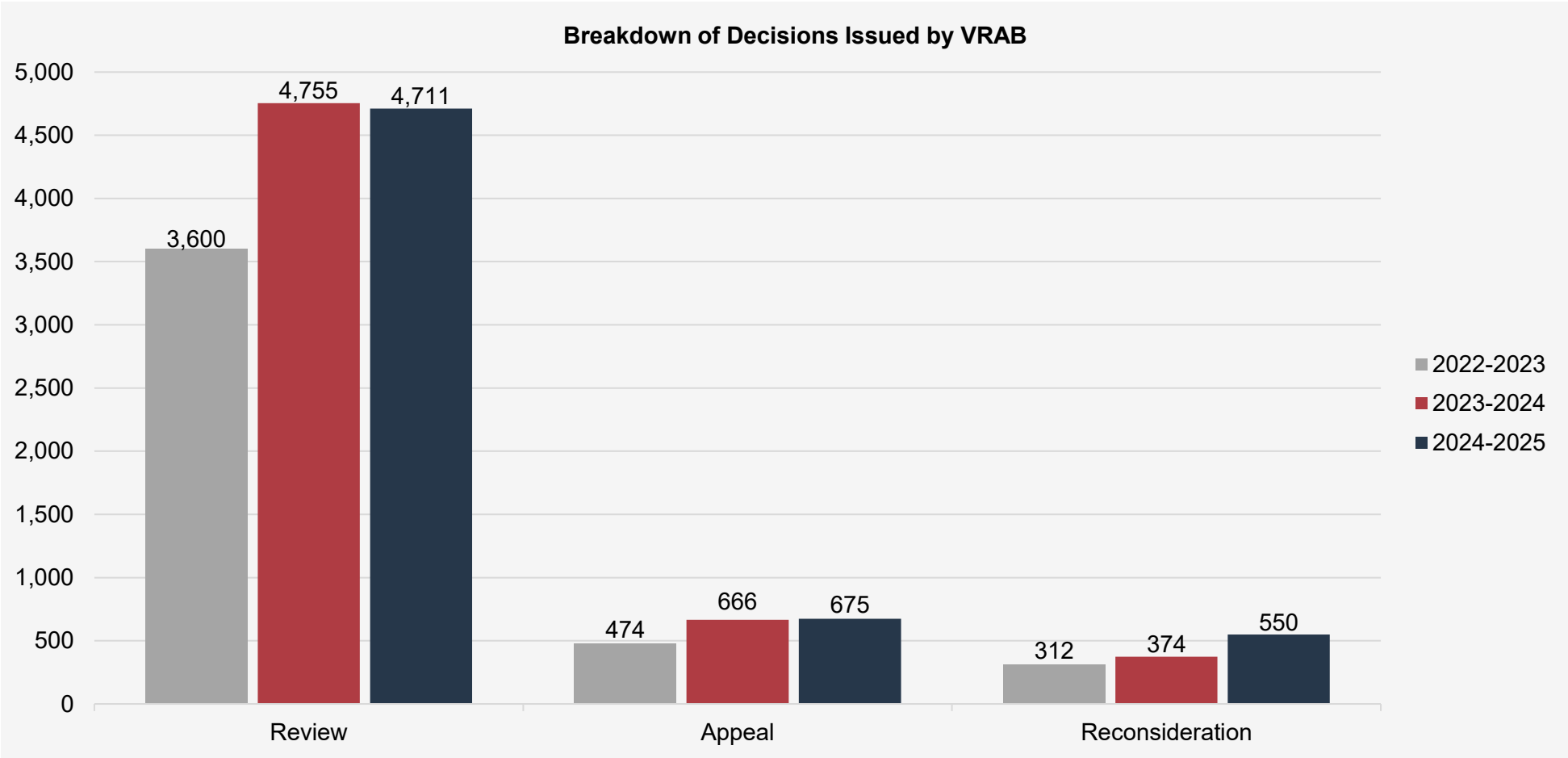
As independent decision-makers, Board Members are not bound by previous decisions. They consider every matter before them with a fresh perspective.

- Review:** A Review Hearing is the Board's first level of review, an opportunity for Veterans to appear before decision-makers (Board Members) and tell their story.
- Appeal:** An Appeal Hearing is the Board's second and final level of review. Their case will be heard by three Board Members who were not involved in the client's Review Hearing.
- Reconsideration:** If a client is still dissatisfied with an appeal decision, they can apply to the Board for a reconsideration (a re-opening of their case) if new, credible, and relevant evidence comes to light at a later date, or if an error in fact or law is found in the Appeal decision.

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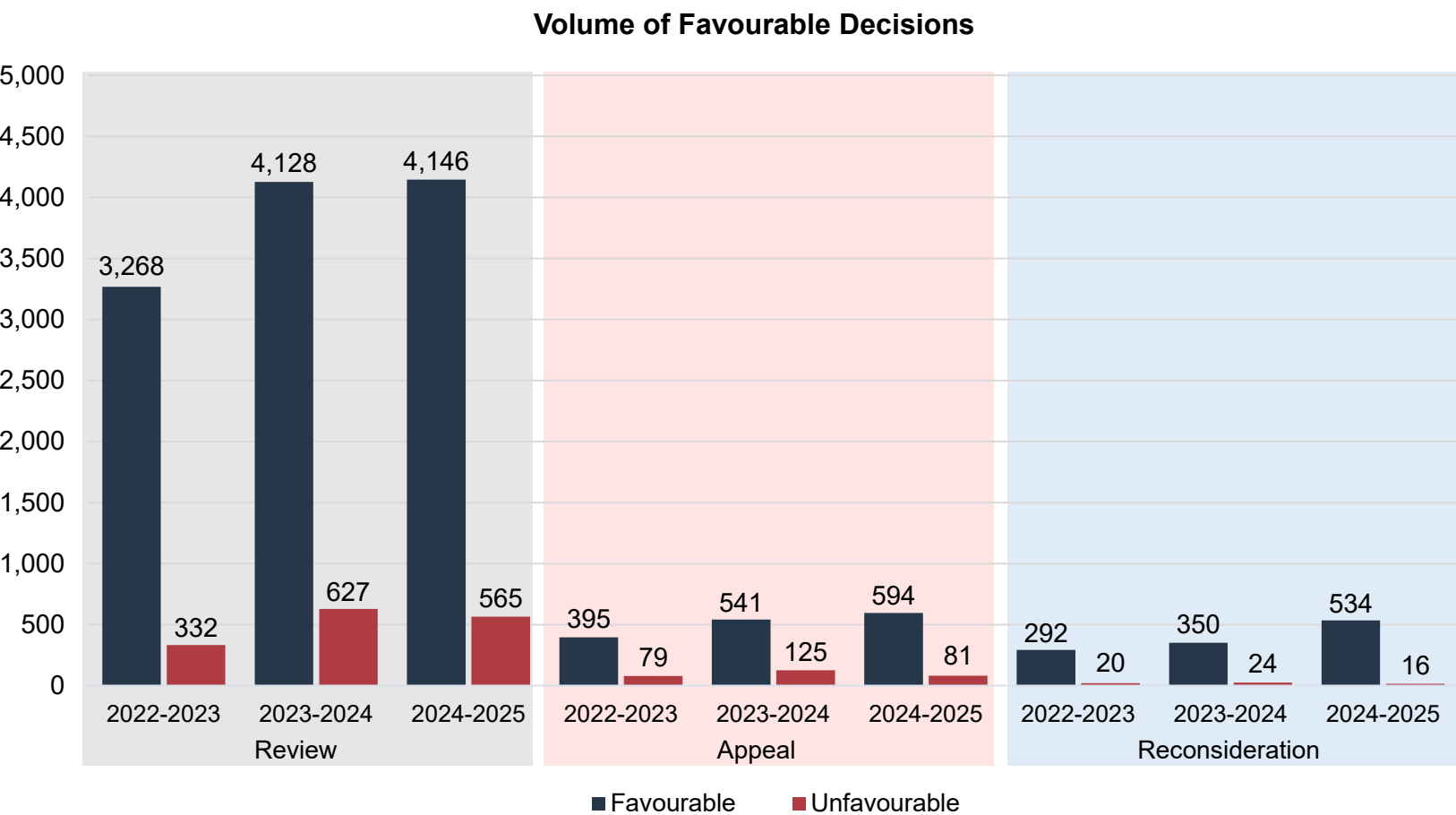
The following table outlines the decisions issued in 2024-2025, compared to the last two fiscal years.



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The following table outlines the number of favourable decisions issued in 2024-2025, compared to the last two fiscal years.



The Board may overturn decisions for several reasons, including the presentation of new or updated medical evidence, changes in medical consensus, changes in VAC policy, or testimony from the Veteran regarding how their illness or injury is related to their service and affects their daily life.

Over the last few years, the Board has experienced high favourability rates which have been impacted by several factors. These factors include significant changes in VAC policies, such as the Partial Entitlement Policy, which has allowed many previously-entitled Veterans to come forward and receive greater entitlement. Notably, this accounts for approximately one quarter of the Board's favourable decisions. The Board has also seen a rise in assessment cases where the Veteran received a favourable decision from VAC but appealed for a higher assessment. Any resulting increase is considered a favourable Board decision.

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Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

As part of the Board's ongoing efforts to improve access to justice by enhancing communication to Veterans and their families, representatives from the Board attended various stakeholder and Veteran-centric events throughout the year.

49th RCL Dominion Convention

The Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) holds its Dominion Convention on a bi-annual basis to discuss issues that are important to Veterans. Board representatives were honoured to attend this event in Saint John, NB, and foster strong connections with the Veteran community.

Métis National Veteran Council

This past year, the Chair met with the Métis National Veteran Council for the first time in Charlottetown, PEI. The meeting offered a meaningful opportunity to explore the distinct challenges faced by Métis Veterans.

Women Veterans Forum

This past spring, Board representatives attended the 2025 Women Veterans Forum in Ottawa, ON, a two-day event to recognize and celebrate the contributions of women who have served in the CAF and RCMP. It provided the Board with the opportunity to speak directly with women Veterans and learn about their distinct needs and challenges in regards to obtaining the benefits they are entitled to for service-related disabilities.

2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum

Board Member, Nancy Miller and two staff members attended the 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum in Fredericton, NB. This forum provided an opportunity to learn more about the challenges and needs of 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans.



ANAVETS Dominion Command Convention

Every two years, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAVETS) organization holds their Dominion Command Convention. Board representatives attended this event in Sherbrooke, QC, which provided an opportunity to speak directly with Veterans and their families.



CIMVHR

The Deputy Chair, and Board Member Patrice Carrière, attended the 2024 Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) Forum in Winnipeg, MB. This Forum brings together stakeholders from various sectors to explore ways to improve services for military personnel, Veterans, and their families.



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Commemoration

The Board takes pride in attending commemorative ceremonies throughout the year to honour the sacrifices of our country's brave service members. These ceremonies are a great way to preserve military history and act as a powerful reminder behind the important work that we do. The following outlines some of the commemorative events from the 2024-2025 year.

80th Anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy

The Board participated in multiple events across the country to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy. These events were a wonderful way to honour the courage and sacrifice of our Allied forces who stormed the beaches of Normandy in 1944, shaping the course of history and securing our freedom.



Photo credit: Veterans Affairs Canada

Tomb of an Unknown Newfoundland First World War Soldier

The Deputy Chair attended ceremonies in Newfoundland to commemorate the return of the remains of an unknown soldier who died in northern France during the First World War.



Photo credit: Veterans Affairs Canada

Veterans' Week 2024

During Veterans' Week 2024, the Board was honoured to attend and participate in various commemorative events across the country. These events included the annual Candlelight Tribute in Ottawa, Senate Ceremony, Indigenous Veteran's Day Ceremony, Turn to Busan, and Remembrance Day ceremonies. A highlight of the week was hosting a Veteran panel at our office in Charlottetown. During this session, we heard from both active and retired service members regarding their careers in the Canadian Armed Forces. The information and stories shared were highly impactful for all those in attendance.



Photo credit: Veterans Affairs Canada



Photo credit: Veterans Affairs Canada



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Learning and Professional Development

The Board values continuous learning and professional development as it provides staff and Members with the ability to stay up to date on issues that relate to Veterans. Educational sessions also foster a sense of pride in the work we do and while promoting inclusivity. The following items highlight some of the key learning and professional development events that took place over the 2024-2025 year.

Board Members

The Board was pleased to welcome 16 new Members who were appointed through the Governor in Council process. These new Members received specialized training on various topics including legislation, administrative law, the weighing of evidence, military issues, medical conditions, the conduct of hearings and decision writing. Later in the spring, all Board Members attended a week of training in Toronto. This marked the first time all of our existing and new Board Members came together to learn about emerging issues is key to ensuring the best outcomes for Veterans.



Diversity and Inclusion

As part of the Board’s ongoing commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, we hosted various education sessions for staff and Members. Highlights included a presentation by the Autism Society of PEI to learn more about autism spectrum disorder and how to create a more inclusive and welcoming work environment for all, as well as a transformative Learning Circle about Two-Spirit, the LGBT Purge and the trauma-informed approach led by an Indigenous Veteran and Purge survivor.

Mental Health in the Workplace

Board staff were given the opportunity to attend Mental Health in the Workplace sessions by the Joint Learning Program. The Joint Learning Program (JLP) is a collaborative initiative between the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat that offers workshops to promote healthier, more inclusive, and respectful workplaces through dialogue and shared learning. These one-day Mental Health in the Workplace sessions, attended by staff and management, provided participants with the skills to proactively and effectively support their coworkers and promote a psychologically safe and healthy workplace.

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Contact Information

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Photo credit: Veterans Affairs Canada