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CANADA

VETERANS: A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

**Report of the Standing Committee on Government
Operations and Estimates**

Tom Lukiwski, Chair

**JUNE 2019
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

has the honour to present its

NINETEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) and 108(3)(c)(iii) and the motion adopted by the Committee on Tuesday, October 2, 2018, the Committee has studied hiring veterans for public service positions and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

On 10 April 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates (the Committee) undertook a study on hiring veterans for public service positions. The Committee held six meetings, heard 35 witnesses and received 26 briefs in the course of its study.

This report provides background on the veteran population and on the federal government programs available to veterans. It reviews the priority hiring system and other measures put in place to improve veterans' access to employment in the federal public service through the [Veterans Hiring Act](#), and addresses some of the Act's shortcomings. The report also discusses many challenges that veterans face as they transition to civilian employment—such as how to translate their military skills and experience into universally-understood competencies and credentials—and it offers solutions to these challenges. Finally, it analyzes the complexity of the federal public service hiring process and offers recommendations to help veterans secure employment within the federal government.

The Committee identified four main challenges facing veterans who apply for positions in the federal public service:

- public service managers and human resources specialists do not sufficiently prioritize the hiring of veterans;
- the value of veterans is not sufficiently recognized by public service managers;
- military skills and experience are difficult to translate into civilian terms for the purpose of applying for civilian positions, including those in the public service; and
- military members and veterans lack the tools and services needed to help navigate the federal public service hiring process to secure employment.

The Committee makes 17 recommendations in the report. Four of the recommendations address the above-mentioned challenges by proposing:

- the establishment of clear targets for the implementation of the *Veterans Hiring Act* for each department and agency along with sub-targets for

various position levels, and that senior managers be made accountable for meeting these targets (Recommendation 8);

- the promotion of the value of hiring veterans, especially in the federal public service, and the provision of training to public service managers and human resources specialists on the skills and qualifications of military members, so that those managers and specialists can identify civilian equivalents (Recommendation 11);
- the development of a comprehensive, algorithmic, military skill translation software tool to facilitate military members' transition to civilian employment upon release (Recommendation 12); and
- the improvement of the services offered to military members and veterans to help them secure employment, including career coaching services and public service job application training, and the creation of a veterans liaison to assist them in navigating the federal public service hiring process and support them after they are hired by the federal government (Recommendation 14).

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada increase the promotion of its employment programs and services to military members and veterans through partnerships with military and veterans’ organizations, and that it measure and report annually on the effectiveness of its promotional activities. 17

Recommendation 2

That Veterans Affairs Canada develop appropriate metrics for all its programs before implementing them, and that it report annually on the performance of those programs. 18

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada ensure that public service managers and human resources specialists receive regular training regarding the rules and obligations under the *Veterans Hiring Act*. 25

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada develop a comprehensive and measurable career transitioning and training program to explain the provisions of the *Veterans Hiring Act*, including entitlement—as well as the federal public service hiring, application, and interview process—to all Canadian Armed Forces members upon their hiring, and to veterans before their release. 25

Recommendation 5

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat provide veterans with the relocation benefits that are provided to public servants so that veterans can satisfy the location requirements of public service positions, and that the Treasury Board of Canada’s relocation policy be expanded to make eligible anyone who has served at least five years in the Canadian Armed Forces. 26

Recommendation 6

That the *Public Service Employment Act* be amended to expand the definition of a “veteran” to include serving reservists..... 26

Recommendation 7

That, given the length of the application process for federal public service positions, the time limit for both the statutory and regulatory priority entitlement periods be extended or removed..... 26

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada establish clear targets for the implementation of the *Veterans Hiring Act* for each department and agency, along with sub-targets for various position levels, and make senior managers accountable for meeting these targets..... 26

Recommendation 9

That federal departments and agencies report annually to the Veterans Ombudsman the number of veterans they hire and employ per position level, including through the statutory priority entitlement, regulatory entitlement, preference for appointment and the mobility provision of the *Veterans Hiring Act*, so that the Veterans Ombudsman can track trends and evaluate departments’ and agencies’ success rates..... 26

Recommendation 10

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat ensure, while respecting the requirements of collective agreements, that service in the military, including in the Regular Force, the Reserve and the Reserve Overseas, be counted on a one-for-one basis for vacation accrual and seniority rights for shift and vacation scheduling..... 26

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada promote the value of hiring veterans, especially in the federal public service, and ensure that public service managers and human resources are trained in the skills and qualifications of military members, so that they can identify civilian equivalents. 37

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada develop, as suggested by the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence in June 2014, a comprehensive, algorithmic, military skill translation software tool to help military members obtain civilian employment upon release. 37

Recommendation 13

That the federal public service recognize work experience and qualifications gained in the military as commensurate with civilian work experience and qualifications. 37

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada improve services offered to military members and veterans to secure employment, including career coaching services and public service job application training, by creating a veterans liaison to assist them in navigating the federal public service hiring process and to support them after they are hired. 37

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada ensure that hiring managers and human resources specialists provide veterans not selected for public service positions with feedback in writing, and that the feedback be forwarded automatically to the Veterans Ombudsman. 38

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada create a new, flexible and agile veterans-only job classification that cannot be backfilled by civilians. 38

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada explore options to ensure seamless transitions from the military to the public service. 38



VETERANS: A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

“ We believe that the men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line for their country must know that the nation that sent them into harm’s way will be there for them when their service is complete. One small way that we, as a country, can fulfill the sacred obligation is to provide employment for those who are employable.”

Debbie Lowther,

Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada,

10 April 2019

On 1 July 2015, the Veterans Hiring Act came into force. As the Act’s short title suggested, its primary goal was to improve veterans’ access to employment in the federal public service by amending the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) and adding three provisions.

- 1) **Priority entitlements:** Members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) released for medical reasons that are attributable to their military service have a statutory priority entitlement right that takes precedence above all other categories of people with priority rights.¹ In a brief, the Public Service Commission of Canada (PSC) explained that the 75 federal departments and agencies subject to the PSEA “must consider persons with a priority entitlement before making an appointment to a position.” This means that “qualified veterans who are medically released for reasons attributable to service will be the first to be hired in any

1 As explained by the Public Service Commission of Canada [PSC] in a brief, priority entitlements assist people with career changes and life events in re-employment in the federal public service. There are four statutory entitlements in the hiring process that observe the following order of priority:

- i. members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) released for medical reasons attributable to service;
- ii. surplus employees within their own organization;
- iii. employees returning from a leave/replacing an employee on leave; and
- iv. laid-off employees.



appointment process [in the federal public service].”² For veterans whose medical release was not due to service, the eligibility period for priority entitlements set out in the regulations as regulatory priority entitlements,³ was extended from two to five years.

- 2) **Veterans’ preference for appointment:** Members who have been honourably released from the CAF, and who have accumulated at least three years of service, benefit from a preference—for up to five years after their release date—in job competitions open to the general public. [PSC](#) explained that veterans “found qualified for the position ... must be appointed ahead of other candidates (but only if there are no persons with a priority entitlement qualified for the position).”
- 3) **Mobility provision:** Veterans who have been honourably released from the CAF and who have accumulated at least three years of service can apply—for up to five years after their release date—for positions advertised internally, which are normally reserved for public service employees. This provision also applies to CAF members who have served for a minimum of three years.

On 2 October 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates (the Committee) adopted a [motion](#) to undertake a study to review the impacts and results of the *Veterans Hiring Act* and the federal government’s strategies for hiring veterans for public service positions.

Between 10 April and 15 May 2019, the Committee held six meetings and heard from 35 witnesses, including federal officials from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), the National Defence and Canadian Armed

2 PSC, [2015-2016 Annual Report: Building Tomorrow’s Public Service Today](#), p. 22.

3 In its [brief](#), the PSC explained that there are seven regulatory entitlements, but that they have no order of priority in the hiring process:

- CAF members released for medical reasons not attributable to service;
- employees who become disabled;
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police members discharged for medical reasons;
- reinstatement;
- relocation of spouses or common-law partners;
- surplus employees from another organization; and
- surviving spouses or common-law partners if the death is attributable to the performance of duties.

Forces Ombudsman, the Veterans Ombudsman, representatives of organizations helping and hiring veterans, and a number of veterans who shared their individual experiences. The Committee also received 26 briefs in relation to this study, three of which were confidential. The full list of witnesses is available in Appendix A, while the list of non-confidential briefs is provided in Appendix B.



VETERANS AND THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS THAT SERVE THEM

“I think our veterans population represents a huge pool of talent that should be leveraged. It is not always understood across Canada, both in the public and private sectors.”

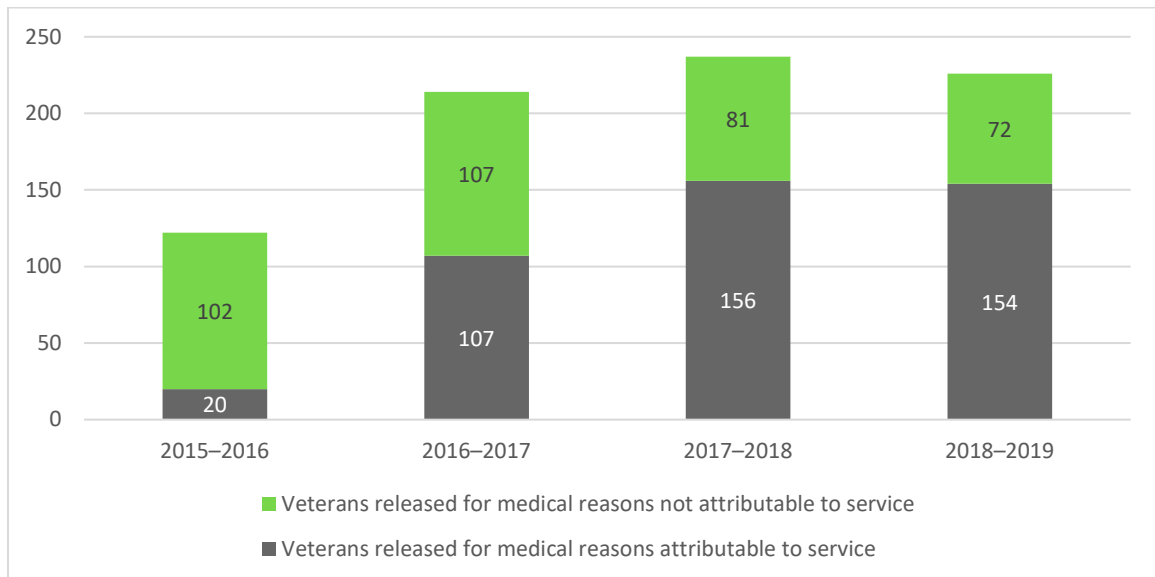
Craig L. Dalton,
Veterans Ombudsman, Office of the Veterans Ombudsman,
6 May 2019

The Veteran Population

According to the [2016–2017 annual report of the Veterans Ombudsman](#), there are 675,000 veterans spread across Canada. In its May 2018 report entitled [A Seamless Transition to Civilian Life for All Veterans: It’s Time for Action](#), the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs reported that “[o]f the 9,000 members who leave the Canadian Armed Forces each year, including members of the Regular Force and of the Reserve, approximately 2,500 are medically released. These numbers have been steadily growing for a number of years now.” It added that “[o]ver the next few years, it is expected that roughly 2,500 members will be medically released each year.” In its [Annual Report 2017–18: Building Tomorrow’s Public Service Today](#), PSC notes that “[m]edically released veterans are the only priority entitlement group whose population is steadily rising, now accounting for 33% of all individuals with a priority entitlement.”

According to [PSC](#), 1,440 medically released veterans activated their priority entitlement between 1 July 2015 and 31 March 2019; 545 from 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016; 323 during fiscal year 2016–2017; 306 during fiscal year 2017–2018; and 266 during fiscal year 2018–2019. Figure 1 presents the number of medically released veterans who were hired in the federal public service since the coming into force of the *Veterans Hiring Act* in 2015, while Table 1 provides information on the top ten hiring departments and agencies for veterans with a priority entitlement.

**Figure 1—Medically Released Veterans Hired in the Federal Public Service,
2015–2016 to 2018–2019**



Source: Figure prepared using data provided to the Committee by the Public Service Commission of Canada, *Hiring Veterans in the Federal Public Service: Information for members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, April 30, 2019*, p. 4.



Table 1— Top 10 Hiring Departments and Agencies for Veterans with a Priority Entitlement, 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2019

Departments and agencies	Number of veterans hired
Department of National Defence	514
Canada Revenue Agency	34
Employment and Social Development Canada	31
Veterans Affairs Canada	29
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	28
Correctional Service Canada	25
Public Services and Procurement Canada	21
Shared Services Canada	19
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	17
Health Canada	13
Other departments and agencies	68
Total	799

Source: Table prepared using data provided to the Committee by the Public Service Commission of Canada, *Hiring Veterans in the Federal Public Service: Information for members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, April 30, 2019*, p. 4.

Table 2 provides the number of veterans hired in 2017–2018 under the three major changes to the PSEA made by the *Veterans Hiring Act*: (1) the priority entitlement that applies to CAF members released for medical reasons; (2) the veterans' preference; and (3) the mobility provision for veterans. According to PSC, since the coming into force of the Act on 1 July 2015, 1,448 veterans have been hired in the federal public service—799 through priority entitlements, 269 through preference for appointment, and 380 through the mobility provision for veterans.

[Kiran Hanspal](#), Director General, Human Resources, Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Services Branch, VAC, shared that from 2015–2016 to 2018–2019, the federal public service hired 10,459 veterans—a significant increase from the 141 it hired between 2012–2013 and 2014–2015. It is unclear, however, how the figure reported by Ms. Hanspal can be reconciled with the ones provided by PSC. From 2015–2016 to 2017–2018, 147,207 new employees were hired in the federal public service.⁴ In September 2018, during the Committee study on the hiring process in the federal public service, [Patrick Borbey](#), President of PSC, said that since the *Veterans Hiring Act* came into force in 2015, 525 veterans released for medical reasons were hired in the federal public service. [He](#) added that on average, 20 to 30 veterans find employment in the federal public service every month.

Table 2—Number of Veterans Hired in the Federal Public Service under the Three Changes to the *Public Service Employment Act* Made by the *Veterans Hiring Act*, 2017–2018

	Number of veterans hired	Increase (%) from previous year
Priority entitlement	237	10.7
Veterans' preference	115	2.7
Mobility	193	16.3
Total	545	

Source: Table prepared using data obtained from Public Service Commission of Canada, [Annual Report 2017–18: Building Tomorrow's Public Service Today](#), p. 14.

[Lieutenant-General \(Retired\) Walter Semianiw](#), National Director, VETS Canada, noted that from 2012 to 2014, VAC had only 75 veterans among its 3,000 employees. However, [Ms. Hanspal](#) indicated that, as of April 2019, there were 165 self-identified veterans working for the department. In response to a question from a Committee member, [Gregory Lick](#), Interim Ombudsman, National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, said that in fiscal year 2017–2018 military members represented between 40% and 50% of the Department of National Defence (DND) hiring.

4 Government of Canada, "[Hiring activities under the Public Service Employment Act, by tenure and fiscal year](#)," *Public Service Hiring and Staffing Activities under the Public Service Employment Act*.



Lastly, [Mr. Lick](#) told the Committee that CAF members are released, on average, at 40 years of age, and that they therefore still have many years remaining in their working lives before they retire.

Programs for Veterans

“Right now, the onus is on the members to find the help they need and to get their applications through. If you can’t advocate for yourself, you’ll fail in this system.”

[Fraser Zerebecki](#),
Medically Released Veteran Who Testified as an individual,
6 May 2013

The Committee was informed about programs offered to veterans to help them transition to civilian life and navigate the federal public service hiring process. [Ms. Hanspal](#) explained that VAC’s Veterans in the Public Service Unit (VPSU), which was launched at the 2017 Invictus Games, “is the first service of its kind to solely assist veterans in navigating the federal public service hiring process. The unit is comprised of two subunits: the strategic human resources initiative and the service delivery subunit.” She indicated that through the strategic human resources initiative, VAC promotes best practices in the hiring of veterans to public service managers and human resources specialists and helps them understand veterans’ training, experience and skills. It also promotes job opportunities, and career events through social media messages to veterans. The service delivery subunit is composed of advisors who support veterans seeking public service employment. She added that, as of 26 April 2019, more than 600 veterans had connected with the VPSU. Finally, [she](#) remarked that her department has made efforts through the VPSU to entice departments to work with PSC and hire veterans.

While noting that the VPSU helped him improve his employment application, [Fraser Zerebecki](#), a veteran who was medically released in 2017 and who testified as an individual, informed the Committee that he learned about the existence this program through DND. According to him, the onus is on veterans to find the necessary help to secure employment. [Luc Généreux](#), a veteran who also testified as an individual, suggested in his [brief](#) that VAC case managers should receive more training regarding the department’s services.

[Ms. Hanspal](#) also informed the Committee that, at the 2017 Invictus Games, several other federal departments offered “conditional on-the-spot job offers.” However, during the Committee study on the hiring process in the federal public service, [Mr. Borbey](#)

reported that no veterans offered jobs at the 2017 Invictus Games were actually hired, because the location of the available positions did not suit them.

Several veterans were frustrated that their lack of post-secondary education would create obstacles for finding employment, including employment within the federal public service.⁵ To help veterans transition to civilian life and gain more education, [Elizabeth Douglas](#), Director General, Service Delivery and Program Management, VAC, told the Committee that on 1 April 2018, VAC introduced the following two initiatives:

- the Education and Training Benefit (ETB), which provides funding to former CAF members for education and training⁶ and which will be extended, starting on 5 July 2019, to members of the Supplementary Reserve as a result of a measure announced in Budget 2019; and
- the Career Transition Services benefit, which provides, through a third-party contractor, career counsellors who offer serving members, veterans and their spouses several services, including education counselling, job coaching, and assistance with writing a curriculum vitae (CV), preparing for interviews and applying for jobs.

She added that VAC plans to monitor and evaluate the initiatives to ensure they meet their objectives and to develop a deeper understanding of the clients who are accessing the services. Moreover, in response to a question from a Committee member, [she](#) explained that her department and the Minister of VAC have promoted the ETB through town halls, visits to military bases, the VAC website and social media. As a result, [she](#) shared that 4,540 people applied to the ETB as of 31 March 2019. Finally, she said that VAC is looking into the creation of a job bank for veterans with the help of a third-party contractor responsible for providing Career Transition Services.

Testifying as an individual, [Danielle Boutilier](#), the spouse of a veteran, explained that among the programs offered by the CAF Joint Personnel Support Unit, there is the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Serving Members. This program “gives medically releasing CAF members the opportunity to begin on-the-job training or an education

5 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates [OGGO], [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 168th Meeting, 10 April 2019, 1556 (Andrew Richards, As an individual); and [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 172nd Meeting, 13 May 2019, 1631 (Thomas Harrison, As an individual) and 1535 (John Hewitt, As an individual).

6 The maximum funding amount is \$40,960 for veterans who have at least six years of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) service and \$81,920 for veterans with at least 12 years of CAF service.



upgrade program in the six months leading up to their release date.”⁷ [Mr. Lick](#) further explained that, through this program, CAF covers their members’ salaries while they work for the public service. It is therefore an opportunity for managers to see if CAF members are a good fit within their organizations. He added that “[t]he program is incredible [... and] is a perfect example of seamless transition. Our office and I have used this program in the past, and we have gained from it.” [Ron Rea](#), a veteran who testified as an individual, shared that, thanks to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Serving Members, he transitioned seamlessly from CAF to a job in the private sector.

However, [Mr. Lick](#) remarked that it is “evident that there is a genuine lack of awareness of valuable programs, such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Serving Members.” [Ms. Boutilier](#) highlighted that a roadblock CAF members face with on-the-job training within the federal public service is that their service number is not recognized as a public service employee number—formally known as Personal Record Identifier—and therefore they cannot register for online training offered by the Canada School of Public Service.

Some witnesses said better transition services should be offered to CAF members. Both [Mr. Lick](#) and [Craig L. Dalton](#), Veterans Ombudsman, Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, advocated for preparing CAF members for the transition to civilian life at the beginning of their careers in the military. [Ms. Boutilier](#) and [Captain \(Retired\) Katherine Lamy](#), a nurse practitioner and a veteran who testified as an individual, argued that CAF members should be offered a transition course to facilitate their release. In his [brief](#), Mr. Génereux suggested that the CAF Transition Group provide in-person information sessions to military members moving to civilian life and that veterans be able to pursue a rehabilitation program while they apply for public service positions. Lastly, one veteran advocated for better compensation measures, including increased financial support.

To ensure that CAF members and Reserve Force members are properly informed about available programs and services, [Brian McKenna](#), Director, Equitas Disabled Soldiers Funding Society, advocated for the creation of a directory that lists all resources available and insisted that every organization helping veterans should have a copy. [Master Corporal \(Retired\) Terence Grabowski](#), who testified as an individual, shared that “it’s incumbent on the Canadian Forces or the government to give as much information as possible so a retiring member of the Canadian Forces can make their best-educated and informed decision on the information that they have at hand.” Recognizing that

7 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, [A Seamless Transition to Civilian Life for All Veterans: It’s Time For Action](#), Ninth Report, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, May 2018, p. 15.

more information is being provided to veterans with the implementation of the CAF Joint Personnel Support Unit, [he](#) called for a more streamlined process.

Committee Observations and Recommendations

The Committee was told that there are a number of programs and services to help veterans secure employment when they leave the military. However, the Committee notes that many veterans are unaware of the existence of these programs and services. For some of them, this is due to the fact that they were released from the Canadian Armed Forces or the Reserve Force before their implementation. The Committee believes that veterans must be made aware of these programs and services and feels that Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces must increase their efforts to promote them to veterans and current military members.

The Committee notes that there is a disconnect between Veterans Affairs Canada and the veterans they support regarding the hiring of veterans in the federal public service and the reality and experience veterans face. Moreover, there is also a discrepancy between various departments' and agencies' data on the federal government's hiring of veterans. For example, the Committee heard from Veterans Affairs Canada that from 2015–2016 to 2018–2019, there were 10,459 veterans hired in the federal public service, while the Public Service Commission of Canada reported that, since the implementation of the *Veterans Hiring Act*, only 1,448 veterans have been hired.

The Committee believes that the performance evaluation of programs is essential for good policy administration. To that end, appropriate metrics must be developed for new programs before they are implemented to assess their performance and to ensure that public funds are wisely spent. It therefore strongly encourages Veterans Affairs Canada to develop these metrics for all its programs and report annually on their performance.

Consequently, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada increase the promotion of its employment programs and services to military members and veterans through partnerships with military and veterans' organizations, and that it measure and report annually on the effectiveness of its promotional activities.



Recommendation 2

That Veterans Affairs Canada develop appropriate metrics for all its programs before implementing them, and that it report annually on the performance of those programs.

IMPROVING PRIORITY HIRING AND OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS

“I think we would all be aware of some of the challenges that occur with transitioning from uniform to civilian life. Priority hiring is one way, if implemented effectively, we could address and support these challenges.

They’re not just opportunities for veterans, for those who are medically released, those who have suffered illness and injury as a result of their service to our country. It represents an obligation, an obligation on the part of government and an obligation on the part of Canadians to support those veterans who, through no choice of their own, are unable to continue their service in uniform. I think it’s quite self-evident why it’s important to get this right for those Canadians who have sacrificed for us and all Canadians.”

Craig L. Dalton,

Veterans Ombudsman, Office of the Veterans Ombudsman,
6 May 2019

Some witnesses criticized the implementation of the *Veterans Hiring Act*. [Mr. Dalton](#) said, for instance, that some CAF members continue to be unaware that the priority hiring process even exists, while [Alex Grant](#), a veteran who testified as an individual, noted that the misunderstanding of priority hiring created a lot of frustration among veterans when the Act came into force because many thought the legislation meant that they would be guaranteed public service jobs. Mr. Grant added that veterans have since gained a better understanding through information sessions provided by the CAF and VAC along with the dissemination of information on their websites.

To improve the understanding of priority hiring, Mr. Généreux proposed in his [brief](#) that the public service offer information sessions to veterans before their priority entitlements are activated, while [Alex Perry](#), a medically released veteran who testified as an individual, advocated for informing CAF members with upcoming release dates of when information sessions are offered. Another suggestion made by an individual

veteran was to create an easy-to-read document explaining the priority hiring process for veterans.

During the Committee study on the hiring process in the federal public service, [Mr. Borbey](#) shared that PSC has “set up almost what we could call a ‘concierge service’ to support [veterans], because we realized that there was too much of a passive approach to managing the priority. We’ve actually had somebody call every veteran who was on the list to find out if they actually were actively searching for work or if they were not.” However, through that service, PSC realized that several veterans were not ready to reintegrate into the workforce.

A number of witnesses also highlighted that even some public service managers and human resources specialists do not understand the priority hiring process for veterans.⁸ [Mr. Grant](#) argued that to increase the hiring of veterans in the public service, public service managers and human resources specialists need to be educated on the process and need to be held accountable when they do not follow it.

Both the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman and the Veterans Ombudsman said that some CAF members do not participate in the priority hiring process after their release due to administrative delays. [Mr. Lick](#) explained that VAC is responsible for making the determination of whether a medical release is attributable to service, but that since the coming into force of the *Veterans Hiring Act* it “has struggled to meet its service standards,” which has created delays for veterans seeking priority access to public service jobs.

According to [Mr. Grant](#), the *Veterans Hiring Act* “creates a complex space between the Public Service Commission, Veterans Affairs Canada and Canadian Armed Forces mandates.” He added that the mandates of these three organizations differ and none of them have a clear leadership role regarding the Act. Also, no memorandum of understanding exists between the three organizations, which creates confusion. In her [brief](#), Maya Principle, a military spouse, commented that DND tends to adopt new programs quickly, but implements them poorly.

Some witnesses also criticized the lack of coordination between DND, VAC and PSC. [Wolfgang Zimmermann](#), Executive Director, National Institute of Disability Management and Research, said that “[t]he current interface between DND and Veterans Affairs is

8 House of Commons, OGGO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 171st Meeting, 6 May 2019, 1543 (Craig L. Dalton, Veterans Ombudsman, Office of the Veterans Ombudsman), 1637 (Robert Northey, Audit Officer, Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Review Services, As an individual) and 1658 (Robert Hicks, As an individual).



often detrimental to the continuing employment prospects of disabled veterans, and could be dramatically improved.” [Mr. Lick](#) commented that the process managed by PSC to put veterans on the priority lists is lengthy and that, due to administrative delays, “fully deserving and qualified former members of the Canadian Armed Forces are missing out on opportunities,” which “causes a great deal of anxiety among Canadian Armed Forces members who are transitioning from military to civilian life.” He, however, recognized that some improvements have been made to speed up VAC’s adjudication process.

To reduce delays and improve communication between VAC and DND, [Mr. Lick](#) called for “having almost real-time access to medical information on [CAF members] that can easily pass back and forth between CAF and Veterans Affairs.” [Mr. Dalton](#) said that the federal government should ensure that all medically released veterans interested in working for the federal public service are able to do so, from both a personal and administrative standpoint, as soon as they are informed that they will be released (which is usually six months before their release date). [Mr. Lick](#) supported this suggestion.

[Mr. Zerebecki](#) argued that when a veteran dies or suffers from a severe disability, hiring priority entitlements should be transferred to their spouses. This, he said, would reduce the stress that families experience during a veteran’s transition to civilian life.

Regarding the mobility provision under the *Veterans Hiring Act*, which allows veterans to apply for public service positions advertised internally, [Ms. Boutilier](#) called for an examination of the Treasury Board’s relocation policy, which discriminates against those veterans who are not released for medical reasons. “A medically released member gets a full relocation, but anyone with under 20 years of service does not,” [she](#) said.

Among those who made suggestions to the Committee, Commander (Retired) A. Vance Wirth, a veteran, proposed in his [brief](#) that legislative amendments allow veterans to continue receiving an annuity for their military service when they obtain a position in the public service. Jacob Foster advocated, in his [brief](#), for amending the definition of “a veteran” in the PSEA to include serving reservists. In his [brief](#), Commander (Retired) Wirth also suggested that veterans be added as a fifth employment equity group.⁹ This suggestion was echoed by [Robert Hicks](#), a veteran who testified as an individual, who said:

Four [employment equity designated groups] are protected right now. We’re not. I’ll go to the meat of it and say, yes, that would be a fantastic idea for veterans to have a cut.

9 Under the [Employment Equity Act](#), there are four employment equity designated groups: women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities.

The problem is, take a look at the four of us here. We're almost the demographic of the Canadian Armed Forces. We're four white males and I imagine we're straight. We don't fit into an environment where the hiring practices are all based on where you fit according to intersectionality and those kinds of rules.

Finally, [Mr. Rea](#) advocated for the implementation of a veterans first strategy in hiring.

Extending the Length of Priority Entitlement

Veterans released for medical reasons attributable to their military service can assert their statutory priority entitlement right for a period of up to five years following their release. Once they assert their statutory priority entitlement right, their priority must be exercised within five years. Candidates with the statutory priority entitlement are the first to be considered when they apply for positions in the federal public service. Veterans whose medical release was not due to service, in contrast, have five years of regulatory entitlement and are considered immediately after people with statutory priority when they apply for positions in the federal public service. The entitlement right for medically released veterans ends, however, if they accept an indeterminate position with the public service.

Recognizing that the legislation is relatively new, [Mr. Borbey](#) told the Committee during its study on the hiring process in the federal public service that PSC has not run into issues regarding the length of priority entitlement. In contrast, several veterans commented that the priority entitlement time limit is too short and advocated for a removal of limits for both statutory and regulatory priority entitlements.¹⁰ Agreeing with that suggestion, [Mr. Rea](#) explained that it is inappropriate to put a time limit on priority entitlement for veterans, since it sometimes takes several years to diagnose medical conditions.

10 House of Commons, OGGO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 168th Meeting, 10 April 2019, 1652 (Captain (Retired) Katherine Lamy, Nurse Practitioner, As an individual); [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 170th Meeting, 1 May 2019, 1659 (Master Corporal (Retired) Terence Grabowski, As an individual); Nikalus Hovelkamp, [Brief](#) submitted to OGGO; and Dennis Bellamy, [Brief](#) submitted to OGGO.



Implementing Targets for the Hiring of Veterans

“ [S]omebody who has served may not go into an office tower down the road, but why would they not be retrained for a career within Parks Canada or [Canada Border Services Agency]? Why would they not be retrained for a career, as Mr. Richards said, within Fisheries and Oceans or as a labour inspector within the labour program at Employment and Social Development? There is no reason.”

Wolfgang Zimmermann,

Executive Director, National Institute of Disability Management and Research,
10 April 2019

Debbie Lowther, Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada, commented that the priority entitlement process for veterans has been an important development, but that it is poorly implemented. This is because “the final hiring decision is left to hiring managers who have no obligation or interest in actually hiring veterans.” Mr. Lick recognized that it might be more challenging for some departments and agencies to link CAF training to public service position requirements; nonetheless, he argued that it is incumbent on all public service hiring managers to meet former CAF members at least halfway when it comes to fulfilling commitments made to them.

Witnesses informed the Committee that, in contrast to other jurisdictions such as the United States and Australia, Canada has not implemented targets for the hiring of veterans in the public service.¹¹ Ms. Lowther suggested that Canada should emulate these jurisdictions and implement targets with measurable outcomes for the hiring of veterans in the federal public service. This suggestion was supported by Mr. Zimmermann.

Ms. Hanspal told the Committee that “[t]o increase recruitment, our deputy minister established an aspirational goal of having veterans represent 10% of the department’s workforce by July 1, 2020. As of December 2018, the percentage of self-identified veterans increased to 7.3%, from 5.9% in June 2017.” In response to a question from a Committee member, she indicated that the goal does not include subtargets for senior and management positions. Mr. Grant suggested establishing aspirational hiring goals

11 House of Commons, OGGO, Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 168th Meeting, 10 April 2019, 1723 (Danielle Boutillier, As an individual); and Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 171st Meeting, 6 May 2019, 1650 (Mr. Hicks).

instead of targets for veterans for each department and agency, and holding managers accountable every time they screen out a veteran.

[Mr. Dalton](#) highlighted that the federal government has not established clear objectives for increasing veteran employment and has not assigned clear accountability for delivering on these objectives. He and [Mr. Hicks](#) recommended that PSC collaborate with federal departments and agencies to establish and assign clear targets for hiring veterans along with clear accountability for delivering on these targets. Agreeing with this suggestion, [Mr. Lick](#) added that targets for hiring veterans in the public service should be supported by performance measurement frameworks and proper managerial tools. He also suggested making one department responsible for those targets for the entire public service.

To help departments and agencies make progress towards their targets, [Mr. Dalton](#) suggested sharing best practices across government. [Mr. Lick](#) and [Mr. Hicks](#) advocated for the promotion of hiring veterans through the creation of awards for departments and agencies that perform well.

Lastly, in response to a question from a Committee member on the fact that targets are often ignored for the awarding of contracts to certain business types in the federal public service, [Ms. Boutilier](#) suggested attaching financial incentives such as bonuses to targets.

Recognizing Veterans' Years of Service

“ [Not recognizing military service] could make it difficult to promote a future career in the public sector to veterans currently looking to transition from the military.”

[Andrew Richards](#),
a veteran who testified as an individual,
10 April 2019

[Andrew Richards](#), a veteran who testified as an individual, explained that the Treasury Board of Canada policy for vacation does not count a day of service in the CAF or the Reserve Force as equivalent to one day of service in the federal public service, because the calculation varies based on the type of service (i.e. Regular Force, Reserve, Reserve Overseas). [Mr. McKenna](#) commented that, as a result of the policy, two different groups have been created: public service employees for whom years of service are calculated on a one-for-one basis, and CAF members, whose years of military service are calculated using opaque formulas and other considerations. He suggested that continuous service



in the military should be counted the same way as continuous service in the public service.

During the course of this study, some veterans now working as border services officers for the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) told the Committee that—since their last collective agreement came into force in June 2018—their years of service as CAF members or Reserve Force members no longer count as service in the public sector when their seniority rights are calculated.¹² [Mr. Richards](#) said that this is the result of a vote among members of their union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and that it has created animosity in the workplace. [Emily Rowe](#), a veteran who testified as an individual, [Sergeant Matthew Harris](#), a reservist and veteran who testified as an individual, and [Sergeant \(Retired\) Mike Peterson](#), a veteran, suggested that time served in the CAF, Regular Force and Reserve Force should be recognized for seniority and vacation scheduling in the federal public service.

[Morgan Gay](#), National Negotiator, PSAC, explained that the 2009 collective agreement for the border services group seniority rights for shift and vacation scheduling was based on employees' years of service in the public service. [Sandra Hassan](#), Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment Conditions and Labour Relations, TBS, told the Committee that since 1 April 2012, "the Directive on Terms and Conditions of Employment in the Federal Public Service was amended to include service with the Canadian Forces in the definition of 'service' for vacation leave purposes. ... This allowed prior service as a member of the Canadian Forces to be consistently taken into account in the calculation of vacation leave credits for all employees in the core public administration." She added that "[a]ny former service in the Canadian Forces for a continuous period of six months or more either as a member of the Regular Force or of the Reserve Force while on class B or C service, is included in the calculation of vacation leave credits." [Mr. Gay](#) said that, as a result of that new directive, the 2013 collective agreement for the border services group recognized former military service for vacation accrual. However, PSAC filed a grievance due to a dispute following the creation of two separate seniority lists in the workplace, one for vacation scheduling and one for shift scheduling. After losing the grievance, PSAC negotiated a new agreement in 2018, which recognizes seniority solely based on service time in the public service. However, time served in the military is still recognized for vacation accrual.

Some witnesses also made suggestions regarding pension transfers to the public service. [Ms. Rowe](#) said veterans need to be better informed about their pension transfers when

12 House of Commons, OGGO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 168th Meeting, 10 April 2019, 1534 (Mr. Richards); and [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 170th Meeting, 1 May 2019, 1546 (Sergeant Matthew Harris, As an individual) and 1551 (Emily Rowe, As an individual).

they join the federal public service. Sergeant (Retired) Peterson made a similar point in a [brief](#). He requested that the federal government provide a clear explanation to veterans on how CAF pensions would interact with public service pensions.

Committee Observations and Recommendations

The Committee believes that every public service manager and human resources specialist should be familiar with the obligations under the priority hiring process, and in particular with the changes made to the *Public Service Employment Act* through the coming into force of the *Veterans Hiring Act* in 2015. The Committee believes that it is equally important that all Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans are made aware of their public service hiring rights.

The Committee recognizes that veterans with priority entitlements and veterans eligible for the preference for appointment and mobility provision under the *Veterans Hiring Act* are not being hired by the federal public service. To that end, it believes that to ensure an increased number of veterans are hired, targets should be established for different position levels, including management, and that departments and agencies should report on those targets. The Committee is of the opinion that departments and agencies should produce better data on the number of veterans per position level that they employ and hire.

Finally, the Committee believes that to improve veterans' transition from the military into the public service, service in the military—including in the Regular Force, the Reserve and the Reserve Overseas—should, while respecting the requirements of collective agreements, be counted on a one-for-one basis for vacation accrual and seniority rights for shift and vacation scheduling.

Consequently, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada ensure that public service managers and human resources specialists receive regular training regarding the rules and obligations under the *Veterans Hiring Act*.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada develop a comprehensive and measurable career transitioning and training program to explain the provisions of the *Veterans Hiring Act*, including entitlement—as well as the federal public service hiring, application, and



interview process—to all Canadian Armed Forces members upon their hiring, and to veterans before their release.

Recommendation 5

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat provide veterans with the relocation benefits that are provided to public servants so that veterans can satisfy the location requirements of public service positions, and that the Treasury Board of Canada’s relocation policy be expanded to make eligible anyone who has served at least five years in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Recommendation 6

That the *Public Service Employment Act* be amended to expand the definition of a “veteran” to include serving reservists.

Recommendation 7

That, given the length of the application process for federal public service positions, the time limit for both the statutory and regulatory priority entitlement periods be extended or removed.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada establish clear targets for the implementation of the *Veterans Hiring Act* for each department and agency, along with sub-targets for various position levels, and make senior managers accountable for meeting these targets.

Recommendation 9

That federal departments and agencies report annually to the Veterans Ombudsman the number of veterans they hire and employ per position level, including through the statutory priority entitlement, regulatory entitlement, preference for appointment and the mobility provision of the *Veterans Hiring Act*, so that the Veterans Ombudsman can track trends and evaluate departments’ and agencies’ success rates.

Recommendation 10

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat ensure, while respecting the requirements of collective agreements, that service in the military, including in the Regular Force, the Reserve and the Reserve Overseas, be counted on a one-for-one basis for vacation accrual and seniority rights for shift and vacation scheduling.

REINTEGRATING VETERANS INTO THE LABOUR FORCE

“There’s a knowledge benefit to be gained in the public sector by hiring veterans, in retaining the skills, training and experience they have obtained through their military service.

There is also a cost benefit to the public sector by hiring veterans, in that time and money has already been invested in them through their training and things as basic as, for example, valid security clearances they already hold.”

Andrew Richards,

a veteran who testified as an individual,
10 April 2019

Promoting the Value of Veterans

Robert Northey, Audit Officer, Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Review Services, who testified as an individual, noted that “there is a negative stigma in the public service that priority hires are subpar performers who are unwanted and being passed around from department to department.” This comment was echoed by Mr. Généreux. Along the same lines, Mr. Dalton noted that some public service managers and human resources specialists have limited knowledge of the CAF and what CAF members have to offer as employees. According to him, the federal government should play a leadership role as the largest employer in the country and “send a real message to the rest of the public and private sectors that there’s tremendous value in hiring a veteran.”

Several witnesses explained that it is necessary to promote the skills and experience that veterans have to offer to public service managers and human resources specialists.¹³

Ms. Boutilier and Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (Retired) Christopher Radimer, a veteran, suggested that the Canada School of Public Service offer veteran familiarization training to managers and human resources specialists. Sergeant-at-Arms Donald Ticknor, Chairman of Voluntary Resources and Executive Committee Member, Branch 350, Royal Canadian Legion, told the Committee that more veterans should be hired in management positions through priority entitlement.

13 House of Commons, OGGO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 171st Meeting, 6 May 2019, 1610 (Gregory Lick, Interim Ombudsman, National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman), 1633 (Mr. Hicks) and 1710 (Luc Généreux, As an individual).



A few witnesses told the Committee that many public service managers prefer to hire existing public service employees over veterans.¹⁴ According to [Mr. Northey](#), some managers only become aware that candidates had priority entitlements after investing time and resources into hiring candidates without priority. In his [brief](#), Shaun Brown, a veteran, told the Committee that he has interviewed unsuccessfully for 10 public service positions for which he was qualified. He felt that the hiring process was a pro forma exercise—that is, he was only interviewed so that managers could say they considered a veteran.

[Mr. Zerebecki](#) commented that understanding the organizational structure and mandate of the organization is a common requirement for public service jobs, which puts external candidates and veterans at a disadvantage. He called for simplifying the essential qualifications of public service positions. [Mr. Hicks](#) suggested that veterans could be hired as consultants to evaluate their potential before being offered permanent positions within the public service.

The Committee was informed of federal public service initiatives aimed at promoting the recruitment of veterans among public service managers. [Mr. Grant](#) explained that an interdepartmental working group was created, best practices were shared, and outreach and connection pilot projects were completed through strategic initiatives. [Ms. Hanspal](#) explained that VAC put CAF experience as an asset in its job postings and more recently added it as an essential qualification for targeted recruitment. Moreover, VAC opened positions to veterans and CAF members. [She](#) added that through its VPSU, VAC organizes “community fairs across the country precisely to educate managers on how they can write better statement of merit criteria [tailored to veterans].”

The Committee also heard about a Crown Corporation that recognizes the value of hiring veterans and that has developed initiatives to increase the number of veterans in its ranks. [Jacques Fauteux](#), Director, Government and Community Relations, VIA Rail Canada Inc., told the Committee that his organization has recently received a celebration of service award from a group of parliamentarians to recognize Via Rail Canada Inc.’s work in hiring veterans and reservists. He reported that, as of May 2019, Via Rail Canada Inc. employed 87 veterans or reservists, which is four times more than in 2014. In response to a question from a Committee member, [Mr. Fauteux](#) explained that Via Rail Canada Inc.’s human resources department incorporates military experience and expertise into their recruitment process through social media, and with the help of

14 House of Commons, OGGO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 171st Meeting, 6 May 2019, 1637 (Mr. Northey) and 1643 (Fraser Zerebecki, As an individual); and Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (Retired) Christopher Radimer, [Brief](#) submitted to OGGO, 28 April 2019.

veterans organizations, VAC and the CAF. [He](#) added that veterans working for Via Rail Canada Inc. also help with the recruitment process.

[Ziad Nader](#), Director, Human Resources and Information, Via Rail Canada Inc., noted that when recruiting new employees, his organization looks beyond expertise, title, experience, and diplomas, and instead focuses on transferable skills. He explained that managers and human resources specialists in his organization have exposed themselves to military skills and tasks by attending a day of military training to improve their understanding of military expertise. [Thomas Harrison](#), a military member who is expected to be medically released and who testified as an individual, suggested that federal public service managers and human resources specialists should do the same.

Translating Military Skills

“With approximately 5,000 Canadian Armed Forces members releasing from service each year, there was, and still is, a growing untapped talent pool in Canada.”

Canada Company,
[Brief](#) submitted to the Committee,
15 May 2019

Several witnesses explained that the experience and skills acquired through military service do not easily translate into requirements for civilian positions, including public service positions.¹⁵ According to some witnesses, including [Mr. McKenna](#), it is much easier for high-ranking CAF members such as colonels and admirals to find employment in the public service, because their expertise is well understood.

Both the Interim National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman and the Veterans Ombudsman recognized that there are challenges in translating the skills, experience, and knowledge gained by CAF and Reserve Force members into civilian language to meet public service position requirements. [Mr. Lick](#) commented that it is troubling to see that, despite the efforts made by the federal government since at least 2011, “there’s still a

15 House of Commons, OGGO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 168th Meeting, 10 April 2019, 1559 (Mr. Richards); [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 170th Meeting, 1 May 2019, 1531 (Brian McKenna, Director, Equitas Disabled Soldiers Funding Society); and [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 172nd Meeting, 13 May 2019, 1551 (Sergeant-at-Arms Donald Ticknor, Chairman of Voluntary Resources and Executive Committee Member, Branch 350, Royal Canadian Legion), 1555 (Florin Corcoz, As an individual) and 1646 (Mr. Harrison).



lack of understanding of how the knowledge and skills acquired through military service translate into the civilian work environment.”

During the Committee study on the hiring process in the federal public service, [Mr. Borbey](#) explained that there is a mismatch between the way CAF members and veterans describe the skills they acquired in the military and the National Occupational Classification system, which classifies jobs based on the duties employees perform. A veteran suggested human resources specialists from DND could help harmonize the National Occupational Classification system with a military equivalent.

[Ms. Boutilier](#) told the Committee that CAF members “are released with a list of courses that most people cannot decipher,” which makes it difficult for prospective employers to understand their qualifications. [She](#) added that, as a result, veterans with priority hiring are often screened out from the outset.

In response to a question from a Committee member, [Ms. Hanspal](#) explained that VAC developed, in partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada, CAF and DND, an online tool—the skills translator—that translates a military occupational structure identification code into the equivalent civilian national occupational code based on CAF job specifications. The tool can be used by veterans to prepare their job applications as well as by public service managers to understand the variety of skills acquired in the CAF. She added that VAC is promoting the tool within the federal public service and [Ms. Douglas](#) shared that VAC is working on adapting the tool for the private sector.

In its [brief](#), Canada Company, an organization supporting CAF members and their families, explained that through its Military Employment Transition (MET) Program it developed an application called METPathfinder that offers “an exclusive and real-time connection to thousands of jobs across Canada or conversely, for employers to source thousands of transitioning military members, veterans and military spouses.” Furthermore, the application created online business profiles “matching a member’s military occupation, rank, training and experience to roles and skills required with the many jobs available.” Canada Company reported that in five years, “over 3,000 military members and 300 spouses had been hired through the MET program by any of our 600 employer partners.”

[Mr. Lick](#) noted that the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence, in its June 2014 report entitled [Caring for Canada’s Ill and Injured Military Personnel](#), recommended that the Government of Canada “develop a comprehensive, algorithmic, military skill translation software tool to facilitate CF members to obtain civilian employment upon release.” He added that such a tool already exists and is used in the

United States: “An American military member can simply enter their service units and the certifications they have received into a computer database. The computer then spits out those civilian job equivalencies as well as a civilian resumé template once the member has made some simple drop-down menu selections.” Recognizing that VAC had developed a skills translator, he called for a tool that would go beyond translating occupational codes and incorporate leadership and management experience gained in the military.

In his [brief](#), Mr. Généreux suggested conducting “a fair and equitable assessment of veterans’ qualifications and experience to identify [public service] positions at the right level,” as well as ensuring that the Priority Information Management System—the tool developed to help human resources specialists administer priority entitlements—target positions suitable for veterans’ qualifications. In their briefs, several medically released veterans, including [Dennis Bellamy](#), [Craig Evans](#) and [Mr. Harrison](#), suggested that the federal government recognize military training and experience as education in its hiring process.

[Ms. Boutilier](#) explained that most public service managers do not know that several courses taken by CAF members are very similar to those offered to public service employees. As a solution, she proposed that the Canada School of the Public Service identify courses provided by the military that are similar to those offered in the federal public service. Similarly, [Mr. McKenna](#) suggested that human resources specialists in the public service identify job tasks in the military that are similar to those performed by federal employees. Lastly, [Mr. Zerebecki](#) proposed that PSC mandate public service managers to be more flexible when they compare military skills and experience with public service position requirements.

Supporting People with Disabilities

Some witnesses discussed the challenges faced by those with disabilities—and more specifically, veterans with disabilities—seeking employment in the public service. [Mr. Zimmermann](#) commented that [Bill C-81, An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada](#), which is being studied by Parliament and came with a federal government commitment in [Budget 2019](#) to hire at least 5,000 people with disabilities over the next five years, would create employment opportunities for disabled veterans. However, [he](#) noted that the federal public service does not have a culture of accommodation that other organizations, such as the Canada Post Corporation or the Irving Group, have developed. [He](#) said that, as a result, “70% of disabled individuals currently hired into the federal civil service don’t make it through their probationary period.”



In a joint [brief](#), PSAC and the Union of National Defence Employees observed that veterans who enter the public service with mental disabilities and exhibit symptoms, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, are being disciplined or terminated. They noted that DND, for example, which has statistics on the number of veterans hired into the department, does not have—or at least has not shared—statistics with respect to those veterans who have resigned or been terminated. As a solution, they suggested that military physicians assess veterans’ fitness for public service positions; that there be a transition period during which veterans can continue to access military physicians and other medical personnel until they can obtain a civilian practitioner and/or a position in the federal public service; and that better processes be implemented to ensure veterans entering the public service are placed in positions suited to their abilities, and that training be provided when necessary.

[Mr. Zimmermann](#) explained that successful job retention for people with a mental or physical health impairment requires the following three components: “creativity, because no two disability situations are alike and can vary based on a number of circumstances; collaboration between various stakeholders; and open and transparent communication.” He suggested that PSC think “outside the box to review and remove, if necessary, bureaucratic impediments that take any number of forms from unnecessary educational requirements to more flexibility in delivering additional training.” [He](#) added that early support is critical to help people with physical or mental health impairments because, “if an individual has been out of work for a year, their chances of ever going back to work are down to less than 10%.”

According to [Mr. Lick](#), “[m]edically released members may face greater barriers to entry and challenges in obtaining and maintaining a second career. For this reason, logically we have the provisions of the *Veterans Hiring Act*, as well as priority entitlements, to ease entry into public service employment.”

[Kerry Gibson](#), President, EcoCentury Technologies, who testified as an individual, encouraged the federal government to support the transition of veterans into civilian life and to offer them help in finding suitable and satisfying employment. She explained that employment “serves more benefit than simply financial gain. It offers purpose, support and social connection.” She suggested that federal workplaces accommodate varying levels of physical ability and that human resources specialists be trained to gain a better understanding of the mental health challenges faced by veterans, such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Offering Better Support to Veterans

“Ultimately, the public service, and particularly those veterans now working in the public service, must take responsibility and be supported in mentoring, coaching and training service members in their transition. We have to make it as easy as possible for public service managers to hire former CAF members.”

Gregory Lick,

Interim Ombudsman, National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman,
6 May 2019

Several witnesses explained that little support is offered to veterans before and after they leave the CAF. Captain (Retired) Lamy observed that “[t]he longer members serve in the military, the more they become institutionalized [... and] become accustomed to having much, if not most, of their normal day-to-day activities coordinated and managed by the system.” In contrast, she added, when they leave the CAF, “there’s no one and no process in place to help guide and assist members through it.” Lieutenant-General (Retired) Semianiw explained that when he was released in 2015 from the CAF, no support was offered to him. Mr. Richards remarked that “[t]here are programs in place to assist veterans with career transition who have been medically released from the Canadian Armed Forces, but there does not seem to be similar assistance available to veterans who are voluntarily looking to change careers.”

According to Mr. Perry, “the burden to seek information about retirement or release is placed on the member.” He explained to the Committee that medically released CAF members are offered only an initial six-month period before their effective release date to make critical decisions about, for example, where they want to live and what they may want to study. He recommended that this period be extended to at least 12 months. In a brief, Sergeant (Retired) Peterson suggested the CAF consider ways in which it could speed up the voluntary release process for its members.

Mr. Dalton informed the Committee that some CAF members do not know how to navigate the federal public service hiring process and that there is a lack of support for transitioning CAF members to participate in the priority hiring process. Ms. Boutilier observed that CAF members are released with “no pre-release training on how to apply for a public service job or how to sell themselves in an interview.” She added that people in the military are not trained for and not used to a hiring process that rewards candidates who share as much information as possible and that this “severely hinders their CV writing skills and interview skills.” She suggested that released CAF members receive mandatory CV writing and job interview training. In his brief, Mr. Généreux



similarly advocated for better access to VAC's services related to writing CVs and cover pages, and for re-establishing some services related to hiring, such as interview preparation.

Several witnesses, including the [Veterans Ombudsman](#), identified the lack of feedback provided to veterans when they are screened out of job competitions as a recurring problem.¹⁶ And even when feedback is provided to veterans, according to [Ms. Lowther](#) and [Mr. Zerebecki](#), it is often vague and unhelpful. [Master Corporal \(Retired\) Grabowski](#) noted that receiving feedback from unsuccessful job competitions would help veterans grow and learn, and ultimately become successful hires. [Captain \(Retired\) Lamy](#) suggested that the federal public service offer debrief sessions to veterans screened out of job competitions.

To help veterans find employment, several witnesses called for better support. [Mr. Génèreux](#) suggested implementing a mentorship program to coach and support CAF members several months before their release, while [Mr. Zerebecki](#) proposed that the VPSU take on a more active role in helping CAF members secure public service positions. [Mr. Zimmermann](#) advocated for the implementation of a program supporting veterans that is similar to one in Australia, which offers job coaches to people who have been on social security for a long time. [Ms. Boutilier](#) suggested that the Canadian Forces Liaison Council be mandated to help CAF members transition to civilian life, and that each veteran be assigned a family liaison officer or a career manager. [Lieutenant-General \(Retired\) Semianiw](#) added that the supporting person could help CAF members and veterans translate the skills and experience they have acquired in the military into civilian equivalents so that they can meet public service job requirements. This was also supported by [Captain \(Retired\) Lamy](#).

[Lieutenant-General \(Retired\) Semianiw](#) told the Committee that the CAF is testing a concierge service for Canadian Forces Base Borden. Under this service, a person would work with CAF members to ensure that everything is in place for a smooth transition to civilian life one or two years before their release. However, he clarified that it would take time before this service is offered on all military bases. While recognizing that a concierge service would help, [Mr. Zerebecki](#) noted that a single person could not know how to navigate the whole public service hiring process due to its complexity.

Finally, [Ms. Rowe](#), a veteran who works for CBSA, proposed that veterans be offered an allowance of at least \$125 per week while they attend training for public service positions. She explained that this type of allowance is offered to customs officers. She

16 House of Commons, OGGO, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 172nd Meeting, 13 May 2019, 1615 (Mr. Hewitt) and 1634 (Ed Simmons, As an individual); and Mr. Génèreux, [Brief](#) submitted to OGGO.

also advocated for allowing veterans who work for CBSA to choose where they would like to work and, more generally, for offering veterans signing bonuses when they accept jobs in the public service.

Simplifying the Public Service Hiring Process

“ In fall 2018 I initiated a process to join the federal public service. My journey was not easy. It was like crossing a minefield.”

Luc Généreux,
a veteran who testified as an individual,
6 May 2019

Several witnesses complained about the complexity of the federal public service hiring process. Master Corporal (Retired) Grabowski and Mr. Rea found the process complex, frustrating, long, laborious, and redundant. Master Corporal (Retired) Grabowski explained that after applicants have uploaded their resumes on the federal government’s online platform, they must answer questions already answered in their resumés. Mr. Zerebecki shared that “[o]verall, my search for public service employment has been stressful, frustrating and unnecessarily complicated.” Other witnesses, including Mr. Généreux, shared similar remarks.

According to Mr. Dalton, the public service hiring process “is too complex and not veteran-centric,” which becomes a burden for veterans—especially those released for medical reasons. Mr. Northey added that some public service exams are unfair. He provided the example of a test he took in which he was expected, without advance notice, to remember a policy specific to the department to which he was applying. In a similar vein, Mr. Généreux, Mr. Harrison and Sergeant-at-Arms Ticknor advocated for the use of more reasonable exams in hiring processes. Mr. Zerebecki also commented that job advertisements provide little information on job tasks, which makes it difficult for applicants to determine if they are a good fit.

With the goal of improving the federal public hiring process for veterans, Mr. Hicks suggested creating “a new, flexible, agile classification for veterans that can’t be backfilled by civilians.” He also suggested creating a pool of qualified veterans that public service managers would be required to consider when hiring. In a brief, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Charles Jansen, a veteran, suggested that veterans be exempted from “recent experience” requirements for public service positions that are defined as “within the last five years,” since CAF members rarely remain in one location for longer than three years. In his brief, Mr. Bellamy suggested that PSC’s Investigations Directorate be held to account when it refuses to take action related to unfair hiring



practices in the federal public service. Dawn Williams suggested in a [brief](#) that veterans be allowed to enter priority public service hiring pools before they are officially released from the CAF to ensure a seamless transition to civilian employment. Lastly, [Mr. Perry](#) called for aligning military service numbers with the Personal Record Identifier used for public service employees.

Some witnesses discussed language training and security clearances for public service jobs. [Captain \(Retired\) Lamy](#) said that only CAF members and veterans medically released at a certain rank qualify for second-language training. Moreover, [Ms. Boutilier](#) explained that second-language training is not included in the lists of courses reimbursed to veterans through their insurance plans. To help veterans improve their second-language skills and to ensure they are not screened out of federal public service job competitions, [Captain \(Retired\) Lamy](#) and [Jan Kennedy](#), a medically released veteran who represents the Global Alliance Foundation Fund, suggested that veterans be offered language training free of charge.

[Captain \(Retired\) Lamy](#) and [Mr. Rea](#) explained that when CAF members are released, they lose their security clearances and must obtain new ones for public service positions, which involves costs and delays in their hiring. She suggested looking for ways to maintain security clearances for veterans for a period of time after they are released from the CAF. This suggestion was echoed by [Mr. Perry](#).

Lastly, to reduce hiring delays, Mr. Généreux suggested in his [brief](#) that VAC and the CAF help veterans update their linguistic profiles and reactivate their security clearances.

Committee Observations and Recommendations

The Committee affirms that veterans have much to offer and that the federal public service should capitalize on what these dedicated individuals have to offer. It believes that the majority of public service managers and human resources specialists have a limited understanding of military skills, competencies, and expertise, and therefore do not recognize the full potential of military members and veterans. More should be done to familiarize public service managers and human resources specialists with the military environment—by exposing them to military training, for instance.

The Committee strongly encourages federal public service managers and human resources specialists to incorporate military skills and expertise into applicable public service job postings. Furthermore, the Committee encourages them to be more flexible when translating military skills, expertise and experience into public service equivalents.

The Committee is also of the opinion that the translation of military skills, expertise and experience, including in leadership and management, into civilian equivalents for both the public and the private sector must improve. It encourages the Government of Canada to develop a tool to help managers and human resources specialists understand the value of military members and veterans and to help military members and veterans identify their own transferable skills.

Overall, the Committee believes in providing more support to military members and veterans who want to secure civilian employment, especially in the federal public service, through in-person assistance. Finally, veterans should be provided feedback when they are screened out of public service job competitions so that they can use that information to improve their future job applications.

The Committee recognizes that the federal public service hiring process is very complex and encourages the Government of Canada to keep looking for ways to simplify the process for all applicants, including veterans. Moreover, the Committee believes that the Government of Canada should look at options to ensure smoother transitions from the military to the public service.

Consequently, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada promote the value of hiring veterans, especially in the federal public service, and ensure that public service managers and human resources are trained in the skills and qualifications of military members, so that they can identify civilian equivalents.

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada develop, as suggested by the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence in June 2014, a comprehensive, algorithmic, military skill translation software tool to help military members obtain civilian employment upon release.

Recommendation 13

That the federal public service recognize work experience and qualifications gained in the military as commensurate with civilian work experience and qualifications.



Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada improve services offered to military members and veterans to secure employment, including career coaching services and public service job application training, by creating a veterans liaison to assist them in navigating the federal public service hiring process and to support them after they are hired.

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada ensure that hiring managers and human resources specialists provide veterans not selected for public service positions with feedback in writing, and that the feedback be forwarded automatically to the Veterans Ombudsman.

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada create a new, flexible and agile veterans-only job classification that cannot be backfilled by civilians.

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada explore options to ensure seamless transitions from the military to the public service.

CONCLUSION

Throughout their military careers, veterans make immeasurable sacrifices in serving our country at home and abroad; they endure demanding training and work in difficult environments, and develop unique skills and expertise that allow them to perform and make decisions under duress. Many veterans want to continue serving their country after their military release.

The Committee strongly believes that all employers, and especially the federal public service, should seek to employ these dedicated individuals. The Committee is confident that the 17 recommendations in this report, if implemented by the Government of Canada, will provide veterans a smoother transition to civilian life, will allow them to continue serving their country, and will strengthen the federal public service.

In the Committee's opinion, the Government of Canada should substantially increase its efforts to help veterans transition to civilian life and secure employment. To achieve this goal, the Government of Canada must:

- establish clear targets for the implementation of the *Veterans Hiring Act* for each department and agency along with sub-targets for various position levels and make senior managers accountable for meeting these targets;
- promote the value of hiring veterans, especially in the federal public service, and provide training to public service managers and human resources specialists on the skills and qualifications of military members, so that those managers and specialists can identify civilian equivalents;
- develop a comprehensive, algorithmic, military skill translation software tool to help military members obtain civilian employment upon release; and
- improve services offered to military members and veterans to help them secure employment, including career coaching services and public service job application training, and create a veterans liaison to assist them in navigating the federal public service hiring process and, to support them after they are hired by the federal government.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As individuals	2019/04/10	168
Danielle Boutilier		
Katherine Lamy, Nurse Practitioner Captain (Retired)		
Andrew Richards		
National Institute of Disability Management and Research	2019/04/10	168
Wolfgang Zimmermann, Executive Director		
VETS Canada	2019/04/10	168
Debbie Lowther, Chair and Co-founder		
LGen (Ret’d) Walter Semianiw, National Director		
As an individual	2019/04/29	169
Jordie Yeo		
Department of Veterans Affairs	2019/04/29	169
Elizabeth Douglas, Director General Service Delivery and Program Management		
Kiran Hanspal, Director General Human Resources, Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Services Branch		
As individuals	2019/05/01	170
Kerry Gibson, President EcoCentury Technologies		
Terence Grabowski, Master Corporal (Retired)		
Matthew Harris		
Emily Rowe		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Equitas Disabled Soldiers Funding Society Brian McKenna, Director	2019/05/01	170
VIA Rail Canada Inc. Jacques Fauteux, Director Government and Community Relations Ziad Nader, Director Human Resources and Information	2019/05/01	170
As individuals Luc Généreux Robert Hicks Robert Northey Fraser Zerebecki	2019/05/06	171
National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman Carole Lajoie, Director of Education and Collaboration Gregory Lick, Interim Ombudsman	2019/05/06	171
Office of the Veterans Ombudsman Craig L. Dalton, Veterans Ombudsman Sharon Squire, Deputy Veterans Ombudsman and Executive Director	2019/05/06	171
As individuals Florin Corcoz Alex Grant Thomas Harrison John Hewitt Alex Perry Ed Simmons	2019/05/13	172
Royal Canadian Legion Donald Ticknor, Sergeant-at-Arms, Chairman of Voluntary Resources and Executive Committee Member Branch 350	2019/05/13	172
As an individual Ron Rea	2019/05/15	173

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Public Service Alliance of Canada Morgan Gay, National Negotiator	2019/05/15	173
Treasury Board Secretariat Sandra Hassan, Assistant Deputy Minister Employment Conditions and Labour Relations Baxter Williams, Executive Director Employment Conditions and Labour Relations	2019/05/15	173

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the Committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Anonymous Author
Bellamy, Dennis
Brown, Shaun
Canada Company
Champagne, Martin
Evans, Craig
Foster, Jacob
Généreux, Luc
Global Alliance Foundation Fund
Harrison, Thomas
Hovelkamp, Nikalus
Jansen, Charles
Peterson, Michael
Principle, Maya
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Public Service Commission
Radimer, Christopher
Royal Canadian Legion
Simmons, Ed
Williams, Dawn
Wirth, A. Vance
Zerebecki, Fraser

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 168 to 173, 176, 177, 179 and 180](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Lukiwski
Chair

