



Preventing and Ending Veteran Homelessness

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How many homeless Veterans are there in Canada?

- Veterans Affairs Canada's electronic records management system, Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN), includes a "homeless indicator" that identifies Veterans who are homeless or are in crisis situations
 - Latest numbers from CSDN: September 2016 – 650 Veterans with homelessness indicator
- Over the past number of years, municipal Point-in-Time counts have largely indicated that:
 - 5-7% of respondents self-identify as having served in the Canadian military or RCMP
- The Mental Health Commission of Canada's *At Home/Chez Soi* research demonstration project of homelessness and mental health (2009-2013) reported that:
 - 99 of the 2,298 participants (4.3%) identified themselves as Veterans
- In August 2016, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Homelessness Partnering Strategy, released the *2005–2014 Highlights of the National Shelter Study* which estimated in 2014:
 - 2,950 (or 2.2% of the total number of shelter users) self-identified as having served in the Canadian military

Who are homeless Veterans?

- Veterans, like the general population, become homeless as the result of complex and interrelated issues such as:
 - health status (physical and mental)
 - personal problems (family breakdown or violence)
 - employment instability
 - poverty
 - lack of affordable housing
 - addiction issues



Who are homeless Veterans?

- Many Veterans have been exposed to traumatic and dangerous situations as a result of their military service, and often struggle with the after-effects of these experiences
- Some Veterans find the transition from military to civilian life difficult, and struggle to find ways to adjust to the civilian world



Who are homeless Veterans?

- Veterans who served in the Canadian Armed Forces have made tremendous sacrifices for Canada and Canadians by:
 - protecting Canadian citizens, values and interests at home and across the globe
 - being on duty and on call 24/7
 - being ready to make the ultimate sacrifice, if required
- Through their sacrifices, Veterans have enabled Canada as a nation to contribute to peace and security within its own borders and around the world





“Veteran homelessness is unacceptable in Canada”

- The Honourable Kent Hehr
Minister of Veterans Affairs



Preventing and Ending Veteran Homelessness

- Veterans Affairs Canada is leading the development of a **Veteran Homelessness Strategy** using a whole-of-government approach to address current gaps and improve support to Veterans in crisis
- In collaboration/consultation with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Department of National Defence (DND), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)
- Informed by:
 - National, regional, and local Veteran and homelessness organizations
 - Studies on Veteran homelessness (Ray, Forchuck)
 - Best practices used by Canada and its allies
- The Strategy is based on the following principles:
Veteran-centric, Collaboration-led, Evidence-informed, and Outcome-based



Proposed Strategic Themes and Objectives

<b style="color: red;">Lead and Engage Improve Collaboration and Leadership	<b style="color: red;">Find Improve Outreach and Identification	<b style="color: red;">Assist Improve Mechanisms to Assist	<b style="color: red;">Prevent Prevent Through Optimizing Well-Being
<p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through strong and visible leadership, strengthen existing relationships & develop and leverage new partnerships across all levels of government, with national/community homelessness organizations and Veteran stakeholder organizations, to engage all to act boldly to end Veteran homelessness. 2. Increase knowledge about homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis, the factors that lead to homelessness among Veterans, and successful initiatives that prevent & end homelessness and support Veterans in crisis. 	<p>OBJECTIVE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Strengthen the capacity of Veterans Affairs Canada area offices and partner organizations to identify and connect with homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis. 	<p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Strengthen the capacity of Veterans Affairs Canada and partner organizations to provide effective crisis response to homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis. 5. Increase access to stable and affordable housing for Veterans. 6. Increase access to education and re-entry into purposeful employment for homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis. 	<p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Improve the military to civilian transition mechanisms to ensure a successful transition to civilian by connecting releasing members of the Canadian Armed Forces to the supports they require, and inspiring Veterans to achieve their optimal well-being. 8. Expand and enhance initiatives to rapidly identify and better support Veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system.



How will we **LEAD AND ENGAGE?**

- Enhance relationships with Government and non-government partners:
 - Establishment of Interdepartmental Task Force
 - Increasing awareness through events such as the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference and through initiatives such as the development of an educational video for police services that highlights the unique experience of homeless Veterans, and a new homeless Veteran information poster
 - Increasing engagement with key stakeholders, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, VETS Canada, and community Veteran and homelessness organizations
 - Increasing Veterans Affairs Canada interaction with local Community Advisory Boards and Community Entities



How will we **FIND** homeless Veterans?

- Develop and implement a model for improved VAC Area Office collaboration with local Veteran stakeholders, community organizations and police services that will:
 - Improve coordination of local outreach and identification efforts (e.g. local “Boots on the Ground” outreach walks) that will identify homeless and Veterans in crisis
 - Enhance coordinating and reporting of information that identifies and tracks homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis
 - Provide flexibility in the model to be adaptable to each area’s unique circumstances
- Provide faster service verification for homeless Veterans through better interoperability with Canadian Armed Forces



How will we improve our ability to **ASSIST** homeless Veterans?

- **Emergency Funds:** Improve the ability of VAC front line staff to provide emergency financial assistance at a sufficient level to homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis
- **Facilitate access for Veterans and Veteran-related projects to partner programs:**
 - Assist ESDC with analysis of Veteran-related projects stemming from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy Innovative Solutions to Homelessness Call for Proposals launched on September 26, 2016
 - Work with ESDC and CMHC to ensure Veterans are appropriately included in the forthcoming *National Housing Strategy*
 - Work with ESDC and Mood Disorder Society of Canada to establish a pilot project that will help ensure homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis have access to opportunities for skills training, job search assistance, and job placement in accordance with their unique needs (**announced by Minister of Veterans Affairs on behalf of Employment Minister in September 2016**).



How will we **PREVENT** Veteran homelessness?

- Focus efforts to optimize Veteran well-being by working with the CAF and other government and non-government partners and stakeholders to develop:
 - **A seamless transition process** – Enhance CAF members transition to civilian life with the tools and supports they need
 - **A holistic Career Transition and Employment Strategy** – Ensure CAF members are well supported in finding civilian employment
 - **A Veterans' Families Strategy** – Ensure Veteran families are well supported and duly recognized
- Enable Veterans to achieve community and purpose post military service
 - This is up to all of us!



Outcomes

Successful implementation will mean that VAC and our partners will have the capacity to:

- Identify and engage Veterans who are homeless or in crisis
- Intervene to provide the needed supports For Veterans who are in crisis
- Provide timely access to emergency shelter and crisis services without barriers to entry and secure permanent stable housing and appropriate supports, when homelessness does occur
- Connect homeless Veterans and Veterans in crisis to assistance and services tailored to their unique needs and strengths to help them achieve and maintain optimum well-being.



Annex 3

Have you served in the Canadian Armed Forces or RCMP?

If you are homeless, help is available



Contact Veterans Affairs Canada
1-866-522-2122 veterans.gc.ca/services

For 24/7 crisis support contact VETS Canada
1-888-228-3871 VetsCanada.org

 Veterans Affairs Canada Anciens Combattants Canada 

Questions?