

A View from the Street



**Veterans Emergency
Transition Services**



An Overview of VETS Canada

- Federally registered not for profit
- Volunteer driven, non-partisan
- Founded in 2010 in Halifax, Nova Scotia
- Headquartered in Halifax, Nova Scotia
- CRA charitable status obtained in 2012
- Governed by a Board of Directors
- Hundreds of volunteers across the country
- Provide face to face, online and telephone assistance to homeless, at-risk and in-crisis veterans
- 2014 – awarded contract with VAC
- Have responded to thousands of requests for assistance to date



How We Do It

- Proactive and reactive approach
- Self referral or referral from others
- Family/Friends
- Shelters
- RCMP
- Other organizations
- VAC case managers – more than 80%



How We Do It

- Social media (over 135,000 followers)
- Boots on the Ground (BOG) patrols- teams walk the streets, visit shelters
- Special, annual events (Tour of Duty, In Her Boots)
- Phone line manned 24/7 (1-888-228-3871)



What Can We Do?

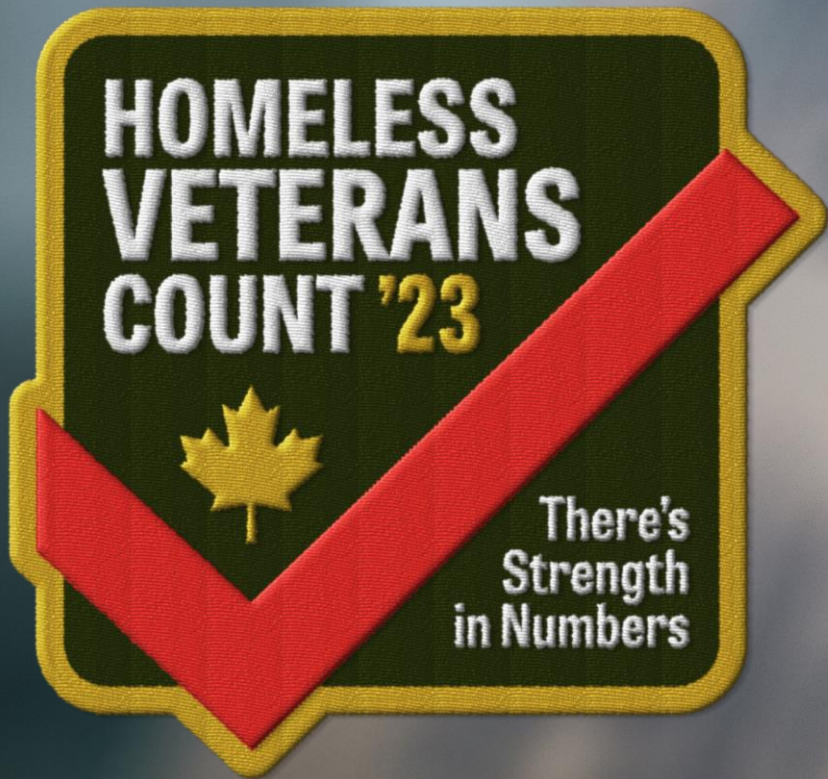


What Can We Do?



What we don't do





A census from Canadian streets to determine the big picture of the scope and nature of Veterans' homelessness.



A Fresh Perspective

- VETS Canada identified the number and location of homeless/at-risk veterans across Canada, including indigenous, LGBTQ2, and women veterans.
- VETS Canada offered tailored support such as temporary accommodations, housing assistance, eviction prevention, food/clothing, and transportation.

A Fresh Perspective

- The veterans were also connected with Veterans Affairs Canada for potential benefits.
- Our volunteers visited shelters, soup kitchens, food banks, and tent cities to verify the service of each identified veteran.
- The project provided accurate data on the number of homeless/at-risk veterans and endeavoured to improve their access to support services.

Homeless Veterans Count Results 2023

PROVINCE/ TERRITORY	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NS	NT	NU	ON	PE	QC	SK	YT	TOTALS
TOTAL # VETERANS	306	357	82	217	80	259	3	1	737	18	194	71	5	2330
MEN	253	290	69	181	68	211	3	1	597	14	159	59	5	1910
WOMEN	52	64	13	36	12	46	0	0	134	4	33	12	0	406
OTHER	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	2	0	0	14
LGBTQ2+	6	9	2	5	2	7	0	0	27	1	5	1	0	65
INDIGENOUS	19	18	4	11	4	14	1	1	49	0	8	7	3	139

June 21, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am one of the lucky ones.

I was a homeless veteran, that stumbled into the most dangerous homeless shelter in Canada. At the corner of Dundas and Sherbourne east streets in downtown Toronto. I like to call it the "Jerry Springer" corner because of the characters that live there.

A buddy of mine staying at the shelter one day made a snarky remark to a man in a suit as he walked past. Within 15-minutes, he was surrounded by a dozen men and beaten and stabbed to death – right in front of me. Turns out, that man in the suit was the neighborhood pimp.

I was one of the lucky ones. I escaped this insanely crazy world of never-ending poverty, food insecurity and potentially life altering – and life ending – violence.

I escaped with a lot of help from VETS Canada.

Within days of calling their toll-free number, they had saved me from the streets of Toronto, by placing me in a nice room at a local hotel. That first night was the first night in a long time that instead of sleeping on a dirty concrete floor, within a couple inches of the next homeless person at the shelter, I slept in a nice warm and comfy bed.

You really don't know how much a bed means until you do not have one.

Like me, many ex-Canadian Armed Forces members find themselves on the streets. Serving changes you. Sometimes for the good. I still make sure my "kit" is wrinkle-free and perfectly polished, even if I'm just going to the gym. Sometimes for the bad. Being trained to follow orders, told where to go and what to do. Living with people that no matter how much they make fun of you, you know they ALWAYS have your back. Then suddenly, you're released into a world where no one is there to give you orders. No one tells you where to go, what to do. And most people will stab you in the back and take advantage of your honesty and helpfulness.

VETS Canada kept me in that hotel and fought for me to keep me at the top of the waiting list for a subsidized veteran's housing unit, where I live now – with other Canadian vets that have gone through incredible challenges after their service to their country.

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While I was homeless, VETS Canada helped me with food, shelter, anything I needed. But the biggest help was their daily calling to the manager of this veteran's housing unit, ensuring that I was next on the list.

Because you don't know how much a home means until you do not have one. And VETS Canada stayed by my side and did not leave me until I did have a home again.

And I'm forever grateful to VETS Canada and Veteran's Affairs Canada, even to the sometimes rough around the edges shelter workers, because without all these amazing people, I would not be housed. I may not even be alive. The streets are a dangerous place. Most do not escape. I was one of the lucky ones. VETS Canada saved my life.

I am one of the lucky ones. Having a safe and affordable home has given me the opportunity to really turn my life around. I took a career assessment, went through a security guard training program and I recently was promoted at the security guard company I work for. I have food in my fridge, clean clothes on my back and my own bed to sleep in, in my own home. A home I would never have found living on the streets. Being homeless is a daily, nightly – all the time – fight just to survive. Being homeless keeps people from getting a home.

Without organizations like VETS Canada, many homeless veterans – good, honest, hard-working people that did unspeakable things to keep you and your loved ones safe and secure here in Canada – would die, alone, homeless on the streets of our cities and towns.

If you have any questions or want to learn more about how VETS Canada helped me, please feel free to call or email me.

Regards,

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