

# PREVENTING AND ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

NOVEMBER 5, 2018



Veterans Affairs  
Canada

Anciens Combattants  
Canada

SLIDE 1

Canada

# OBJECTIVES

- To provide an overview of Veteran Affairs Canada's efforts to prevent and end Veteran Homelessness.



# WHAT DO WE KNOW

- **Veterans are just as likely to be homeless as other Canadians, and respond just as well to 'Housing First' (Bourque 2014, 2015, 2017)**
- **Nearly 5% of homeless Canadians in 2016 were Veterans (Employment and Social Development Canada, Coordinated Point-in-Time Counts, 2017)**
- **2.2% of homeless Canadians (2009-2013) were Veterans (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2016)**
- **4.3% of homeless Canadians (2009-2014) were Veterans (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014)**

# PROPOSED HOMELESSNESS APPROACH

VISION STATEMENT			
Veteran homelessness is unacceptable in Canada; One homeless Veteran is one too many.			
GOAL			
To prevent and end Veteran homelessness in Canada.			
GUIDING PRINCIPLES			
Veteran-centric, collaboration-led, evidence-informed, outcome-based			
THEMES			
<b>LEAD and ENGAGE</b> Improve Collaboration and Leadership	<b>FIND</b> Improve Outreach and Identification	<b>ASSIST</b> Improve Mechanisms to Assist Homeless Veterans and Veterans in Crisis	<b>PREVENT</b> Prevent Veteran Homelessness through optimizing Veteran Well-Being



## Improve Collaboration and Leadership

Through strong and visible leadership, strengthen existing relationships and develop and leverage new partnerships across all levels of government, and with national and community homelessness and Veteran stakeholder organizations, to engage all to act boldly to prevent and end Veteran homelessness.



## Improve Collaboration and Leadership

**Increase knowledge about homeless Veterans, the factors that lead to homelessness among Veterans, and successful initiatives that prevent and end homelessness and support Veterans in crisis.**

# ESDC AND VAC PARTNERSHIP

- **In 2013–2014, ESDC and VAC implemented a joint Partnership Strategy focused on improving the coordination of existing initiatives and services provided by both departments in order to better support homeless Veterans.**
- **The coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Counts organized by ESDC included a question Veteran status. The PiT Counts took place in spring of 2016 and 2018.**

# ESDC AND VAC PARTNERSHIP

- **The Advisory Committee on Homelessness, chaired by PS Vaughan, hosted 10 roundtables across the country, including one focused on Veterans' homelessness, to inform the redesign of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS).**
- **Opportunities for collaboration between ESDC and VAC that could be developed under the NHS:**
  - **Government of Canada is to expand Veterans' access to affordable housing and support programs, while partnering with non-governmental organizations;**
  - **Budget 2017 announced \$4 million investment for Veteran Emergency Fund;**
  - **Need to address data gaps related to housing needs for Veterans.**
- **Moving forward, ESDC and VAC will continue to share relevant information between each department.**



## Improve Outreach and Identification

Strengthen the capacity of Veterans Affairs Canada area offices and partner organizations to identify and connect with homeless Veterans.

- Increasing collaboration, communication and efficiency of outreach initiatives by all stakeholders at the local level.

Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN) - [Back in Step Video](#)

## Improve Outreach and Identification

Strengthen the capacity of Veterans Affairs Canada area offices and partner organizations to identify and connect with homeless Veterans.

- Increasing collaboration, communication and efficiency of outreach initiatives by all stakeholders at the local level.

Created an [Veterans Homelessness Support Interactive Map](#)

## Improve Outreach and Identification

Strengthen the capacity of Veterans Affairs Canada area offices and partner organizations to identify and connect with homeless Veterans.

- Canadian Armed Forces and VAC announced the return of the Veteran's Service Card



## Improve Outreach and Identification

Created a Homelessness poster to inform homeless Veterans and their families of where they can go for help.



**ONE HOMELESS VETERAN IS ONE TOO MANY**

**AVAILABLE RESOURCES ARE:**

- Veterans Emergency Fund
- Health Care
- Financial Support
- Employment
- Vocational Training and Support
- Peer Support
- Veteran & Family Well-Being Fund
- Case Management
- Local Service Providers

**DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO SERVED IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES OR THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE WHO IS HOMELESS OR AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS?**

**CALL US.**  
**1-866-522-2122**  
veterans.gc.ca/services

**1-800-268-7708**  
VAC Assistance Service, to speak to a mental health professional

 

## Improve Mechanisms To Assist Homeless Veterans and Veterans in Crisis

Strengthen the capacity to provide effective crisis response to homeless Veterans.

- Seeking ways to expand eligibility for VAC programs and services;
- Authorizing the funds to provide emergency financial assistance at sufficient levels to assist homeless Veterans; and
- Expanding Veteran services and programs by partnering with other government departments and stakeholder organizations on activities that will provide evidence and establish best practices.

## Prevent Veteran Homelessness By Improving Veteran Well-being

**Improve the military-to-civilian transition mechanisms to ensure a successful transition to civilian life by connecting releasing members of the Canadian Armed Forces to the support they require and inspiring Veterans to achieve their optimal well-being.**

- **Developing a joint VAC-Canadian Armed Forces employment strategy to optimize the military-to-civilian career transition.**

## Prevent Veteran Homelessness By Improving Veteran Well-being

Expand and enhance initiatives to rapidly identify and better support Veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

- Standardizing the assistance available to Veterans who have to navigate the criminal justice system; and
- Enhancing pre-release transition services for incarcerated Veterans to include access to safe and affordable housing.

# VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH INITIATIVE

- **Correctional Service Canada study (2015) reported approximately 3% of federally incarcerated individuals are Veterans.**
- **In 2015, Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) received a proposal from Lieutenant-General (Retired) Roméo Dallaire to pilot a project to assess viability of a Veterans Justice Outreach Program for Veterans in Canada.**
- **Pilot project modelled after a United States Department of Veteran Affairs program that has been operational since 2009.**
- **In early 2016, Major-General (Retired) Pitzul, a former Deputy Attorney-General of Nova Scotia and Canadian Armed Forces Judge Advocate, endorsed the project.**



## Objectives

- To establish partnerships with the Provincial and Territorial justice and correctional systems.
- To raise awareness of VAC programs and services and to help understand the unique challenges faced by Veterans living with the impact of Operational Stress Injuries (OSIs) resulting from their service.
- To incorporate the Veteran military experience into the decisions regarding Veterans in conflict with the law.
- To promote the access to alternatives to incarceration where appropriate.

# VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROJECT

- **Official Ministerial Announcement - May 2017**
  - First of its kind in Canada
  - Long term goal of better outcomes for Veterans - identify, track and explore alternatives to incarceration.
- In 2016, a pilot project commenced in the province of Nova Scotia to promote and facilitate referrals to the Mental Health Court, where appropriate and available.
- When Veterans are involved, a VAC Case Manager is a member of the Mental Health Court Team and a Veterans Service Team Manager is a member of the Courts Program Committee.
- Relationship building with our partners in criminal justice system, mainly the Mental Health Courts and provides information to determine appropriateness of alternatives (e.g., Adult Diversion, Probation).

# VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROJECT

To date, the pilot project has proven successful as it has:

- Raised awareness and provided educational opportunities with Corrections Services regarding the uniqueness of Veterans and the benefits which they may be eligible to receive.
- Contributed to risk assessment via input into the pre-sentence reports.
- Facilitated court ordered programming related to the condition, if eligible for VAC programs.
  - Assisted 11 Veterans (treatment program vs incarceration)
  - 7 through provincial system, Mental Health Courts
  - 4 through federal system, Correctional Services Canada

# VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROJECT

**Additionally, the success of the pilot project has:**

- **Allowed for direct referrals to VAC for immediate treatment and case management services.**
- **Built working relationships in Nova Scotia with new partners (non-traditional) and in collaboration with Crown prosecutors, probation, parole and court officers**

# VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH - MOVING FORWARD

- **Veterans Justice Outreach project implementation**
  - Estimated 6 month phased-in approach.
  - VAC Cost neutral in terms of direct funding.
  - Outreach, establishing partnerships and case management services are part of on-going operations.
- **Incremental expansion would target provinces/territories that have a Mental Health Court or other specialty courts.**

# WHAT'S NEXT

- Create a network/community of support such as food banks and emergency health professionals for homeless Veterans.
- Require affordable housing for the homeless or in crisis Veteran, be it in hotels, apartments or shelters.
- Develop regional lists of regional or local services and organizations who can help address homelessness.

# QUESTIONS

