

HOMELESS VETERANS

- We all agree that Veterans homelessness in Canada is unacceptable. One homeless Veteran is one too many.
- Ending Veteran homelessness is a shared responsibility.
- Through initiatives under the National Housing Strategy, Canada's Homelessness Strategy, and programming provided by Veterans Affairs Canada, this Government is taking concrete action to prevent and end Veteran homelessness.
- A number of new measures were implemented April 1, 2018. These include:
 - The Veteran Emergency Fund, which gives Veterans and their families in urgent circumstances access to immediate financial support; and
 - the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund has supported 15 organizations from all across the country, such as Vets Canada, Mission Old Brewery and the Mustard Seed, to develop unique approaches to address the issue of Veteran Homelessness.
- Veterans, like all Canadians, deserve a safe and affordable place to live.

BACKGROUND – HOMELESS VETERANS

How many homeless Veterans are there?

Accurately measuring the number of homeless Veterans is challenging. Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) considers data from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)—the federal lead on homelessness—as the best indicators:

- Their [2018 "Everyone Counts"](#) report shows that Veterans account for approximately 4.4% of homeless individuals.
- Their [National Shelter Study](#) (2005 - 2016) indicates that in 2016, an estimated 2,400 (1.8%) emergency shelter users identified as a Veteran.

In its [May 2019 report on Veteran Homelessness](#), ACVA found that “homelessness likely affects between 3,000 and 5,000 veterans, or between 4.6 per 1,000 [0.46%] and 7.7 per 1,000 [0.77%] of the nearly 650,000 veterans living in Canada”.

VAC’s approach to homelessness

Our first priority is to find homeless Veterans where they are, inform them of the services and benefits available to them, assist them in getting the support they need, and help them find suitable housing.

VAC conducts outreach across the country and works closely with local community partners, community-based services and emergency shelters to identify homeless and in-crisis Veterans who can then be referred to VAC for services and benefits. All VAC Area Offices have a Point-of-Contact identified to work with homeless Veterans and local organizations.

A number of new measures were implemented April 1, 2018, including:

- The **Veterans Emergency Fund** (VEF) provides emergency financial support to Veterans, their families and survivors whose well-being is at risk due to an urgent and unexpected situation. The VEF provides money for basic necessities such as food, clothing, temporary shelter, or expenses required to maintain safety and shelter.
- The **Veterans and Family Well-Being Fund** (WBF) supports and fosters the development of innovative programs that make a real difference in the lives of Veterans and their families. Twelve (12) of the 43 applications awarded funding in 2018 and 2019 were for projects are dedicated to supporting Veterans who are homeless or in crisis.

Outreach and Communications

Over the last number of years, VAC has undertaken/supported a number of initiatives with/by stakeholders. Some of these include:

- VAC has sponsored (\$20,000/year) the [Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness annual National Conference on Ending Homelessness](#) since 2016, and presented at the 2016 and 2018 conferences.
- On June 7, 2018, VAC held a [Roundtable on Homelessness](#) that brought together more than 70 participants representing more than 65 national and regional organizations.
- VAC developed a [poster](#) in 2018 which has been distributed to public community organizations that come in contact with the homeless population.
- In 2018, VAC launched an [online map](#) to show support and services available to homeless Veterans across the country.
- In September 2018, CAF and VAC announced the return of the [Veteran's Service Card](#), which will help homeless/in-crisis Veterans to have their service verified immediately.
- In 2016, VAC developed [a training video](#) for the Canadian Police Knowledge Network to help police/first responders identify and help homeless Veterans.

Federal Government Collaboration

VAC's main federal partners are:

- **Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)**, which has the federal mandate for addressing homelessness. Their *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* is a community-based program that provides direct funding to support community efforts in addressing homelessness;
- **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)**, which has the federal mandate for affordable housing. Their *National Housing Strategy* includes a number of funds and initiatives under which Veterans can benefit.
- **Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)**. VAC has worked closely with CAF for many years on improving Veterans' transition from military to civilian life; and
- **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)**.

Recent Parliamentary Interest in Veteran Homelessness

Private Member's Motion M-225

Private Member's Motion M-225, Neil Ellis (Liberal, Bay of Quinte), was passed with all-party support in June 2019. It reads:

- (a) the government should set a goal to prevent and end veteran homelessness in Canada by 2025;
- (b) a plan to achieve this aim should be developed by the government and be presented to the House by June 2020, led by the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and supported by the Minister of Veterans Affairs; and
- (c) this plan should include consideration of whether a National Veterans Housing Benefit similar to the highly successful U.S. Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (HUD VASH) Program would fit the Canadian context, complementing the National Housing Strategy.

While this motion is not binding on the next Parliament, VAC is collaborating with ESDC on this work in the event that the incoming government will support it moving forward.

ACVA Report on Veteran Homelessness

- On May 1, 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA) released a report entitled, [Moving Towards Ending Homelessness Among Veterans](#). The report notes that Veterans Affairs Canada has begun to develop an approach to prevent and end veteran homelessness, but reported that stakeholders criticized the amount of time it is taking to launch the strategy, which has been under development for three years.