

HOMELESS VETERANS

- We all agree that Veteran homelessness in Canada is unacceptable. One homeless Veteran is one too many.
- Ending Veteran homelessness is a shared responsibility and requires a whole-of-government approach.
- 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.
- Note: New GOC investments:
 - April 4, 2020 –\$207.5M announced to support the most vulnerable of the COVID-19 pandemic including those experiencing homelessness and women fleeing gender-based violence (ESDC,ISC,WAGE).
 - April 20, 2020 – Government investment of \$350M to introduce Community Emergency Fund to support delivery of essential services of charitable organizations.
 - Veterans Organizations eligible to apply.

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 Point in Time "Everyone Counts"](#) report shows that Veterans account for approximately 4.4% of homeless individuals.

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 the public for 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 ["First in Step" 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 was not binding on the subsequent Parliament, VAC is collaborating with ESDC on this work in the event that the 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. 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 approach, which has been under development for three years.

Covid-19 Funding

- \$157.5 million for ESDC's Reaching Home Program
 - Can be used for a variety of needs (5 categories): housing, prevention & shelter, health & medical, client supports, clinical treatment services
- \$40 million to be given to Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)
 - Up to \$30 million to address immediate needs of shelters and sexual assault centres as follows:

- Up to \$26 million to Women's Shelters Canada to distribute to approximately 575 violence against women shelters across the country; and
 - Up to \$4 million to the Canadian Women's Foundation to distribute the funding to sexual assault centres across the country.
- \$10 million to be provided to Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) existing network of 46 emergency shelters on reserve and in Yukon to support Indigenous women and children fleeing violence.
 - funds will flow directly to shelters
 - will provide additional operational funding to manage or prevent an outbreak in their facilities.

Through ESDC, the Government of Canada invested \$350 million to improve the ability of community organizations to serve vulnerable Canadians during the COVID-19 crisis.

The investment will flow through national intermediaries that have the ability to get funds quickly to community organizations that serve vulnerable populations.

Community-based organizations can apply for funding to support a variety of activities that address a pressing social inclusion or well-being need caused by COVID-19, such as:

- increasing volunteer-based home deliveries of groceries and medications
- scaling up help lines that provide information and support
- helping vulnerable Canadians access government benefits
- providing training, supplies, and other required supports to volunteers so they can continue to make their invaluable contributions to the COVID-19 response replacing in-person, one-on-one contact and social gatherings with virtual contact through phone calls, texts, teleconferences, or the Internet