

DELEGATION REQUEST

Names of persons speaking: Sergeant William Webb (ret), Courtenay Legion

Organization you are representing: Royal Canadian Legion Branch 17

Primary purpose of the organization:

The Royal Canadian Legion's mission is to serve veterans, which includes serving military and RCMP members and their families,

Number of members: 400

Subject matter: Homeless Veterans Study, Homeless Veterans in the Comox Valley

Specific request of the regional district, if any (i.e. letter of support, funding):

Board Resolution Supporting the Legions Effort to End Veterans Homelessness and further our applications with the Veterans Wellbeing Fund Grant application.

Provide matching funding of the Town of Qualicum \$3000.

Requested meeting date: As soon as next available time

THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION'S ACTION PLAN TO PREVENT AND ERADICATE VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS

"Leave the streets behind"
2020-2025



SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 FOREWORD

The Royal Canadian Legion Operation: Leave the Streets Behind began in Ontario Command as a result of being approached by a Veteran of the Korean War to assist in conducting the first ever Homeless Veterans' Remembrance Service in November, 2009.

The success of this Service brought forward the necessity to review the need for a national Homeless Veterans Program. At the Dominion Command Convention in 2012, held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a motion was made to extend this Homeless Veterans program at the National level as "Leave the Streets Behind".

The Royal Canadian Legion's Action Plan to Prevent & Eradicate Veterans' Homelessness "Leave the Streets Behind" is a joint partnership with Dominion Command, Provincial Commands, the OSI Special Section, Branches, Ladies Auxiliaries and external partners. It aligns with the federal government commitment to increase support to Veterans, to increase social infrastructure support, and to ensure that all Canadians have access to affordable housing. This Action Plan builds on past initiatives undertaken by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), the VAC-Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) 2013 Partnership Strategy to Address Veteran Homelessness, and the 2012-2014 VAC-ESDC Pilot Project on Veteran Homelessness. It is informed by research and evidence-based best practices that have been proven to address homelessness among Veterans.

The Action Plan will rely upon consultation with federal, provincial and municipal partners, both government and non-government, as well as national and local Veterans/Homelessness advocates. It relies on collaboration and strong partnership among all

stakeholders and with experts in the field. It also recognizes the importance of expanding the existing body of knowledge on Veterans' Homelessness in order to refine outreach strategies, target prevention activities, and develop Veteran-centric interventions against the backdrop of a strong evidence base.

1.2 THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

To "prevent and eradicate Veterans' Homelessness" does not suggest that the Royal Canadian Legion will never again witness homeless Veterans. Some Veterans may choose to remain homeless despite repeated offers of assistance and housing. The goal of "preventing and eradicating Veterans' Homelessness" does mean that a well-coordinated and efficient system must be in place to ensure that every Veteran has access to the necessary support to avoid living on the street and the ability to make timely movement to permanent housing. The Action Plan, therefore, must be a revolving cycle that will require periodic updating.

Successful implementation will mean that the Royal Canadian Legion, in consultation with our partners, will have the capacity to:

- **Quickly identify** and engage Veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness and after Verification of Service, take the necessary steps to coordinate assistance for the Veteran and his/her family;
- **Intervene** to prevent the loss of housing and divert Veterans from entering homelessness;
- **Work** with shelter and crisis services, to provide immediate needs for the Veteran and;
- **Quickly connect** Veterans to housing assistance and services – tailored to their unique needs and strengths – to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.

1.3 THE CAUSES OF VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS

Veterans become homeless as the result of complex and interrelated issues such as health status (physical and mental), personal problems, employment instability, poverty, lack of affordable housing, and an inability to access services, support and social assistance. In addition, many Veterans have been exposed to traumatic and dangerous situations as a result of their military service and often struggle with the after-effects. More so, some Veterans find the transition from military to civilian life difficult, and struggle to find ways to adjust to the civilian world. Lack of planning when making the transition from military to civilian life is a major factor.

1.4 MEASURING THE PROBLEM

Accurately measuring the number of homeless Veterans is very challenging. Many times the question is being asked "How many homeless Veterans are there in Canada?" Simply put the answer is unknown. They must self-identify and their service verified before they become a part of the program. Many times homeless people are in transit moving from place to place and are therefore difficult to count. There are also the so-called "hidden homeless" (i.e. those who are "couch surfing" and those at risk of becoming homeless) who are often not captured in these formalized counts. Finally, there are those homeless individuals who identify as Veterans in an illegal attempt to garner financial assistance from the Royal Canadian Legion. Care must be applied to ensure these individuals do not obtain assistance and reduce our limited financial resources.

1.5 DEFINITIONS

Absolute Homelessness

Absolute Homelessness is defined where an individual or family has no permanent housing and is staying at a temporary shelter. The temporary shelter could be doorways, empty buildings, abandoned vehicles, parks or beach common areas.

Near Homelessness

An individual or family are on the brink of losing their present living quarters, due to lack of payment of rent, heat and hydro, etc.

At Risk Homelessness

An individual who is dependent on others for housing, who is couch surfing, and whose personal or economic situation has changed.

Transitional Housing

Many programs with Transitional Housing are two years in length and the client is obligated to maintain consistency in attending and being involved in the various rehabilitation programs. Transitional Housing eventually leads to permanent and one must complete programs that lead to being permanently housed.

Permanent Housing

Permanent Housing is the first and most important part of our needs for the Homeless Veterans program. We continue to seek partners to establish Permanent Housing. Developers in Ontario have come forward to provide apartments. Outside organizations such as Mainstay Housing (Toronto) and Multifaith Housing (Ottawa) have stepped to the plate to fulfill the need for permanent housing.

It has been noted that incentives are being offered to developers by municipalities and the Legion needs to seek out these developers to ensure affordable housing for Veterans is included in their new builds.

NOTE: It must also be kept in mind that families of homeless Veterans can also be affected as they often endure the most of emotional, physical and financial abuse because of a Veteran's addictions and often leads to the family leaving the Veteran.

SECTION 2 | THE APPROACH

2.1 OUR MISSION

“To serve Veterans, which includes Serving Military and RCMP members and their families, to promote remembrance and to serve our communities and our country.”

2.2 OUR VISION

“Our vision is to be the most highly respected Veteran and Community Service organization.”

2.3 OUR AIM

“To prevent and eradicate Veterans’ homelessness.”

2.4 THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles for this Action Plan are provided to us in the Veterans Affairs Canada strategy and culture of Care, Compassion and Respect.

Thus, to ensure success, the Action Plan must:

- be Veteran-centric,
- be collaboration led,
- be evidence-informed,
- be outcome-based; and
- support the Legion’s overall Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan.

2.5 THE THEMES OF APPROACH

The Themes of Approach, in turn, are driven by the Guiding Principles and identify the Action Plan’s seven Strategic Objectives:

THEMES OF APPROACH		STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
LEAD and ENGAGE	Improve Collaboration and Leadership	1. Through strong and visible leadership, strengthen existing relationships and develop and leverage new partnerships across all like-agencies to prevent and eradicate Veteran homelessness.
		2. Increase knowledge about homeless Veterans, the factors that lead to homelessness among Veterans, and successful initiatives that prevent and eradicate homelessness and support Veterans in Crisis.
FIND	Improve Outreach and Identification	3. Strengthen the capacity of the Royal Canadian Legion and work with its partners to identify and connect with homeless Veterans.
ASSIST	Improve Mechanism to Assist homeless Veterans	4. Strengthen the capacity of the Royal Canadian Legion and work with its partners to provide effective crisis response to homeless Veterans.
		5. Increase access to stable and affordable housing for Veterans.
PREVENT	Prevent Veterans’ homelessness	6. Facilitate the successful military to civilian transition and inspire Veterans to achieve their optimal well-being.
		7. Expand and enhance initiatives to rapidly identify and better support Veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

2.6 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESULT AREAS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Strong and visible leadership

Strong leadership is required at all levels of the Royal Canadian Legion Commands and Branches in order to ensure the passion, talent, energy and resources brought by all stakeholders are efficiently and effectively resourced and brought to bear on the problem of Veteran homelessness. While there are excellent relations that already exist between our government and non-governmental partners, much more can be done to enhance coordination and ensure information and ideas are rapidly shared to leverage available resources and address identified gaps in services. This will facilitate faster implementation, so that results can be achieved without unnecessary delay.

Key Result Areas:

- Educate the public and our service delivery partners on the scope, causes and costs of Veteran homelessness, and ensure that Veterans issues are understood as part of the wider response to homelessness;
- Increase collaboration at the National, Provincial and Branch levels with established partners and stakeholders as well as other homeless organizations, to better define roles, share information and knowledge, and develop strong and enduring processes to assist homeless Veterans;
- Re-establish the Royal Canadian Legion Veterans' Homelessness Advisory Committee with the previously established stakeholders;
- Engage with Veteran stakeholders on local initiatives; and
- Guidelines for establishing a Homeless Veterans program in each Command (province) have been developed and distributed to Commands.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Increase knowledge about Veterans' homelessness

Over the past few years, information has emerged about the homeless Veteran population. However, to more effectively combat this issue, a more accurate portrait of this population is needed. The availability of data on the situation of homeless Veterans, evidence on the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken, and knowledge of the factors that lead to homelessness among Veterans are key to addressing this issue. Knowing or being able to predict the causes of Veteran homelessness improves the odds of being able to design effective interventions. The most effective initiatives for ending homelessness have been proven to be evidence-based. These rely on timely and accurate data in order to measure their effectiveness and success, and to enable the ability required to rapidly adapt these initiatives if required.

Key Result Areas:

- Increase education and collaboration with partners at the Branch, Provincial Command, OSI Special Section and Dominion Command to identify and share best practices to address the issue;
- Establish metrics to ensure effective services and supports are provided;
- Work with CIMVHR research academics and others to identify gaps in research and help determine the factors that lead to Veteran homelessness; and
- Increase our activities to ensure that the Royal Canadian Legion is the recognized advocate for homeless Veterans at the National, Provincial and Branch levels.

NOTE: Statistics must be collected, shared and distributed on a regular and timely manner.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:**Strengthen our capacity to identify and connect with homeless Veterans**

It is critical that the Royal Canadian Legion effectively reaches out and identifies Veterans who are homeless so that support and services can be provided. However, identification can be challenging, given the very nature of what it means to live on the streets and many homeless Veterans are very likely to be disengaged, isolated and mistrustful. Conventional means of connecting such by phone or email are many times non-effective as many have no fixed address and lack access to the required technology. Even verification of military service can sometimes be a long process, as many Veterans may be missing identification documentation or forgotten details such as their military service number. Accordingly, many do not self-identify to the Service Bureaus and, for those that do, establishing and maintaining contact is difficult. Therefore, a more proactive approach at the Provincial and Branch levels is required whereby Service Officers and local community partner organizations work collaboratively to better find, identify, track and engage homeless Veterans.

Key Result Areas:

- Increase collaboration, communication and efficiency of outreach initiatives by all stakeholders at the Provincial and Branch levels;
- Improve efficiency and timeliness of process of verification of military service;
- Study other processes to more effectively identify and assist homeless Veterans; and
- Share findings and stats with all organizations involved.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:**Strengthen our capacity to provide effective crisis response.**

The Royal Canadian Legion will assist Veterans who are homeless by providing access to the services

and support that address their needs. This will help to either prevent them from becoming homeless, or if they are, give them the necessary support to facilitate their entry into longer-term programs that ultimately lead to a more stable and secure lifestyle.

Key Result Areas:

- Advocate ways to expand the current eligibility criteria for VAC's programs and services to help enable homeless Veterans to get the help they need;
- Collaborate with other government departments and stakeholder organizations on initiatives that will provide evidence and best practices to expand services and programs that help Veterans who are homeless or in crisis; and
- Liaison with Transition Groups.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:**Increase access to stable and affordable housing for Veterans**

In addition to needing clinical supports to deal with their addictions and physical/mental health problems, most homeless Veterans and those in crisis need access to stable and affordable housing. Even with social and financial assistance provided from other sources, such as provincial or municipal programs and services, the amount of funding provided is often insufficient to maintain a very basic lifestyle, as a large percentage of income is dedicated to housing with little remaining for other necessities such as food, clothing or transportation.

Key Result Areas:

- Provide financial assistance and support to Veterans who are homeless;
- Provide financial assistance to organizations that expand the supply of affordable, permanent housing for Veterans; and
- Seek funding support from the Legion National Foundation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6:**Facilitate the successful military to civilian transition and inspire Veterans to achieve their optimal well-being**

Research has shown that homeless Veterans often report poor transition and this was a major factor in the path that led them to homelessness. Hence, it is logical that enhancing the transition experience will reduce the factors and circumstances that lead to homelessness in the first instance. A positive transition experience helps ensure stable employment/sufficient income that provides the necessities of life for Veterans and their families. An improved military to civilian transition would include an efficient and seamless transition of medical treatment information and supports from the military medical system to the provincial system, and linkages to community support systems for the Veteran and family, including mental health and/or additional supports. Ultimately, a successful transition maintains or enhances the well-being of Veterans and families, reducing or eliminating risk factors for homelessness and poor quality of life and helps inspire Veterans to affect positive changes in their own lives.

Key Result Areas:

- Optimize support to Veterans' families through Poppy Funds and local, Legion and non-Legion, financial resources; and
- Re-establish the Royal Canadian Legion Veterans' Homelessness Advisory Committee with the previously established stakeholders.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7:**Expand and enhance initiatives to rapidly identify and better support Veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system**

Ensure assistance is available to all Veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system;

AND

Ensure all incarcerated Veterans are afforded necessary treatment programs while in custody, and that suitable housing is available for them upon release.

Key Result Areas:

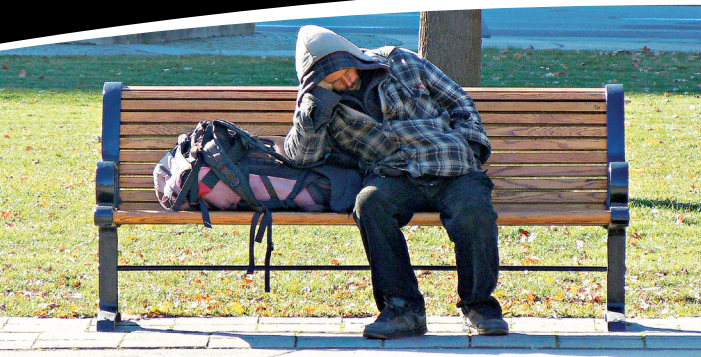
- Develop and implement a model, at the Branch level, for collaboration with local police services and other first responders to coordinate outreach and identification efforts and to facilitate homeless Veterans' use of the Legion's services; and
- Enhance pre-release transition services for incarcerated Veterans to include access to safe and affordable housing.

NOTE: VAC has initiated pilot Criminal Justice programs in Nova Scotia and Alberta. Ontario Command is also working on development of a similar program. It must also be noted that the responsibility for internal treatment programs while incarcerated has yet to be determined.

SECTION 3 | CONCLUSION

Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who willingly put their lives on the line to defend our freedom and values, and to help make our country what it is today. It is disheartening that in a nation as rich as Canada, men and women who have served their country now find themselves struggling to attain the very basic necessities of life – including a place they can call home. While progress has been made, more work needs to be done to reach out and support Homeless Veterans and those in crisis or at risk of homelessness. One thing is certain: *it is unacceptable for any Veteran to face Homelessness in Canada.*

The ultimate goal of “Leave the Streets Behind” is to prevent and eradicate Veteran homelessness in Canada. While it may be naïve to think that there will never again be Canadian Veterans without a place to call home, the objectives outlined in this Action Plan will ensure that these situations are atypical. Should any Veteran find him or herself homeless, the Royal Canadian Legion must ensure that the necessary support is in place to make the experience short-lived and non-recurring. To do less will mean we are failing to meet our organization’s Mission and Vision Statement.



Operation Leave the Streets Behind

Homeless Veterans Assistance

→ **MISSION STATEMENT:** To ensure that every Veteran who is homeless or near homeless finds the help they need to leave the streets behind.

→ **ASSISTANCE PROVIDED**

- Medical Needs
- Assistive Devices
- Emergency Transportation
- Emergency Assistance
- Addiction Programs • Rental Payments
- Furnishing Assistance • Moving Expenses
- Utility Payments • Shelter • Food

→ **ELIGIBILITY**

- Canadian Veterans of all ages and their families
- Commonwealth ex-service
- Allied countries ex-service



Have you served in the Canadian Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

This one question can open a new chapter in a person's life and show that the Legion, as partners in our communities, care about those who served our Country—our Veterans.

Operation: Leave the Streets Behind is a program developed by The Royal Canadian Legion to identify and assist homeless Veterans and those at-risk of homelessness.

Financial assistance can be provided for items such as first and last month's rent, rental arrears, medical needs such as dental, eyeglasses, transportation to medical services, furnishings, food and clothing.

Eligibility includes any Veteran or family member in need of assistance and living in Canada as well as Veterans of Commonwealth and allied countries living in Canada. (A Veteran is any person who is serving or who has served in the Canadian Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

What our Veterans are saying:

"I came into the shelter for a shower and came out with a life."

"Thank you for giving me a hand up."

"It is a great feeling to close the door and feel safe."

"Thank you for the assistance you provided, it has given me breathing room so that I may get the rest of my life in order."

For more information, contact:

The Royal Canadian Legion Service Bureau Network

We care for all veterans of all ages and their families

The Legion Service Bureau Network serves Veterans, members of the CF, RCMP, and their families by representing their interests with Veterans Affairs Canada and the Veterans Review and Appeal Board for disability benefits under the *Pension Act* or the *Veterans Well-being Act*.

The Legion's professional Command Service Officers are mandated by legislation to provide representation, advocacy and financial assistance **FREE OF CHARGE**, Legion member or not.

www.legion.ca/support-for-veterans/homeless-veterans



Opération Leave the Streets Behind

Aide aux Vétérans sans-abri



ÉNONCÉ DE MISSION : Faire en sorte que tous les Anciens combattants sans-abri ou presque sans-abri obtiennent l'aide qu'il leur faut pour quitter la rue.



ASSISTANCE PRÊTÉE

- Soins médicaux
- Accessoires fonctionnels
- Transport d'urgence
- Secours d'urgence

Programmes de toxicomanie • Dépenses de déménagement
Paiement de services publics • Achats de meubles
Paiement du loyer • Nourriture • Refuge



QUI Y A DROIT

- Anciens combattants canadiens et leur famille
- Anciens militaires du Commonwealth
- Anciens militaires des pays alliés



Avez-vous servi dans les Forces canadiennes ou la Gendarmerie royale du Canada?

Cette question pourrait ouvrir un nouveau chapitre dans la vie de quelqu'un et elle révèle qu'en tant que partenaires de nos commu- nautés, la Légion se soucie de ceux qui ont servi notre pays— nos Anciens combattants.

Opération: Leave the Streets Behind est un programme mis en place par la Légion royale canadienne visant à trouver et à aider les Anciens combattants sans-abri et ceux qui risquent de le devenir.

Il sert à leur prêter assistance pour des choses comme les premier et dernier mois de loyer, le retard du loyer, les besoins médicaux comme les soins dentaires et les lunettes, le transport aux services thérapeutiques, la nourriture et les vêtements.

L'admissibilité comprend tout Ancien combattant ou membre de sa famille ayant besoin d'aide qui demeure au Canada ainsi que les Anciens combattants des pays du Commonwealth et alliés vivant au Canada. (Un Ancien combattant est une personne qui sert ou qui a servi dans les Forces canadiennes ou la Gendarmerie royale du Canada).

Ce que disent nos Anciens combattants :

"Je suis entré au refuge pour une douche et j'y ai trouvé une nouvelle vie."

"Merci de m'avoir donné un coup de main."

"C'est bon de se sentir en sécurité chez soi."

"Merci de votre assistance; j'ai pu respirer un peu afin que je puisse mettre de l'ordre dans ma vie."

Pour de plus amples renseignements :

Le Réseau du Bureau d'entraide de La Légion royale canadienne

Les Anciens Combattants et leurs familles nous tiennent à cœur, quel que soit leur âge

Le Réseau du Bureau d'Entraide de la Légion sert les Anciens combattants, membres des FC, de la GRC et leurs familles en représentant leurs intérêts auprès d'Anciens Combattants Canada et le tribunal des Anciens Combattants, Révision et Appel, pour prestations d'invalidité en vertu de la *Loi sur les Pensions* et la *Loi sur le bien-être des vétérans*.

Les officiers d'entraide professionnels de Direction de la Légion sont mandatés par législation de fournir une représentation, un plaidoyer et une aide financière **à titre gratuit**, qu'un individu soit membre de la Légion ou non.

www.legion.ca/support-for-veterans/homeless-veterans



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

MOVING TOWARDS ENDING HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Neil R. Ellis, Chair

**MAY 2019
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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MOVING TOWARDS ENDING HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

**Neil R. Ellis
Chair**

MAY 2019

42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

has the honour to present its

TWELFTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied homeless veterans and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS.....	1
MOVING TOWARDS ENDING HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS	3
Introduction.....	3
Scope of the Problem	5
Portrait of Homeless Canadian Veterans.....	7
Research Needs.....	9
A Problem That Can Be Solved.....	10
Veterans Affairs Canada’s Programs for Veterans Who Are Homeless	12
Veterans Emergency Fund.....	13
Raising Awareness in the Community Sector	15
Case Management for the Homeless.....	18
Veterans and the National Housing Strategy.....	19
Cockrell House.....	24
Multifaith Housing Initiative	25
Community Partnerships.....	25
VETS Canada.....	26
Royal Canadian Legion.....	27
Wounded Warriors Canada	28
Other Organizations	28
Soldiers Helping Soldiers.....	28
Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund	29
RESPECT Campaign.....	29
Conclusion	29
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES	31
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	33

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada work in partnership with community agencies dedicated to helping veterans and establish ways for continual contact between the department and veterans, with the latters' permission..... 9

Recommendation 2

That Veterans Affairs Canada note the various signs of veterans who may be at risk of homelessness and proactively engage with them to prevent homelessness..... 9

Recommendation 3

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in cooperation with Employment and Social Development Canada and organizations supporting academic research, continue its efforts to better understand veterans' homelessness, taking into account the overrepresentation of women and Indigenous peoples..... 10

Recommendation 4

That Veterans Affairs Canada continue, in partnership with other federal, provincial/territorial and municipal organizations concerned, and with the community agencies dedicated to helping veterans in need, to implement action plans such as the National Housing Strategy to eradicate homelessness among veterans. 11

Recommendation 5

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence ensure that veterans receive confirmation of their service within a reasonable length of time. 12

Recommendation 6

That Veterans Affairs Canada ensure that the section of its website concerning homelessness among veterans is updated regularly and offers the most recent information available. 13

Recommendation 7

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) sign a memorandum of understanding to make RCMP veterans eligible for the Veterans Emergency Fund under the same terms and conditions as Canadian Armed Forces veterans..... 15

Recommendation 8

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, ensure that housing projects for veterans who are homeless receive specific targeted funding under the National Housing Strategy. 22

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada create a rent supplement for veterans who are homeless and that this supplement be part of its overall strategy to address homelessness among veterans..... 24

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada ensure that initiatives dedicated to veterans under the National Housing Strategy are open to veterans with service dogs. 24



MOVING TOWARDS ENDING HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

INTRODUCTION

The issue of veterans who are homeless first emerged in the United States. A series of studies conducted in the mid-1980s and early 1990s showed that veterans comprised 11% of the adult male population in the U.S., but up to 26% of the male homeless population.¹ Studies conducted in Australia and the United Kingdom in the mid-2000s, however, estimated that veterans made up only 3% of the male homeless population.²

In Canada, awareness of the issue came later. As of the mid-2000s, anecdotal evidence from community agencies suggested that veterans might make up a significant percentage of Canada's homeless population. The 2011 study by Ray and Forchuk was the first to examine this subject from a national perspective. The purpose of the study was not to estimate the scope of the problem in Canada, but to gain an understanding of the factors underlying homelessness based on the individual experiences of 54 veterans who are homeless. Three main themes emerged: alcoholism triggering a downward spiral; a disparity in the quality of services available from shelters and public institutions; and difficulty transitioning from military to civilian life.

Based on the findings of this initial study, the ongoing dedication of community organizations and the commitment by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to help solve this problem, other studies have been conducted to better identify the extent of the issue and the services that would result in the best outcomes. This research has begun to produce results, providing a clearer picture of homelessness among Canada's veterans and identifying the most promising of the many initiatives launched in the past decade.

The purpose of this report is to review efforts over the past few years regarding three aspects of homelessness among Canadian veterans, which are examined in three sections of the report:

1 Ray, Susan L. and Cheryl Forchuk, *The Experience of Homelessness Among Canadian Forces and Allied Forces Veterans*, Lawson Health Research Institute / University of Western Ontario, 2011, pp. 9–10.

2 Ray and Forchuk (2011), p. 9.



- 1) the scope of the problem based on the most recent statistics and their identified shortcomings;
- 2) the priority that the Government of Canada, and Veterans Affairs Canada in particular, places on fighting homelessness among veterans; and
- 3) the many community-based and private-sector initiatives designed to assist veterans who are homeless, and the support that the Government of Canada could provide them with.

Pursuant to the [resolution passed on 19 June 2018](#), the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (the Committee) held six meetings and heard from 22 witnesses. The main findings that emerged from the Committee's study are as follows:

- Homelessness likely affects between 3,000 and 5,000 veterans, or between 4.6 per 1,000 and 7.7 per 1,000 of the nearly 650,000 veterans living in Canada.
- Given the limited scope of the problem, a concerted strategy could be developed that would completely eliminate homelessness among veterans in a few years.
- To be successful, any initiative to help veterans who are homeless depends on VAC being heavily involved and leveraging its rehabilitation and financial support programs.
- However, VAC can maintain only a limited presence on the ground and must rely on the many activities of community organizations, which are the only stakeholders that can restore trust between veterans who are homeless and the public institutions capable of mobilizing the resources needed to help them reintegrate.

The problems experienced by veterans who are homeless often find their source in a difficult transition from military to civilian life. Everything that can be learned about veterans who are homeless and any measures likely to help them can be applied to developing preventive measures for at-risk veterans and to better supporting veterans experiencing difficulties, no matter how serious.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The Extent and Nature of Veteran Homelessness in Canada was published in March 2015 by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)³. According to the study, “Most veterans who are homeless are adult males, and overall they tend to be older than homeless non-Veterans” (p. 8). Of the 700,000 veterans living in Canada in 2014, approximately 2,250 used homeless shelters during that year. As we will see later, shelter use alone is not sufficient to estimate the total number of veterans who are homeless in Canada, but it does help to establish an objective baseline for measuring future changes and comparing the extent of the problem in Canada with that of other countries.⁴ Of all shelter users registered with the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, about 2.7% were veterans.⁵ This rate is far below that of the United States for the same year. According to the *Annual Homelessness Assessment Report* (AHAR), 11.3% of homeless adults in the U.S. in 2014 were veterans.

However, this comparison between the United States and Canada can be misleading, as it does not account for the much higher percentage of veterans in the U.S. population. In addition, the U.S. government has worked hard for about the past 15 years to reduce the number of veterans who are homeless, and these efforts have produced results. According to the [2017 AHAR](#), the number of veterans who are homeless in the U.S. declined from 73,367 in 2009 to 40,056 in 2017. A comparison with Canada is not possible, as the ESDC report is the first to produce reliable national figures on veterans who are homeless.

In 2014, there were about 21 million veterans in the United States, 30 times more than in Canada, for a population approximately nine times larger than ours: 318.6 million in the United States compared with 35.5 million in Canada. If the number of veterans who used shelters in 2014 is compared with the number of veterans in the country, Canada’s ratio is more than double that of the United States: 3.2 veterans per 1,000 (2,250 out of 700,000 veterans) in Canada, versus 1.5 veterans per 1,000 (32,119 out of 21 million) in the United States.⁶ These differences can be explained by a number of factors: the broader definition of “veteran” in Canada; more points of access to services and higher visibility in the United States (152 veterans’ hospitals, 1,400 veterans’ outpatient

3 Employment and Social Development Canada, *The Extent and Nature of Veteran Homelessness in Canada*, 2015.

4 Mr. Aaron Segart (As an Individual), *Evidence*, House of Commons Standing Committee of Veterans Affairs (ACVA), 27 November 2018, 1535.

5 Mr. Aaron Segart (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1535.

6 The U.S. data for 2014 are from the [2017 AHAR](#) and the [National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics](#).



clinics/centres, numerous local charitable organizations); different shelter networks in both countries; and different shelter user profiles. Given the data currently available, it is impossible to determine whether the problem is proportionally more serious in Canada than in the United States.

Two years after the initial ESDC study, another study allowed for a clearer picture of the number of veterans who are homeless in Canada in 2014. Based on a larger and more accurate sample, it was estimated that, in 2014, “2.2% of shelter users – an estimated 2,950 people – reported having served in the military.”⁷ Aaron Segart, author and principal investigator for both studies, stated that “the figure of 2,950 is more accurate than the initial study with the estimate of 2,250 veterans.”⁸ Mr. Segart went on to say that Canadian veterans are not overrepresented in shelters, contrary to the findings in the United States. In fact, they represent 2% to 3% of the total shelter population and account for 2.4% of the Canadian population.⁹

Other witnesses presented statistics that indicated veterans’ homelessness to be a more serious problem than described in the ESDC study. For example, Faith McIntyre of Veterans Affairs Canada stated that veterans represent 5% of all homeless persons in Canada, not 2% to 3%.¹⁰ The figures depend on the methodology used for the count. Ms. McIntyre’s data are from a point-in-time count conducted in the spring of 2016 by ESDC. Departmental representatives visited shelters across the country on a specific day to count the total number of people who used the shelter that day. The figure of 5% represents the percentage of people counted who reported having served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Data from a point-in-time count are not as useful for estimating the number of veterans who are homeless as data collected over a full year. In Vancouver, for example, these point-in-time counts give very different results from one year to the next: 95 in 2015; 127 in 2016; 168 in 2017; and 111 in 2018.¹¹ The President and Chief Executive Officer of the Old

7 Employment and Social Development Canada, [*The National Shelter Study 2005–2014: Emergency Shelter Use in Canada*](#), 2017, p. 35.

8 Mr. Aaron Segart (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1535.

9 Mr. Aaron Segart (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1535.

10 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1540.

11 Cst Alyson Smith (Homeless Outreach Coordinator, Centralized Operations Services Section, Vancouver Police Department), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1530.

Brewery Mission in Montréal stated that about 2% of the agency's clients are veterans.¹² The full-year count provides an overall view that prevents undercounting or overcounting.

These estimates must be viewed with caution, however. For example, veterans who are homeless might tend to use shelters less than other homeless people. Cheryl Forchuk told the Committee that veterans do not like the unstructured nature of the services in shelters.¹³ Angus Stanfield of Cockrell House shared this view:

[Veterans] are more likely to avoid society, to shun the urban setting. You're not going to see them sitting on the corner in a city. You're just not. It's back to that pride. A lot of the ones who are still of age are possibly living in the bush. We found them living there, or maybe they have a camper that's sitting on the ground and stuck away. Also they're couch surfing.¹⁴

Given the available data and the reservations expressed, the total number of veterans who are homeless in Canada can be estimated at between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals.

Portrait of Homeless Canadian Veterans

The research also highlights certain distinguishing characteristics of veterans who are homeless in Canada. For example, while women account for 10% to 15% of the total number of veterans, they represent 30% of the veterans who are homeless who use shelters. This percentage is the same for the overall shelter population. Among veterans who are homeless using shelters who are under the age of 30, more than half are women.¹⁵

Another finding is that veterans have a higher rate of episodic homelessness than other shelter users, which means that they are about twice as likely as others to experience at least three episodes of homelessness in a given year.¹⁶

12 Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1600.

13 Ms. Cheryl Forchuk (Beryl and Richard Ivey Research Chair in Aging, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Recovery, Parkwood Institute Research, and Assistant Director, Lawson Health Research Institute), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1535.

14 Mr. Angus Stanfield (Chairman, Cockrell House, South Mid-Vancouver Island Veterans Housing Society), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1545. See also Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1600.

15 Mr. Aaron Segart (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1535.

16 Mr. Aaron Segart (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1535.



According to two studies presented by Cheryl Forchuk, Canadian veterans who are homeless are very different from those analyzed in U.S. research.¹⁷ To begin with, military service was a positive experience for most of the Canadian veterans interviewed and a negative one for American veterans. This could help to explain why approximately one-quarter of the veterans released from the Canadian military since 1998 found the transition to be difficult.¹⁸ According to Matthew Pearce of the Old Brewery Mission, most of the veterans who have used this Montreal shelter had no combat experience and had left the CAF at least a decade previously.¹⁹

The Canadian veterans interviewed also tended to drink more heavily during their military service and developed a drinking problem in the 10-to-20 years following their release from the military.

Lastly, Ms. Forchuk told the Committee that post-traumatic stress disorder is rarely the underlying reason for homelessness, even among the veterans who suffer from it.²⁰ Other factors lead to homelessness, such as difficulty adapting to civilian life, and alcohol and substance abuse. Debbie Lowther of VETS Canada described the complex, interrelated issues that can cause veterans to become homeless:

We know that there are many pathways into homeless, such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, job loss or instability, mental illness and addictions, physical health problems, family or domestic violence, and family or marital breakdown. What sets veterans apart is that they not only deal with all of these same issues but they also struggle with their transition from military to civilian life. I talked about the military being a unique culture. Well, now the veteran is trying to adapt to a new civilian culture, feeling as though they have lost their identity and doing so without the social support network that was always so important.²¹

All these issues highlight the complexity of the problem and the many possible reasons for the downward spiral into homelessness. In order to prevent the negative

17 Ms. Cheryl Forchuk (Beryl and Richard Ivey Research Chair in Aging, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Recovery, Parkwood Institute Research, and Assistant Director, Lawson Health Research Institute), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1535.

18 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1540.

19 Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1605. For a similar description of RCMP veterans, see Mr. Ralph Mahar (Executive Officer, RCMP Veterans' Association), *Evidence*, ACVA, 4 February 2019, 1710.

20 Ms. Cheryl Forchuk (Beryl and Richard Ivey Research Chair in Aging, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Recovery, Parkwood Institute Research, and Assistant Director, Lawson Health Research Institute), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1535.

21 Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1530.

consequences of this spiral, and to ensure that veterans who are at risk receive all the support they need, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That Veterans Affairs Canada work in partnership with community agencies dedicated to helping veterans and establish ways for continual contact between the department and veterans, with the latter's permission.

Recommendation 2

That Veterans Affairs Canada note the various signs of veterans who may be at risk of homelessness and proactively engage with them to prevent homelessness.

Research Needs

The preceding section highlights both the importance of research as a starting point for identifying problems and the gaps in this research. For example, women's overrepresentation in the population of veterans who are homeless, compared with their representation among veterans in general, needs to be better explained so that programs and services can be developed to serve their often-overlooked needs. There are no studies on this issue or on the overrepresentation of Indigenous veterans in the homeless population, despite anecdotal evidence to this effect.²² Phil Ralph of Wounded Warriors Canada explained the situation clearly:

Supporting research doesn't sound sexy, but it's important. It's a substantial part of our budget as well. All our programs are the subject of ongoing research, either by CIPSRT or by the University of Victoria. It costs us extra money to deliver programs that way, but in the end it also means that it's not about "hey, Joe thought it was a good idea, Fred thought it was a good idea and Phil thought it was a good idea", but about how the evidence actually says it is the best idea. It's important to do those linkages.²³

Recognizing the need to develop programs based on the most recent evidence, the Committee recommends as follows:

22 Ms. Cheryl Forchuk (Beryl and Richard Ivey Research Chair in Aging, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Recovery, Parkwood Institute Research, and Assistant Director, Lawson Health Research Institute), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1540.

23 Mr. Philip Ralph (National Program Director, Wounded Warriors Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1620. See also Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1610.



Recommendation 3

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in cooperation with Employment and Social Development Canada and organizations supporting academic research, continue its efforts to better understand veterans' homelessness, taking into account the overrepresentation of women and Indigenous peoples.

A Problem That Can Be Solved

Veterans' homelessness is a very real problem, but it is less severe than the situation experienced in the United States over the past 20 years. Actions taken by the U.S. government also show that it can be solved with a determined and coordinated effort. Given that there are an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Canada, this problem can be eliminated here as well. In Canada, veterans' homelessness is an issue that can be solved one veteran at a time.

That point was driven home by Matthew Pearce, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Old Brewery Mission, an agency that has been operating in Montréal since 1889. Shelters provide crucial emergency assistance that certainly helps to save lives but, as Mr. Pearce noted, "if that's all we're offering, it's facilitating homelessness."²⁴ The real solution to getting people off the street is to shift the focus from shelters to long-term housing:

We set about not just finding a way to house 18 or 19 veterans; we set about ending veterans' homelessness in Montreal. We thought that if we were seeing about 45 a year and we're the largest resource, then there might be another five or six who aren't coming to our doors and are going to other doors. However, we're seeing the lion's share of the homeless veteran population in Montreal. We think that kind of number is quite manageable to eliminate.²⁵

This approach was echoed by Tim Richter, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness:

I believe that with a focused effort and a sense of urgency, veteran homelessness in Canada could be eliminated within three years or less.... We have to document the names and unique needs of every veteran experiencing homelessness and have an ability to share that information among those in the community who can house and support them. We have to be able to monitor performance, notice fluctuations, identify

24 Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1600.

25 Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1600.

problems and respond in real time.... We should carve out of the new Canada housing benefit a federally administered veteran housing benefit.²⁶

The statistics presented by various organizations seem to support the belief that this problem can be solved. For example, when Dave Gordon of the Royal Canadian Legion described the initiatives funded by his organization, it was easy to see that there are real people behind the statistics, who have had difficulties but can recover with the right help:

I can tell you that we have the names of every veteran who's come forward and who we've identified. We can go back in their file and see the help we've given them. We're very happy to say that we've housed about 350 of the 667 that we've found.

We have very extensive stats. We do, as I said, 134 towns and cities; we have found 280 in Toronto, 45 in London, 45 in Kingston, seven in Trenton, two in Belleville, and the list goes on. We have those stats. We can back them up and we can show you the exact amount of money that was spent for any part of that in any one of those towns or cities.²⁷

Mr. Richter explained that an individualized approach is key to solving the problem:

[W]e end veteran homelessness one person at a time. We have to have an individualized response. We make sweeping assumptions about veterans, but I can tell you that the 23-year-old female homeless veteran is very different from the 35-year-old Afghan veteran with a physical disability and from the 50-year-old peacetime veteran who has no service-related injury that can account for their homelessness.²⁸

Believing that the problem of veterans' homelessness can be eradicated, the Committee recommends as follows:

Recommendation 4

That Veterans Affairs Canada continue, in partnership with other federal, provincial/territorial and municipal organizations concerned, and with the community agencies dedicated to helping veterans in need, to implement action plans such as the National Housing Strategy to eradicate homelessness among veterans.

For this type of plan to succeed, one of the first obstacles to overcome is the length of time required to confirm a veteran's record of service and determine eligibility for VAC

26 Mr. Tim Richter (President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness), *Evidence, ACVA*, 29 November 2018, 1635.

27 Mr. Dave Gordon (Homeless Veterans' Representative, Royal Canadian Legion), *Evidence, ACVA*, 22 November 2018, 1555.

28 Mr. Tim Richter (President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness), *Evidence, ACVA*, 29 November 2018, 1710.



programs. This may seem like a simple issue, but it can have very significant consequences; for example, a veteran's status must be confirmed before participating in the Old Brewery Mission's Sentinels in the Streets program. Mr. Pearce told the Committee that homeless people may go to the shelter and falsely claim to be veterans in the hope of participating in support programs:

We found out that having people vetted, if you'll pardon the pun, to see if they were in fact veterans by going through VAC was a long, arduous and time-consuming process. You have to understand that if somebody's homeless inside a shelter, whether they're a veteran or not, they may not linger in that condition for very long. If you can't respond to them very quickly, you'll lose them and they'll disappear. We had cases that took as much as two months to verify. We did lose some veterans in the process, who may have resolved their homelessness on their own, but they didn't participate in the sentinels program.²⁹

It is difficult to understand why it takes so long to obtain such simple information. The introduction of a veterans' identity card in September 2018 may alleviate this problem for recent veterans, but since homelessness generally occurs at least 10 years after release from the military, most of the people at risk today cannot count on this solution. Therefore, the Committee recommends as follows:

Recommendation 5

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence ensure that veterans receive confirmation of their service within a reasonable length of time.

VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA'S PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS WHO ARE HOMELESS

The VAC website features a page on [veterans' homelessness](#). Unfortunately, the contents of the page have not been updated in three years. It contains a notice regarding the ESDC study mentioned previously,³⁰ which says that the study will "be published in fall 2016."³¹ This study has been available for two years. The "[Background](#)" link on the veterans' homelessness page leads to information that refers to a 2013 study. Aside from a brief [sub-section](#) about the Veterans Emergency Fund, which was added recently,

29 Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1605; see also Mr. William Webb (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 4 February 2019, 1655.

30 Employment and Social Development Canada, [The National Shelter Study 2005–2014, Emergency Shelter Use in Canada, 2017](#).

31 Veterans Affairs Canada, [Veteran Homelessness in Canada](#).

the other pages in the section are either out of date or give very general information that does not impart a full understanding of veterans' homelessness in Canada.

Given that the VAC website is often the first point of contact for veterans and their primary source of information, the lack of attention paid to the section on veterans' homelessness could give the impression that this issue is not a priority. Therefore, the Committee recommends as follows:

Recommendation 6

That Veterans Affairs Canada ensure that the section of its website concerning homelessness among veterans is updated regularly and offers the most recent information available.

VAC's initiatives can be divided into two areas: emergency funding for veterans who are in crisis and help for veterans who are homeless through local organizations supported by the department. Veterans who are homeless are, of course, eligible for the VAC programs offered to all veterans, including transition programs and mental health services.

Veterans Emergency Fund

The Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF) was announced in Budget 2017 and launched on 1 April 2018. Its purpose is to "provide funds to assist Veterans and their families during times of crisis and when facing emergency financial situations that threaten their health and well-being."³²

Funding for the VEF was set at \$1 million annually for four years. VAC representative Robert Tomljenovic told the Committee that "as of November 15, there have been 416 approvals, and roughly \$676,519 has been put out."³³ Given the strong demand for funding, the government asked for an additional \$300,000 in the *Supplementary Estimates (B) 2018-19*.

Under the VEF, the maximum amount payable per veteran is \$2,500 per fiscal year. This amount may be increased to a maximum of \$10,000 in exceptional circumstances. The purpose of the program is to provide one-time payments for eligible expenses such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care and expenses required to maintain safety and shelter. Recurring expenses like rent or vehicle payments are not eligible. If necessary,

32 VAC, *Veterans Emergency Fund: Terms and Conditions*.

33 Mr. Robert Tomljenovic (Area Director, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1605.



VAC will make payments to a third party on behalf of the applicant.³⁴ Veterans do not have to be receiving other VAC benefits to be eligible for the VEF.

Before the VEF was established, VAC provided low-income veterans with financial assistance, but the eligibility criteria and the approval process were more complex and took longer than under the VEF. In most cases, the department had to involve third-party organizations.³⁵ For example, financial support for veterans who are homeless is available through the Royal Canadian Legion's Poppy Trust Funds, the [Royal Canadian Navy Benevolent Fund](#) and the [Support Our Troops](#) program administered by the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services.

Under the VEF, Veterans Affairs Canada defines an emergency as:

a situation that requires immediate action. It is one that if financial support is not provided, the situation will directly affect the health and safety of a Veteran or their family members. An emergency can be caused by a defined event, or it can be the result of other unexpected circumstances that have contributed to a current and urgent need for funding.³⁶

Non-recurrence appears to be the most important condition for determining whether a need is an emergency or not. For example, first and last months' rent constitutes a single payment and the value cannot exceed the allowable amount of \$2,500, except in exceptional circumstances.³⁷ Once this one-time assistance has been provided, the department can call on other organizations to help with recurring needs that do not meet the VEF's criteria for emergency assistance or it can request extra help like the "apartment kits" that the Royal Canadian Legion provides.³⁸

During his appearance before the Committee, Ralph Mahar, Executive Officer, RCMP Veterans' Association, criticized the fact that Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) veterans, 7,000 of whom belong to his organization, are not eligible for the VEF.³⁹ This example illustrates the grey areas surrounding VAC's role in supporting RCMP veterans.

34 VAC, [Veterans Emergency Fund: Terms and Conditions](#).

35 Mr. Robert Tomljenovic (Area Director, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1630.

36 VAC, *Veterans Emergency Fund*, ["Questions and answers."](#)

37 Mr. Robert Tomljenovic (Area Director, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1630.

38 Mr. Robert Tomljenovic (Area Director, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1600.

39 Mr. Ralph Mahar (Executive Officer, RCMP Veterans' Association), *Evidence*, ACVA, 4 February 2019, 1605.

They are eligible for some VAC programs under certain memoranda of agreement. For example, VAC pays a pension to RCMP veterans with a disability based on the conditions and amounts set out in the *Pension Act*.

In order for VAC to provide RCMP veterans with emergency funding, VAC and the RCMP would need to sign a memorandum of understanding. Mr. Mahar explained that the RCMP Veterans' Association currently assists members who are in need through the RCMP Benefit Trust Fund, but this fund receives an annual allotment of only \$50,000.

After a year of operation, the VEF has clearly demonstrated that it meets a need. It is reasonable to assume that it would perform a similar service for RCMP veterans if they too were eligible for it. Therefore, the Committee recommends as follows:

Recommendation 7

That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) sign a memorandum of understanding to make RCMP veterans eligible for the Veterans Emergency Fund under the same terms and conditions as Canadian Armed Forces veterans.

Raising Awareness in the Community Sector

The fight against homelessness demands the active involvement of all levels of government working closely with the community agencies that best understand the many local aspects of the problem. There are a few community organizations dedicated to supporting veterans who are homeless, but most assist people in need more generally and are not necessarily aware of veterans' specific requirements. Given its nationwide presence and programs for veterans in need, VAC plays a de facto national role in raising awareness among community organizations.⁴⁰

Speaking on behalf of VAC, Robert Tomljenovic stated that the first obstacle agencies encounter when they try to facilitate contact between veterans in need and the department is that veterans do not really trust government institutions:

That comment is dead-on. In my offices we've seen veterans who have been identified as being very hesitant to either come into the office or speak to—quote, unquote—a government official. In those instances, we don't rush. The first thing we need to do is build trust with a veteran who has that sort of paranoia with the department, or who, for whatever reason, has had a bad experience in terms of either his military or personal life.

40 Mr. Robert Tomljenovic (Area Director, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1545.



We don't rush case management. We don't rush what we call developing a case plan and goals. The immediate need there is to build trust, even if that means we visit the veteran every day for five to 10 minutes, maybe with a community worker, if the veteran has one.

Until that trust is built, it's very difficult for them to engage.⁴¹

As a result, community workers must be able to reach out to veterans in need about the benefits of contacting the department. For its part, VAC has stepped up its efforts to inform the organizations serving homeless people about its services.

For example, it has distributed a [poster to](#) these organizations to help them identify the veterans among their clients. According to its website, VAC has “provided information on its programs and services to approximately 200 community organizations that work with the homeless in more than 50 cities across the country, including key information on how to connect with VAC.” The goal is to distribute the poster to 2,000 strategic areas across the country.⁴²

To raise awareness among community organizations about the special needs of veterans who are homeless, VAC hosted a Round Table on Homelessness in Ottawa on 7 June 2018. According to Faith McIntyre, the 70 participants “were all identified as subject matter experts in the area of homelessness, particularly focusing on veterans.”⁴³

The first outcome of the round table was an [interactive map](#) featuring links to more than 100 agencies able to assist veterans in need. Debbie Lowther of VETS Canada noted that, while she did not mean to criticize VAC's efforts, she felt these initiatives lacked focus. She said that there are very few agencies that are truly able to give veterans who are homeless the help they need, and those organizations are somewhat lost amid the many agencies that provide general support to homeless people:

The interactive map has the Royal Canadian Legion located in Ontario only and VETS Canada located in Halifax only, when we are both national organizations.

My intention here is not to sound critical or negative, but this has become a very crowded landscape and more than anything, veterans who are homeless, like all homeless people, want to receive help from a credible organization that is going to

41 Mr. Robert Tomljenovic (Area Director, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1555.

42 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1540.

43 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1540.

deliver on what they say they can do. They're not interested in dealing with a connecting agency or a middleman that is just going to refer them to someone else.

We do not naively think that one organization can solve this issue. We realize it takes a collaborative effort, but we also know that a veteran is more likely to accept help from someone who speaks their language, who understands their culture and who can provide immediate support.⁴⁴

However, bringing on board people with similar experiences cannot replace some form of specialized expertise. In other words, simply being a veteran does not necessarily make that person capable of providing adequate assistance to other veterans. Philip Ralph, from Wounded Warriors Canada, explained the balance that is needed between professional expertise and personal empathy for veterans:

[O]n some of our programs, and I'll take COPE as an example, the clinicians aren't necessarily veterans, but they are people who understand uniformed service and trauma. They're some of the best in the country in caring for people. What we have in that group is one couple who have worked through the program and who come back a year later to give that credibility to the clinicians and that language. They become the peer mentors for that group. So you're using the veteran's strength, but then you're tapping into the expertise that is out there in society.

...

You need to take their strengths and surround them with people who are experts and who are supportive from other professions, and use both, so that they can talk to each other and bridge that gap.⁴⁵

Ms. McIntyre acknowledged that veterans prefer organizations that focus on their specific needs. Projects in which veterans can interact with other veterans, while leveraging the skills available from other resources, offer the best chance of success. This approach has been validated by VAC studies to identify best practices in housing for veterans in need:

We did pilot studies on housing models a few years ago with Employment and Social Development Canada in various cities across the country. For the most part, the most successful models were ones that had veterans housed with veterans, where that peer support and that culture was available as part of that housing model.⁴⁶

44 Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1535.

45 Mr. Philip Ralph (National Program Director, Wounded Warriors Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1640.

46 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1615.



Awareness efforts therefore need to target the many organizations that are likely to interact with veterans in need. These clearly include shelters, whose mission is to care for the homeless, but also the police⁴⁷ and many municipal services. These organizations must be made aware of the reality of veterans who are homeless, just as they must be made aware of all the specific issues that can factor into homelessness. The Government of Canada's National Housing Strategy identifies 11 vulnerable populations, including veterans, and each should obviously be the subject of outreach efforts by the departments concerned.

That said, organizations whose core mission (VETS Canada at the national level) or that have as a clearly defined mission helping veterans in need should figure prominently in this complex, diverse environment. Their efforts are presented in the next section of this report, and they should be considered key partners. They could serve as a bridge for VAC's outreach efforts, as they are much better placed than the department to identify local organizations that have the capacity to help veterans who are homeless.

Case Management for the Homeless

Once at-risk veterans have been identified and have agreed to contact VAC, the department must help restore their trust. Committee members have no doubt that Veterans Service Agents (VSAs) and case managers are acting in the best interests of veterans they wish to help. However, unfavourable conditions may hamper recovery. The testimony heard by the Committee can sometimes be anecdotal and constitute an unfortunate exception to a generally effective larger context. In his testimony, William Webb raised a troubling issue with respect to the turnover of case managers. Mr. Webb said that, after having had a case manager whose services he greatly appreciated, he has had a string of case managers hired on three-month contracts.⁴⁸

In some situations, such employees may be needed because of a temporary shortage of qualified staff, or for some other reason. However, the department should make sure that veterans who are at risk of returning to homelessness are not placed in a situation that, like the one described by Mr. Webb, very clearly hinders a climate of trust between VAC and veterans.

47 Inspector Colleen Yee (Centralized Operations Services Section, Operations Division, Vancouver Police Department), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1600.

48 Mr. William Webb (As an Individual), *Evidence*, ACVA, 4 February 2019, 1620.

VETERANS AND THE NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Launched in November 2017, the [National Housing Strategy](#) (NHS) is a 10-year project aimed at:

- “cutting chronic homelessness by 50%;
- removing 530,00 families from housing need;
- renovating and modernizing 300,000 homes; and
- building 100,000 new homes.”⁴⁹

Spearheaded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the NHS will provide \$20.5 billion in federal investments over 12 years, cost-matched by the provinces and territories. The NHS has six “priority areas for action”:

- housing for those in greatest need – vulnerable populations;
- social housing sustainability;
- Indigenous housing;
- northern housing;
- sustainable housing and communities; and
- a balanced supply of housing

The first priority area for action, “vulnerable populations.” includes:

- women and children fleeing domestic violence;
- seniors;
- young adults;
- Indigenous peoples;

49 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, National Housing Strategy, [“What is the strategy?”](#)



- people with disabilities;
- people dealing with mental health and addiction issues;
- veterans;
- LGBTQ2+;
- racialized groups;
- recent immigrants, especially refugees; and
- people experiencing homelessness.

Veterans are therefore one of the 11 vulnerable populations targeted by the first of six priority areas for action. In the wake of the NHS, VAC is currently devising its own strategy to combat homelessness among veterans and coordinate its actions with the CMHC and ESDC.⁵⁰ According to Ms. McIntyre, this VAC-specific strategy is in the development stage:

We are working on Coming Home, Veterans Affairs Canada's strategy to prevent and end veteran homelessness. This strategy proposes a number of objectives that will ensure that Canada's veterans who are homeless receive the support they need to achieve housing stability and well-being, and assist in reducing the likelihood of veterans from ever being homeless.⁵¹

In his testimony, Raymond McInnis from the Royal Canadian Legion criticized the time it is taking to launch this strategy:

In 2016 we were briefed on a VAC homelessness strategy and action plan in the works that would be veteran-centric, evidence informed and outcome based. We were told that it would enable VAC and partners to better find and assist veterans who are homeless and veterans in crisis and prevent veteran homelessness. To date, we have seen no sign of progress.⁵²

50 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1610.

51 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1540.

52 Mr. Raymond McInnis (Director, Veterans Services, Dominion Command, Royal Canadian Legion), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1540.

A key element of the VAC strategy would be a better coordination of projects and programs between the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments. As some witnesses explained, resistance from provinces and municipalities makes it hard to implement projects related to veterans' housing. For example, Executive Director Suzanne Le, from the Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI), said that, "[i]n the case of veterans, there are many provinces, Ontario being one of them, and many cities, Ottawa being one of them, that will not fund projects and programs for veterans of any sort. We are specifically excluded from it because they see it as a federal plan."⁵³ While her project could have received provincial and municipal funding if it were aimed at homeless people in general, the MHI has had to carry out a major fundraising campaign that will eventually allow it to raise \$5 million for the project.⁵⁴ In other words, the fact that one of the conditions for federal funding is the involvement of provincial governments (which usually involves municipalities) creates an additional barrier to the early-stage development of housing projects for veterans.

For its part, the Homes for Heroes Foundation (HHF), founded in 2016, develops projects for veterans in need. Each project features 20 tiny homes that cost about \$125,000 per unit to build.⁵⁵ Projects are underway in Calgary and Edmonton. HHF President David Howard argued that this jurisdictional dispute is preventing his organization from undertaking projects:

[M]unicipalities and provinces are saying that they have a lot of homeless vets and that it isn't their problem—that it's Ottawa's problem and it's a federal issue. We're having a difficult time convincing them that they should give us land for this project. It's one of the obstacles we have. We understand that housing for homelessness doesn't fit within the Veterans Affairs mandate, and that is an issue for us. It's difficult for us to get any support on funding if it doesn't fall within their mandate.⁵⁶

To make sure that organizations interested in developing housing projects that address homelessness among veterans receive as much attention as others when they submit their projects to provincial/territorial and municipal authorities, the Committee recommends as follows:

53 Ms. Suzanne Le (Executive Director, Multifaith Housing Initiative), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1655.

54 Ms. Suzanne Le (Executive Director, Multifaith Housing Initiative), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1640.

55 Mr. David Howard (President, Homes for Heroes Foundation), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1630.

56 Mr. David Howard (President, Homes for Heroes Foundation), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1630.



Recommendation 8

That Veterans Affairs Canada, in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, ensure that housing projects for veterans who are homeless receive specific targeted funding under the National Housing Strategy.

Growing awareness of veterans who are homeless over the past decade has led to several housing projects for veterans in need. Following in the footsteps of London in 2012, Toronto, London, Calgary and Victoria, in conjunction with the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), VAC and several community organizations, launched a project to develop a Canadian model for housing and support for veterans experiencing homelessness. Western University's Dr. Cheryl Forchuk, a member of the project's steering committee, shared the findings from the evaluation project report with members of the Committee.

As part of this two-year project, 78 veterans were housed in one of 56 units at four sites offering different types of accommodation. The project's principles were as follows:

- focus on veterans helping veterans;
- separate veterans from the general homeless population;
- emphasize promoting self-respect;
- provide a structured environment;
- address addiction;
- focus on the transition process to long-term housing;
- have a core of at least six veterans per site;
- apply a Housing First approach (access to housing is not conditional on participation in a rehabilitation program); and
- apply a harm reduction approach (people in the program do not need to abstain from alcohol or drugs but must respect certain common rules).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ *A Canadian Model for Housing and Support of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness*, document submitted to the Committee by Dr. Cheryl Forchuk at the meeting of 6 February 2019, p. 8.

The project identified four key areas for consideration for developing housing projects for veterans who are homeless:

- Permanent housing solutions with support must be preferred over transitional housing models.
- Housing First and harm reduction principles must drive programming.
- Housing arrangements must take the specific needs of veterans into account, and better integrate women veterans and families.⁵⁸ Evidence-based outcomes must be centred on housing stability with decreased use of emergency services (shelters, police and emergency departments).⁵⁹

This model provided a framework for recent projects, some of which are briefly presented in the following section.

Several witnesses also said that, since housing stability is the best indicator of a person's ability to escape homelessness, a rent supplement would make a major difference in veterans' chances of success. According to Mr. Pearce:

We're making an offer to someone and a leap of faith for people who have been on the streets for a while. If we can offer them some stable funding over a period of time, and I would even argue that for those for whom it's possible, a declining level of funding... For example, the rent subsidy is x dollars one year, x dollars minus \$100 the next year, and then x dollars minus \$100 the following year. Over time, those who can survive in that way reduce their dependency and increase their autonomy.

The horizon for funding, when it's just one-year or two-year funding, just doesn't give us the room to breathe. It doesn't give promise to a homeless person that we're going to be there for them for a sufficiently long period of time. I think extending the horizon is a good investment in stabilizing people outside of homelessness.⁶⁰

Emphasizing that veterans are a priority for the Government of Canada under the National Housing Strategy, the Committee recommends as follows:

58 For more on this point, see Ms. Cheryl Forchuk (Beryl and Richard Ivey Research Chair in Aging, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Recovery, Parkwood Institute Research, and Assistant Director, Lawson Health Research Institute), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1535.

59 *A Canadian Model for Housing and Support of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness*, document submitted to the Committee by Dr. Cheryl Forchuk at the meeting of 6 February 2019, p. 18.

60 Mr. Matthew Pearce (President and Chief Executive Officer, Old Brewery Mission), *Evidence*, ACVA, 29 November 2018, 1700.



Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada create a rent supplement for veterans who are homeless and that this supplement be part of its overall strategy to address homelessness among veterans.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada ensure that initiatives dedicated to veterans under the National Housing Strategy are open to veterans with service dogs.

Cockrell House

Founded in 2009, Cockrell House in Victoria is one of the four organizations involved in developing the Canadian Model for Housing and Support of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness. It is an eight-unit transition house, and therefore does not provide a permanent solution to the housing needs of veterans who are homeless. Other private units or facilities provided by the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion can temporarily accommodate three to five other people. One of the veterans acts as resident manager.

According to Cockrell House Chair Angus Stanfield, when new residents arrive, the first step is matching them with a VAC case manager.⁶¹ The average stay is about one year, but many stay for two, and some for more than two. A limit of three years and then two was initially set, but this was abandoned. Running the facility costs approximately \$1,100 per month per resident.⁶² After the first few months each individual's situation is assessed, and they are encouraged to contribute between \$200 and \$500 a month, depending on their income.

Cockrell House does not receive any government financial support. But, as Mr. Stanfield notes, "Without the Royal Canadian Legion we couldn't survive."⁶³

61 Mr. Angus Stanfield (Chair, Cockrell House, South Mid-Vancouver Island Veterans Housing Society), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1540.

62 Mr. Angus Stanfield (Chair, Cockrell House, South Mid-Vancouver Island Veterans Housing Society), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1545.

63 Mr. Angus Stanfield (Chair, Cockrell House, South Mid-Vancouver Island Veterans Housing Society), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1550.

Multifaith Housing Initiative

While Cockrell House has been running a transition house for veterans for the past decade, the Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI) plans to start the construction phase of its project in 2019. MHI has been a registered charity in Ottawa since 2002, providing housing and support for individuals and families who are homeless. Founded by the Archdiocese of Ottawa, the organization already has housing for the homeless, but it wanted to develop a project for veterans. It relies on a pool of volunteers from approximately 70 faith groups in the region, but it has no religious or affiliation requirements for its tenants.⁶⁴

MHI Executive Director Suzanne Le said the affordable housing for veterans project is taking a Housing First approach. The goal is to build 40 supportive housing units with access to integrated mental health and addiction management support services. The project will be built on the former Rockcliffe air base in east Ottawa, which has been declared “surplus federal real property” by the Department of National Defence, and which, under an Employment and Social Development Canada program, is available for homelessness initiatives.⁶⁵ The project will be carried out in partnership with Salus Ottawa, Veterans Affairs Canada, Soldiers Helping Soldiers, the Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command and District G, True Patriot Love, the Canadian Forces Moral and Welfare Services, Support Our Troops and Helmets to Hardhats.

As discussed above, jurisdictional issues may impede the public funding of projects for veterans. That is why MHI has been forced to conduct a major fundraising campaign that will ultimately allow the project to proceed. While this shows that such projects can be carried out with limited financial support from public authorities, the bigger challenge is that these funding difficulties are directly linked to the fact that the project is veteran-specific, which tends to cause provincial and municipal authorities to step back.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

This section presents some of the initiatives undertaken by community-based organizations that help veterans who are homeless and that the Committee was able to meet as part of its study. These organizations have often been able to expand the scope of successful local and regional initiatives by attracting the support of VAC, the Royal Canadian Legion or other funding agencies.

64 Ms. Suzanne Le (Executive Director, Multifaith Housing Initiative), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1710.

65 Ms. Suzanne Le (Executive Director, Multifaith Housing Initiative), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1640.



VETS Canada

VETS Canada began in 2010 in Halifax as a peer support initiative to help veterans who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Its activities grew rapidly and, in 2014, the organization signed an agreement with VAC and became an official service provider for homeless and in-crisis veterans. There are now “regional operations managers” in each province.

Each year, VETS Canada organizes a tour during which hundreds of volunteers walk the streets of Canada’s major cities to identify homeless people in need and refer them to appropriate services. It provides emergency transition housing in Halifax, Vancouver and Ottawa, and recently opened a drop-in and support centre in Ottawa. VETS Canada recently launched the Captain Nichola Goddard Support Initiative for Female Veterans in Crisis, funded by the True Patriot Love Foundation. One of its first tasks is to develop a guide for supporting homeless and in-crisis women veterans.

According to VETS Canada Chair and Co-founder Debbie Lowther, the organization receives between 200 and 300 requests for assistance each month across the country:

Those requests come to us in a variety of ways, through our 1-888 phone line, our website or social media platforms, and most recently through our newly opened veterans drop-in and support centre here in Ottawa as well as our recently announced veterans support centre in Edmonton. Some of those referrals are from other organizations or agencies. Approximately half of our referrals each month come from Veterans Affairs Canada case managers.⁶⁶

With the introduction of the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund (VFWBF) on 1 April 2018, VAC no longer recognizes VETS Canada as a specialized service provider, but rather as one of many organizations eligible for funding under the VFWBF. According to Ms. Lowther, VETS Canada received the same funding from VAC as the previous year, but she is concerned that the proliferation of organizations will scatter funding, diluting the ability of proven organizations to continue to provide the same level of service.⁶⁷

Of the 155 organizations that applied, 21 shared a total of \$3 million in assistance. Of these 21 organizations, three have activities directed at supporting veterans who are homeless: VETS Canada, the RESPECT Campaign and the Old Brewery Mission.⁶⁸

66 Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1530.

67 Ms. Debbie Lowther (Chair and Co-founder, VETS Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1530.

68 Ms. Faith McIntyre (Director General, Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration, Department of Veterans Affairs), *Evidence*, ACVA, 20 November 2018, 1540.

Royal Canadian Legion

Through its [Leave the Streets Behind](#) program, the Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) provides financial assistance to homeless and at-risk veterans, as well as emergency housing. It partners with VETS Canada and other organizations, such as [Soldiers Helping Soldiers](#), to help veterans who may be in need. Because of its poppy campaign, the RCL does not have to depend on taxpayer funds for its activities. As a result, it has not received any funding under the VFWBF.

The Leave the Streets Behind program was launched by the RCL's Ontario Command in 2009. Thanks to initial funding of \$500,000 in 2012, the program was expanded across the country so that each provincial command can develop a support program for veterans who are homeless. In total, more than \$2 million has been disbursed through its activities.⁶⁹ Raymond McInnis, with the RCL's Dominion Command, gave some examples of initiatives made possible by this funding:

[The Ontario Command] has a partnership with Mainstay Housing in Toronto and are supporting three locations in Toronto: Parliament Street, Bathurst Street and 10 apartments in the Pan Am village. To date, Ontario Command has assisted 667 veterans who are homeless in 139 communities in Ontario, and that includes 62 female veterans who are homeless.

B.C./Yukon Command provides financial support for Veterans Manor in Vancouver's east side and for Cockrell House in Victoria, a transition house that is presently full. There are nine rooms there, and they are constantly full.

Alberta/Northwest Territories Command operated a food bank for over 20 years and today works directly with the Calgary Food Bank to assist many veterans in the community. The command is also engaged with first responders, social services and Veterans Affairs Canada in identifying and assisting veterans who are homeless. Although they do not keep detailed statistics, their estimate for providing emergency shelter for veterans in the past three years would be over 60 veterans and families. The number of veterans who they have helped with rent to ensure they do not become homeless would be more than double that number.

Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command launched the veterans outreach program, bringing together community resources and establishing partnerships to provide proactive assistance to veterans who are homeless.⁷⁰

69 Mr. Raymond McInnis (Director, Veterans Services, Dominion Command, Royal Canadian Legion), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1540.

70 Mr. Raymond McInnis (Director, Veterans Services, Dominion Command, Royal Canadian Legion), *Evidence*, ACVA, 22 November 2018, 1535-40.



There is no substitute for the national network the RCL has developed over the past century, which allows it to coordinate assistance at the local level. It is therefore difficult to consider a comprehensive plan to address homelessness among veterans that does not actively involve the RCL.

Wounded Warriors Canada

Founded in the late 2000s, Wounded Warriors Canada (WWC) has taken a progressive approach to its interventions by filling gaps that the organization had identified while avoiding duplication. This has led the WWC to focus on mental health over the past six years. This year, the organization will invest \$3.2 million in its overall programming.⁷¹ In keeping with the WWC's spirit of working together, it has partnered with VETS Canada to expand its program, rather than launch a new program aimed at veterans who are homeless.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Soldiers Helping Soldiers

Soldiers Helping Soldiers (SHS) has been in Ottawa for six years. It incorporated as a not-for-profit in 2017.⁷² Lieutenant-General (Retired) Stuart Beare, Chair of the Board, described SHS as follows:

We are an organization of volunteers that aids in recognizing and connecting with veterans on the street. We identify them. We connect with them. I loved Cheryl's description of how that cultural and military reconnection is so important to so many. We connect with them on a personal level and then facilitate their connection and interconnectedness with those who can help them. It's very much that "walking beside" mission as opposed to "delivering the service" mission, and allowing those who are experts at delivering the services to be accessible to them so they can get the services they require. Fundamentally that's who we are and what we seek to do.

71 Mr. Philip Ralph (National Program Director, Wounded Warriors Canada), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1545.

72 Lieutenant-General (Retired) Stuart Beare (Chair of the Board, Soldiers Helping Soldiers), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1550.

It's all volunteer work, including by serving members of the Canadian Forces who have permission to work with us as volunteers in uniform, helping to bring the uniform into that ecosystem.⁷³

Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund

Founded in 1942, the Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund (RCNBF) provides distress loans, grants and bursaries to Royal Canadian Navy veterans and their dependants. In 2018, it provided nearly \$600,000 in various programs to 237 people.⁷⁴ One of these programs is emergency assistance, accounting for 15% to 20% of total expenditures. This emergency assistance provides up to a maximum of \$1,000 per person and is similar to the Veterans Emergency Fund. RCNBF President Robert Cl  roux said that these requests are usually intended to complement assistance provided by VAC, VETS Canada or the Royal Canadian Legion. The fund provided just over 100 grants last year.

RESPECT Campaign

The RESPECT Campaign is a multi-organizational networking initiative to support retired first responder veterans. Founder Stephen Gregory said the project began in Montr  al and, with funding from the VFWBF, has been expanded to 19 cities across Canada.⁷⁵ One of the goals of these collaborative meetings is to create a map identifying local organizations that can provide services to veterans.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Homelessness is a complex issue whose solution requires numerous, coordinated interventions—both major, nationwide ones and concrete, local ones. In the case of veterans, given the targeted nature of the interventions that can be carried out, it should be possible to implement a program that eliminates veterans' homelessness. That is the main recommendation of this report.

73 Lieutenant-General (Retired) Stuart Beare (Chair of the Board, Soldiers Helping Soldiers), *Evidence*, ACVA, 6 February 2019, 1550.

74 Mr. Robert Cl  roux (President, Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund), *Evidence*, ACVA, 27 November 2018, 1635.

75 Mr. Stephen Gregory (Cofounder, RESPECT Campaign), *Evidence*, ACVA, 4 February 2019, 1600.

76 Ms. Brenda Fewster (National Director, University Outreach and Program Evaluation, RESPECT Campaign), *Evidence*, ACVA, 4 February 2019, 1630.



There are probably between 3,000 and 5,000 veterans who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness in Canada. Veterans are an extremely diverse group, and a one-size-fits-all model would not meet all their needs. Local, individual solutions involving housing stability are needed. This is the stated principle of Housing First, which centres on finding a stable housing solution before addressing any other problem that may have contributed to the person spiralling into homelessness.

Veterans are an at-risk population under the National Housing Strategy. This provides unparalleled funding leverage for a national coordination of initiatives to end veterans' homelessness. Veterans Affairs Canada has a key role to play as a bridge between local organizations working with individual veterans in need and the federal programs that best suit their needs. The Committee therefore eagerly awaits the launch of the department's homelessness strategy, which has been planned for some years now.

Community organizations whose expertise and national reach have already produced remarkable results must also be recognized as key partners in this strategy. VETS Canada has contributed more than any other organization to raising national awareness about veterans' homelessness. The Royal Canadian Legion, with its nationwide network, is simply irreplaceable in terms of translating national objectives to the local level.

Finally, in each community, people from all walks of life recognize the immense dedication of veterans and are ready to help them out at the slightest sign of concerted action by public officials, at all levels of government, appealing for their support. The time is ripe for the Government of Canada, in partnership with the provinces and territories, all municipalities, dozens of community organizations, the generosity of the private sector and the sincere desire of Canadians, to recognize the contribution of veterans to Canada's national identity and make homelessness among veterans a thing of the past.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Veterans Affairs Faith McIntyre, Director General Policy and Research Division, Strategic Policy and Commemoration Robert Tomljenovic, Area Director	2018/11/20	99
Royal Canadian Legion Dave Gordon, Homeless Veterans Representative Dominion Command Raymond McInnis, Director Veterans Services, Dominion Command	2018/11/22	100
VETS Canada Debbie Lowther, Chair and Co-founder	2018/11/22	100
As an individual Aaron Segart	2018/11/27	101
Multifaith Housing Initiative Suzanne Le, Executive Director	2018/11/27	101
Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund Robert Cl��roux, President Tom Riefesel, Vice-President	2018/11/27	101
South Mid Vancouver Island Veterans Housing Society Angus Stanfield, Chairman Cockrell House	2018/11/27	101
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Tim Richter, President and Chief Executive Officer	2018/11/29	102

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Homes for Heroes Foundation David Howard, President	2018/11/29	102
Old Brewery Mission Matthew Pearce, President and Chief Executive Officer	2018/11/29	102
Vancouver Police Department Cst Alyson Smith, Homeless Outreach Coordinator Centralized Operations Services Section Insp Colleen Yee, Centralized Operations Services Section, Operations Division	2018/11/29	102
As an individual William Webb	2019/02/04	106
RCMP Veterans' Association Ralph Mahar, Executive Officer	2019/02/04	106
Respect Campaign Brenda Fewster, National Director University Outreach and Program Evaluation Stephen Gregory, Cofounder	2019/02/04	106
Lawson Health Research Institute Cheryl Forchuk, Assistant Director, and Beryl and Richard Ivey Research Chair in Aging, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Recovery Parkwood Institute Research	2019/02/06	107
Soldiers Helping Soldiers LGen (Ret'd) Stuart Beare, Chair of the Board	2019/02/06	107
Wounded Warriors Canada Capt(N) (Ret'd) Philip Ralph, National Program Director	2019/02/06	107

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 99 to 102, 106, 107, and 114](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Neil R. Ellis
Chair



A Homeless Veterans Program

Leave the Streets Behind

Un programme pour
Vétérans sans abri



A helping hand to Veterans who are
homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Un coup de main aux Vétérans qui sont
sans abri ou à risque d'itinérance.



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