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**SUBJECT****VETERANS HOMELESSNESS**

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**ISSUE**

What is the Government of Canada doing to address Veteran homelessness?

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**RESPONSE**

- **Everyone in Canada deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. The Government of Canada is committed to eliminating chronic homelessness, including among veterans, and to ensuring that all veterans receive the services for which they are eligible.**
- **Through initiatives under the National Housing Strategy and programming provided by Veterans Affairs Canada, this government is taking concrete action to prevent and reduce veteran homelessness.**
- **Budget 2021 announced that our government will invest \$45 million over two years, beginning in 2022-23, to reduce veteran homelessness by providing rent supplements and wrap-around services for homeless veterans. I am working with my colleague at veteran's affairs to determine how best to implement this commitment.**
- **Consistent with my mandate letter, I will also be seeking to address homelessness among veterans through a new veteran stream under the Rapid Housing Initiative.**
- **The Budget also announced an additional \$567 million over two years for Reaching Home: Canada's homelessness strategy to support communities in their efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness.**
- **Ending veteran homelessness is a shared responsibility and I look forward to working with the minister of Veterans Affairs to ensure we take a whole of government approach to supporting veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.**

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## BACKGROUND

**Reaching Home:** As part of the National Housing Strategy (NHS), the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$2.2 billion over 10 years to prevent and reduce homelessness. This investment supports the broader NHS objective of reducing chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027-28. On April 1, 2019, the Government of Canada launched Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

Veterans experiencing homelessness have access to programming made available to homeless and at-risk individuals through Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy funding to communities. Between April 2014 and March 2019, Reaching Home's predecessor, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy invested \$17,655,429 into 74 projects that included veterans in their target populations.

**Data on Veteran Homelessness:** The National Shelter Study data shows that the proportion of emergency shelter users who reported having served in the military declined from 2.2% in 2014 (nearly 3,000 individuals) to 2.0% in 2017 (an estimated 2,650 individuals). Results from the 2018 Coordinated Point-in-Time Count show that in the 61 participating communities, approximately 5% of respondents indicated that they were a veteran of either the Canadian Armed Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

### Government commitments:

- On September 23, 2020, the Speech from the Throne committed to building on the work of the NHS by focusing on, "entirely eliminating chronic homelessness in Canada", including among veterans.
- On April 19, 2021, the Budget announced \$45 million over two years, beginning in 2022-23, for the Government to pilot a program aimed at reducing veteran homelessness through the provision of rent supplements and wrap-around services for homeless veterans such as counselling, addiction treatment, and help finding a job.
- The Budget also announced an additional \$567 million over two years, beginning in 2022-23 through Reaching Home to maintain the 2021-22 funding levels announced in the Fall Economic Statement in response to the pressures of COVID-19. The Budget reiterated the Government's commitment to entirely eliminating chronic homelessness.
- The Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion's Mandate Letter, published on December 16, 2021, included a plan to "Accelerate our Government's commitment to end chronic homelessness among Veterans through the Rapid Housing Initiative, a new rent supplement program, wrap around supports and a dedicated stream of funding for Veterans within the National Housing Co-Investment Fund." Officials at Infrastructure Canada are working closely with those at Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on the design of a program to reduce Veteran homelessness.

**Beyond Reaching Home, other initiatives that support veterans:** Through VAC, the Minister of Veterans Affairs is responsible for a number of other initiatives that support veterans as well as the organizations who serve them. Budget 2021 announced \$140 million over five years starting in 2021-22, and \$6 million ongoing, for a program that would cover the mental health care costs of veterans with PTSD, depressive, or anxiety disorders while their disability benefit application is being processed.

**Other examples of VAC programming include:**

- The Veterans Emergency Fund provides financial support to veterans, their families and their survivors in meeting urgent needs for which there are no other income sources available;
- Financial assistance is available to eligible veterans through the War Veterans Allowance, the Assistance Fund, and Health Care Benefits;
- Veterans may be able to access educational and employment assistance and mental health supports as well as programs that care for Veterans with disabilities;
- The Veterans Assistance Service provides psychological support to veterans, their family members, or caregivers for difficulties affecting their well-being 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Not-for-profit organizations, such as VETS Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund and the Canadian Forces Personnel Assistance Fund, also provide veterans in crisis with access to emergency funds.