

HOUSING AND SUPPORTS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

— ENDING HOMELESSNESS BY 2019 —

Alberta: Helping veterans who are homeless

Alberta was the first in Canada to have a provincial plan to end homelessness. It now includes a focus on helping homeless veterans to get and stay housed.

To do this, Alberta Housing and Urban Affairs has brought together several groups to provide the needed help—such as determining the support, community and health services that homeless veterans may need.

Other assistance that may be needed is special housing. An Alberta government partner is currently working on purchasing a housing complex as part of a pilot project to help homeless veterans move from the street to a permanent home. Details are expected to be announced in the coming months.

To further assist homeless veterans, the province is also working with its partners to:

- Quickly identify veterans who are homeless.
- Create more affordable housing and housing for the homeless units.
- Connect homeless veterans with available assistance from other levels of government.
- Help organizations that support homeless veterans to know about the assistance available to veterans—such as the *Housing First* program.

Partners brought together to support homeless veterans include veterans' organizations, police, community-based organizations working to end homelessness, and other levels of government.

Ten years after the attacks on the World Trade Centre, many Canadian Armed Forces members have served in Afghanistan. Though veterans are often thought of as those who served in the World Wars, there are many other younger veterans have served in locations such as Cyprus, the Persian Gulf, or Bosnia.

In some cases, veterans have housing needs that are not met by market housing. Some may need affordable housing, while others may be homeless and need help not just finding but keeping housing.

A 2011 research paper reported that veterans may become homeless many years after their release from the military—11 years on average. (Source: *Final Report, The Experience of Homelessness Among Canadian Forces and Allied Forced Veterans*). Today, there are an estimated 20 to 25 veterans who are homeless in Calgary and about as many in Edmonton.

The Alberta government offers several housing support programs that can assist these veterans. A variety of housing programs offer cheaper rent than the average monthly rental rate, and the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness uses a *Housing First* approach to help homeless veterans to get and stay housed.

It is important that veterans know about housing options supported by the Alberta government. Our veterans put their lives on the line for others and for Canadian values like freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and dignity. When they return, it is our turn to step up.

— Jonathan Denis, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs

What is Housing First?

As its name implies, *Housing First* provides safe and stable homes, as well as outreach support to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness by addressing addiction and mental health issues, getting life skills, employment training and finding a job.

About 4,000 formerly homeless persons have been helped using the *Housing First* approach.

Last year (2010/2011), 30 formerly homeless veterans were housed and supported under *Housing First* programs in Alberta: 14 in Calgary, 5 in Edmonton, and 11 in other cities.