



**GOOD SHEPHERD  
MINISTRIES™**  
WELCOME HOMELESS

## Good Shepherd Refuge Social Ministries

### Briefing Note: Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

Date: Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 p.m.

#### Background

Good Shepherd Ministries (GSM) has over 60 years of experience providing services to the homeless adult population in Toronto. Our mission is to support the homeless and the most neglected members of our community. We offer a wide range of compassionate programs and services aimed at enhancing the quality of life, inspiring hope, and promoting human dignity. Our programs are resident-centered, strength-based, trauma-informed, and tailored to meet the individualized needs of vulnerable and marginalized individuals. Services include:

- Emergency Shelter for homeless men (128 beds)
- Supportive Housing for formerly homeless seniors (8 units)
- Supportive Housing for individuals living with HIV/AIDS (6 units)
- Drug and Alcohol Pre- and Post-Addiction Treatment Program (25 beds)
- Daily Drop-In Meal Service (serving 900 free meals daily)
- Housing Resettlement Program (identifying, securing, and maintaining housing for homeless clients)
- Eviction Prevention Services (Toronto-wide)
- Housing Follow-Up Services (Toronto-wide)
- On-site Medical and Mental Health Care, with access to specialized services (e.g., dental care, chiropody)
- Pastoral Care

GSM's vision is to alleviate the effects of poverty and work toward ending chronic homelessness in our community.

For more information, visit [goodshepherd.ca](http://goodshepherd.ca).

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#### Focus on Homeless Veterans

GSM began focusing on homeless Veterans after a one-day survey conducted in 2010, which included 669 clients. Of those surveyed, 9.7%, or 65 individuals, identified themselves as Veterans.



Following this survey, the City of Toronto integrated questions about homeless Veterans into its regular "Street Needs Assessment Survey."<sup>1</sup> The table below outlines the survey results:

Year	Estimated Homeless Population (one day snapshot)	Veteran Percentage	Estimated Veteran Homeless Population	Comment
2013	5,253	7%	368	7% of the respondents indicated they had some experience in the Canadian Forces
2018	8,715	5%	436	Of the 533 estimated people sleeping outdoors, 13% or 69 reported having service in the Canadian Military or RCMP
2021	7,347	5%	367	Of the 742 estimated people sleeping outside, 7% or 52 reported having service in the Canadian Military or RCMP

The next City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment is scheduled for the last week of October 2024, with results expected to be published in the second quarter of 2025. Currently, Toronto's homeless population is estimated at 10,503 (3-month average). Given the average prevalence rate in the last three surveys, it is safe to assume that there could be a significant number of homeless Veterans on the streets and in the shelters in Toronto.

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### Tailoring Services for Veterans

The data indicated a need for services specifically tailored to homeless Veterans in Toronto. With support from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), GSM began adjusting its case management efforts to address Veterans' needs. The following are key areas where Veterans require assistance:

- Access to affordable and appropriate housing
- Securing basic needs such as income, identification, shelter, and physical/mental health supports
- Housing aftercare support
- Crisis intervention

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<sup>1</sup> City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment Survey are available at <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/>



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To meet these needs, GSM allocated resources to provide intensive case management for 30-35 Veterans at any given time. We also established a robust network of service providers to ensure effective collaboration. Additionally, five addiction treatment beds were reserved for Veterans to facilitate quick access for those pursuing an abstinence-based recovery.

A six-week Life Skills Program was also introduced to help Veterans develop new skills and coping strategies. This program fosters peer interaction to address social isolation and covers topics such as stress management and healthy living.

In collaboration with Helmets to Hardhats (H2H), GSM helps Veterans find employment in the construction industry.

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### **Outcomes**

Since 2010, GSM has provided case management and housing assistance to over 300 Veterans. Of these, 37% were identified by GSM, while 63% were referred by other agencies. Currently, GSM offers comprehensive support to 32 Veterans.

Last year, our partnership with H2H provided 12 Veterans with employment service, at present 7 homeless Veterans are enrolled in the H2H training program. An additional 4 Veterans are actively seeking work outside of the H2H program.

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### **Building on Success**

GSM has recently entered into a funding agreement with Infrastructure Canada to expand its support for homeless Veterans in Toronto. This four-year project aims to prevent and reduce veteran homelessness, assist with eviction prevention, and promote long-term housing stability. The project's goals include:

- Engaging with 50 homeless or at-risk Veterans annually (200 total over 4 years) and providing support services
- Supporting the housing stability of 25-30 Veterans at Finchurst (formerly a Canadian Legion apartment now operated by Housing Link Mainstay Housing)
- Housing and supporting 24 homeless or at-risk Veterans annually (96 total over 4 years)
- Providing rent subsidies to 48 Veterans



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To ensure the project's success, GSM has partnered with two affordable housing providers: Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes and Housing Link Mainstay Housing (HLMS). GSM will lead the project and provide most support services, while our partners will focus on housing.

Support services will include:

- Offering life skills, social skills, and other therapeutic groups (3 times per year)
- Hosting a weekly breakfast club for Veterans (by HLMS)
- Conducting 12 outreach activities annually to identify and encourage Veterans to seek support

The staff required for this project are:

1. Veterans Transition Worker
2. Addictions/Mental Health Caseworker
3. Peer Support Worker
4. Housing Support Worker (HLMS staff)

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### **Future Risk**

While we are confident that the federal funding provided will make a positive impact on homelessness among Toronto-area Veterans, the agreement only lasts for four years. At the end of the project, there is a risk of housing instability for Veterans who rely on the rent subsidy component. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a transition plan for these Veterans in case the program funding is not renewed.

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### **For more information contact:**

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