

SENTINELS OF THE STREET PROGRAM

Key Messages and Q&A – July 2019

1. How many homeless veterans are there in Montréal? In Québec?

While no precise data exist on the number of homeless veterans in Québec, the results of Montreal's last homeless count (April 2018) reveal that **4,4% of people living on the street claimed to be veterans**—approximately **139 people** (out of a total of 3,149 visibly homeless people) surveyed on one given night in Montreal.¹ In 2015, 6% of respondents claimed to be veterans.

2. What is the Sentinels of Street?

In 2017, the Old Brewery Mission launched the Sentinels of the Street (*Sentinelles de rue*), the first long term housing initiative of its kind in Quebec aimed at veterans who are homeless or vulnerable and precariously housed.

- **16 HOMELESS VETERANS have been housed since the start of the program**
- **88% SUCCESS RATE**

3. What are its goals?

- To provide veterans who are homeless and/or precariously housed with the support they need to stabilize their situation, overcome trauma and chronic homelessness, find suitable housing and reintegrate into the community.
- Gain and share knowledge of the phenomenon of homelessness among veterans to better adapt responses and end homelessness among this population.

4. Is there a need for such a program?

- **Yes. No one should live without a home, much less those who have served in Canada's armed forces.**
- While about 2% of our clients are military veterans—a relatively small percentage—we noticed that **many of them need specialized services** to be able to overcome years of trauma and life on the street.

5. What problems/challenges do homeless veterans face in particular?

- According to the Quebec Veterans Foundation, **an average of eight years elapses between the end of military service and the first episode of homelessness.**
- Many cope with serious, persistent mental or physical health issues, often in the presence of other chronic problems (addiction).
- We have encountered instances of anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive problems, post-traumatic stress episodes, Tourette's syndrome, depression, substance addiction, personality disorders and paranoid schizophrenia.

¹ Eric Latimer, François Bordeleau, pour l'équipe de Je Compte MTL 2018. Dénombrement des personnes en situation d'itinérance sur l'île de Montréal le 24 avril 2018. Ville de Montréal et CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, 25 mars 2019.

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- The transition to civilian life is also a challenge faced by vulnerable veterans.
- **The risk of suicide among male veterans is 40% higher than among the Canadian population as a whole.**

6. What particular services does the program provide to homeless veterans?

- Safe place to stay 24/7, three meals a day, locker to store personal items
- Individual counselling, medical check-ups and legal services onsite at the Mission
- Help applying for financial benefits and/or stable source of income
- Referrals to other resources in the community
- Help identifying long term affordable housing options, in the neighbourhood of their choice (as much as possible)
- Once housed, follow-up visits by a Mission counsellor and psychosocial support
- Financial assistance for rent
- Full furnishings
- Initial grocery shopping

7. What's the cost of running the Sentinels?

The average cost of maintaining the Sentinels is roughly \$175,000 per year.

8. Where does the funding come from?

Primarily from the federal government (Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund) and the Quebec Veterans Foundation.

The Sentinels program has proven itself as a model that has a positive and lasting impact on the Veteran community. **The fact that the federal government has chosen to continue funding the Sentinels via the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund will enable us to pursue an effective model over the next 5 years with the goal of bringing an end to homelessness among veterans in Montreal.**

9. How are participants recruited?

Most participants are those which are already within our services or are those who come to our doors. We also reach out to other Montreal-area community organizations.

10. How do you secure housing for the veterans?

The search for housing is a vital issue in the project's success. We collaborate with private property owners, housing organizations and potential real estate partners. It has been a challenge as some private owners are hesitant to collaborate with us, and systematic work has gone into raising awareness, confronting prejudices and educating them of the realities of

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homeless veterans. Establishing contact and visiting dwellings has enabled us to identify landlords in different areas of Montreal who are open to our clientele.

11. Who are our partners?

The Sentinels project's success relies, in great part, on the diversity and number of our partners. To support housing stabilization among participants and to meet their needs, we set up collaborations in several areas:

- **Health care** (hospitals, CLSCs, clinics, addiction rehabilitation centres, etc.)
- **Legal services** (community-based advocacy groups, legal clinic, etc.)
- **Military matters** (Quebec Veterans Foundation, Veterans Affairs Canada, Veterans Emergency Transition Services [VETS Canada])
- **Real estate** (Habitations Sherbrooke Forest, SHAPEM, AB4G, private owners)
- **Community organizations** (job reintegration, food assistance, furnishings etc.)
- **Academic circles** (collaboration with McGill University in research on homeless veterans who benefited from the program)

12. What does success look like?

We have witnessed and celebrated many milestones and successes. For example, Mario, a former infantry corporal in the Canadian Armed Forces, who worked with his intervention counsellor to get the psychosocial support he needed and to find stable, affordable housing. Mario was the first participant to leave the program. He now lives in his home town, closer to his family.

We define success as the ability to provide veterans with the support they need to work through years of trauma, stabilize their situation, find suitable housing and reintegrate into their community. The Mission is proud of the Sentinels' 88% success rate and works hard to continue to improve on it.

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