



# The Open Door

*The Homes For Heroes Newsletter (Jan 2020)*

## Homes For Heroes Opens Its First Veterans' Village in Calgary, Alberta 908 ATCO Village

October 28, 2019 arrived with a chilly, biting wind out of the northwest as crowds gathered to celebrate the grand opening of our first Veterans' Village in Calgary. But for these friends and supporters of Homes For Heroes it somehow felt appropriate as it reminded us that there were veterans who were outdoors, living and sleeping in these conditions, and in need of shelter.



Attendees included **H4HF co-founder Murray McCann** who first proposed the use of tiny homes to support veterans experiencing homelessness: *"We needed the members*

*of our military, and they answered the call. Now many veterans need us, and we will now be able to answer their call. A made-in-Canada solution for aiding veterans with difficulties transitioning to life in everyday society can now realize its potential across our country."*



**Nancy Southern, Chair and CEO of ATCO** was also on hand: *"The people of ATCO have a long and proud history working alongside the brave men and women of Canada's military – heroes who have given so much to preserve our security and freedom. That is why it is such a profound honour for ATCO to participate in this critical project, and to provide our veterans with a place that they can proudly call their own, a small but important gesture when measured against their herculean sacrifice."* Notably, ATCO was one of the very first to step forward to support Homes For Heroes, pledging \$1.5 million in charitable support to the Calgary and Edmonton Villages.

Another major contributor to the project, CP Rail, was represented by **Scott MacDonald, Senior Vice-President Engineering, Mechanical and Procurement**. *"CP has a long history of supporting the military and we are proud to have our employees rally behind this important cause. It's an honour and a privilege to*

*support our Canadian veterans in their time of need as they so selflessly stood on guard for this great country."* To date, CP's annual Spin for a Veteran event has raised over \$800,000 in support of our Veterans' Villages.

*"This cluster of tiny homes in our city's southeast will do more than provide housing for homeless military veterans",* said **Brig.-Gen. Stephen Lacroix, Commander of 3rd Canadian Div.**, suggesting the housing will also be a reminder to our ex-soldiers of their earliest days of service and the camaraderie available to them. *"If you look at the setup of the village, it's not a fluke. It's deliberate attempt to reproduce what soldiers know. We go through training and courses in our careers in places like this. . . We benefit from each others' help, encouragement and challenges and come out better at the end."*



All of our “tiny” homes are now occupied by veterans who’ve had a difficult time adapting to civilian life. Post-traumatic stress is a factor for some and they’ll have access to counselling at the Village, with programming coordinated by The Mustard Seed and Veterans Affairs Canada.

*“Simply building a home was not going to solve the whole problem; we need a full support system to ensure tenants do not end up back on the street.”* said our **President Dave Howard**.

Dave also made reference to the commemorative plaques in front of every home, each bearing the name of a Canadian soldier who fell during the Afghan combat mission. *“It goes to show the Calgary and Canadian communities care deeply about those who have stood on guard for Canada.”*

And finally, Dave took time to thank all of those who had supported the project including ATCO, CP Rail, the PCL Construction team, the Gerald A. Cooper-Key Foundation, the Canadian Legacy Project, the McCann Family Foundation and the many other individuals, corporations and service organizations without whose assistance the Village would not have opened.

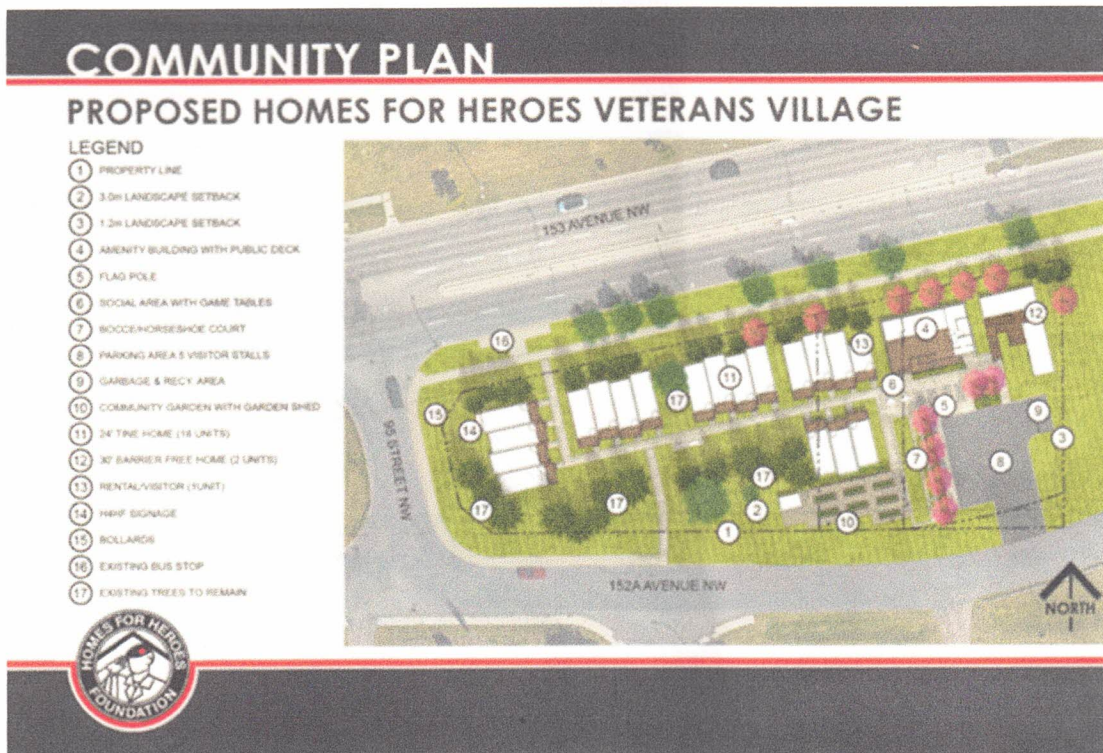
As of November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, **because you cared**, 15 veterans are able to be warm and safe, to take care of their personal needs and to have a secure place to keep their belongings – they have begun the journey back into mainstream society. **We, and they, can’t thank you enough!**

## **With Calgary Finished, Homes For Heroes Makes Plans To Expand Across Canada**

With our Calgary Veteran’s Village complete and fully occupied by veterans who are on the path back into mainstream society, Homes For Heroes is working actively to achieve our mission of ending homelessness across Canada.

**Edmonton** – having worked with the Edmonton City Council and their Affordable Housing Department to identify a suitable site for a Veterans’ Village in the community of Evansdale, we are now navigating our way through the permitting and zoning process. Our first meeting with members of the community back in May will be followed up in February with a second city-led consultation – all part of our Public Engagement Plan and our desire to be a Good Neighbour in the community. If all goes

as expected, we should have “spades in the ground” later this year. Edmonton as a whole is providing tremendous support to the project, including prominent members of the business community and the military family, the PPCLI Association/Foundation, K-97 Stingray Radio and Global TV.



**Ontario** – following Dave’s meetings with Provincial officials in Ontario, we have now been presented with ten site options (5 private and 5 publicly owned) in communities across the Province. After we complete our review, we hope to be able to announce the location of our first Village in Ontario. We are already assembling local leadership committees in cities like Kingston and London who will spearhead our efforts in their communities.

**Winnipeg** – City Council and local residents are very keen on the development of a Homes For Heroes Veterans’ Village in Winnipeg and we are confident that we will be able to announce a land acquisition and financial support for this build in the near future.

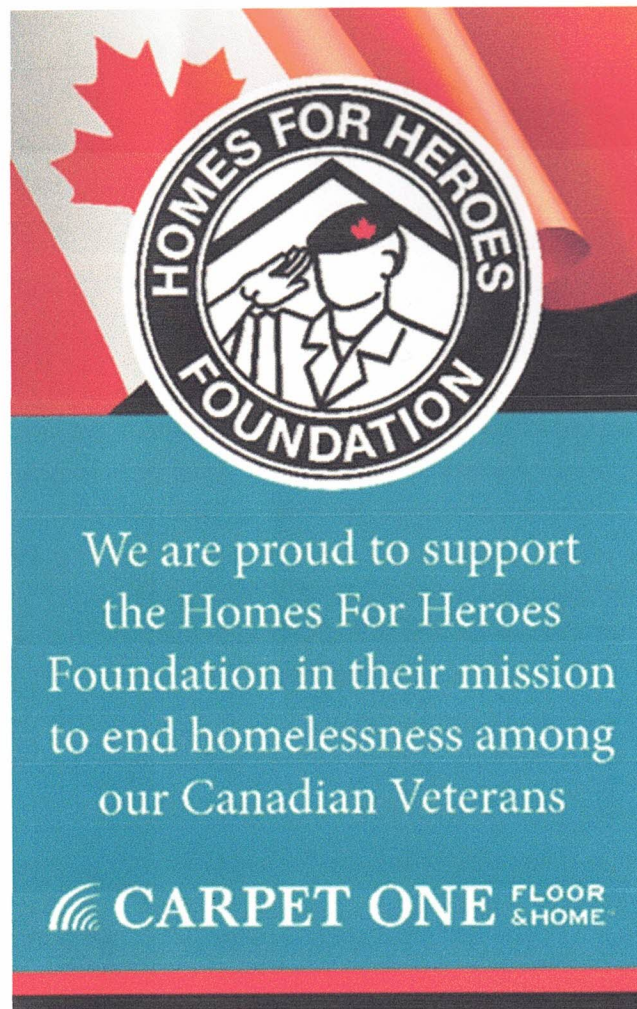
**British Columbia** – We are well aware of the need for affordable housing and services for homeless veterans in the B.C. lower mainland and Greater-Victoria areas and are meeting with representatives of both the Provincial and municipal

governments. Notably, a recent article in the *Martlet* – a publication of the University of Victoria, <https://www.martlet.ca/from-service-to-the-streets-veterans-and-victorias-housing-crisis/> highlighted the extent of veteran homelessness in that city and has sparked considerable interest among individuals and not-for-profits who are willing to assist Homes For Heroes. Local committees are coming together to champion our efforts in communities like Surrey and Langford.

## Exciting New Partnership for Homes for Heroes

We are pleased to announce a new partnership between Homes For Heroes and Carpet One Canada.

Carpet One is the largest purchaser of flooring in North America. The company consists of 1,000 individually owned co-ops, of which 100 are located in Canada.



Carpet One has been a major supporter of veterans in the United States but, until recently, hadn't selected a charity to support in Canada. Two weeks ago, at their annual convention, Carpet One announced that they had selected the Homes For Heroes Foundation as their Canadian charity-of-choice.

As a result, Carpet One Canada will be donating the flooring for all of Homes For Heroes Veterans' Villages across Canada. As well, each Canadian co-op will be undertaking fundraising campaigns in support of our mission to end homelessness among Canada's veterans.

Homes For Heroes already has a solid presence in Alberta with the opening of our Calgary Village last November and our Edmonton Village later this year. Carpet One's commitment is one more example of corporate partners who have recognized that Homes For Heroes' vision and plans are, indeed, nation-wide.

We wish to express our immense gratitude to Andrew Wiebe, owner of the Red Deer Co-op and Baxter Freake, President of Carpet One Canada for their faith, generosity and financial leadership in introducing Homes For Heroes and stewarding this national partnership. And most of all, thank you for supporting Canada's veterans-in-need. **We, and they, can't thank you enough.**

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## **Introducing Don McLeod - Veterans Peer Support Worker at 908 ATCO Village**

Don retired from the military in 2012 after serving over 30 years. He considers himself lucky because he was able to find a job in Alberta's oil industry but struggled with a sense of loss since his departure from his military family.

He admits getting accommodated with health care, finances, and wellness was very overwhelming, but what was most intimidating was his realization that he had no idea what it was like to be a civilian.

*"We are thrust (back) into society, with a slap on the back and a 'thank you for your service,'" says Don. "Some do amazingly well moving forward in their lives. Others, not so much."*



After some time in his oil field position, Don still felt a strong connection with the veteran's community. He made a bold decision to leave his job and pursue addictions counselling in hopes of reconnecting and giving back. Through his studies and practicum placement with The Mustard Seed, Don now finds himself doing what he sees as his dream job.

As of November 1, you can find Don – the newly appointed Veteran's Peer Support Worker – welcoming veterans experiencing homelessness into the first tiny home village for veterans in Canada. A partnership between the Homes for Heroes Foundation and The Mustard Seed, the Homes for Heroes ATCO Village is intended to provide a transitional living environment for veterans as they work to heal and reintegrate into society.

*“The goal of my position is to provide individual and group guidance and coaching as veterans acquire the skills to live independently,”* Don told us.

Once veterans are selected for the program, not only will they have 24/7 support from a former veteran, but they will also have access to Mustard Seed employment services, as well as the Wellness Centre where they can receive referrals to other social service organizations.

*“This program will give them something which they haven't had in a long time – a sense of belonging, guidance, and options,”* says Don. *“From there we will move forward together, one on one, or as a team, with the goal of independent living in a safe and stable environment.”*

The above story was sourced from The Mustard Seed and is available at: <https://theseed.ca/homes-for-our-heroes/>