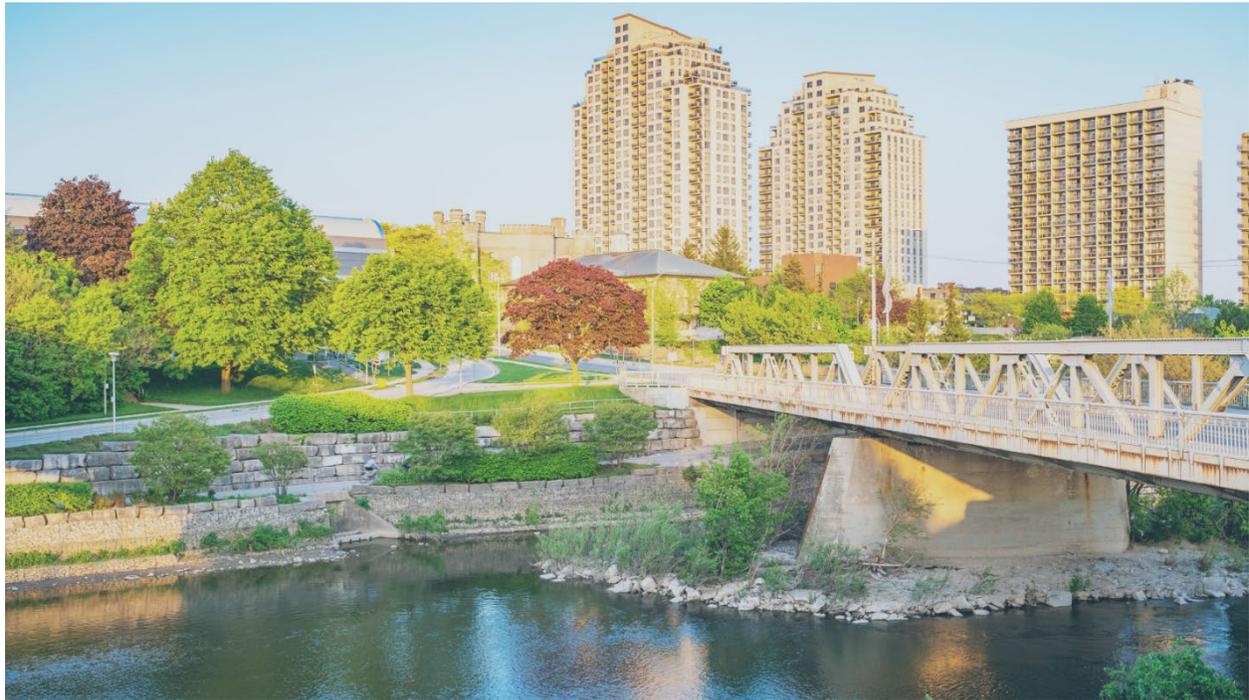




London, Ontario: Veteran Functional Zero Case Study

The Built for Zero Canada community of London became the first in Canada to end veteran homelessness.



COVERAGE AREA



Canada's 11th largest metropolitan area

Municipality:
City (single tier) covering 420.57 km²

Total Population:
383,822 (as of 2016 Census)

The Achievement

FUNCTIONAL ZERO VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

- **Joined BFZ-C:** 2019
- **Milestones Reached:** Veteran (October 2020)
- **Next Population for Focus:** Chronic homelessness

In October 2020, London became the first community in Canada to achieve functional zero veteran homelessness as part of Built for Zero Canada, a national movement of over 30 communities working to end chronic and veteran homelessness. The community, which joined Built for Zero Canada in 2019, received confirmation following a rigorous process from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.

When we refer to ending homelessness, we mean that a community has reached functional zero. Functional zero is a dynamic milestone defined as having fewer veterans experiencing homelessness that can be routinely housed within a month. In London, this means having zero, or no more than three, veterans actively experiencing homelessness at the end of each month. By reaching and sustaining functional zero, London has proven it has built a system that can ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring even as new veterans experience housing crises over time. As an analogy, a well-functioning health care system will not necessarily prevent people from getting sick. But it will ensure that people who fall ill are triaged appropriately and receive the services they need so their illness does not become a crisis.

For further information on the definition and Built for Zero Canada’s work to end veteran homelessness go to <https://bfzcanada.ca/veterans/>.



How did they do it?

As part of Built for Zero Canada, London changed how its homeless response system works by adopting the core elements of its methodology:

- **Building an integrated, command centre team.** Key agencies, local government, and veterans’ organizations work together toward a shared definition of zero.
- **Comprehensive, real-time, by-name data.** Built for Zero Canada communities know every veteran experiencing homelessness by name in real time. The result is more tailored solutions for individuals and a clearer picture of the systems as a whole.

- **Strategic, data-driven housing investments.** Communities use real-time data to secure the housing resources they need and target them for the greatest possible reductions in homelessness.
- **Community-level measurement.** They measure success by the total number of people experiencing homelessness, not by program outcomes.

What it means to be a Built for Zero Canada veteran community:

- Aim to end veteran homelessness.
- Adopt Built for Zero Canada terms and definitions.
- Achieve a veteran quality By-Name List.
- Collect and submit monthly veteran data through Built for Zero Canada.
- Coordinated efforts with local veteran organizations.
- Take on improvement projects to functionally end veteran homelessness.

Summary of London's Strengths:

- Strong collaborative team laser focused on ending veteran homelessness.
- Strong data culture and data management practices.
- Monitor data closely to help inform resources and housing plans.
- Community is solution-oriented and coordinates efforts across the sector.
- Support of the mayor and council.
- Directed resources to reach and sustain an end to veteran homelessness.

“[This achievement is] the direct result of a compassionate community coming together to achieve something truly remarkable. Safe and affordable housing is a right for everyone, especially brave women and men who have so selflessly served our country,”



- Mayor Ed Holder

BUILDING A COMMAND CENTRE UNDER ONE ROOF

London has built a strong team with a common goal – reach and sustain an end to veteran homelessness. Veteran organizations were already doing a great job of serving veterans experiencing homelessness in the community, so it became about leveraging and leaning on each other's expertise.

London was an early pioneer in working to end veteran homelessness. In 2010, London conducted the first Canadian study on veterans experiencing homelessness, asking them how they became homeless and what would get them out of homelessness. From 2012-2014, London participated in and took the lead on a four city demonstration project, [The Canadian Model for Housing and Support for Veterans](#)

Experiencing Homelessness (Evaluation Project). These initial projects deepened community awareness of veteran homelessness and effective responses and began to develop relationships between the veteran sector and the homelessness response sector.

In 2016, London formed the Veteran Advisory Committee to help support veterans experiencing homelessness. The Committee includes the Royal Canadian Legion, Canadian Armed Forces – London Morale and Welfare Services, London Cares Homeless Response Services, Local Emergency Shelter, London Police Service, Veterans Affairs Canada, City of London Homeless Prevention, Parkwood – Occupational Stress Injury Clinic, Department of National Defense – Occupational Stress Injury Social Services, and Lawson Research Institute.



“Our commitment to build long-standing relationships and our willingness to work collaboratively as a system has been the key to our community’s success.”

- Anne Armstrong,
Executive Director, London Cares

The Veteran Advisory Committee’s early work to end veteran homelessness focused on networking and information sharing. When London joined Built for Zero Canada in 2019, they were poised to take the next step, to further coordinate their efforts through a By-Name List.

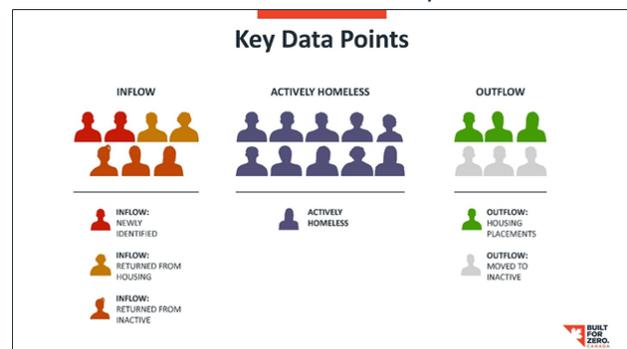
UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM THROUGH QUALITY REAL-TIME DATA

Communities need real-time, person-specific data. You cannot hope to meaningfully solve a problem when you do not understand its scope. Built for Zero Canada communities are uniquely positioned to end homelessness because they set up the necessary systems to accurately track the number of people experiencing homelessness, know them by name, and can better determine what it will take to get everyone on their By-Name List housed permanently.



This real-time actionable data allows communities to support triage to services, system performance evaluation and advocacy for the policies and resources necessary to end homelessness. Data is critical to making targeted investments and changes to end homelessness in any community.

By-Name Lists are a real-time, person-specific list of all individuals experiencing homelessness in a community. It includes a robust set of data points that support Coordinated Access and prioritization at a household level and an understanding of homeless inflow and outflow at a system level.



In July 2020, London became the first community in Canada to achieve a Quality Veteran By-Name List.

Key to getting to a Quality Veteran By-Name List includes the ability to identify veterans experiencing homelessness and confirm their veteran status (to clarify who is a veteran and to leverage resources available for veterans). In London's case, they reconfirmed they had all the necessary consent and data sharing practices in place. They developed new standards of practice around how frontline shelter and outreach staff ask the people about veteran status. They developed processes with the Royal Canadian Legion, Vets Canada and Veteran Affairs Canada to confirm veteran status. London is now to the point where they are fully utilizing Coordinated Access for same-day veteran status confirmation, and swiftly connecting veterans to housing and support programs.

“By achieving our quality veteran’s By-Name List in the late summer of 2020, the City of London and its partners were able to better understand and respond to the specific needs related to individuals on the By-Name List. This provided a goal for the group and really allowed the system to understand the inflow and outflow of veteran’s homelessness.”

“The key to the City of London’s results has been data, more data and then more data. Knowing each veteran by name, being able to speak to and plan for each individual on the list has resulted in great outcomes and success.”



- Craig Cooper,
Manager Homelessness Prevention, City of London

Once their committee began working from a single shared list with comprehensive, real-time data, they were able to shift their efforts from networking and information sharing, to focus on collective problem-solving towards ending homelessness for each veteran on their list.

COLLABORATING TO LEVERAGE AND COORDINATE RESOURCES

Veteran programs and the homelessness and housing sector are working together with the goal is to align as many resources as possible to end homelessness for those on the By-Name List. While London's Veteran Advisor Committee worked together to identify new resources (e.g., a new 42-unit non-profit building including 12 units specifically for veterans supported by the Royal Canadian Legion and London Cares), the Committee has primarily looked at how it can creatively use existing resources in new ways to support veterans experiencing homelessness to become housed:

- London Cares (one of the city's Housing First partners) identified an existing housing worker to be dedicated to veterans, as needed.
- Rallying around the shared goal of 'Achieving Functional Zero', programs not traditionally working with veterans experiencing homelessness provided units, casework and/or other supports to end veteran homelessness e.g., London Middlesex Community Housing, Housing Access Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex, and Parkwood Institute at St. Joseph's Health Care in London. In addition, the Unity Project offered casework supports, assisting in supporting veterans residing in motels to collect necessary documents for housing.

- London issued a specific call for market rental units over the summer.
- London established Veterans as one of their priority population for London’s Prioritization Criteria.

“Collaboration is an approach that is woven into all of the City of London’s strategic initiatives, including how the City addresses the issue of homelessness,” says Craig Cooper, Manager, Homeless Prevention Housing, Social Services & Dearness Home. “Cross-pollination between sectors allow us to be better equipped to meet the needs of our community and allows us to have a broader reach in helping to identify veterans at various points of access across our homeless and veterans’ serving sectors.”

- Craig Cooper,
Manager Homelessness Prevention, City of London

The veteran Case Conferencing table now meets weekly to review the list and their data, verify veteran status, match veterans to housing resources, prevent evictions where possible and problem-solve solutions. And, once veterans become housed in London, they tend to remain housed through London’s strong adherence to Housing First and intensive case management practices to support housing stability.

What’s Next

The goal now is to sustain their gains and keep working to absolute zero on veteran homelessness while taking their learning and applying it to other populations.

“Managing data such as inflow and outflow of veterans experiencing homelessness also helps us look at the past and present contexts to inform how to best position our community resources to maintain functional zero over the coming months and years,” says Cooper.

As of 2021, London has continued to sustain functional zero veteran homelessness. London is also committed to ending chronic homelessness and is using the same model and steps of any Built for Zero Canada community.

“Solving veteran homelessness is near and dear to my heart, being a veteran myself. Working with these individuals, sharing their stories, finding them the right supports and programs and seeing them housed is very important to me. But the work isn’t over. Homelessness will always persist, and we need to continue to come together as a community to support these individuals and ensure they remain housed in our community.”



- John Sluggett, Service Officer, Royal Canadian Legion, Victory Branch

Built for Zero Canada is starting with chronic and veteran homelessness as the first steps in eliminating all homelessness. By working with communities to build coordinated homelessness response systems focused on preventing and ending homelessness (beginning with chronic and veterans) to create proof-

points, we can demonstrate that ending homelessness is possible. Through the efforts of building a By-Name List and Coordinated Access, a community is learning and setting up the foundation for a homelessness-serving system that will lay the foundation to ensure that homelessness for everyone is rare, brief and non-recurring.

London is a community to watch and emulate!

Timeline

2015 – 2018

- Participated in the 20,000 Homes Campaign

2019

- **June:** Joined Built for Zero Canada

2020

- **January:** Joined the Veteran Community Cohort Pilot
- **July:** Became first community in Canada with Veteran Quality By-Name List
- **August:** Reached first month of Functional Zero threshold
- **October:** Achieved Veteran Functional Zero

2021

- **Now:** Sustaining and working toward absolute zero and functional zero chronic homelessness.

Who was on the team?



Community and Data Lead

Jonathan Rivard

Manager Homelessness Prevention

Housing, Social Services & Dearness Home, City of London

THE TEAM:

Craig Cooper

Manager Homelessness Prevention, City of London

Service Manager Lead

Ann Armstrong

Executive Director, London Cares

John Sluggett

Service Officer, Royal Canadian Legion, Victory Centre

Royal Canadian Legion Lead

Season Bieronski

Housing Stability Coordinator, London Cares

Along with all the members of the Veteran Advisor Committee

Built for Zero Canada Improvement Advisor:

Amanda DiFalco

Veteran Strategy Lead

[Read the Announcement Release](#)