The Missing Link: Discharge planning, Incarceration and Homelessness

The John Howard Society of Ontario
2006

The Missing Link: Discharge planning, Incarceration and Homelessness

Written and prepared by Stephen Gaetz and Bill O'Grady
October, 2006

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The John Howard Society of Ontario works to achieve fundamental and long-term changes in individual behaviour, in public attitudes, and in government policies. We believe that the process of building a better community is ongoing and evolutionary. We are committed to fulfilling our mission in accordance with principles of regular self-evaluation, best practices, and continuous improvement.

The John Howard Society of Ontario

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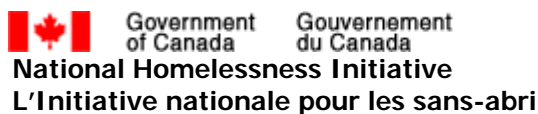111 Peter Street, Suite 603
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Executive Summary

The objective of this research was to provide a preliminary assessment, based on data collected in Ontario and British Columbia, of the relationship between incarceration, prisoner re-entry and homelessness. Independently, these issues have been explored in previous Canadian research, yet this is one of the first studies to look at the interconnections among these realms.

The analysis began with a literature review of the key issues related to discharge planning and prisoner re-entry. This review identified a set of risk factors that are associated with prisoner re-entry, which include: housing, employment training and education, health, substance abuse and the role played by familial support. The study then investigated several matters related to homelessness in Canada. Our review found that mental and physical health, substance abuse, labour market barriers, crime, policing and incarceration are all connected to homelessness. Homeless populations are particularly susceptible to criminogenic environments, in addition to greater surveillance from the police. These two factors go a far way in explaining why it is the case that homeless people are over-represented in the prison system. The bi-directional relationship between homelessness and incarceration was found to have considerable empirical support in the research literature.

In the next section of the report we present the results of our research. We began with a discussion of the research methods employed for this study, including the limitations of the design. Our data collection consisted of self-report questionnaires and a series of qualitative interviews. Our analysis then proceeded to explore the background characteristics of the prisoners and ex-

prisoners interviewed for this study. By and large, the backgrounds—educational levels, percent Aboriginal, and number of times incarcerated---of the imprisoned and released inmates (housed, under-housed and homeless) were found to be very similar. This uniformity suggested to us that these men are essentially members of the same population grouping; supporting, of course, the proposition that the relationship between homelessness and incarceration is bi-directional. That is, the homelessness population is not entirely discrete from the prison population. Homelessness puts people at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. At the same time, being incarcerated increases the risk of homelessness. This appears to be equally true in both our British Columbia and Ontario samples.

The remainder of the analysis focused on three key areas. First, we began with discussion of the prisoner discharge planning process within provincial correctional facilities. Here we found that discharge planning is provided for provincially incarcerated inmates by corrections staff and by community-based groups such as the John Howard Society and multi-faith religious NGO's. Even though sentenced inmates are entitled to some form of support and planning by corrections staff prior to discharge, we found that the nature of such program delivery was uneven. Moreover, within the province of Ontario, our investigation revealed that since the mid 1990's there has been a reduction in program supports for discharge planning in addition to a decrease in the number of parole and conditional release programs. Cut backs such as these have been accompanied by the elimination of provincially funded halfway houses, and a substantial increase in numbers of inmates who are being held in custody while awaiting court appearances (remand). Interviews with discharge planning staff showed that current resources are inadequate to provide sentenced inmates with proper discharge planning support. Moreover, inmates incarcerated under remand conditions are not entitled to discharge planning programming in either Ontario or British Columbia.

The discharge planning experiences of inmates in Ontario and British Columbia correctional facilities was the second theme explored in the empirical segment of this report. At this point our analysis revealed a number of interesting findings. First, less that half of the inmates we interviewed reported that they had actually received a discharge plan, even though all were entitled to one. Second, for those who did receive some form of a discharge plan, the support was most often carried out in conjunction with an addiction counseling program. Releasees who did not receive addiction counseling, however, were unlikely to have been recipients of discharge planning support.

A sample of recently released inmates was the third group interviewed for this study. This population was divided into three sub-groupings: housed, under-housed and homeless recent releasees. Our analysis found that housing status was associated with a number of post-release conditions. For instance, stable housing was positively associated with employment, ability to access government benefits, mental and physical health, and familial support. On the other hand, releasees who were unable to secure housing were in living in environments, which were conducive to re-offending in addition to heightened police surveillance.

Based on the empirical evidence collected in this study, we contend that the way in which inmates are prepared for re-entry into the community has important implications for successful re-integration. Our findings are also supportive of the notion that the relationship between homelessness and incarceration is bi-directional: people who are homeless are at risk to end up in prison, and the prison experience itself places many releasees in jeopardy of becoming homeless. The report then moved on to discuss a number of factors that need to be addressed so that discharge planning can be made more effective. These measures included:

- enhanced community housing supports

- improved releasee linkages to the labour market

- stronger community and institutional health care and substance abuse supports—including harm reduction measures

- enhancements in familial support networks

- more effective immediate post release needs such as the provision of food and clothing, transportation, and sufficient inmate identification documents

- better support systems for sex offenders and violent offenders

In order that this list of steps be effectively implemented, however, we have argued that the dual issues of homelessness and prisoner re-entry must receive the level of political attention that they deserve, otherwise calls for progressive action will either be ignored or dismissed.

1.0   Introduction

Canada has the fifth greatest incarceration rate in the western democratic world (Griffths, 2007)[1]. Over the past several decades, we have seen calls for reforms to the criminal justice system that emphasize harsher prison sentences. This has included calls to reform the Young Offenders Act (now the Youth Criminal Justice Act), to place greater restrictions on bail, to eliminate conditional sentences, and impose minimum sentence prison terms. Critics of 'law and order' approaches to crime contend that such measures can have the effect of increasing the prison population, both by incarcerating more people, and also by lengthening the amount of time inmates remain in prison.

While a "get tough on crime" approach may put more people in jail, it is also true that the vast majority of individuals who wind up in jail are eventually released into the community. Whether one sees the goal of prison to be punishment or rehabilitation, from a public safety perspective, all agree that it is desirable that those who are released from prison successfully integrate into communities, and that they not re-offend.

As such, since almost all prisoners - whether sentenced[2] or in remand[3] - will one day be released, how we prepare prisoners for re-entry has huge implications for communities across the country.   Inadequate transitional supports may increase the risk of recidivism for inmates, undermining a key

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1 Yet Canada's incarceration rate in 2003-2004 was at its lowest since 1981-1982 (*The Daily*, Statistics Canada, December 16, 2005).

2   In Canada, inmates serving less than two years are generally under provincial / territorial jurisdiction. Inmates serving over two years are the responsibility of the Federal correctional system (Correctional Services Canada)>

3 Remand refers to accused people who are placed into custody while awaiting a further court appearance.

goal of corrections, and thus jeopardising not only the health and safety of inmates but of all Canadians as well. This is where the relationship between incarceration, prisoner re-entry must be considered.

While the nature of homelessness may differ in many regions, it is becoming more readily apparent that across Canada, many inmates discharged from prison are winding up homeless, and conversely, that many homeless people end up in prison (Novac, et al., 2006; Vitelli, 1993). Without access to housing and employment, without support for problems such as addictions and mental health, inmates released from prison are at risk of becoming homeless. At the same time, people who become homeless face incredible challenges, and are at increased risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. This 'revolving door' syndrome is fueled as local jurisdictions continue to adopt and enforce policies and ordinances, such as the 'Safe Streets Act' in Ontario (2000) and Vancouver (2004), that criminalize activities such as sleeping and panhandling in public spaces. Once into the criminal justice system, incarcerated or detained, many people leave jails and prisons without a destination, and bereft of the resources necessary to secure housing or social supports.

If a goal of corrections in Canada is to make Canadians safer through reducing recidivism, then it is imperative that we come to a deeper understanding of the relationship between incarceration, prisoner re-entry and homelessness. While a considerable body of research exists on the nature and extent of homelessness, specific research on the relationship between homelessness and incarceration in Canada is limited.

This report is an attempt to address this gap in our knowledge. The report consists of three main sections:

The *first* section of this report focuses on the key issues in discharge planning, prisoner re-entry and community reintegration in both the federal and provincial systems. While there are some distinct and notable differences between the two systems, they share many of the common challenges, problems and opportunities.

In this section, we draw on American and Canadian literature in order to identify the risk factors that are associated with prisoner re-entry and to deepen our understanding of debates regarding the effectiveness of different approaches to discharge planning. This will include a review of research on

housing, employment training and education, health, substance abuse and the role that families play for inmates who are discharged into the community. Our literature review then examines programs that are available for inmate reintegration, such as discharge planning, institutional support programs, and post release supports and community supervision.

The *second* section is an exploration of homelessness in Canada, its causes and the relationship between homelessness, criminality, policing and incarceration. Not only has research shown that levels of homelessness have been rising in recent years, but knowledge about how homelessness is associated with poor mental and physical health, substance abuse, and loose ties to the labour market is becoming much better understood. Based on systematic empirical evidence, we argue that not only are homeless populations more susceptible to offending that those in Canada who are housed, but also that homeless people are under considerable surveillance from the police, in addition to being over represented in the prison system.

In the *third* section, we introduce the results of our research on incarceration, discharge planning and homelessness. This research focuses on: a) the discharge planning process in provincial facilities (which in Canada house inmates sentenced to terms of less than two years, as well as persons on remand awaiting trial or sentencing); b) the discharge planning experiences of provincial inmates in Ontario and British Columbia, and c) the discharge planning experiences of releasees – housed, underhoused and homeless – in Ontario and British Columbia.

We conclude our report with an analysis that suggests that transitional supports for inmates in provincial correctional facilities are currently inadequate. When inmates are released without appropriate discharge planning and supports in the community, they are at increased risk for homelessness and recidivism. We conclude with a series of recommendations.

2.0 Corrections and Prisoner Re-entry

Whether the goal of incarceration is punishment or rehabilitation, it is generally agreed that once a prisoner is released from prison it is hoped that they do not reoffend and wind up in prison again. Prisoner re-entry refers to the transition from incarceration to life outside of jail. Successful prisoner re-entry means that the ex-convict reintegrates into the community, obtains housing and employment, develops relationships and connections, participates as a citizen and does not reoffend. This is in fact a definition of social inclusion.

If this is a key goal of prisoner re-entry, it is necessary to understand what factors support successful reintegration, and conversely, which factors exacerbate social exclusion and increase the risk of recidivism. This is important, for successful strategies not only enhance the well being of those caught in the criminal justice system, but also make Canada a safer society.

This section provides an overview of key issues in discharge planning and prisoner re-entry. We begin with a brief overview of corrections in Canada in order to provide a context for the discussion. Next, we explore a range of risk factors that present challenges to inmates discharged from prison. Finally, we define discharge planning, drawing on research from both Canada and the United States, paying attention to significant shifts in policy over the past thirty years that have had an impact on incarceration rates, criminal justice and prisoner re-entry. In many jurisdictions in Canada, for instance, factors such as a "get tough on crime" policy, restrictions on bail (leading to more people being held on remand) withdrawal of funding and support for discharge planning and parole supervision, for example, have resulted in an increasing number of prisoners on remand and a reduction in supports that

might assist re-entry. From this, we will be able to assess some of the strengths and weaknesses of discharge planning in Canada.

2.1   Corrections in Canada

2.1.1 Background

The original divisions of federal and provincial powers concerning criminal justice were first set out by the British North American Act of 1867. In basic terms, the federal government has jurisdiction over the creation, amendment, and repealing laws for the entire country. It also set the procedures for processing persons charged with criminal offences. Moreover, the federal government has jurisdiction over establishing the range of punishments that can be imposed for all federal offences, including of course criminal code violations. In terms of the correctional system, the federal level of government operates correctional institutions for those sentenced to prison terms for two years or more, and is responsible for granting parole to federal inmates and for provincial/ territorial inmates in jurisdictions other than Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia[4]—these being the only provinces in Canada that have their own provincial parole boards (Griffiths, 2007). All provinces and territories in Canada are responsible for the administration of justice, and for incarcerating those sentenced to terms under two years less a day, including those on remand (awaiting trial or sentencing).

Given that inmates who are incarcerated in Canada fall under both federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions, it is no simple task to present data showing changes in levels of inmates who have been incarcerated across the country in recent years, nor in making generalizations about how corrections operates. In 2003/4, there were approximately 152,600 adults either in prison in federal, provincial and territorial corrections facilities, or under community supervision on any given day (Beattie, 2006: 3). Of these, 12,838 were in federal custody serving sentences of two years or more. 19,685 were in provincial or territorial facilities, either serving sentences or on remand (awaiting trial or sentencing). This means that over 126,000 were under community supervision, including 105,061 on probation, 1014 on provincial parole, 13,193 under conditional sentences[5] and 7,222 under community

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4   It should be noted that the BC Parole Board ceased to exist as of April 1, 2007

5   Conditional sentencing, introduced in 1996, applies those sentenced to terms of less than two years

releases (federal offenders on day parole, full parole or statutory release).

The prison population in Canada is not reflective of the general population. For instance, 94% of all inmates are male (Beattie, 2005). There are significant ethno-racial differences to note as well. While Aboriginal people in Canada comprise approximately 3% of the Canadian population, they comprise 18% of the federal offender population (Trevethan, Moore & Rastin, 2002). Black Canadians, who comprise 2% of the population, also comprise 6% of the prison population. Canadians who are white, Asian or South Asian are underrepresented (Trevethan & Rastin, 2004). Given the higher percentage of visible minorities in provinces such as Ontario and British Columbia, it is anticipated that minority populations in prison facilities are also higher.

The incarceration rate in Canada is 130/100,000 which, though is the fifth highest rate in the developed world , is considerably lower than the incarceration rate in the United States, which stands at over 700/100,000. In addition, unlike the United States which has seen a dramatic rise in incarceration rates over the past two decades and a tripling of its prison population, rates have actually declined in Canada over this same period. According to Statistics Canada, Canada's incarceration rate in 2003/04, including individuals held in federal, provincial and territorial systems, was at its lowest level since 1981/82. For every 100,000 adults in the population in 2003/04, 130 were incarcerated, a 3% drop from the previous year, and the first decrease since 2000/01 (Beattie, 2005:1).

The number of sentenced offenders in a provincial/territorial jail continues to decline as well, at an even greater rate than for federal offenders. In 2003/04, close to 10,000 sentenced offenders were in provincial/territorial custody on any given day, down 7% from 10,600 one year earlier. The level in 2003/04 was nearly 14% below what it was in 1999/2000, and more than 31% below the level a decade earlier. The figure below provides a good visual illustration of declines recorded for sentenced offenders in Ontario and the rises in the number of remands from 1991/92 to 2004/05.

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in prison for less serious events, who then serve their complete sentence in the community, under strict and compulsory conditions and supervision, which may include house arrest.

2.1.2 Remand

One of the most striking shifts that have taken place in Canada over this period, however, is that while rates of convicted offenders have dropped, the use of remand continues to grow, continuing a trend dating back to the mid-1980s. Remand refers to inmates who are held in custody in corrections facilities while they await further court appearances. Across Canada, remand counts have increased: in 2003/04 they were 37% higher than they were in 1999/2000, and 72% higher than in 1994/95. According to Statistics Canada,

> "Offenders sentenced to custody accounted for 31% of all individuals in custody in 2003/04, down from 42% in 1994/95. In contrast, individuals who had been remanded accounted for 29% of all adults in custody in 2003/04, nearly double the proportion of 16% a decade earlier. In the federal penitentiary system, just over 12,600 adults were in custody, down 2% from 2002/03, and down 9% from 1994/95."
> (Statistics Canada, 2005)

In some provinces, the number of prisoners on remand is much higher than the Canadian average. In Ontario, for instance, the remand population is particularly high, and has been rising steadily.

Figure 1

The Increase in Remand and Decline in Sentences in Ontario.

Source: Statistics Canada and Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections Services

As can be seen in figure 1, between 1991 and 2005, the remand population on any given day has increased by 106%, while at the same time the number of persons in jail having been sentenced has dropped by 43%, so that now 60% of the population in Ontario prisons is on remand, up from 31% fifteen years

previous (The John Howard Society of Ontario, 2005). The average length of time prisoners spend on remand before conviction or release has also increased by over 50%, from 22 to 34 days.

Several factors, suggests Statistics Canada, may explain increasing use of remand and the decreasing use of sentenced custody. First, the drop in police-reported crime during the 1990s and the decline in the number of adults charged has reduced the number of persons in court and who have received a prison sentence. Second, the implementation of the conditional sentence in 1996 provided the courts with a community-based alternative to imprisonment, which likely had an impact on the drop in the number of sentenced prison admissions. A third factor is the crediting of time served on remand during sentencing. Judges may, at their discretion, give an offender credit with the time spent on remand when issuing a sentence. Consequently, the number of offenders in sentenced custody relative to those individuals serving time in remand may be lessened (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Finally the rise in the remand population has been justified by some as a reflection of the rising percentage of persons being charged with violent offences in Canada. However, the dramatic increase in numbers of people held on remand far outstrips any noted increase in violent crime, making this claim somewhat dubious. The truth is that we lack solid research on the complex reasons for the increase in the remand population at this time.

Nevertheless, the high percentage of prisoners on remand, particularly in Ontario, is important to the discussion of discharge planning and homelessness. First, the John Howard Society has argued that pre-trial detention is used in a discriminatory way:

> "The poor, homeless and other wise disadvantaged are more likely to be denied bail and held in detention because the criteria for assessing the risk of flight (employment status and residential stability) and the imposition of conditions for bail, particularly surety, disproportionately disadvantages certain groups."
> (The John Howard Society of Ontario, 2005:2)

Second, remanded inmates are "under considerable stress and are in a situation of uncertainty, not knowing if or when they may be convicted of the offence for which they have been charged" (Beattie, 2005). Third, remand may become a key *cause* of homelessness. Many people held on remand are poor and are vulnerable to lose their housing or their job while incarcerated. This is a particularly important consideration given that not all remanded inmates

will be found guilty of the offence for which they have been charged, or will be released for time served. Fourth, inmates on remand have limited access to recreational activities or, more importantly, structured corrections programming (addictions treatment, anger management, employment training, etc). Due to a policy decision in the 1990s, inmates held on remand in Ontario are also not eligible for regular, institutionally provided probrammes and services, some of which prepare inmates for successful community reintegration (John Howard Society of Ontario, 2002), though there is anecdotal evidence that this is changing somewhat. Finally, if found "not guilty" or if convicted without having to serve time, prisoners are often released directly without money, or access to their clothing or possessions (if they have been transported from a more distant facility). In some cases they are released into urban areas far removed from their communities of origin, and given a bus ticket home.. As such, it is worth considering that the 58% of prisoners who are held in custody in Ontario may be deemed "low risk" offenders, but may in fact be at high risk for becoming homeless.

2.1.3 Conditions under which convicted offenders are released

In Canada, most convicted offenders will spend at least part of their time serving their sentence in the community under supervision. This is contrasted with the situation in the United States over the past thirty years, where a rising number of prisoners are expected to spend their entire sentence in prison, without any transitional supports or community supervision.

It is worth pointing out again that Canada has two correctional systems (see Section 2.1.1) the Federal and the Provincial/Territorial systems. While they share some features in tersm of their operational practices, programmes and services, the nature and availability of inmate release mechanisms differ considerably. As a result, the potential success of inmate post-release resettlement is influenced by the number, nature and accessibility of assistive services. The federal system, Corrections Services Canada, offers a variety of release mechanisms, including:

- Temporary absences – for administrative or medical reasons, family contact or community service, provided the offender is assessed as "low risk". In Ontario, policy shifts over the past ten years mean that few provincial inmates receive temporary absences.

- Work Release – allows for release from minimum or medium security facilities to do paid or voluntary work under supervision. Statistics Canada reports that of offenders under work release in 2003/04, 99% completed without a breach of conditions or a new offence. In Ontario, provincial inmates are not eligible for work release.

- Day Parole – allows offenders to participate in community-based activities in preparation for full parole or statutory release. In Ontario, provincial inmates are not eligible for day parole.

- Full parole – After offenders have served one third of their sentence, they are eligible for full parole (unless judges choose to delay their eligibility because of the seriousness of their crime or risk of reoffending). Being granted full parole is discretionary.

Convicted offenders who receive *Conditional sentences* (first established in 1996) serve their entire sentence in the community, but usually under stricter conditions than parole. This may include house arrest or strict curfews. Such sentences are typically given to low-risk offenders. If they breach the conditions of their sentence they may have to spend time in prison.

Statutory Release is the granting of parole after two-thirds of a sentence are served, and are placed under community supervision until their full term is served. Unlike full parole, Statutory Release is mandatory, unless the prisoner is declared a "dangerous offender" (meaning they can be incarcerated indefinitely – this only applies to federal prisoners).

Prisoners who are deemed high risk and a threat to society may also be subject to a "Peace Bond" when released (allowing courts to impose conditions for up to one year) or can be designated "dangerous" and be placed under long term supervision orders (Correctional Service of Canada, 2005:24).

There is no statutory release for provincial prisoners. After serving two thirds of their sentence, and in consideration of good behaviour, provincial inmates are released in 'remission', and are not under community supervision.

The provincial / territorial discharge planning and community reintegration services vary among provinces. It should also be pointed out that there is regional variation within provinces (and between institutions) as well. What is clear from this research is that there are important and numerous gaps in the quantity, quality and availability of both discharge planning and post-

release reintegrative services for provincial inmates. Some provincial institutions in Ontario offer discharge planning; others do not. Some have formally or informally designated "discharge planning officers"; others do not. As a result, wide variations exist in the discharge planning, and subsequently, in the post-release community assistance offered to provincial inmates.

2.2 Risk Factors and Prisoner Re-entry

Though it has been argued that "we know very little about correlates of success and failure in the process of reintegration" (Petersilia, 2001:360), it probably goes without saying that offenders invariably face a number of challenges upon being released from prison; challenges that can mean either successful reintegration or a return to prison. In this section, we explore a range of risk factors that undoubtedly have an effect on the success of prisoner re-entry, and on the risk of homelessness. These factors include: housing, employment, health, mental health, substance use and family support. These risk factors are not discrete, but rather intersect in complex ways. It goes without saying that not all prisoners are subject to the same risk factors, and that different individuals will face different and often unique challenges.

2.2.1 Housing

Obtaining and maintaining housing is one of the key challenges facing prisoners upon release (Bradley et al., 2001; Visher et al., 2003; La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005). While some prisoners are in fact homeless prior to arrest, for others it is being imprisoned that leads to a loss of housing. Incarceration – whether one is convicted of a crime or awaiting trial (or sentencing) - may mean that people are unable to hold on to housing (pay rent or mortgages) and their relationships with housed partners may become strained. Other factors may also be at play. In Ontario, for instance, people who are living in subsidized housing who are convicted of an offence automatically lose their housing.

The key factor that seems to indicate the likelihood that a released inmate will have immediate access to housing is the presence or absence of strong family connections and relationships. In an American study, the majority of prisoners (88%) wind up living with a family member and/or an intimate

partner upon release (Visher et al., 2003; La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005). In most cases these inmates had made these arrangements beforehand. However these arrangements are often temporary.

Those without prior arrangements with family or intimates face incredible challenges in obtaining housing, because of the scarcity of affordable housing in many cities, the lack of financial resources to pay for first and last month's rent, legal restrictions in some jurisdictions, and the stigma and discrimination that goes with being an ex-convict. A study of returning prisoners in five American cities found that of those who did not have some arrangement made for housing prior to release, "over 70% reported that they would need *some help* or *a lot of help* in finding a place" (Baer et al., 2006). Finally, research also indicates that prisoners who do not have stable housing arranged prior to release are much more likely to return to prison (Metraux & Culhane, 2004).

Gowan (2002) describes the challenges ex-prisoners face in obtaining housing, and highlights the fact that they are often reduced to obtaining inadequate housing in neighbourhoods with high crime rates and few employment prospects, which of course becomes a risk factor for reoffending.   The challenge of obtaining adequate housing is particularly pronounced for those releasees who have a history of mental health problems or substance use issues (Hammett et al., 2001:401).

2.2.2 Employment, Training and Education

There is ample evidence that prisoners face incredible economic challenges when released. Petersilia (2001) also points out that the majority of inmates leave prison without savings, with limited access to immediate benefits and with few prospects. The inability to obtain and maintain employment and / or income support has a direct impact on an individual's ability to obtain housing. For an inmate discharged from prison, the longer it takes to obtain employment, the greater the likelihood that they will become homeless, particularly if they lack family support. As discussed in Section 2, the inability to obtain income through employment may become a situational factor that leads to engagement in criminal or quasi-illegal activities to generate income (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Hagan & McCarthy, 1998).

There are a number of factors that contribute to the employment challenges of ex-convicts. First, many offenders were unemployed prior to imprisonment.

Boe, et al., (2002) report that 65% of Canadian federal offenders were unemployed prior to arrest, and 32% were chronically unemployed. Second, the fact a substantial group of inmates lack adequate literacy, educational, work readiness and training skills means that obtaining and maintaining employment is difficult at the best of times. In the United States, it is estimated that 70% of inmates function at the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy (National Institute for Literacy, 2001). As a result, they are less employable because of the narrow range of jobs available to them, and because their work readiness skills may be inadequate (that is, their ability to fill out applications or prepare a resume). Third, offenders with substance use problems and / or mental health challenges will experience greater barriers in obtaining employment and housing. Finally, motivational factors are relevant. A Canadian study by Gillis & Andrews (2005) argues that an offender's intention to find work is strongly linked to his ability to obtain and retain employment. An extensive study of employment and re-entry by Baer, et al., (2006) identified that prisoners do recognize that having a job is an important factor in staying out of prison, but that in spite of the need for employment assistance, few receive such supports and training while in prison.

It is not merely the inadequacies of the offenders that affect employability. When one is imprisoned (whether on remand, or after they have been sentenced), there is a strong likelihood that a person will loose their employment. Evidence from the United States suggests that despite the fact that approximately two thirds of inmates were employed before imprisonment, the employment rate for inmates after release is very low (Lynch & Sabol, 2000; Western, Kling & Neima, 2001). Nagin & Waldfogel (1998) suggest that this problem is particularly pronounced for those released who are over 30 years of age.

In addition to the personal deficits mentioned above, employment prospects and future earnings are hampered by the stigma of a criminal record, and the fact that a substantial group of inmates lack adequate literacy, educational, work readiness and training skills. In a survey of 5 major American cities, Holzer identified that 65% of employers would not knowingly hire ex-convicts (1996). For visible minorities, the stigma of being an ex-convict is compounded by the experience of racism.

In order to counter these challenges, offenders should ideally have access to employment and educational training and counselling opportunities while incarcerated. In addition, strong support upon release is advocated. Gillis &

Andrews (2005) in their study of offenders and employment in Canada argue that "it is critical that an effective and ongoing employment counselling process is established, (as is) the important role of social support in contributing to employment outcomes for offenders" (2005:39).

2.2.3   Health

The relationship between health and imprisonment is complex. On the one hand, some inmates experience improved health while in prison, in part because they are sheltered and have access to food on a regular basis. In addition, inmates often have access to health care professionals, including doctors and dentists. This is particularly important for sub-populations who may experience barriers to accessing health services (especially people who are homeless, aboriginals and illegal aliens).

While being in prison may produce relatively positive outcomes for some inmates, for others there can be a profoundly detrimental impact. There is compelling evidence that in American prisons chronic and infectious diseases are much more common amongst inmates than the general population (National Commission on Correctional Health Care, 2002). In another study, 31% of state inmates and 23% of federal inmates reported significant physical or mental health problems (Maruschak & Beck, 2001). Baer et al., (2006) identify that 30-40% of their sample report chronic physical or mental health conditions, the most common being depression, asthma and high blood pressure.

Hammett et al., have done extensive work on HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in correctional settings. They have found that: "almost one fourth of all people living with HIV infection or AIDS in 1997 were released from a correctional facility in that same year, as were almost one third of all people with hepatitis C infection and more than one third of all people who had TB disease that year" (Hammett, et al., 2000). In another study, almost a third of all diagnosed syphilis cases in Chicago were prisoners (Beidinger, 1999). The prevalence of such infectious diseases in contexts where people are housed in close quarters and where harm reduction practices are minimal or totally absent, the risk of the spread of infectious disease is particularly great.

For inmates released from prison, chronic health problems can undermine

efforts to obtain and maintain employment. This is particularly the case for those who experience barriers to health care services, and for whom the transition from prison-based health care, to care in the community is impaired. Accessing appropriate health care both within prison and ensuring access once released is crucial for offenders identified as having serious and chronic health conditions.

2.2.4 Mental Health

Mental illness is a risk factor both for homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system. A study by Ditton (1999) revealed that 16% of prisoners in the United States were identified as having a mental illness. Hartwell (2004) has reviewed a body of research that highlights a range of factors that lead to the likelihood of incarceration of the mentally ill. The fact that many mentally ill people become 'disruptive and disorderly' in the community means that they are more likely to come to the attention of law enforcement (Abram & Teplin, 1991; Beckett & Sasson, 2000; Green, 1997; Hiday, 1999). Problems with legal representation, mandated sentencing statutes and behavioural outcomes of mental illness meant that the mentally ill receive longer sentences (Healey, 1999; Porporino & Motiu, 1995; Travis, 2000).

In some cases, mental health problems are situational. That is, being in prison may increase psychological distress or depression, for instance. In a significant number of other cases, however, mental health problems may precede incarceration. A large number of inmates arrive in prison with existing serious mental health problems, which may be exacerbated by the prison experience. It has been argued that jails have in many cases "become psychiatric crisis centres of the last resort" (Osher, et al., 2003:80). Since Abramson (1972) first observed that the mentally ill were becoming criminalized, many research have supported the argument that a consequence of deinstitutionalization of the mental health system has been that more and more people are being processed through the criminal justice system (Gibbs, 1983; Laberge & Moran, 1995; Lamb & Weinberger, 1998; Lurgio, 2001).

This raises questions regarding the adequacy of supports that such inmates receive while in prison, and the degree to which such supports prepare them for release (Barr, 2003). It has been argued that that this is a particularly vulnerable prison population that is in need of extensive discharge planning and support (Barr, 2003; Lurigio & Swartz, 2000). This is especially the case

for those with concurrent disorders or 'dual diagnosis' (that is, an addiction problem in addition to severe mental illness) (Hartwell, 2004; Barr, 2003).

People who have mental health problems who are incarcerated often arrive at prison with precarious supports. Because prisons are not health care facilities, mental health problems may be exacerbated. Without adequate discharge planning and a manageable transfer of care to the community, such inmates are at very high risk of becoming homeless. They are also likely to be arrested again (Gendreau, Goggin & Cullen, 1999; Harris & Koepsell, 1996; Hartwell, 2004; Torrey, Wolfe & Flynn, 1992; Vose, 1990).

2.2.5 Substance Use

In the United States, 80% of the prison population reports a history of drug use (Beck, 2000; Mumola, 1999). A Canadian study by Grant et al., (2005) likewise identified that approximately 80% of offenders in Federal correctional facilities were identified as "having a substance abuse problem that is associated with their criminal behaviour on admission to prison" (2005:1).

The association between substance use and incarceration is related to several factors. First, chronic users of substances such as heroin, cocaine and crack commit a vast amount of crime in order to maintain their habits (Johnson et al., 1985; Lipton & Johnson, 1998). Second, the increasing focus on criminalizing drug use, especially in the United States, means that many users of drugs - particularly from vulnerable populations - are likely to come into contact with the justice system. In fact, Harrison argues that the tripling of the US prison population since 1980 is largely the result of America's "War on Drugs" (Harrison, 2001: 462).

The 'mainstream' approach to working with substance users is treatment. While in prison, some inmates have access to treatment, though Baer et al., (2006) argue that the amount of treatment is inadequate. Harrison suggests that while the number of treatment programs in prison has risen since 1980, it is still inadequate to meet the needs of the prison population.

Once released from prison, it is clear that there is a need for support for substance users. This is because, first, research suggests that prisoners who were addicted prior to incarceration are likely to resume their addicted (and criminal) lifestyle (Harrison, 2001: 464). Second, many prisoners return to

their old neighbourhoods and relationships, which makes avoiding drug use particularly problematic. It is imperative, then, that inmates have quick and ready access to treatment programs if abstinence is their goal, and more broadly, access to harm reduction programming both while in prison and once they are released. In the absence of such supports, these inmates risk falling back into problematic patterns of drug use that may jeopardize employment and housing opportunities, and can lead to homelessness and recidivism (Harrison, 2001).

2.2.6 Families

In the United States, close to 1.5 million people are in prison, and nearly all of them will return home to their families and communities after release (Travis, 2000). According to Mumola (cited by Travis & Waul, 2003:3), the total number of parents in prison has risen dramatically in the 1990s—up 60 percent from 1991-1997. In fact, over half of the inmates in American prisons are parents. Not only are inmates disconnected from their families while incarcerated, but families are also negatively impacted by the incarceration of a family member. The incarceration of a father, for example, adds further stress to family environment that is more often than not already traumatized by poverty end social exclusion. Since most inmates have poor employment histories—and even poorer employment prospects—lack formal educational credentials, face serious physical and mental health problems, and lack access to affordable housing, formidable challenges must be overcome in order to successfully reintegrate with family and community.

Yet, families play an important role in the re-entry process. Research has shown that when families are in contact with inmates while in prison and following incarceration, rates of recidivism are improved, as is family and community reintegration (Visher & Travis, 2003). Upon release, families can provide immediate housing and possible employment connections, not to mention social and emotional support.

At the same time, lack of family connections presents a significant challenge to prisoner reintegration. For many releasees, staying with a family member or a partner is not an option. For many others, it is a temporary situation at best. The reasons for this may include the violent history of the offender, a breakdown in relationships and in some cases, the fact that relationships with family were tenuous or non-existent prior to incarceration (Gouvis-Roman &

Travis, 2004). In some cases, parolees may in fact be prohibited from making contact with family members (Rhine, et al., 1991). The end result is that released offenders without family connections are much more likely to be at risk of homelessness, because the likelihood of having housing arrangements and supports established prior to release are greatly reduced.

2.2.7   Violence and Anti-Social Attitudes

Many offenders wind up in prison as a result of violent criminal acts, ranging from assault to sexual offences to murder. Although understanding the reasons for violent behaviour is challenging given the intersecting effects of background and situational variables as well as psychological factors, it nevertheless goes without saying that for violent offenders, the inability to control violent impulses is significant (Dowden & Serin, 2001).

In addition, there is a considerable body of research that identifies a positive relationship between antisocial behaviours and attitudes and criminal behaviours (Andrews & Kandel, 1979; Andrews & Wormith, 1984; Hoge, Andrews & Leschied, 1994). Anti-social attitudes, as identified by criminologists and psychologists, encompass such things as

> "criminally oriented norms, values and beliefs towards legal institutions and authority, identification with criminal others, rationalizations, justifications or tolerance for law violations, pride in the commission of criminal acts, as well as beliefs in luck, random chance and / or other externally attributable factors"
> (Yessine & Kroner, 2004:1)

It is argued that without appropriate interventions, offenders displaying anti-social tendencies and / or who have anger management problems are at high risk for recidivism, for the breakdown of family relations and potentially becoming homelessness.

2.3   Programs that Support Prisoner Re-entry

Prisoner re-entry programming (Seiter & Kadela, 2003) refers to the range of programs and supports that are dedicated to enabling the successful reintegration of released inmates into the community. Because these supports occur while the inmate is serving time, just prior to release, and after their release, some have advocated the use of the term transitional planning

(Hammett, et a., 2001). Ideally, prisoner re-entry programming should begin once a prisoner enters a correctional facility, and there should be continuity between the different facets of programming.

Successful prisoner re-entry programming begins with an assessment and an understanding of those risk factors that pose a challenge to successful reintegration, and an identification of what supports might be necessary. Many key risk factors were discussed in the previous section, some referring to individual challenges; others refer to structural factors that present barriers to social inclusion that individuals who are marginalized may experience because of racism, disability, lack of education and of significance here, the stigmatization of being an ex-convict.

Efforts must then be directed at identifying how a prisoner can be supported in dealing with the risks that they face. These supports may be necessary both while the person is in prison, but also once they are released. In the absence of necessary prisoner re-entry programming, it is argued that released prisoners run the risk of becoming homeless, which in turn increases the likelihood of reoffending behaviours, and eventual reincarceration.

Key in this process of providing support for prisoner re-entry is the recognition that not all inmates face the same challenges in reintegrating to communities. For those identified as low risk, reintegration into the community may be straightforward. For others, whose lives are complicated by addictions, low literacy and mental health problems, for instance, a more substantial intervention may be required.

It is argued here that a successful prisoner re-entry strategy includes three interconnected spheres of activity:

1) **Discharge planning**

2) **In-prison support programs.**

3) **Post-release supports and Community Supervision.**

2.3.1 Discharge planning

This refers to counselling and support programs that prepare inmates for release and reintegration into the community. Discharge planning involves several components. The first and necessary component is assessment. As

Bonta & Cormier (1999) argue in their review of corrections research in Canada, "When offender risk and needs are assessed accurately and appropriately, treatment programs are provided, offenders, correctional staff and the community at large benefit" (1999:235). Assessment should begin at the time the inmate enters prison, and should be reviewed and updated based on emerging issues. Such an assessment should identify appropriate In-prison programming and supports (employment training, for instance), and begin the process of preparing for eventual release.

In the past 15 years, "actuarial approaches to risk assessment" have emerged in Canada, which demonstrates a higher degree of predictive accuracy than assessments based on professional judgement (Bonta, et al., 1996; Grove & Meehl, 1996). While research attesting to the salience of this approach has flourished (Bonta & Cormier, 1999), it is not known how extensively actuarial risk assessment is practiced in federal and provincial institutions.

A second feature of discharge planning involves the development of a 'release plan' that prepares an inmate for release, and outlines housing, employment and educational needs and opportunities that will have to be in place in the community once the inmate is released. As part of the ongoing risk assessment, the plan should also identify any continuing treatment that may be required, particularly for health / mental health and substance use issues. The success of discharge planning inevitably depends on having staff to manage the plan, the inclusion of the inmate in the identification of needs, and the presence and accessibility of appropriate post-release resources in the community. Wilkinson (2001) describes an example of such pre-release programming that provided inmates with a broad range of life-skills training and support, and began family reunification counselling.

Finally, discharge planning involves a process of transferring care to the community. Efforts should be made to support inmates in getting access to housing and employment opportunities, and to enable transfer of care to appropriate health care providers. Depending on the circumstances of release (parole, transfer to a halfway house, outright release) this support may or may not be available to help ensure a smooth transition.

When prisoners are sentenced to federal facilities in Canada, they undergo a comprehensive assessment to determine what factors contributed to their criminal behaviour (Correctional Service of Canada, 2005:14). Such an assessment becomes the basis for the development of a Correctional Plan,

intended to foster changes in behaviour through participation in programs and / or treatment. The offender's progress in meeting objectives is continually monitored and where necessary adjustments are made.

Those working with releasees have argued that the quality of discharge planning for prisoners in federal institutions is superior to that found in provincial jails. For those serving under provincial jurisdiction, there does not appear to be a standardized procedure. In Ontario, for instance, a risk assessment and discharge planning process is in place for young offenders, but it is not clear the degree to which such supports are available for adult inmates serving less than two years. Finally, given the high percentage of inmates in provincial facilities who are on remand awaiting trial (or sentencing), it is important to remember that they generally do not have access to discharge planning or other prison support programs.

Discharge planning is considered to be key to successful prisoner re-entry. Such planning typically makes reference to two other spheres of activity: in-prison support programs, and post-release supports.

2.3.2   In-Prison Support Programs

This includes a range of programs that inmates can participate in while they are incarcerated. The overall goal of such programming is rehabilitation directed towards enhancing the success of prisoner re-entry. That is, such programs are directed at reducing negative and anti-social behaviours and improving the employability of inmates and reducing their negative behaviours, so that they might become 'productive' once released and less likely to reoffend.

In-prison support programs broadly focus on three main areas. First, such programs are intended to address the employment readiness of inmates, so as to help them to obtain employment upon release. This is achieved through programs that focus on education, literacy, job-readiness training, work skills, and work experience. Second, some programs focus on improving interpersonal skills. This includes activities that focus on communication skills, assertiveness training, violence and anger management, and parenting, for instance. Finally, there are a range of programs that are intended to reduce the risk factors that may lead to reoffending. This includes substance abuse groups, mental health supports and domestic violence support groups.

In-prison support programs are also intended to meet other objectives. For instance, a desired effect of participation in such programs is that inmates are seen to be using their time more productively while incarcerated. Perhaps most significantly, however, participation in prison support programs is often rewarded. In general, some jurisdictions, inmates may be able to earn a reduced sentence. In fact, in Ontario, a law was passed in 2000 which states that provincial offenders will have to *earn* the privilege of early release by "actively participating in work, skills/trades training. Education, community service, rehabilitative and treatment programs and other purposeful activities." (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2004). However, there is some question as to what degree this law has been implemented and therefore it's impact.

Are these programs effective? In the 1970s, the usefulness of such programming came under attack following Martinson's (1974) pessimistic assessment of offender rehabilitation literature, claiming "nothing works". In the following three decades, this message was picked up by conservative commentators and governments in North America who see rehabilitative programming as an unnecessary "frill", and instead advocate an approach to incarceration that focuses more on punishment. In Canada, Harris argued in his book "Con Game" (2002) that Canada's prison system is in crisis; that it is "a place where criminal behaviour is rarely altered, (and) true recidivism rates are hidden from the public" (2002:6). This work has been roundly criticized for logical and factual errors (Gardner, 2002) yet nevertheless encapsulates the views of many prison reformers in Canada and elsewhere, who decry "Club Fed" prisons. In fact, over the past several decades, advocates of a "get tough on crime" perspective (Corcoran, 1993; Nossiter, 1994) have argued for a return to "no frills" prisons "which feature, among a variety of things, less TV, recreation, visits, internal traffic, more use of solitary, more gun coverage, and a return of the lash and chain gangs" (cf. Gendreau, et al., 2002).

In spite of the current popularity in some circles that rehabilitation of prisoners is mostly a waste of time, such views are not based on solid evidence. In fact, almost immediately after the publication of Martinson's claim that "nothing works", critiques of his methods demonstrated that even using his own data, one could demonstrate the effectiveness of such interventions (Palmer, 1975, 1978). Conversely, most punitive "get tough" programs have been shown to have little effect on recidivism (Bonta & Cormier, 1999; Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Gendreu & Goggin, 1996). More

recently, a review of the literature by Cullen (2006) demonstrates how a group of top criminologists have:

> "used rigorous science to show that popular punitive interventions were ineffective, that offenders were not beyond redemption, and that treatment programs rooted in criminological knowledge were capable of meaningfully reducing recidivism"
>
> (Cullen, 2006:1)

The argument is that the decision of corrections reformers to abandon rehabilitation programs based on Martinson's work was misplaced, as there is plenty of evidence for the effectiveness of many (but certainly not all) interventions.   The emergence of solid evidence in support of rehabilitation programming is leading many involved in corrections in both Canada and the United States to reconsider the "get tough" approach.   It seems that "something works" after all.

In terms of employment and training research, there is evidence that prison-based programs do enhance the employability of inmates. A study in Maryland (USA) identified that respondents who, while in prison, had job training, work as a condition of supervision, or had a work release job, were more likely to be fully employed after release. Another study demonstrated that federal prisoners in the United States who participated in academic, vocational and work-experience programs were more likely to be employed one year after release from prison (72%) and had lower recidivism rates than non participants (63%) (Saylor & Gaes, 1997). Canadian evaluations have also identified positive outcomes. Latendresse & Cortoni (2005) evaluated the National Employability Skills Program, and found that there was a positive increase in employability attitudes and beliefs, as well as in skills. Gillis & Andrews (2005) also reviewed employment supports and found them to be beneficial. One of their key findings was the importance of ongoing social support (including after release) as contributing to employment outcomes:

> "employment counsellors play a critical role in the process of employment programming, including assessment of clients' needs, competencies and vocational / employment interests; liaison with community employers and agencies; employment counselling, and follow-up. It is critical that an effective and ongoing employment counselling process is established, as this study illustrates the important role of social support in contributing to employment outcomes for offenders."
>
> (Latendresse & Cortoni, 2005:39)

In terms of programs for substance users, there is a significant body of

research that demonstrates the efficacy of in-prison treatment (Harrison, 2001; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). A range of studies examine the effects of specific treatment programs (pre-release) and conclude that they significantly reduce both the likelihood of a relapse into drug use, and related to this, recidivism (Hiller, Knight & Simpson, 1999; Butzin, et al., 1999; Rhodes, et al., 2001). In Canada, federal penitentiaries have created Intensive Support Units, which focus on abstinence-based drug treatment and support, and have shown a decline in drug use (Grant, et al., 2005). It is argued, then, that participation in such programs along with post-release supervision will enhance individual and community health and safety (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). However, harm reduction programs, in spite of growing acceptance as a pragmatic approach to working with illicit drug users in Canada and elsewhere (because of the War on Drugs, Harm Reduction has less acceptance in the United States), have yet to be widely embraced in the prison context.

There are a range of programs designed to alter anti-social behaviours (Yessine & Kroner, 2004). The research on the success of cognitive-behavioural treatment has led to it becoming the preferred treatment method for offenders, compared to more traditional counselling techniques (Bonta & Cormier, 1999). Evaluations of "Reasoning and Rehabilitation" programs and "Cognitive Skills" programs have been positive (Robinson, 1995; Ross, Fabiano & Ewles, 1988). In Canada, the "Counter-Point" program has been evaluated and has been shown to have a positive effect in reducing antisocial attitudes, neutralization and negative criminal attributions (Yessine & Kroner, 2004). An evaluation of have evaluated Correctional Services Canada's "Anger and Emotions Management Program" found that participation in this program was associated with strong reductions in reoffending (Dowden & Serin, 2001:17)

In the end, different factors contribute to the success or failure of rehabilitative programming. It is clear that such programming is weak when the individual programs in question are poorly conceptualized and inadequately supported by corrections management, and when they are inadequately staffed by unqualified personnel. The success of such programming also depends on the availability of such programs in different corrections facilities.

Poor programming, inaccessibility and lack of prisoner motivation to participate results in overall low participation rates. A study of American inmates by the Criminal Justice Institute (cited in Austin, 2001:322) reported that participation in such programs was relatively low, and one quarter of

inmates were not involved in any meaningful work or educational programs at all. In his study, Beck (2000) reports that only 18% of inmates had participated in treatment programs since imprisoned. The low usage of such programs is likely due to several factors. On the one hand, inmate participation is driven by the inmates themselves, and whether they see the programming as helpful or necessary. On the other hand, Austin argues that the lack of full participation may be linked to overcrowded prisons and the lack of programs and staff (2001:324). He reports that in American prisons, less than 20% of the staff are involved in education or treatment.

In spite of such low usage, there is ample evidence that when programs are well planned, operated and staffed, and when prisoners have access to the programs they need, that there are positive outcomes in reducing risk behaviours and recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 1995; Austin, 2001; Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy, 2001; Harrison, 2001; Petersilia, 2001; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis & Petersilia, 2001).

2.3.3 Post-release supports

This includes programs and supports that assist prisoner re-entry once a prisoner has been released. As with in-prison programming, the intention is to reduce barriers that risk factors present to successful reintegration. Such programming may include temporary and / or supportive housing, employment and income assistance, programs that target literacy, anger management, and substance use. Violent and / sexual offenders may access support programs.

In the United States, prison populations have tripled over the past three decades (due largely to the War on Drugs), and prisoners are serving longer sentences and as a result of reforms reflecting a "get tough on crime" approach, are less likely to obtain early release. In Canada, depending on the circumstances, prisoners may or may not be released from prison with some degree of support. If they have served their full sentence, they are released into the community. In addition, there are significant differences in supports for inmates released from federal versus provincial institutions (halfway houses in Ontario are only for federal prisoners). Finally, those released from remand (even if they are eventually convicted and then released for time served) do not get, nor are they eligible for support. This is important to consider, for while the provincial remand population in Ontario has increased

substantially over the past decade, formally designated, effective discharge planning and reintegration services for this group appears to be highly inadequate.

In all such cases, they may be under supervision and surveillance. In some cases there may be specific conditions attached to their release. It is not clear, however, how many actually have access to post-release programming and supports that facilitate re-entry. In this section, a series of interventions which are either mandated (halfway houses, parole) and/or are optionally available to prisoners released into the community will be discussed.

a) Halfway Houses

These are community based residential facilities for offenders who having completed a portion of their sentence in prison now serve the remainder of their sentence under community supervision. Prisoners in halfway houses are often granted day release so that they can obtain employment, go to school and / or seek housing. While in the halfway house, inmates have access to general counselling, ongoing supervision and in some cases access to relevant programming. Halfway houses are seen as a positive institutional bridge between prison and the community, and give inmates time and support to obtain employment and housing, all the while under supervision. Seiter & Kadela reviewed four halfway house programs in the United States, and concluded that they do reduce recidivism and ease the transition from prison to the community (2003:378).

The John Howard Society estimates that there are currently 175 halfway houses in Canada. In 2002/03, more than one half of offenders released from Canadian federal institutions were released to such community residential facilities. The majority of such facilities are located in large cities in low to middle income residential areas. They are set up for releasees defined as "medium need for programming intervention, medium risk to reoffend, medium reintegration potential, and having medium or high motivation for intervention" (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). All such facilities provide programs to their clients, the most common being substance abuse and cognitive/learning skills (ibid). Unfortunately, in some provinces such as Ontario, there are no halfway houses dedicated to supporting prisoners in the process of being released from provincial facilities.

b) Parole supervision

This is a controversial area. Parole refers to the release of an inmate into the community before their sentence is completed. While on parole, inmates may be provided with varying degrees of supports to assist in reintegrating into the community. The intention of parole supervision is to keep close contact with the inmate while they serve out the rest of their sentence in the community. Their parole is supervised, which means that the released inmate must regularly check in with a parole officer, and in some cases demonstrate that they are not reoffending (by taking drug tests, for instance).

Research from the United States has suggested that parole supervision has not been successful in reducing reoffending (Petersilia and Turner, 1993). The rate of parole violations has in fact increased significantly over the past three decades. The percentage of failed parolees has risen from less than one third in 1985, to 54% in 1997 (Petersilia, 1999). It has been argued, however, that the apparent ineffectiveness of such programming is not necessarily due to flaws inherent in the idea of supporting prisoners upon release. Rather, the problem may have more to do with changes to how parole is operationalized, and the shift from a casework model (helping) to a surveillance model (policing) of parole supervision (Seiter & Kadela, 2003:363). Contributing to this is the fact that caseloads for parole officers have increased dramatically since the 1970s (Petersilia, 2001:364).

Nevertheless, these shifts in the perceived effectiveness of parole (and the change to a surveillance model) have had profound consequences, not the least of which is that the prison population in the US has continued to grow as parolees are more likely to wind up in prison. These changes have also contributed to debates about the efficacy of parole itself. Those with a 'get tough on crime' agenda, for instance, have successfully lobbied many jurisdictions to restrict the conditions of, and in some cases, eliminate altogether, parole. For instance, many American states have passed "Truth in Sentencing" laws, which stipulate that inmates must serve their entire sentence in the prison, and are not eligible for parole. With the ability of judges to use discretion now diminished, the overall result is that in the US, prisoners stay in jail longer, and are released with fewer supports, and with little or no supervision.

Is it fair to say that parole does not work? There are many reasons to believe

that it is not the notion of parole that is flawed, but rather, that the shift to a surveillance model of parole supervision, coupled with reduced opportunities for parole (through truth in sentencing) in fact undermines the potential success of prisoner re-entry. The first thing to point out is that the increased and intensive surveillance of parolees means that there is a greater likelihood that technical violations and small offences come to the official attention of authorities, which means more prison time (Travers & Petersilia, 2001:297). It is therefore not accurate to argue that those on parole are more likely to offend, but rather, that they are more likely to get caught. For low risk offenders, such tight supervision increases the likelihood of being charged again, often for non-criminal offences such as "failure to report" or for misdemeanour offences (Austin, 2001:332). Second, if parole and early release are not an option, the incentive for good behaviour and participation in "productive" in-prison support programs are reduced (Seiter & Kadela, 2003:369). This increases the challenges for those managing prison populations. It also has the effect of undermining the skills development that enhances the readiness of inmates to re-enter communities.

Finally, the surveillance approach to supervision, coupled with a reduction in parole, undermines support for strategies to properly manage re-entry into the community. Austin suggests there is a growing tension between those who would have parole eliminated entirely, and those who argue that "parole should be enhanced rather than abandoned" (2001:331). He suggests a third way based on the perspective that parole can be more effective if it is planned with an assessment of risk in mind. Those who are deemed likely to reoffend should receive a greater amount of supervision, resources and support while on parole. For those who are deemed to be low risk – a very significant number of offenders – parole supervision would be eliminated or reduced.

c) Post-Release Program Support

Once released from prison, whether on parole or not, inmates face numerous risks and challenges. As discussed in Section 2.3, released offenders may face barriers in accessing housing, income, appropriate care for health, mental health and substance use, any of which may put them at risk for homelessness and recidivism. Lack of family contact or support can exacerbate the problem.

Ideally, prisoners who have identified needs will be able to access appropriate supports. This of course depends on a number of things. If the inmate has

finished their sentence, the government no longer has a mandate to provide such support. In the absence of comprehensive and managed transitional planning, access to such programs and support depends on a variety of factors, including the personal resources of the individual, the availability of institutional and community-based supports in a given jurisdiction, and not insignificantly, the conditions of release. In any event, participation (or lack of) in such programs cannot and should not be merely dependent upon the motivation of the ex-convict. That is, released prisoners cannot participate in such programming if they are not aware of it, do not have access to it (or support in accessing it) and / or if such programming does not exist.

To expect every released prisoner to manage all of these challenges on their own is in a sense a set up for failure. There is a growing consensus in the literature that supports are required to manage the transition from prison to community (Baer, et al., 2006; Hammett, et al., 2001; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Osher, 2003). The key fundamentals of such transitional support is that it be directed by a specific individual or team who will have responsibility for gathering available assessments and supporting the transition through helping to put in place post-release programming support (Osher, 2003:83). Special attention should be given to the crucial first seven days following release. The transitional support must be holistic and coordinated; that is, it must simultaneously address different risks faced by inmates. It must involve different stakeholders, including prison officials, community resources, and not incidentally, the prisoner. Successful transition will inevitably rely on a broad range of accessible and receptive community supports, some of which target ex-prisoners, others that do not (this will not be possible in all communities, however). All of this speaks to the need for systems and personnel who are knowledgeable about services etc.

For inmates released on parole, this idea of transitional support requires a shift from the model of parole as "supervision" to one of casework, supported by agencies and service providers with expertise in this area. This does not, however, solve the problem of what to do with inmates who are released directly, without parole. In the United States, where this situation is becoming more common, Travis & Petersilia have argued that every substantial period of incarceration should be followed by a period of "managed re-entry", which would require the provision of services and support to inmates whether they are released on parole or not (2001:203). This requires, they argue, a decoupling of the logic of imprisonment and criminal justice (with the focus

on deterrence, retribution and rehabilitation), from the goal of reintegration. Almost every prisoner will some day be released. They suggest that managed re-entry would be the responsibility of a community-based agency that would oversee an inmate's transition to the community over a period of time. Expectations would be placed on such inmates, with indicators of successful integration built in (housing, employment, etc.). Failure to meet expectations would not necessarily result in a return to prison, but may involve other consequences: "(A)s with drug courts, failure could result in graduated sanctions, up to a short deprivation of liberty, if those sanctions are demonstrably effective at changing behaviour" (Travis & Petersilia, 2001:307).

In the United States, there have been several experiments in this area. Seiter and Kadela identify a number of successful community supervision programs that target successful re-entry by emphasizing new approaches to individualizing offender management to deal with their risks and needs (Lehman, 2001; Andrews & Bonta, 1995; Rhodes et al., 2001). In Washington State, all prisoners are assessed and required to be released via a pre-release centre. All prisoners receive discharge planning support (Austin, 2001:326). Hammett reports that Massachusetts is also experimenting in this area (2001:396). Travis has also discussed the notion of the "re-entry court", which would be charged to oversee transition, and impose sanctions if released inmates failed to meet conditions of the re-entry plan (Travis, 2000). It is not known to what degree there are experiments with managed re-entry in Canada, as there is no available published research on this area at this time.

In Canada, all Federal offenders on conditional release are supervised, with the degree of supervision depending on the offender's needs and risk. It is the view of Correctional Service Canada that "supervision alone does not help offenders change; supervision together with programming does" (Correctional Services Canada, 2005:23). Such programming ideally is designed to build on gains made by inmates involved in in-prison programming.

Serin, Vuong & Briggs (2003) conducted a study of Intensive Supervision Practices (ISP) with 210 high-risk offenders in Canada. ISP programming involves higher levels of supervision and support, combined with increased programming and treatment for personal and social problems that were thought to contribute to recidivism. Their research demonstrated a positive affect of ISPs, with those participating having "had lower rates of revocation (16.7% reduction) and longer time until first suspension warrant was issued (when compared to a control group). For instance, the comparison group had

a 24.1% shorter time to revocation or suspension compared to the ISP group(Serin, Vuong & Briggs, 2003:4). They have argued that in Canada since the 1980s, ISPs "with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing re-offending developed during this area had several common features: 1) small staff to client caseload rations; 2) well trained and/or committed program staff, 3) a primary focus on providing treatment services to clients; and 4) intensive monitoring and follow-up "reinforcing a balanced approach" (Serin, Vuong & Briggs, 2003:7).

2.4 Conclusion

In this section, our goal was to explore in the Canadian context the efficacy of prisoner re-entry programming. The criminal justice system in Canada is organized in such a way that the Federal government is responsible for incarcerating inmates who have sentences of two years or more, and provinces are responsible for those sentenced to less than two years, as well as those awaiting sentencing (on remand). If one of the goals of corrections is to make Canadians safer through reducing the risk of recidivism, then it is imperative to examine how we handle prisoner re-entry. Different inmates face different challenges – in terms of accessing housing and employment, in terms of health and mental health issues, violence and substance use, for instance – any and all of which may make it difficult for a releasee to successfully integrate into their community. Prisoner re-entry supports include: a) discharge planning, b) In-prison support programs, and c) post-release supports. The evidence we have reviewed suggests that such supports are beneficial to inmates and the communities they return to through mediating many of the risks and challenges discussed above. It is possible to speculate that in the absence of such supports, a number of prisoners will fail to obtain housing and employment in a timely manner, will be unable to access necessary supports to deal with substance use, health or mental health, and may wind up homeless. In the next section, we explore the relationship between incarceration, prisoner re-entry and homelessness.

3.0   Homelessness and the Criminal Justice System

There is an emerging body of literature that documents the relationship between homelessness and the criminal justice system (Delisi, 2000; Gowan, 2002; Metraux & Culhane, 2004). It is argued that, for a variety of reasons, people who are homeless will come into contact with the criminal justice system more likely as offenders than as victims. In this section, research on homelessness will be explored in order to identify the key features of homelessness that are likely to lead to criminal behaviour and encounters with the law.

Making sense of this relationship must begin with an understanding of homelessness in Canada. Here, we will begin with an analysis of different dimensions of social exclusion, including barriers to accessing housing and employment, health and mental health services, and for those with addictions. These factors produce the conditions whereby people who are homeless have difficulty escaping their current circumstances, and at the same time are criminogenic.

It will be argued, however, that the involvement of homeless people in the criminal justice system is not simply a product of their criminality. Rather, it is also important to understand how the experience of being homeless leads to greater surveillance by law enforcement, and as a result, an increased likelihood of being charged with an offence. It also must be acknowledged that efforts to criminalize the behaviours of the homeless that have been popular over the past decade (including laws outlawing squeegeeing, panhandling and sleeping in parks, for instance) can only lead to increased rates of incarceration for people who are homeless.

If being homeless increases the likelihood of incarceration, can the reverse be

said to be true as well?   This part or our review will conclude with an exploration of what we know about the likelihood that inmates released from prison will wind up homeless. Here, we draw on Canadian and American research on shelter populations that reveals a surprising number of residents have recently been released from prison.   This suggests that, to some degree, the relationship between homelessness and incarceration is bi-directional, resulting in a cycle that for some means that failed prisoner re-entry strategies result in homelessness, which in turn results in recidivism and criminality, leading to further involvement with the justice system (DeLisi, 2000; Gowan, 2002; Kushel, et al., 2005; Metraux & Culhane, 2004; Vitelli, 1993).

3.1 Homelessness and Social Exclusion

In Canada, homelessness has emerged as a growing problem since the 1980s. Despite the development of an expanding infrastructure created to address issues of homelessness, there were approximately 250,000 homeless people in Canada in 2005 (Yalnizyan, 2005).   We define homelessness as the absence of stable, permanent housing. This includes people who are absolutely homeless (living out of doors or in squats), sheltered homeless (those who are residents of hostels or shelters, or who are temporarily staying with friends or family) and the precariously housed (persons living in rooming houses, hotels or whose housing is otherwise precarious).

One of the challenges of discussing homelessness is that even though it is true at the aggregate level that people who are homeless are characterized by extreme poverty, low income and a lack of affordable housing, this is not to suggest that all people wind up homeless in the same way, or that the population is homogeneous. In fact, it is worth pointing out that males are typically over-represented amongst the homeless (Farrell, et al., 2000; Novac, et al., 2002; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004), as are those people who are sexual minorities (O'Brien, et al., 1994; Gaetz, et al; 1999). In terms of cultural diversity, some sub-populations are overrepresented, including aboriginals and black Canadians (Murdie, 2003; Hunter, 1998, Dunn, 2003, Springer, et al., 2006). These groups face the additional challenges of racial discrimination and / or homophobia.

In making sense of homelessness in Canada, it is important to understand how different factors interact to produce profound social and economic

deprivation. That is, homelessness is not simply about a lack of shelter, but is also related to problems with income security and lack of access to necessary supports (to deal with mental health issues and substance use problems, for instance). It is therefore necessary to identify a range of systemic factors that increase the risks to people who are homeless, and which profoundly limit choices and opportunities to get off the streets. Here, the concept of 'social exclusion' is helpful in that it allows one to explore how the personal histories of individuals intersect with certain social, political and economic conditions that restrict people's access to spaces, institutions and practices that reduce risk. Such an account begins with recognition that it is not atypical for marginalized groups and individuals to be socially, economically *and* spatially separated from the people and places that other citizens have access to within advanced industrial societies (Mandaniapour, 1998:22).

For those who become homeless, social exclusion is experienced across several intersecting domains, including barriers to accessing shelter and housing, employment, food security, a healthy lifestyle and safety. Social exclusion is a process that in most cases begins before people become homeless - this is certainly the case for ex-prisoners - but intensifies the longer one is without housing. An outcome of homelessness and social exclusion is that many people wind up in trouble with the law, either because they resort to criminal activities, or because the very fact that they are homeless exposes them to greater scrutiny by the police.

In order to explore the relationship between homelessness, criminality and incarceration, it is first necessary to examine some of the different dimensions of social exclusion, including: *housing, health, mental health, substance use and income*[6]. These factors are not meant to describe all of he possible manifestations of social exclusion, but rather, to provide a sense of how and in what ways people who are homeless experience barriers, or lack access to, fundamental institutions and services that many if not most Canadians take for granted. As we will see, there is an overlap between the dimensions of social exclusion faced by homeless persons, and key risk factors that inmates face upon release from prison.

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[6] Much of the research cited in this section comes from Gaetz, S. (2004) *Understanding Research on Homelessness in Toronto: A Literature Review*. Toronto: Wellesley Central Health Corporation

3.1.1 Housing

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the social exclusion of people who are homeless is their inability to access and maintain safe, affordable housing. There are many studies that effectively point out the direct connection between a lack of affordable housing and increasing homelessness (Carataga, 2003; Dunphy, 2000; Golden, et al., 1999; Fallis & Murray, 1990; Hulchanski, 1995a; 1995b; 2002a; 2002b; Shepherd, et al., 2003; TD Bank Financial Group, 2003). Inadequate housing is also identified as having negative health outcomes (Dunn, 2003; Hulchanski, 2001; Raphael, 2002) and as placing women, children and families at risk (Callaghan, et al., 2002; Chau, et al., 2001; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004; Novac, et al., 1996; 2002).

It is argued that the current housing crisis for low income Canadians which has exacerbated the homelessness problem in Canada (and which presents a challenge for released prisoners) is in large part due to the withdrawal of the Federal and Provincial governments in the 1990s from the funding and building of public housing in the early 1990s (Harris, 1998; Skaburkis, 2000).

People who are homeless live in a wide range of conditions. Some stay in one or more of the many shelters for the homeless (located mostly in urban centres). Those defined as "absolutely homeless" are not able to access shelter spaces or may find it difficult to stay in such settings (because of concerns re: health, safety, and lack of autonomy), and will stay out of doors (under bridges, on rooftops, in parks, doorways, etc.) or in unoccupied buildings (squats). Many others will find temporary shelter staying in the homes of friends, and some will get together enough money for short term housing in rooming houses or motels.

All of these situations are characterized by a lack of security, by their temporary nature, and by the limitations that such conditions place on people's ability to stay safe and healthy, gain employment, continue their education or otherwise move on with their lives. It is also true to say that over time, many if not most homeless people move through a variety of these situations, and many people move in and out of homelessness. It is indeed the instability of housing that is a key defining feature of the homeless population.

Being without secure shelter has a profound impact on a person's ability to exert greater control over their life, and to develop a lifestyle that allows them to eat and sleep with greater consistency, be healthy and to obtain and maintain employment. Inmates who are released without housing supports

may wind up homeless, and in searching for housing they face the added disadvantage of stigmatization resulting from their prison record.

3.1.2 Health

There is ample evidence in Canada that homelessness is associated with poor health status, summarized in some excellent reviews of the literature (Frankish, et al., 2003; Hardill, et al, 1993; Hwang, 2000; Hwang & Gottlieb, 1999; Kushner, 1998 Quantz & Frankish, 2002). This includes, but is not limited to, greater incidences of illness and injury, higher mortality rates (Hwang, 2000; Cheung & Hwang, 2004), diabetes, heart disease, arthritis and musculoskeletal disorders (Crowe & Hardill, 1993), dental and periodontal disease (Lee et al., 1994), and tuberculosis (Yuan et al., 1997). In spite of the existence of shelters and soup kitchens in many Canadian cities, there is strong evidence that people who are homeless suffer from food deprivation and malnutrition (Antoniades & Tarasuk, 1998; Tarasuk et al., 2005).

A range of Canadian studies have identified high prevalence rates for diseases such as gonorrhoea, syphilis and various strains of Hepatitis (Fischer et al., 2004; Haley et al., 2002; Roy et al., 1999; Roy et al., 2001; Tyndall, 2003; Weber, et al., 2003). There has also been a range of research on the incidence of HIV infection amongst the homeless in Canada (Dematteo, et al., 1999; Kerr et al., 2004; Palepu, 2001; Roy et al., 2000 Dematteo, et al., 1999).

Both personal and structural factors that are implicated in the process of becoming homeless may consequently impact on health. This includes: poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, history of abuse or violence, alcohol or drug abuse, and mental illness, for instance. Contextual factors associated with homelessness are also identified as having an impact on health. The rigours of life on the streets (lack of sleep, poor hygiene, inadequate nutrition), living in overcrowded conditions, and exposure to violence and weather (freezing temperatures in the winter and extreme heat in the summer) all increase the risk of illness and injury, and can exacerbate existing or emerging health conditions. It is also important to consider the degree to which compromised health, poor hygiene and trauma all affect the ability of people who are homeless to stabilize their lives, obtain shelter and employment, and ensure their own safety.

3.1.3 Mental Illnesses and Disorders

There is considerable literature both in Canada and internationally which suggests that a significant percentage of people who are homeless suffer from a variety of mental illnesses and disorders, ranging in severity from depression, to trauma, to more serious psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia, mood disorders and schizo-affective disorders, for instance (Ayerst, 1999; Enyan, et al., 2002; Mental Health Policy Research Group, 1998; Tolomiczenko, et al., 2001; Votta & Manion, 2004).   Such mental health challenges can disrupt people's ability to carry out a range of daily life activities such as self-care, interpersonal relationships, and maintenance of housing and employment.

The causes of such mental health challenges for people who are homeless are often traced to background variables (that is, events and circumstances prior to homelessness) and situational variables, such as a wide range of hardships, substance use, victimization and trauma, for instance. Even when mental health problems are not a direct cause of homelessness, they can reinforce and lengthen the experience of homelessness (Eberle et al., 2001).

In Canada, it has long been recognized that the over-representation of people with mental illnesses amongst the homeless population is in part connected to the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients that began in the 1960s (Canadian Public Health Association, 1997; Hargrave, 1999; O'Flaherty, 1996), with the number of long term psychiatric hospital beds having declined by 80% between 1960 and 1993/4 without sufficient community supports being in place (Geyer Szadkowski, 1998).

There are legal and justice implications to consider here, in terms of the number of homeless people with mental heath problems who wind up in custody, as evidenced in some important Canadian research. In a study of 110 inmates, Vitelli (1993) found that those who were homeless at the time of their arrest were much more likely to report a previous involvement with the mental health system, to display overt symptoms of mental illness and have a history of suicide attempts.   Likewise, Zapf et al. (1996) did a study of 790 pre-trial males. They found that those who were homeless were more likely to have severe mental disorders and a prior psychiatric history. Laberge et al., (1998) identified the difficulties experienced by attorneys defending people with mental illnesses in court. Finally, James et al., (1999) identify the linkage between involvement in the criminal justice system, homelessness and

psychiatric admission rates.

3.1.4 Substance Use and Addictions

There is a considerable body of excellent research conducted across the country on drug use and homelessness, particularly amongst street youth (Baron, 1999; Canadian HIV / AIDS Legal Network, 1999a; 1999b; Health Canada, 2000a; 2000b; 2001; Myers, et al., 1995; Spittal, et al., 2002). This research identifies higher prevalence rates and the impact of drug use on the lives of people who are homeless.   Baron, for instance, argues that the use of substances by street youth is influenced by the complex intersection of a number of background, situational (street lifestyle) and economic factors (Baron, 1999).

Much of the research on drug use and homelessness in Canada identifies the negative consequences of such use (in particular, injection drug use), including a range of health risks (Adlaf & Zdanowicz, 1999; Bernstein, et al., 2000; Laurie, et al., 2000; Ochnio, et al., 2001; Patrick, et al., 2001; Rhodes et al., 1998; Smart & Ogborne, 1994; Spittal, et al 2002).   This research identifies the link between injection drug use and HIV / AIDS, Hepatitis A and C and other diseases, and as a result the increased need for access to health care (Hankins, et al., 2002; Palepu, 2001). Millson et al., (2004) identified that intravenous drug users perceive their mental and physical health to be much worse than the general population.

The relationship between drug use and mental health is in fact complex. The term "concurrent disorders" describes the combination of mental health problems with addictions and reflects the general belief that people with mental health problems have a greater likelihood of drug use (Hood et al., 1996; Golden, et al., 1999; Lowry et al., 1996; Rabkin & Geal, 1997).

There are other risks associated with drug use. In comparing street youth to a domiciled sample, both of whom were in treatment, Smart and Ogborne (1994) found that street youth had lower self-esteem, were more likely to be depressed, unemployed and to have legal problems. Because homeless people lack access to private spaces to inject or otherwise use drugs, much of their drug use takes place in public spaces. Finally, it is worth considering that because homeless people are more likely to use substances, coupled with the fact that they typically lack private spaces to consume such substances (and

recover from use) puts them at greater risk of encounters with the police.

Getting access to treatment can also be problematic. With waiting lists for treatment and detox beds (if and when they are even available), many homeless people are unable to get supports they need. In addition, innovative approaches to substance use that embrace a harm reduction approach are not always widely embraced. In an interesting study, Wood et al (2004) explore the consequences of law enforcement strategies for drug users and programmes. In studying the results of a police "crack down" in Vancouver, they found that this did not really affect drug prices or frequency of use, nor encourage enrolment in treatment. Rather, police crack downs led to shifts in the spaces and places where people consume drugs, and some decreases in use of services such as used syringe drop-off boxes.

3.1.5 Employment

The ability to obtain - and perhaps more importantly, maintain - work is central to the survival of people who are homeless. People who are homeless face incredible challenges in a competitive labour market, and a lack of housing (meaning no address to put on a resume), poor health, inadequate food security compromise the ability of homeless people to obtain and maintain work. While recent research (Gaetz and O'Grady 2002) demonstrates that most homeless youth are not avoiding work and most do want regular jobs, the vast majority face significant barriers to obtaining – and maintaining – employment. When they do, it is often short term, dead end jobs that they acquire, or unregulated work on the margins of the economy.

Nevertheless, because in general homeless people cannot access welfare or unemployment benefits, they must generate income in order to survive. A distinctive feature of the lifestyles of homeless people - and, indeed, a manifestation of their social exclusion and economic marginalization - is the range of money making activities they engage in which, on the one hand, provide income to meet day-to-day needs, but on the other, carry significant risks and dangers. As a result of their exclusion from the formal economy, many homeless people are forced to engage in risky money making strategies which are in some cases illegal or quasi-legal, including the sex trade, panhandling (begging), squeegeeing (cleaning car windshields), and criminal acts such as theft and drug dealing (Gaetz, O'Grady & Vaillancourt, 1999; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004). On the streets, then, the

subsistence activities people engage in are a consequence of very limited employment options, inadequate employment supports, and the need to meet immediate survival needs (Gaetz and O'Grady 2002; Hagan and McCarthy 1997, Hagedorn 1998, Whitbeck et al., 1999).

The links between the money making strategies and the criminal justice system are clear. Many of the money making strategies that homeless people resort to are illegal, while others are quasi-legal (aspects of the sex trade) and or the subject of new laws and measure. Because homeless money making is often highly visible (panhandling, squeegeeing) and forces interactions between homeless people and the public, there has been growing demands across the country to suppress and / or make illegal such activities. As we will see in the next section, this has resulted in an approach to the homelessness crisis that focuses on criminalization.

In summary, the social exclusion of the homeless population is characterized by a lack of access to affordable housing, secure income and necessary supports to deal with health, mental health and substance use. Other factors could be added to the list, including inadequate social capital, and alienation from the family. The challenges of social exclusion deepen the longer one is homeless. This trajectory of social exclusion is cumulative in nature, making it difficult to escape, particularly when constant exposure to risk compromises health, safety and opportunity.

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that the key indicators of social exclusion for people who are homeless are not dissimilar to the risk factors for released inmates that we identified in Section 2.3 of this report. This is a reflection of the overlap between the two population groups and the degree to which both offenders and the homeless experience social exclusion. The nature of the relationship between homelessness, crime and the criminal justice system will be explored further in the following sections.

3.2   Crime and Homelessness

The issue of the relationship between homelessness and crime is quite contentious. On the one hand, there are those who identify homeless people as for the most part dangerous, untrustworthy criminals who have a negative impact on the lives of law-abiding 'citizens'. On the other hand are those who argue that the criminality of homelessness, where it exists, is more likely a

consequence of extreme poverty and the limited choices open to such people. These two perspectives are at the centre of debates about crime, homelessness and public safety (DeLisi, 2000; Gaetz, 2004; Hermer & Mosher, 2002).

There is a body of criminological research that addresses the relationship between homelessness and crime. Canadian research focuses for the most part on the experiences of street youth (Baron, 1999; 2001; Baron & Hartnagel, 1997; 1998 Baron et al., 2001; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; McCarthy & Hagan, 1992a; 1992b; Hagan and McCarthy, 1998; O'Grady & Greene, 2003, Tanner & Wortley, 2002). In the Toronto Youth Crime and Victimization Survey, Tanner and Wortley (2002) compare the homeless youth population to domiciled youth, and reveal that the former are in general more likely than the latter to engage in criminal behaviours and activities. Baron, in his work on street youth in Edmonton, identified the significance of background variables on later experiences of victimization (1997) and how this likely impacts on more aggressive approaches to problem solving once young people wind up on the streets (Baron et al., 2001). Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that to *say* homeless youth are more likely to commit crime than domiciled youth is not to suggest that all street youth are criminals. There is compelling evidence that there is great variation within the homeless population, with some young people responsible for the bulk of the crimes, while others are minimally engaged (Gaetz, 2004).

A key question to be asked, then, is whether homeless people are themselves more likely to be criminals, or does the experience of homelessness produce criminal behaviours? The key work in this area has been done by Hagan and McCarthy (McCarthy & Hagan, 1992a; 1992b; Hagan and McCarthy, 1998), who conducted extensive research conducted in the early 1990s on homeless street youth in Toronto and Vancouver. Their book Mean Streets (1998), documented in great detail the factors that lead to youth homelessness, and through blending quantitative and qualitative data, present a picture of life on the streets and its relationship to crime.

Their key contribution to the literature has been to demonstrate that situational factors (poverty, lack of housing, limited employment opportunities and hunger) play a large role in leading street youth to engage in criminal activities. That is, they argue that it is the *experience* of the hardships of homelessness and poverty, rather than a predisposition for delinquent behaviour, that explains the criminal behaviours of street youth. In addition, they also highlight through their comparison of Vancouver and

Toronto how different social policy frameworks may in fact impact on levels of criminal involvement, suggesting that the crime control approach adopted in Vancouver is seen to enhance criminogenic conditions.

The work of Gaetz and O'Grady on money making by homeless youth supports the view that adverse situational conditions and social exclusion lead to criminal behaviours (Gaetz, O'Grady & Vaillancourt, 1999; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004). A range of factors including education level, physical and mental health, work readiness skills, nutrition and type of shelter etc., shape the economic opportunities of different groups of homeless youth, resulting in differentiated money making strategies. Some homeless youth are better able to compete in the formal economy for work, while others are excluded, and must generate income through a range of quasi-legal (panhandling, squeegeeing, sex trade) and illegal activities (theft, drug dealing). It is important to note that many of these money making activities take place in public spaces, which draws the attention of local businesses, residents and, of course, the police.

Finally, while in discussions of crime and homelessness the focus is most often on their role as offenders, it is worth pointing out that people who are homeless are also much more likely to be victims of crime than the general public. People who are homeless suffer from a lack of guardianship, increased exposure to other criminals, and the inability to avoid dangerous areas, all of which result in greater vulnerability to a whole range of crimes, including assault, robbery, theft, vandalism and sexual assault (Gaetz, 2004). This has an impact on the criminal behaviour of homeless people. For instance, Baron has argued that aggressive and even violent responses to confrontations are considered an adaptive response to life on the streets (Baron, et al., 2001). In addition, Gaetz has shown that the steps which many homeless people take to protect themselves often include the carrying of weapons, and that strained relations with police lead many homeless people to seek retribution on their own terms rather than involve the police (Gaetz. 2002; Gaetz, 2004). Considered together, it becomes evident that the very practices that many people engage in to protect themselves from the very high risk of criminal victimization that they face may in fact contribute to violent confrontations that result in entanglements with the police.

3.3 The Surveillance and Policing of Homeless People

The growth of homelessness in both Canada and the United States has simultaneously resulted in shifts in public policy that has increased the surveillance of homeless people by the police. In socially divided societies such as Canada, public and semi-public spaces are sites where the question of who has access to them and how they can and should be used is contested. In such cases, it is not only the activities of the homeless (including their subsistence strategies) that increasingly come to be defined as "criminal", but in fact the very presence of homeless people on city streets, in parks and other public places (Hermer and Mosher, 2002; Esmonde, 2002; Schafer, 1998). In their volume titled *Disorderly People Law and the Politics of Exclusion in Ontario*, Hermer and Mosher (2002) make the case that laws, public policies and the logic of government marginalize vulnerable populations such as the homeless in the name of public safety. This, it can be argued, is another manifestation of social exclusion.

Homeless people are stigmatized because of their appearance, the fact that many have mental health problems and they are forced to engage in everyday behaviours in unconventional but very public ways (sleeping, eating, sitting, drinking, defecating). The fact that many homeless people directly approach passers by for money also draws public attention. As a result, the police are routinely called upon by city residents, businesses and politicians to arrest or minimally 'move on' homeless people in an effort to rid the city of urban disorder (Hermer & Mosher, 2002). John Irwin has called such policing of homeless persons "rabble management" (1986). In an effort to displace homeless persons and reduce their presence in public spaces, homeless people are often ticketed or otherwise charged with misdemeanour offences such as trespassing, drinking in public and disturbing the peace (Fischer, 1992; Gaetz, 2002; Snow, Baker & Anderson, 1989). While these offences may not result in prison sentences, Solomon & Draine (1995) have argued that such "lifestyle offences" often do lead to more serious criminal charges such as burglary.

Some researchers have pointed out that such misdemeanour offences do matter, and that many people wind up in jail for small and relatively insignificant crimes (Irwin & Austin, 1994). This is important to consider given the growing popularity of 'order maintenance' and 'broken windows' policing (Kelling & Wilson, 1982; Kelling & Coles, 1997), which is premised upon the notion that the failure to suppress low level symptoms of disorder as

aggressively as major crimes can in fact lead to the escalation of crime and urban decay. Such practices, which have become popular in many jurisdictions since the mid-1980s, involve a more aggressive policing strategy, including the selective enforcement of generally applicable laws and targeted policing (identifying particular areas and / or specific populations within them). This approach to law enforcement puts homeless people at greater risk by virtue of their homelessness. That is, because they do not control nor have access to private spaces to engage in a range of behaviours that may be legal (consuming alcohol, earning money, having sex) or illegal (consuming illegal drugs, engaging in acts of violence), their transgressive behaviours invariably occur in public places increasing opportunities for surveillance and apprehension.

The response to homelessness has not been simply to more strongly enforce existing laws to displace homeless persons, however. In fact, one of the key policy responses has been to *criminalize* homelessness through changing laws to target the activities and behaviours of homeless people, ranging from their ability to sleep in parks and other places, to placing limits on their money making strategies. Following the lead of several American states, the Province of Ontario in 2000 introduced the *Safe Streets Act*, which while not explicitly mentioning people who are homeless, increased penalties for key money making activities such as panhandling and squeegeeing (Hermer & Mosher, 2002; Esmonde, 2002). Since that time, the province of British Columbia has followed suit, as have a number of other municipalities in Canada.

It is argued that such actions, which implicitly target the homeless, are a clear example of social exclusion as practiced through government policy. There is no evidence to suggest that such policies and practices, which 'criminalize' homelessness, have had the effect of moving homeless people into the economic mainstream and out of homelessness. In fact, such policies likely have the opposite effect. For instance, O'Grady and Greene (2003) documented the impact of the Safe Streets Act on homeless youth (squeegee workers) in Toronto, highlighting the degree to which the criminalization of squeegeeing and panhandling has led to more difficult life circumstances for homeless youth, and has exacerbated their relations with the police.

3.4 Homelessness and Incarceration

Given what we now know about the relationship between homelessness, crime and the criminalization of the homeless, it should not be surprising that there is an over-representation of homeless persons, or people who were homeless at the time of their arrest, in prison populations. A body of research suggests that this is in fact the case (Centre for Poverty Solutions, 2003; Delisi, 2000; Kushel, et al., 2005; Vitelli, 1993; Zapf, et al., 1996). In an early review of the literature, Schlay and Rossi (1992) reported that between 4% and 49% of the homeless population had reported being in prison in the past, depending on the study. Michaels et al., (1992) found that between 24% and 32% of the inmates they interviewed had been homeless in the previous two months. In the United States, two Bureau of Justice Statistics reports identify that 12% (Langan & Levin, 2002) and 9% (Ditton, 1999) of their prison samples reported being homeless prior to arrest. Novac, et al., (2006), in a snapshot count of prisons in Toronto, found that 18% of those admitted to the Toronto (Don) jail had no fixed address (2006:3). Mindful of the limitations of the City of Toronto shelter use data and the Ministry of Corrections data on admissions and releases of homeless individuals, Novac et al. confidently assert that both data sets clearly indicated a year to year increase in the number of homeless people entering and leaving provincial jails, reflecting a cycling from jail to shelter to jail and back. This evidence is supported by data provided by the Re-Integration Program managed by the Ontario Multi-Faith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care. It is also important to recall that stiff bail conditions in Ontario (evidence of employment, residence) mean that people who are homeless are more likely to be held in pre-trial detention (see Section 2.2).

Researchers on homelessness and the prison population suggest the relationship is bidirectional. That is, just as homeless people are at high risk of becoming incarcerated, prisoners are at high risk for becoming homeless. A number of American studies have explored the degree to which inmates released from prison are vulnerable to homelessness. Riley (2003) reported that at any one time about 800 parolees were in the New York City shelter system. Hombs (2002), drawing from corrections data, found that over a three year period, between 6.3% and 10.5% of all state prison releasees in Massachusetts wound up directly in the homeless shelter system. Metraux & Culhane (2004) examined shelter use and reincarceration amongst a population of 48, 424 people released from state prison in New York between

1995 and 1998. They found that within two years, 11.4% wound up in shelters in New York City, and 32.8% returned to prison. They also found that prisoners who had a history of being homeless prior to arrest were almost five times as likely to wind up in a shelter after release.

There has been limited research done in this area in Canada. Two recent studies in Toronto highlight the relationship between homelessness and incarceration.   Novac, et al. (2006) explored this issue through interviews, and an examination of homeless shelter data in Toronto. They report that according to the City of Toronto's data, over 800 individuals coming from corrections are admitted to a shelter during 2003 (Novac, et al., 2006:4). They suspect that this is a grave undercount, due to the fact that shelters do not require proof of a prior residence, and there is a stigma to coming from corrections.   Many wind up in homeless shelters. They also report that the average stay is less than three months.

In 2006, the City of Toronto undertook a "Street Needs Assessment", which indicated that at any one time there are over 5000 homeless people in Toronto (City of Toronto, 2006). Thirty five percent of the population surveyed reported interaction with corrections in the previous six months. In addition, they also reported that homeless people with a history of incarceration were also much more likely than other individuals surveyed to use a range of services, including food banks, drop-ins and detox. While one may read this as evidence that homeless persons who were previously incarcerated have higher needs, the report also suggests that they are less likely to participate in other kinds of programming, such as employment training (City of Toronto, 2006:24).

Explaining the bi-directional relationship of homelessness and incarceration requires consideration of a number of factors. As discussed extensively above, the increased likelihood that people who are homeless engage in criminal behaviours is a product of their social exclusion. That is, the adverse situational conditions of homelessness (social exclusion, marginality, poverty, etc.) mean that many homeless people engage in crime in order to survive and ensure their own personal safety. The increased visibility of homeless persons over the past several years has resulted in a range of responses, including greater surveillance of the homeless, the management of "disorderly people", and the enactment of laws that essentially criminalize homeless people. Finally, the fact that homeless people live much of their lives in public makes them vulnerable to policing strategies that focus on cracking down on small

scale and petty crime.

In explaining the relationship between incarceration and homelessness, there are three other factors worth considering:

3.4.1 Prisoners and the homeless share risk factors

Kushel argues that homeless people are vulnerable to incarceration because they generally share risk factors with the prison population and that being homeless increases the likelihood of arrest (Kushel, et al., 2005:1747). Homelessness is characterized by the experience of social exclusion across a number of domains, and many ex-prisoners are also at risk of experiencing barriers to obtaining housing and income, have substance use issues and/or mental health challenges. A 1999 study by Rossman et al., of 400 prisoners with histories of substance abuse found that 32% had been homeless for a month or more at least once during their lives.

There is a body of American research that highlights the relationship between homelessness, mental illness, criminal behaviour and incarceration (Belcher, 1988; Desai, et al., 2000; McGuire & Rosekheck, 2004; Martell, et al., 1995; Solomon & Draine, 1999). Canadian research from over a decade ago highlighted this link (Vitelli, 1993; Zapf, et al., 1996). The overlap of risk factors suggests that without proper supports, inmates are likely to become homeless. The risk factors facing inmates will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

3.4.2 Prisoners who were previously homeless are at high risk of becoming homeless again

Evidence from both Canada and the United States suggests that many inmates were in fact homeless before being incarcerated. Again, risk factors such as substance use, mental health issues and income generating strategies associated with the homeless make them vulnerable to arrest. It also means that upon release from prison, such persons are less likely to have family and relationships in the community that will assist with re-entry.

There are some interesting differences between inmates who have experienced homelessness and those who have not. Delisi (2000) compared two

populations of inmates - one group who were formerly homeless, and the other who were not. He found that those who were formerly homeless were distinguished from the non homeless population in a number of ways, including higher incidences of mental illness and a greater likelihood of having been arrested for "nuisance offences". Delisi also found that prisoners who were formerly homeless had four times as many prior arrests as did domiciled inmates, and significantly more arrests for the use of weapons (Delisi, 2000:65).   Vitelli (1992), in a Canadian study, similarly found that over 80% of homeless inmates had previous convictions, compared to 64% for domiciled inmates.

3.4.3 *"Discharge Planning" for high risk prisoners is inadequate*

Many inmates leave prison without plans, and without resources (Gouvis Roman & Travis, 2004; Novac, et al., 2006; Metraux & Culhane, 2004).   Gouvis Roman & Travis (2004), in an extensive report highlighted many of the barriers to successful re-entry for prisoners in the United States. Most significantly, they identify a lack of planning and support for high-risk prisoners who are discharged without family or housing options in place. They then go on to identify some successful housing programs.

Novac, et al., (2006) found that many inmates are released from prison with little or no discharge planning, and many wind up in homeless shelters.   The remand situation exacerbates this problem as:

"It is not unusual for persons to appear before the court and be released on the same day, from the courthouse. Some people are transported to the court in their jail issue uniforms (orange jumpsuits and running shoes) and are released by the court in this attire, not having had a date to work towards for a release plan" (Novac, et al., 2006:1).

The inadequacy of resources to support prisoner re-entry means that many inmates are left with few options other than to become homeless. For inmates who are further marginalized due to racism or disability, the challenges are even greater. Given the fact that homeless people are at higher risk for incarceration, it seems clear that for releasees, the movement from prison directly to the shelter system means homelessness and an increased risk of recidivism.

3.5 Conclusion

Our review of the literature suggests that attention must be paid to the relationship between homelessness and incarceration. Are inmates released from prison at risk of becoming homeless? In turn, are people who are homeless vulnerable to involvement in the justice system because of their substance use, subsistence strategies and the growing trend to criminalize homelessness? It will be argued that there are very real risks facing inmates (and the public) who upon being discharged from prison, become homeless. In fact, it seems likely that ex-prisoners who wind up homeless and/or in the shelter system will likely experience an exacerbated sense of social exclusion, and will face additional barriers to their successful reintegration in society. A question that must be asked, then, is whether by not putting in place measures that reduce the risk of homelessness for discharged inmates, are we in fact increasing the likelihood that they will again wind up in jail.

4.0 Results: Incarceration, Discharge Planning and Homelessness

While the literature on homelessness does suggest that a disproportionate percentage of homeless persons are engaged in the criminal justice system, there is a need for a deeper understanding of this situation. At the same time, from a policy perspective, it is necessary to investigate whether current supports for prisoner re-entry are adequate to prevent the revolving door of homelessness and incarceration. In this section, we present findings from research that has been conducted in 2005/06 in Ontario and British Columbia. Using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, we have sought to ensure that the voices of our interview subjects come through clearly.

Our investigation has been guided by the following research questions:

1) What is the nature of discharge planning in provincial correctional facilities (in Ontario)?

- What are the policies that frame discharge planning practice?
- How do provincial employees within the corrections system manage discharge planning?

2) What are the key similarities and differences between the prison population and the homeless in Canada?

- Are the backgrounds of homeless and domiciled prisoners and releasees similar?
- To what degree do releasees – whether housed, underhoused or homeless - share risks associated with housing, employment, health, mental health and substance use?

3) How is discharge planning experienced by inmates and releasees?

- Is discharge planning seen to have an impact on the lives of releasees?
- How do releasees envision a more effective discharge planning process?

4.1 Data and Methods

To assess the inter-relationships between homelessness, crime and the criminal justice/correctional systems with a focus on discharge planning, this study collected information from male informants who are or have spent time in provincial corrections facilities in Ontario or British Columbia, including inmates and three groups of releasees: a) domiciled, b) underhoused, and c) homeless (with a recent history of incarceration). All interviewees will potentially have some experience with discharge planning (or the lack of it) in provincial facilities, either currently or in the recent past. In addition, we have interviewed personnel involved in the discharge planning process in both British Columbia and Ontario.

The table below provides a more detailed breakdown of just who was interviewed for this study.

Table 1
Sample Participants by Province

	Ontario	British Columbia
Inmates	18	20
Releasees (housed)	30	10
(underhoused)	7	17
(homeless)	46	7
Planners	5	9
Total	106	65

INMATES refers to persons currently in provincial corrections facilities who have been convicted of a crime, and who are awaiting release. The sample of inmates drawn was obtained with the assistance of correctional officers who solicited volunteers in each respective institution. Deputy wardens requested that correctional officers select inmate participants for the study on the basis that each person was going to be released relatively soon into the community. This criterion was important because if inmates are going to receive discharge planning, this would be the time that they would most likely receive it. Correctional officers were also asked to recruit volunteers according to the mix of inmates who were presently incarcerated within each institution. This "mix" was based mainly on the age and racial composition of the inmate population, in addition to the types of offences that resulted in the inmates terms of custody. One provincial institution in western British Columbia, and

one provincial institution located in central Ontario were selected for the study. All inmates who participated in the research were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality by interviewers, and singed a consent form. Each inmate was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes. The protocol included open and closed ended questions. All participants were given a $20 honorarium for partaking in the study. Inmates received the honorariums on the day when they were released.

RELEASEE refers to persons who are no longer in prison, but who were recently held in provincial corrections facilities either as convicted offenders or while on remand.   It is important to note that given our interest in the relationship between homelessness and incarceration, people who have experienced homelessness have been over-sampled. The population of releasees interviewed includes:

a) *Housed releasees* – individuals who have stable, permanent housing they can access.

b) *Underhoused releasees* – individuals who have a precarious housing situation, may be temporarily staying with friends or relatives and paying rent, or may have been in treatment at the time of the interview.

c) *Homeless releasees* – individuals without stable or permanent housing who are sleeping out of doors or in temporary shelters.

Using snowball and quota sampling techniques, released ex-inmates were obtained from organizations that catered to the needs of recently released inmates in Ontario and British Columbia. These organizations included Alcoholic's Anonymous, employment counselling centres, methadone clinics, drop in centres, etc. Many of the interviews were acquired with the assistance of John Howard Society in both British Columbia and Ontario. Similar to the incarcerated sample, released persons were all guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality by the interviewers, and each signed a consent form. Each released man was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes with a protocol that also included open and closed ended questions.

Other homeless releasees were contacted through three organizations serving homeless persons in Toronto. The first was a large male homeless shelter, located in the downtown core of the city. The second from an organization that provides service to under housed drug users in Toronto, and finally a

street youth drop in centre. Each participant was provided with a $20 honorarium, and asked to sign a consent form that assured his anonymity and confidentiality. Eligibility criteria for this sample were simply based on participants having recently been released from an Ontario correctional facility. Staff members at each respective organization recruited clients. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Information was collected using a survey that is located in the appendix of this report.

PLANNERS refers to persons who are responsible for "discharge planning" in provincial corrections facilities, either as corrections employees or as volunteers. The 14 planners who were interviewed for the study were selected using snowball techniques. Normally, when interviewers were in the institutions officials were asked if they could interview discharge planners. In most cases, the planners who were on the job at the time when the interviewer was in the institution were the people interviewed for the study. All planners signed consent forms. Data from the planners were collected in an interview that lasted about one hour.

4.1.1 Data Limitations

Given the nature of the populations that were included in this study—prison inmates, releasees who are housed, under-housed and homeless, and discharge planners—it was not realistic to attempt to draw random samples that would be able to provide accurate statistical representations of these four populations. We caution the reader regarding generalizations about all inmates who have been discharged from provincial corrections facilities, as we did not sample a large number of inmates who upon release were housed and in need of minimal discharge planning. But every effort were made within each sample to include participants who were judged by those employed in the four settings as being, at face value, an honest representation of the broader group from which the selection was made. Since this study is not concerned with formal hypothesis testing, we believe that the samples we have assembled here can provide the range of data necessary to satisfactorily address the research questions posed for this study.

For this project, we limited our research to a study of male inmates, releasees and homeless persons. While we recognize the significance of gender and the need to investigate discharge planning and the experience of women, we made the decision to limit our study to males. We do not make the

presumption that the experiences of males and females – whether referring to inmates, releasees or homeless – are identical.

We also experienced some challenges in gaining access to interview subjects in prisons. In Ontario, this was particularly problematic, and as such, we were not able to interview the volume of inmates and prison personnel that we had hoped to.

Finally, in spite of the fact we did research in two provinces, our analysis will emphasize the Ontario context. We interviewed discharge planners from both Ontario and British Columbia, but due to limitations in our understanding of corrections in the latter province, our analysis will focus on Ontario. Similarly, we were able to interview inmates and releasees in both British Columbia and Ontario. However, because our analysis of the populations from the two provinces reveals overwhelming similarities in terms of backgrounds, situational variables and experiences of discharge planning.

4.2 Findings: The Discharge Planning Process

In the following section, we review the Discharge Planning Process. We begin with a review of discharge planning policy in Ontario, followed by a depiction of the discharge planning process in one Ontario facility, revealed through interviews with corrections officials responsible for this work[7]. Against this backdrop, we also explore the experiences of discharge planning from the perspectives of inmates and releasees (both domiciled and homeless). What we will see is a lack of congruence between policy and practice, and between the perceptions of discharge planning by those who provide it, and those who receive it.

4.2.1   Correctional programs for provincial inmates

In Canada, provincial governments are responsible for persons convicted of crimes and are sentenced to less than two years, as well as the care and incarceration of people awaiting trial or sentencing (on remand). The programs and services available for convicted prisoners are not the same as for

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7   This section focuses on discharge planning in Ontario, as we were unable to obtain sufficient information regarding discharge planning in provincial corrections facilities in British Columbia to allow us to provide a proper description.

those on remand, and this distinction will be noted throughout this section. The focus of analysis will be on the policies and practices of correctional programs and discharge planning in Ontario. Interviews were done with persons responsible for discharge planning in both provinces.

Stated in the policy directives of the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Commissioner's Directive 726) is the mandate: "to ensure that correctional programs meet the identified needs of offenders and promote successful reintegration". This includes "in-prison" supports as well as discharge planning. Prisoners who are convicted of a crime (as opposed to those who are awaiting trial or sentencing on remand) are provided with a "correctional plan" that identifies needs and makes suggestions regarding programming. Psychological assessments are mandatory only for those prisoners convicted of violent crimes and high-risk sex offenders, but not those deemed to have other mental health problems. Prisoners with identified substance use problems are referred to counselling for support.

Correctional programs provided within prisons include work/skills training, education, counselling and programs for substance use, violence and sex offenders, etc. Participation is voluntary and requires informed consent, however prisoners are encouraged to take part in such programs and early release may be tied to such participation. In some cases (sex offenders), post treatment assessments will be done to determine the effectiveness of treatment and to assess risk.

The Province of Ontario outlines a series of procedures for releasing prisoners. All prisoners (who were convicted of a crime) receive information on the conditions of their discharge, a "certificate of release", and identification. They are issued any savings they may have accrued while in prison, and all prisoners are released with a minimum of $50. Prisoners are released into the community that they were arrested in or to their last place of residence, and the police and, where relevant, inform specific community services of the impending release. Those who receive conditional releases (parole, work release) will have additional conditions attached, and may receive additional community supports. The Ontario Government does not have the mandate or responsibility to provide programming and services in the community once a prisoner has completed their sentence, nor for those who were on remand but who have been released.

4.2.2   Discharge Planning for Provincial Inmates

Discharge planning is provided for inmates in Provincial Corrections Facilities by corrections staff and by community-based groups such as the John Howard Society and Ontario Multi-Faith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care. The community-based groups provide both in-prison counselling regarding discharge, as well as some transitional supports in the community. We once again remind the reader that discharge planning services (both institutional and community-based) and reintegrative supports differ not only provincially, but regionally and institiutionally within provinces.

While discharge planning is not officially mandated for all prisoners in Ontario (it is primarily available for those convicted of a crime), it does appear that it is the goal of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services that prisoners receive some form of support and planning by corrections staff prior to discharge. However, because different institutions are responsible for the development of program plans and delivery, the nature of discharge planning will vary from institution to institution. While the provincial government has been criticized for a lack of a "standard policy throughout the province" (NHI, 2005: 9), it is also true that as part of the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Accessibility Plan (2005-06), "(b)est practices guidelines for Discharge Planning, including areas that focus on offenders with special needs, have been developed and approved by senior management" (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2006). For this project, we have not been able to evaluate the implementation of this new policy direction.

However, it is worth reviewing some of the fundamental changes in criminal justice policy relating to corrections in Ontario that have occurred since the mid-1990s, as these have had an impact on discharge planning in provincial prisons and supports for prisoner re-entry.   Many of these changes were the result of reforms by the provincial government (under Mike Harris' Conservatives) that have been intended to reduce costs and as part of a neo-conservative drive to move towards "no frills" prisons. The end result has been that fewer inmates in Ontario have access to discharge planning and transitional supports. Some of these key changes include:

- **Reduced program support for discharge planning**. Transitional support for releasees has historically been the purview of both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Since 1995, "Funding for many

community-based programs and services for offenders have been eliminated or reduced. These include programs geared to: employment, family counselling, men who are abusive, community youth support, diversion and discharge planning for those being released" (John Howard Society, 2000:1). It is not clear how many of these programs have been replaced or enhanced since the beginning of the decade.

Reduced funding means that non-governmental organizations have less capacity to enter prisons and engage in thorough discharge planning exercises with high risk prisoners, and that there are fewer resources in the community for discharge planners to refer releasees to.   Cutbacks for parole/probation officers means higher case loads which compromises their ability to offer effective supports (Government of Canada, National Homelessness Initiative, 2005).

• **Reduction in Parole and Conditional Release Programs.**   Since the mid-1990's, the use of conditional release programs for provincial inmates has declined dramatically. For instance, in 1993/994, the average count of convicts on provincial parole in Ontario was around 1800, and in 2004/5, this number dropped to less than 200.

• **Elimination of halfway houses.**   As part of the reforms of the mid-late 1990s, the Ontario government eliminated halfway house and transitional housing programs for provincial prisoners, which has affected transitional support, employment and the opportunity to maintain stronger family supports. According to the John Howard Society of Ontario, the elimination of provincial funding for halfway houses limits released inmates' opportunities to "maintain community and family responsibilities, such as employment, school or child care" (JHS, July 2000: 1).   As a replacement for the provincial halfway house system, the government decided to endorse and expand electronic monitoring. While 'house arrest" does provide restricted offender access to the community, and some argue that the tool is more cost effective than staffing and providing service in halfway houses, electronic surveillance does not normally involve programs and services designed to reduce offending, which were a major component of the now defunct halfway house system. In addition, people who are homeless are clearly not eligible for house arrest.

- **Increase in remand population.** Those on "remand" are persons being held in custody and awaiting trial or sentencing, and are therefore, under our system, presumed innocent. Since the early 1990s, fewer persons charged with offences have been granted bail and have been kept in detention on remand. This has led to a steady increase in the size of the remand population, while at the same time the number of persons convicted of offences has declined (for more details, see Section 2.2).

  In addition to the growth in the percentage of persons held in Provincial Corrections Facilities who are being held on remand (at present, they make up 60% of the population in Ontario) the average length of time on remand has also increased, from 22 days to 34. Those on remand for even a short period of time whether convicted of a crime or not, experience disruptions to their day-to-day lives, including the potential loss of housing and employment.   It is also important to remember that people who are homeless are more likely to be held on remand, as bail conditions often require a home and employment.

  Unfortunately, because of a policy decision in the 1990s, Ontario's Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has deemed that those persons being held on remand are not eligible for programs available to sentenced prisoners, including discharge planning supports. However, there are indications that a shift in this thinking is beginning, and that in some prisons, inmates on remand are getting access to supports.

4.2.3   Perspectives on Discharge Planning: Staff Responsible for Discharge Planning in Ontario Provincial Corrections Facilities

Discharge planning is typically done by corrections staff and / or employees or volunteers from non-governmental organizations such as the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society and Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.   As part of our research, we interviewed five discharge planners in an Ontario provincial facility, all of whom were provincial employees.   This provides a snapshot of how staff at one prison deal with the issue of discharge planning. Because different facilities organize their programs (including discharge planning) in different ways, we urge caution in generalizing from these findings.

Within this provincial facility all five persons interviewed carried some

responsibility for discharge planning. However, with the exception of one individual (the transition coordinator), discharge planning was considered only a part of the employee's responsibility. As a group, they report that they spend between 15 minutes and an hour with each releasee. The intensity and depth of the discharge planning varies from planner to planner, based on their job description and resources they have access to. This means that there is not a consistent approach to discharge planning, and different inmates will receive different levels of support.   The transition coordinator, presumably because of her job description, does the most intensive work with releasees.

Discharge planning may involve the identification of needs, sharing of information, establishing community linkages where needed, ensuring accommodation support and providing other supports within the community to assist in the transition. From our interviews, it is evident that though efforts were made to assess needs, due to large caseloads, additional responsibilities and lack of resources both within the prisons and in the community, the bulk of discharge planning involves merely the sharing of information, rather than more intensive planning involving contact with and establishment of appropriate and necessary supports in the community. Most suggest when possible they may try to make referrals to major institutions in the community, such as Alcoholics anonymous, CAMH, CMHA, Ontario Works and the reintegration programs of the Multifaith Council and the John Howard Society. The areas covered in discharge planning may include employment, mental health and substance use issues, family contacts and accommodation.

Employment supports arranged by discharge planners vary considerably, ranging from nothing at all, to providing the person job ads from the internet. Arrangements with Ontario Works are sometimes set up prior to release. Some planners strive to provide more intensive support:

> "Yes, I will make telephone calls to employers for them or allow them to make telephone calls to employers. I'll counsel them about the appropriateness of employment i.e., if a guy has a substance abuse problem and wants to go back to an environment that might trigger him."
> (Social Worker 4, Ontario Provincial Facility)

In other cases, participation in in-prison programming may assist in this area.

> "(Our facility) has a brick laying pre-apprenticeship program –
> inmates leave with jobs and pre-apprenticeship training. If they
> complete this program inmates leave with a job, hard hat, work boots,
> housing secured and Ontario Works. They are then monitored by
> Education Department while out for next 8 weeks to ensure they are

coping."
<div align="right">(Social Worker 5, Ontario Provincial Facility)</div>

Prisoners who have been identified previously as requiring support for substance use problems or anger management, or who may be convicted sex offenders, may receive additional discharge planning support from the counsellors they have been working with while incarcerated, in order to establish supports in the community.

> "Yes, with sex offenders, we notify them (inmates) of sex offender registry, review conditions and remind inmates of them."
> <div align="right">(Social Worker 2, Ontario Provincial Facility)</div>

> "We are in contact with treatment facilities on a case by case basis".
> <div align="right">(Social Worker 3, Ontario Provincial Facility)</div>

Though inmates may get some support for substance use while in prison (this prison had three substance abuse counsellors), referrals to the community (which seem to focus only on treatment rather than harm reduction) are often difficult to arrange and manage. This is due not only to the lack of staff resources within prisons, but also reflects the challenges of finding and obtaining timely and appropriate sources within the community.

> "More staff are required . . . at my institution we are doing what we can but resources are limited. Linkages to counselling prior to release are non-existent. Bed availability and timing to get inmates into treatment is not effective."
> <div align="right">(Social Worker 4 Ontario Provincial Facility)</div>

> "In some cases, some treatment facilities (residential) often won't accept people with arson charges."
> <div align="right">(Social Worker 3 Ontario Provincial Facility)</div>

> "It would be helpful to have the ability to arrange to have someone taken directly from CNCC to a treatment facility."
> <div align="right">(Social Worker 3 Ontario Provincial Facility)</div>

Supports in contacting family are arranged if the inmate requests this. However, in some cases this can lead to problems with accommodation, if a spouse, partner or family member, for instance, decides that they do not wish the inmate to move back with them.

The range of supports for obtaining post-release accommodations appears to be quite limited. While one planner indicated that she attempted to assist all of her clients in obtaining housing, she was unusual in this regard. Several of the planners reported that at best, they would simply provide releasees with a list of shelters and hostels in the area they were to be discharged to. That is, if

prisoners do not have pre-arranged accommodation or a general expectation that they can access housing through family or friends, the main discharge planning strategy seems to be to direct releasees to the shelter system for homeless people. In spite of the importance of accommodation as a transitional support, several staff indicate that they are not provided with the resources to do an adequate job in this area:

> "For me, it's a time thing and I have never been directed to do that kind of work. I don't think here it has been deemed a priority".
> (Social Worker 2, Ontario Provincial Facility)

In summary, all of the planners we spoke with see the value of discharge planning and transitional supports, and believe that if done effectively, can have a positive effect on recidivism.

> "Offenders need to be returned to healthy living and work environments that will assist with their new lifestyle."
> (Social Worker 4, Ontario Provincial Facility)

> "If they get released and have nothing they are possibly going to commit another offence to get their necessities of life met. They relapse to old friends and behaviours."
> (Social Worker 1, Ontario Provincial Facility)

> "If they are going out with no housing/support and family relationships are broken down, the chances of re-offending are far greater. Anxiety levels high when leaving."
> (Social Worker 2, Ontario Provincial Facility)

> "If an effective plan is not set up that gives the inmate an opportunity to use that for an excuse to offend again. Inmates are overwhelmed with adjustment to community they need an effective discharge plan."
> (Social Worker 5, Ontario Provincial Facility)

At the same time, the planners recognize that under the current conditions, it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of releasees. Their concerns have to do with inadequate resource within corrections, the absence of policies to support inmates on remand, and the inadequacies of community based resources to make referrals to:

> "More staff are required. At my institution we are doing what we can but resources are limited. Linkages to counselling prior to release are non-existent. Bed availability and timing to get inmates into treatment is not effective."
> (Social Worker 4 Ontario Provincial Facility)

> "I suppose it's a matter of manpower, with our present staffing. We would not have the time."
> (Social Worker 2, Ontario Provincial Facility)

"From the remand side of it, we technically do not have a discharge process. This is very frustrating. For the guys, they can't get their property, court may have not even been in the town they come from, they are stuck with no property, no money, no transportation."

(Social Worker 1, Ontario Provincial Facility)

"(We need) Community agencies being more receptive to working/assisting inmates; landlords being more receptive to giving inmates a chance. P&P giving them a chance, believing in them."

(Social Worker 5, Ontario Provincial Facility)

4.3 Inmates and the Discharge Planning Process

At this point, we have painted a picture of the discharge planning process for provincial inmates. Government policies suggest convicted inmates (those not on remand) are eligible for discharge planning support, and corrections staff recognize the importance of discharge planning. However, in a context where resources to support discharge planning both within corrections and the non-profit sector have been cut back in the name of efficiency and "no-frills" prisons, it is not clear to what degree inmates are receiving transitional supports, and the quality of such supports.

In this section, we examine the experience of discharge planning from the perspective of those who have received it, including both inmates and individuals who are now released from prison. In order to deepen our understanding of the relationship between discharge planning and incarceration, we compare the experiences of inmates (convicted persons currently held in provincial facilities) and releasees, including those who are housed, underhoused or homeless persons).

4.3.1 Demographics and Background Factors

We begin this section of the report with a comparison of descriptive statistics relates to the backgrounds of the inmates, releasees and homeless people who were interviewed for this study. It is argued that there is merit in comparing the backgrounds and demographic features of incarcerated persons and people who are homeless. This is because it is an axiom in sociological research that background variables - including things such as education, history of substance use, etc. – can tell us something about the current situations, behaviours and practices of a population group.

The information displayed in Table 2 suggests that, with the exception of the ages of the three samples, the backgrounds of the men within each group are similar. First, the vast majority (9 out of 10), were born in Canada. Second, each group has a much higher proportion of Aboriginal people contained within it than is the case for the general Canadian population (which is around 3%). Third, in terms of levels of educational attainment, the three samples are alike in the numbers who were unable to proceed past grade 9. In fact, over 20 percent of studies participants were unable to get beyond grade nine, and very few attended school beyond the high school level. Similarities between the four samples are also found in the number of times inmates and homeless men reported to having had been incarcerated in the past 5 years. Interestingly, recently released inmates (particularly those who are homeless) were less likely to have been incarcerated more than 5 times over the past 5 years.

Table 2:
Backgrounds of Incarcerated Inmates and Releasees (housed, underhoused and homeless)

	Incarcerated Inmates	Releasees			
		Housed	Under housed	Homeless	TOTAL releasees
Mean Age	28.8	39.6	36.5	37.9	37.8
Percent Born in Canada	93%	90%	96%	87%	91%
Self Identified Native/Aboriginal/First Nations	20%	30%	17%	22%	24%
Educational Level					
< Grade 9	20%	22.5%	29.2%	22.6%	24%
Some High School	34%	42.5%	16.6%	22.6%	28.2%
High School (or GED)	40%	25%	45.8%	43.2%	37.6%
College/University	6%	10%	8.4%	11.4%	10.3%
Number of times incarcerated (past 5 years)					
Once	17%	12%	23%	12%	14%
Twice	14%	15%	23%	15%	16%
3-5 Times	31%	47%	36%	42%	43%
Over 5 Times	38%	22%	9%	30%	24%
N=	38	40	23	53	117

While not contained in the statistics contained in Table 2, our conversations with the men from these four groups revealed just how much more likely it was the case that they grew up in non-traditional family settings. Many had spent time in foster care, while others lived with grandparents during their early years. Levels of illegal substance usage, particularly heroin and cocaine, is also much higher within these three samples than are levels obtained from

the general population of Canadian males who fall within similar age brackets.

By and large, the similarities noted between these three groups denote considerable uniformity, especially the inmates and releasees (which is not unexpected). But the homeless men who were once institutionalized also share many of the general characteristics of the other two populations. These characteristics will provide an important backdrop for the upcoming analysis.

4.3.2 Inmates and the Discharge Planning Process

How do inmates experience the discharge planning process? To address this question a group of 38 inmates were interviewed and asked a wide range of questions related to their custodial discharge experiences. In total, 35% of the inmates reported that they had specifically met with a staff person in the institution who discussed with them a discharge plan. It is also important to keep in mind inmates in this sample were all entitled for discharge planning, since all were serving time under sentence, not under remand awaiting trial or sentencing. Moreover, most were soon approaching the date of their release.

There were few differences in the percentage of B.C. and Ontario inmates who reported to have received discharge planning from institutional staff—about one-third in each sample. There is some evidence to suggest, however, that prior inmate drug use may be associated with attaining some kind of discharge planning in both provinces. In British Columbia, for instance, 83% of those inmates who thought that they had been in contact with a discharge planner also reported to have been heroin users prior to their incarceration. The situation was similar in Ontario, but inmates who were crack/cocaine users were the most likely to report some level of staff assistance with a discharge plan. While there were relatively few heroin users in the Ontario sample, 67% of those who had received discharge planning used cocaine/crack before being incarcerated.   On the other hand, inmates who did not report to be opiate or cocaine users in the past were less likely to have received a discharge plan. It appears, then, that institutional drug counsellors are involved, to some extent, in the discharge planning process.

There were some significant ethno-racial differences in the reported experience of the discharge planning process as well. Interestingly, Aboriginal inmates received less contact with discharge planners than non-Aboriginals. While 11 of the 27 (41%) non-Aboriginal inmates indicated to our interviewers

that they had contact with a staff person to discuss a discharge plan, only 1 of 7 (14%) Aboriginal inmates reported that they had this type of pre-release contact. These differences, however, can be partly accounted for by the fact that fewer Aboriginal people in either the Ontario or B.C. samples were crack/cocaine or heroin users, compared to the non-Aboriginal population. One hundred percent of Aboriginal inmates reported to be heavy drinkers prior to their incarceration, but the vast majority did not receive any planning or assistance with their release. It appears to be the case that inmates with cocaine and/or heroin problems attract more attention from authorities about discharge planning than men with pre-prison entry drinking problems. Perhaps authorities are more sensitive to the needs of illegal drugs users and the risks that these released inmates pose to the community, and are less concerned with inmates who have drinking problems, for example.

Age, sentence length, and number of past convictions are unrelated to whether or not an inmate reported to have received a discharge plan. Bearing in mind the small sample size used to generate these statistics, it is not possible to judge their generalizability. But the issue of illegal drug use and discharge planning would be an ideal focus for further research.

Since this study only interviewed inmates who were serving court imposed sentences, one must bear in mind relatively few inmates in Ontario and British Columbia provincial correctional institutions are the recipients of systematic release planning because so many inmates are serving "dead time" – that is, they are in prison on remand. As we have argued throughout this report, Ontario and B.C. inmates who serve time on remand are not entitled to formal discharge planning. And since 34% on inmates in B.C. and 60% of inmates in Ontario are serving remand time, this adds up to a large number of people who are being released into the community with time served without a discharge plan. More than this, inmates who are given short sentences after serving time on remand may also miss out on a formal discharge plan due to issues over timing and organization.

> "I don't see a lot of remand inmates who have some sort of access to health and abuse programs, even though they are not sentenced. A lot of people come here and do remand, and get their time served. In my situation, I got a 90-day sentence, since my remand time, I only have 2 weeks left. It's a disadvantage. It takes longer time to set up discharge plans, but it's not the inmates' fault."   (B.C. inmate)

For those inmates who did report having received discharge planning, it was

not always clear just who actually was involved in the pre-release planning process. It appears that the some level of service is being provided on an indirect ad hoc basis by staff and volunteers addressing the needs of opiate and cocaine users. In any case, for those inmates who did receive some discharge planning assistance, a number of areas surrounding post release were addressed. In Ontario, assistance with finding housing was an area where inmates reported the most attention. In B.C., consideration was most likely to be directed at substance abuse issues and supports upon release. This is not surprising given the high number of B.C. inmates who had used heroin in the past, compared to the Ontario inmates, where cocaine and crack use were more prevalent prior to incarceration. Employment, family reunification, mental health, and physical health counselling were the other areas that received attention in the discharging process, according to our interviewees.

4.3.3 Releasees and the Discharge Planning Process

Below, we examine the experience of discharge planning from the perspectives of those who received it, and who are now released from prison. This includes three groups of releasees: those who are housed, those who are underhoused, and those who are homeless. All interviewees were incarcerated in provincial facilities in the previous six months.

Currently housed recent releases from Ontario and British Columbia were asked by interviewers if there was anybody in the institution from where they were last released who was responsible for their discharge planning. Under half (40%) of these individuals in both provinces reported that they had seen a staff discharge planner prior to the completion of their sentence.   Of those releasees designated as underhoused, 45% reported that they received discharge planning (the higher percentage of underhoused receiving discharge planning may reflect the fact that several are in treatment).

The third population group examined were homeless releasees residing in shelters or else were living on the streets who had recently been incarcerated in an Ontario or British Columbia correctional facility. Of the 52 homeless men interviewed, 15 (29%) reported that they had met with a correctional staff person who talked to them about a release plan. This figure is lower than numbers obtained from the domiciled population of releasees and the group of presently incarcerated inmates.

Releasees who did receive discharge planning – whether housed, underhoused or homeless - were asked to state how useful the planning was in terms of employment, housing, family reunification, health, and dealing with substance abuse. Some found this discharge planning to be quite helpful:

> "Ah, yeah there was a discharge planner. I can't remember the ladies name, but she was very very helpful. Helped do a resume, you know, get my family contacts back, clothing for when I got released, very helpful, very helpful."
> (Ontario releasee - currently homeless)

> "John Howard Society helped with getting access to my vehicle and my personal property that had been seized by police. She made arrangements with a friend of mine and contacted 3 detachments of the RCMP and acted as a liaison and arranged from my friend to be able to go down and pick everything up. I didn't know about JH before so it opened the door for getting help for things that were sort of beyond my control at that time. And for things like résumés and stuff it was like a refresher course."
> (British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

Interestingly, for those releasees who did receive planning, the area that was typically found to be most the effective was once again the domain of substance abuse. Here are a few examples of the experiences for those who did receive a discharge plan.

> "Yeah…the discharge planning… the only discharge planning that I had, which had success was at the Don jail… pretty good, too, because a lady came to see you, a week before you get out. And had everything for you before you got released, like welfare, you gotta pick your cheque for your housing, and you go to get your money, and get your money for the housing for the next week or two… pretty well…Yeah, a social worker came in, and after you get out, you part, like…also someone from the John Howard…"
> (Ontario releasee - currently homeless)

> "Rev Ray helped me out with clothing. I had no clothes! The drug and alcohol counselor helped me out with getting into the risk-light program at the New Life mission so I had a safe, secure and drug free environment to go to. The CO liaison worker to the MHR set me up with welfare file. The drug and alcohol counselor laid the groundwork for me to attend the Mecca program up at Thompson Rivers University…I got set up with appointment with the interior health authority to see a drug and alcohol authority there who I'm in the process of doing counseling session with and at whatever time he sees fit he'll send me in a particular direction and I will follow his advice and his lead and see where it takes me."
> (British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

However, the majority of releasees – whether housed, homeless or underhoused - reported not to have received a discharge plan prior to release.

The following remarks are typical examples encountered by 64% percent of releasees interviewed in Ontario and British Columbia.

> "You get nothing when released, no one to greet you. If you say you're going to help, actually help them." "And hey, they don't plan it, they just throw you out, you know what I mean."
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently underhoused)</div>

> "I've never…I didn't even think they did that [discharge planning]… Nobody did that. None of the times, over the past 25 years has…I don't even remember anyone even talking about that…up until today. That was about the extent of it. "
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently homeless)</div>

> "No, not that I can think of. Other than the fact that my experience had no sort of planning for the future after release, when it should I can't stop thinking about it, ever since you mentioned, that they should show somebody how to… I mean, it's like I'm in a different country, and I don't know anyone. That would be the case. I'm learning the language. So, that should be looked at, if anything…."
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently homeless)</div>

> "No discharge planning – that's it, you're free to go, give me token and tell me to go."
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently homeless)</div>

> "No – never [Discharge Plan]. I've been to jail when I was younger 15-16 times – never once has anyone ever asked me where I lived. This is how I ended up on the streets several times.
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently homeless)</div>

> "No. – not even approached. There could be a possibility they might do it in Pennetang, because they're pretty organized in there – but I didn't serve much time there to get it. As for the Don – no. There was a guy who went there for 2-4 years, and turned it into hell – no."
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently housed)</div>

> "If you have something to come out to, then you're gonna be all right, but if you got nothing to come out to, then you have to go to a shelter, and then you gotta start out… it sucks. "
>
> <div align="right">(Ontario releasee - currently homeless)</div>

It is important to realize, then, that regardless of government policy re: discharge planning for provincial inmates, and regardless of existing resources within correctional facilities and provided by non-profit groups, the vast majority of releasees in this study either did not receive discharge planning, or did not experience whatever help they did receive as a transitional support.

4.4 The Challenges of Post-Prison Release

Discharge planning is only an issue if the transition from prison to community is seen as potentially problematic. That is, if release from prison is followed by unemployment, homelessness, fractured relationships, problem addictions and a return to crime. A key theme of this report is that many releasees do indeed face considerable challenges in making the transition, and at the same time, people with a history of homelessness are particularly vulnerable. In this section, we review our data regarding the experiences of housed, underhoused and homeless releasees in the areas of housing, income, health (including mental health and addictions) and relationships.

4.4.1 Housing

> "But I never, never in my life have I ever been in a prison in Toronto where someone has offered to assist me in finding things like housing before I get out of jail." (Ontario releasee - currently homeless)

Obtaining adequate housing is of course a challenge for many releasees, and it goes without saying that the inability to do so is a defining feature of homelessness. Individuals who are poor, who have a previous record of homelessness, who have weak (or nonexistent) attachments to family and friends, are particularly at risk. Our sample selected individuals for whom obtaining and maintaining housing is a challenge: 45% of our sample of releasees were homeless at the time of the interview, 20% were underhoused, and 34% were housed.

The category we have defined as underhoused is important to consider. This is a group of people who do currently have shelter (staying with friends or family, temporarily in treatment, or in rental accommodations they are having difficulty maintaining), but for whom their tenancy is very uncertain:

> "I am going to be evicted at the end of the month. I have no place now . . . After next week, I am homeless. For a month. And then August 1, my brother, not real brother, my stepbrother…his roommate is leaving at the end of the month, and he says he needs a room mate, and if I want to go in with him, I can. And its only $350 that I have to pay, and its a two bedroom apartment. Its gonna be kinda weird, its gonna be the first time that I have actually lived in an apartment that's not just a dinky little room. Like the room I have right now is smaller than this room, and one of my friends lives with me too…Usually, I am just there to sleep…and I have to clean it up because health inspector is coming."
> (Ontario releasee - currently underhoused)

"When I was released in November 2005 I stayed with family members in London for a few months. I then came to Barrie in January and stayed with a friend – no rent – for one week, and another friends for a few days. We went to a shelter for about 3 weeks and I'm now staying at a friends house again."   (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

 " . . .I was staying at a friends, and he takes people in, and at some point, he had seven people there. So I couldn't take it, I threw everyone out, then he told me, "you can't do that." I said, "yes I can do that… you wanna see?" I threw everyone out, packed my bag, and left. I'm not too particular about who I offend, when I get pissed off. That's probably part of why I end up in jail."   (Ontario releasee - currently homeless)

"I lived with friends, uncles…I lived from place to place. Nothing really stable. Eventually I got an apartment for myself. I've been on my own since I was 15, I stayed in place to place and then got my place at 24."
                    (British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

In fact, the vast majority of releasees – regardless of their current housing situation, faced challenges obtaining and maintaining appropriate shelter. It is worth pointing out that of those defined as housed or underhoused, 80% reported being homeless at some time in the previous six months or since being released from prison. Forty three percent reported that since being released from jail they found it difficult finding a place to stay at least one a week, with 34% reporting that was a problem they faced on a daily basis. Of those who were currently housed, sixty five percent reported to have stayed in a shelter on at least one occasion during the last six months. Few releasees overall, then, reported a high degree of stable housing since being released.

One of the consequences of being released from prison with inadequate housing supports and minimal income is that people often wind up having to live in unsafe neighbourhoods, where they are at risk of being victimized and / or being drawn into criminal situations. In our survey, the vast majority of homeless releasees (71%) described their neighbourhoods in unfavourable terms, compared with those who are underhoused (29%) and those who were housed (22%). Releasees were able to identify the relationship between poor housing and other risks that they face:

"This neighbourbood here? Hmm…what's a good word for this? Umm…Crazy? Crazy… because any given time of the day, there's a commotion out in George St. I don't care what time of day, no matter what the weather is like, there's always some kind of commotion outside. So it's a non-stop, crazy-paced, stab you for 2 cents in your pocket kind of neighbourhood…"   (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "Bad. But I have no choice, you know, I have no choice but to live here. But, you know, I go home and I lock my door, and it's quiet in my floor, nobody bothers me, and I jut lock my door and sit there and watch TV and mind my own business. If anybody knocks and I don't know who it is I won't let them in."　　　(Ontario releasee – currently housed)

Many releasees argued that when releasing inmates, consideration should be given to where they are released. Releasing an inmate into the community and placing him in a "bad" environment was considered to be a highly problematic situation:

> "They should focus on where people are going to live, they should have a place, a safe place for the name to live before being released, and rooming houses are not safe. They have booze, drugs, hard drugs. Then some help with getting a job or getting disability."　　　(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "They should give people a choice, like if you want to go into a place where there's not a lot of drugs around because a lot of guys, I don't want to go into a house where people are smoking crack and drinking Listerine and doing all kinds of crazy behaviour. That doesn't do anything good for you. It brings you down even more."
> 　　　(Ontario releasee – currently housed)

In interviews regarding discharge planning, housing was the issue that came up most often amongst both inmates and releasees. Access to housing was viewed as a fundamental first step for successful prisoner reintegration:

> "Housing planning should be mandatory. If they keep wondering why people re-offend, they shouldn't be allowed to release anybody who has no address to go to. And if they got no fixed addressed when they go to jail, they should have, they got case worker, every person in jail has a case worker and they should be on getting somewhere to live, even if its just a halfway house. The crime rate would drop significantly, just from re-offenders."
> 　　　(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

> "Housing definitely. Help looking for employment. After that you can pretty much figure the rest out on your own. Housing and employment are really the most important needs."
> 　　　(Ontario releasee – currently housed)

Releasees were particularly emphatic about the need to ensure that inmates with a history of homelessness received special supports in helping to arrange housing, post-release.

> "So many people (are) trying to get housing. I'm a homeless person, I'm f---ing fed up. The plan – you don't have to come out…if the housing people didn't like you, they didn't let you get in. It's a sore subject for me to talk about the housing issue."　　　(Ontario releasee – currently housed)

> "Well, finding a place, help finding a place, halfway houses or something like that. I got released nowhere and just living on the street, I mean, like, that doesn't make sense to me. And I found it kind of, well, I was pissed off about it. There was no discussion about going somewhere or me finding a place."
>
> (British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

Finally, releasees were very aware of the importance of arranging some sort of accommodation prior to release from remand. That is, the process of being release in such situations often means a direct discharge from the courthouse, without giving the inmate the opportunity to recover belongings or the necessary resources to make arrangements for transition into the community:

> "Having somewhere to go instead of being released onto the street is important. People that get released from jail don't really have nothing, and they have no place to go. And that right back into the crime. I know when I got released before, I got released from the courthouse, and, you're kind of out there, and you do whatever to survive right. Nowhere to go so"
>
> (British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

> "I was released from Surrey courts without my belonging from north Fraser, no money, no clothes, I came in right from a jail transfer and they give me this grey jumpsuit and I didn't even have a quarter to call a recovery house or something. But it was like god was looking out for me or something because as I'm walking towards the bus with a bus ticket they gave me I found a 'toonie' on the ground. It was just pure luck, just as I was thinking about it too, I looked down and there was a toonie and I was like "oh, great, now I can phone the recovery house"….because I was arguing with the sheriffs, like, what do you want me to do break into your cars now? … It was a huge hassle; all they had to do was take me back to north Fraser and everything would have been fine."
>
> (British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

4.4.2 Income: Jobs, benefits and 'Making Money'

Income is of course connected to housing and to being able to move forward in one's life. In Table 3 we present data that describes the employment situation of releasees, and some of their non-employment income generating strategies. It is clear that as a group, releasees are underemployed regardless of their current housing situation, with only 27% currently having a job, and 57% reporting any kind of employment since being released. Those who were housed were much more likely to be employed (40%) than were homeless (22%) or underhoused (17%) releasees. It is worth pointing out that only two thirds of the sample who actually had jobs reported full-time employment.

The unemployment rate for this group of releasees (73%), then, can be compared to the national unemployment rate which for the past six years has hovered around 7%. The unemployment rate is of course higher for those releasees who are homeless or underhoused.

Those who have some kind of shelter are also more likely to access government benefits such as welfare and ODSP than are releasees who are homeless. For those inmates who are identified as being at risk of becoming homelessness, helping to facilitate obtaining necessary government benefits should be seen as a priority transitional support.

<div align="center">

Table 3
Prison Releasees and Income

</div>

	Housed	Under housed	Homeless	Total
Employment Status:				
Are you currently employed?	40%	16%	21%	27%
Have you been employed since your release?	54%	57%	45%	51%
Are you on government benefits?	33%	26%	10%	21%
In the past six months, have you done the following (more than once a week) to make money?				
Panhandled / Squeegeed?	12%	8%	28%	19%
Engaged in prostitution?	0%	0%	6%	3%
Sold drugs?	12%	25%	15%	16%
Stolen property / sold stolen property?	10%	16%	9%	11%
CRIME TOTAL (prostitution, drug dealing, theft)	17%	33%	26%	25%

It follows that releasees as a group are quite aware of the challenges they will face in obtaining employment or benefits once they are discharged from provincial corrections facilities. Several releasees spoke of the risk of leaving prison with few resources and few prospects for employment:

> "I had money coming out of jail – trying to find a way to maintain it even longer…it's kinda hard doing that. It's pretty tough.."
> (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "I've been mooching off my friends – can't make money, and friends get pissed off at me…" (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "I've been on welfare and had odd jobs; tagging clothes and working at a grocery. Before I was addicted I worked often you know."
> (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "I would say, employment would be key, then you'd be making money –

> you'll be working, so you won't have time to spend that money or get into trouble…"   (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

Releasees, then, are well aware of the challenges related to generating income once released. Releasees spoke of the importance of correctional programs relating to employment, and of the necessary role that income plays in a successful transition to the community. Below, releasees identify how the lack of in-prison supports and discharge planning impacts on their ability to generate income and avoid crime. Many feel more attention should be paid to providing employment supports.

> "I think there should be more effort on job planning and educational skills training, on some kind of trade or some education. There's a lot of guys who come out of jail, who don't even know how to apply for jobs, and fill in applications for jobs. Their education is very limited. The institutions really need to focus on job training."
> (British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

> "Like, people who get out try to have it set up so… people wait to receive their money, and in the time they're waiting to receive money, you see them in the street, basically. And when you get your money, a lot of people are drug addicts. So if they can somehow help you when you get out of jail, maybe when you're released, and get your money for food and all that can be made available, so that you're not walking around with no money in your pocket, looking for a place."
> (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

> "No. Never has been (discharge planning). No pre-release plans for anyone. It just doesn't happen. In provincial they don't care. The let you out the front door after your two thirds, and you're gone. Plan or no plan. That's why a lot of people end up going back to the institution 10 days after they are released because they got no choice but to do crime to get money in their pocket to survive. Takes 3 weeks to get an appointment with social services alone, and they won't even accept you, you can't book an appointment when you're in jail, you know."
> (British Columbia Releasee – currently underhoused)

These final remarks are actually indicative of a more general trend that was observed with all participants in this study. That is, 83 percent of the inmates and those interviewed in the community reported that on at least one occasion they broke the law in order to survive.

Given the high rate of unemployment and the fact that only one fifth of the sample are receiving government benefits of any kind, it should not be surprising that a percentage of releasees – whether housed or homeless - engage in non-conventional ways of making money, ranging from quasi-legal (panhandling, squeegeeing and prostitution) to criminal activities. As

research on homelessness suggests, situational factors associated with homelessness and poverty lead many people to engage in such activities in order to obtain cash day-in, day-out, to meet their needs. In this study, people who were homeless were overall more likely to resort to quasi-legal and criminal money-making practices in order to survive, but it is worth pointing out that these strategies are also used by a percentage of releasees who have housing, suggesting the degree of financial stress they also experience.

Finally, releasees spoke of the importance of also providing material supports at the time an inmate is discharged. Many felt that discharging inmates without proper funds, transportation or proper clothing put them in a difficult situation:

> "They should find them somewhere to live, so they can know where they are going so they can plan on trying to look for work. They should also assist them in looking for work. And if they need tool, steel toe boots, they should get those for them. I was offered various jobs before and I couldn't take the job because I didn't have the tools. I could have had a fantastic job but I didn't have the tools."
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently housed)

> "(When I was released) some money would have been nice. Some $200 – 300, because I was released on a Saturday on a long weekend, the bus ticket was all paid for…but to buy personal things, deodorant, toothbrush, all that… basic things"
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

> "Having funds for when you get out (is important). And transportation. Its kinda of hard to walk all over the town, especially when you have probation."
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "Not having ready cash available, housing set up, and having rent paid directly from your cheque until you have the life skills to be able to handle it. Financial planning."
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

> "There was no discharge planning. . . .the clothing I had when I got out was ripped, and they just wanted me to get out like that and wander around. Well I am not doing that, you know. Well, that's a part of discharge planning, the clothing, I would like that dealt with."
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently housed)

> "I know one of my friends, was in the clothes he came in with. And he was released in the winter, and went in the summer…They didn't give him a ticket or anything. If you get arrested in the summer, obviously, you are not gonna be prepared for the winter."
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently housed)

4.4.3 Health, Mental Health and Addictions

The homeless population is in general characterized by poor health, and this is both a cause of, and a product of being homeless (Section 3.2.3). In our survey, we asked respondents several questions in order to gauge their overall health and mental health (See Table 4 below). When asked to evaluate their health compared to other people their age, 37% of homeless releasees rated their health status as "poor to fair", which was worse than either underhoused (25%) and housed (22%) releasees. Adequate nutrition and food security are a challenge for low income Canadians particularly those who are homeless. In our sample, over half of all releasees (51%) report not getting enough food at least once a week.

Overall, one third of all releasees identified themselves as having a disability, with domiciled releasees being the least likely to report this. This is a particularly important issue to point up regarding discharge planning, as it is possible that many inmates are in fact eligible for disability benefits and are unable to work. As was pointed out in the previous section, only 20% of releasees we interviewed were on government benefits, and in most cases this was welfare, not disability benefits.

> "You know, it's not just getting back out but its trying to get going, and then you can't find a place to live, and you're stuck in an "out of the cold" and it's a big run-around, especially when you're disabled…and it's all frustrating but you just gotta keep on plugging, and know the right things to do and the things to stay away from."
>
> (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

Compromised mental health is another factor associated with the homeless population (Section 3.1.3), and is also a risk factor for incarcerated individuals. Twenty nine percent of our total sample of releasees indicated a past diagnosis of a serious mental illness, including schizophrenia (3.4%), bipolar disorder (15.5%), personality disorder (10.3%), and fetal alcohol syndrome (4%). Mental illness was more characteristic of homeless releasees (33%) and underhoused (33%) releasees than those who were currently housed (18%). Nevertheless, the rates of reported mental illness for all releasees are higher than the general population.

Table 4
Health Status of Releasees (including mental health and addictions)

	Housed	Under Housed	Homeless	Total
Health Status:				
Health rated as 'poor to fair'?	22%	25%	37%	30%
Reported Disability	31%	48%	34%	36%
Not enough food (more than once a week)	47%	50%	57%	52%
Mental Health:				
Diagnosis of major mental illness	18%	33%	35%	29%
Met with clinician re: Depression	48%	46%	62%	53%
Reported depression in previous week	63%	62%	64%	63%
Substance Use: Reported daily use of:				
Cigarettes	83%	79%	89%	85%
Alcohol	15%	4%	17%	14%
Marijuana	20%	0%	20%	16%
Crack	5%	12%	25%	15%
Cocaine	0%	8%	13%	8%
Heroin	0%	0%	2%	1%

Over 53% of all releasees had met with a clinician at some point in the past because of depression, and 63% of all releasees had experienced depression at least once in the previous week. In addition, 14% of releasees had met with a clinician or counselor in the past because of a suicide attempt. There are clear indicators, then, that a significant segment of this population has a history of mental health problems.

> "There should be social services, and see if you're emotionally OK…you know, cause I know a lot of guys who go through the jail, and get depressed. They don't know how to deal with depression, that's all. Get some kinda of support groups."
> (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

Substance use has of course been identified as a potential problem for both inmates and people who are homeless. In Table 4 (above,) daily use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana is comparable between all three groups of releasees. Daily use of crack and cocaine is higher amongst homeless and underhoused releasees, however.

As suggested above, it is possible that inmates who are identified as having an *illegal* drug problem may be more likely to receive discharge planning. The nature of these transitional supports is not clear, however. In any event, the ability to control or avoid drug use is not merely dependent upon admission

to 'treatment' or 'detox'. There are a number of interrelated factors that contribute to sustained and problematic substance use, and many of these factors (including poverty, mental health problems, income problems, exposure to other addicts, etc.) intersect when one is homeless, underhoused or when one lives in a dangerous neighbourhood.

The link between homelessness, mental health challenges and substance use is made by a number of releasees. Many argue that there need to be more in-prison supports, and that health, mental health and addictions challenges should be more clearly dealt with through the discharge planning process to ensure that vulnerable people are not placed in situations that will exacerbate their problems:

> "(We need) more counsellors and more everything in terms of that mental health issue. I mean, addictions really is a mental health issue, I think, as much as it is a disease and a physical addiction, you gotta get your head straight, you know."
> (British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

> "Addictions, alcohol that stuff brings you down. If you are going to be surrounded by people like that and behaviour like that you're going to get caught up in that. It takes very strong-willed person not to get caught up in that."
> (Ontario releasee – currently housed)

> "Safe places for . . . recovering drug addicts. A lot of guys who are in jail need, they're sick people, they need counselling, they need some out patient counselling. That would be a great one. Like the mental health unit. They need to introduce it to them, you know, like…programs for addictions . . . for those people its important for them to take part. They need to actually show them they care. They don't actually care. They don't. It would be good for them to actually look at homelessness."
> (British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

> "Drugs . . . Most people in prison are on drugs. They need help to be clean. That is very important. It is the most important. Nothing is more important than drugs and alcohol."
> (Ontario releasee – currently housed)

4.4.4 Relationships

In the literature review, the quality of relationships experienced by inmates and releasees is seen to be significant, both as a predictor of involvement in the justice system, and as a factor that contributes to successful prisoner reintegration. Such issues are of course relevant to this research on releasees.

For instance, 61% of all releasees surveyed (there were no significant differences based on housing status) had been told in the past by counselors or physicians that they had anger management problems. Many releasees suggest that the reason they were in prison in the first place was due to violence and problematic relationships with family, partners and spouses.

Table 5
Characteristics of Releasee's Relationships

	Housed	Under housed	Homeless	Total
Are you lonely (at least once a week)?	50%	71%	66%	62
Are you in contact with family?	68%	70%	55%	62%
Are you currently in a relationship?	35%	18%	24%	27%
Do you have children?	62%	55%	49%	55%
In contact with children (if you have them)?	75%	41%	41%	55%

In Table 5, data is presented that depicts some characteristics of the relationships of releasees. As can be seen, housing status is connected to relationships. Those who are homeless, followed by those who are underhoused, are more likely to report being lonely, and are less likely to be in contact with their family. This group is also less likely to be in a relationship currently, and to have children. They are also more likely to be estranged from their children. All of this suggests that while overall, as a group, releasees demonstrate strained relationships with family, this problem is more acute for those who are without shelter.

Relationships are important for successful transitions to the community. Released inmates who have strong relations with family, a partner or friends are more likely to obtain shelter (even if it is temporary and transitional) moving in with family members (parents, relatives, siblings). Some releasees have their own families (partners, children) that they live with. Family relationships – whatever their form - not only mean that releasees have a home to return to but also may form a basis for support in obtaining employment and in dealing with other post-release challenges. The absence of relationships – especially quality relationships - can place releasees at greater risk of homelessness:

"If they don't have family out there, or they don't have money or their not established out there, they need for the first month or at least some kind of assistance with respect to shelter . . . Some people get out and they're lost, you know, they got to do all this stuff and they're overwhelmed, especially if they have been in for a while."
(British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

Several releasees in interviews discussed the importance of relationships in helping with transitions back to the community, and even the necessity of family for obtaining bail:

"I'm living with my family again. My wife works part time, and we have a joint bank account. I work driving a cab, doing odd jobs. I've been at the present address for two years."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"I am just thinking mostly more about like homeless people, than people that have like families and stuff like that. I am sure that people that have families and stuff, their families are doing everything for them, for when they get released anyway."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"Their bail program makes no sense to me… if you're homeless, and have no family here, then you're stuck in jail, so you expect me to just sit in there? I think the legal system is fucked."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

The quality of relationships releasees have with family members is worth assessing, as families can offer support and a place to move into upon release. Some interviewees reported supportive relations with family members:

"(My family supports me now) yes, because I have changed. I have changed some of my bad ways. They see the changes. They don't nag at me, they put little bit more trust in me. Want me around more often."
(Ontario releasee – currently housed)

"(My family's support) - it's unconditional. It has been proven to be unconditional. It stops after a while. They can only take your shit for a while, then it's… my brother gets disappointed that these things happen, but he's not gonna love me less, you know what I mean?"
(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

"My dad supports me no matter what I do. He doesn't really support me financially because he knows I'm using drugs, but emotionally he's always there." (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

In other cases, releasees reported strained relations with family members:

"My family doesn't want anything to do with me since I've been released - I'm the 'black sheep' of the family."
(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

"They accept my calls, lecture me over the phone, but I hang up on them. "You should think about what you're doing"… You think I don't know that? I don't need any lectures. What are you, a social worker, or something? I don't need that. I already have enough stress."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"My family has no respect, they don't allow me to have contact with my sister, have stopped financial support, and won't allow me to stay with them"
(British Columbia – currently underhoused)

"Disappointed, I guess they are. I'm having a hard time right now with my family"
(Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

"I don't communicate too well with my family – my family has a mixed decision on how they feel about me. They're confused if I'm a good person… "
(British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

Friendships are of course an important type of relationship. Friends can provide support, including temporary shelter. However, many releasees report that they don't have close friends. For others, friends are seen as a problem, rather than as a potential source of support. That is, many releasees report that most of their friends are also involved in crime or are substance users, and continuing a relationship with them once released jeopardizes their ability to 'keep clean' and avoid jail.

For formerly homeless inmates, or those who have problems with addictions, returning them post-release to the same neighbourhoods or to the same conditions (i.e. – homelessness) is then potentially placing them at risk for a relapse into addictions or recidivism. Many releasees recognize this, have ambiguous (or even hostile) feelings about friends, and may wish to avoid reconnecting with them upon release:

"Ya, I'm kind of distant (from my friends). I don't associate with them anymore. They were a bad influence"
(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

"I don't really have any friends. Anybody I know is from my life since I was 13 and I started out on the street and since then I never really had any real friends. They were just either there because I had money or dope, or we hung around because it was mutually beneficial for ourselves. So I got maybe 1 or 2 good friends and that's though recovery. The only friends I really consider friends are the people I met in recovery."
(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

"I left Ontario and took myself out of that situation. I don't associate with them anymore."
(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

"They wonder what I'm doing. I bumped into one of them, and they seem to be supportive of what I'm doing, and actually wonder what I'm up to, and doing. Some of them I am not in touch with, as they are into drinking and drugs, which is funny, because I was the one who started cocaine in the group, I was the only one at the time. But some of them are supportive now of me."   (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

"I no longer have the same friends that I had before I got incarceration. I've left my old friends behind, and made friends with more positive people."   (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

"Yes; any real friends have disowned me. My user friends are there of course. They are just acquaintances. I have no friends in the user world. We just get together and do what we need to do to survive I guess."
               (Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

4.4.5   The Case for Discharge Planning: in their own words.

One of the richer, qualitative components which emerged from this study occurred when our participants were asked if they had any thoughts on what could be done to improve the discharge process. Inmates and releasees appear to be very clear on the challenges they face upon being discharged into the community. They are also aware that the absence of strong transitional planning places them at risk for homelessness, addictions, recidivism and eventually winding up incarcerated again.   In their own words, they make the case for the necessity of discharge planning and transitional supports:

In this final section on results, releasees discuss a number of topics relating to discharge planning. Several spoke of the problems relating to the discharge process, particularly for those released from remand:

"That's my one thing; you be able to be helped just as you're coming out so you don't have to worry. I'm coming out? Ok, I've gotta go to welfare, you know, I gotta find a place. All you're doing is running around, getting all twisted up, and some people get frustrated, they say 'ok, I'll go and have drink because this isn't working out'."
               (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"They should have more people going around in the jails and helping people. People's heads aren't in the right place at the time of release. No where to go, no assistance so you just spend the money they have at the bar."
               (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

Maybe, I don't know if they have AA, CA. If you can get support from them while you are in. That's what brought me to jail every time, it was addictions, using. I lost self control."
               (Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"Discharge planning needs to be done. Many people have direction being if it's a small thing, make them feel wanted or needed, give them help for when they're released."
(British Columbia releasee – currently underhoused)

"Make sure inmates have a place to go or live, give inmates counseling to not get back in trouble and to look at why you were in there. Have welfare appointments ready for them."
(British Columbia releasee – currently housed)

"While there, you are given cloths, food, shelter, and you become sober. Upon release, you are given just the sobriety and a piece of paper. So what happens is we didn't have follow through with the drug counseling, mental health counseling, life management skills, how you manage your time and money, and, possibly teach us how to make resumes. We have all time. Job search, you know a lot of us haven't done that."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"They should contact social services tell them/verify his identity in order for a release to get a welfare check upon release. They should not release you on Friday or a weekend."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

"Little bit of life skills and definitely some kind of arrangements before you are released end up cutting you loose and you go to welfare and you pick up a check and the next because they thing you know you're all messed up. It's not, for a lot of guys, including myself, it's not really a good set up."
(Ontario releasee – currently housed)

"I think a lot more should be done looking at this topic because its really important. Half the time nowadays as far the correctional centres, we're building all these super jails and just warehousing people. We had Americans rent Pennetang and say how they have all these course for inmates to take and there really is diddly squat going on there. The only thing you do when you go to jail is learn how to survive, learn new tricks, learn how to do your criminal activities better and slowly turn into an animal. So, what they're doing there isn't working and they should spend more time working with us inside and upon release so that we don't re offend and keep these places in business, because none of us want to be there."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

When asked who should provide these services many respondents noted by saying that the correctional institutions should be required to ensure that inmates are released with the proper supports. Moreover, several participants mentioned that there should be more co-ordination between correctional institutions and social services. Consider these words:

"Where do we put the responsibility? Do we leave it up to corrections? Corrections has a mandate that once your sentence is up they are no

longer responsible for you. And, just because I don't have a welfare file set up or whatever it doesn't mean that they are not going to let me go. They gotta let me out. So, based on their budgets and their policy, their hands are tied. They can't keep us after about release date. Again, the support workers up at the jail, there aren't enough of them to go around. If you are in a remand situation they won't even see you because they're not under contract to counsel people who have been detained without being convicted and then go to court and then are exonerated or released or given a conditional sentencing to the community where the community is not ready for them, don't even know they're coming. Why? Because there's not enough support staff. It's madness, I'm telling you. And I've been in the ringer for the last 12 years"

(Ontario releasee – currently underhoused)

5.0   Discussion

"A shelter is an external jail with more yard time."
(Ontario releasee – currently homeless)

In this report, we have argued that how we prepare inmates for re-entry has huge implications for communities across the country. If a key goal of corrections is to reduce the likelihood that prison releasees will reoffend and wind up in prison again, it is important to understand what factors may have an impact on this. Our review of the literature suggests that prisoner re-entry supports (corrections programs, discharge planning, and post-release programming) can and do play a role in helping released inmates successfully reintegrate into communities, thus reducing the risk of recidivism.

It is also clear that there is a bidirectional relationship between homelessness and incarceration; that for a number of reasons, people who are homeless are more likely to wind up in prison and that the prison experience itself may place releasees at risk of becoming homeless. It must be asked, then, whether current policy regarding discharge planning adequately accounts for the risk of homelessness, and whether current levels of prisoner re-entry supports are in place to reduce this risk. For, allowing releasees to slide into homelessness puts them in a situation where intersecting challenges (lack of housing, lack of income, health problems and nutritional inadequacy, mental health problems and addictions) may make it more difficult to reintegrate and move on with their lives, and as a result may make it more likely that they reoffend.

5.1 Our Findings

In conducting our research, our goal was to come to a greater understanding of the nature of discharge planning in provincial correctional facilities. We also set out to explore the key similarities and differences between homeless and non-homeless inmates. Finally, we were interested in understanding how discharge planning is experienced by inmates and releasees.

The findings in this study are supportive of the general argument that the needs of provincially released inmates are not being met by the current discharge planning system and that these insufficiencies have important implications for homelessness. While all provincially sentenced inmates are entitled to a discharge plan, according to the findings reported in this study, less than one-half actually received such a plan. For those who did, several of the men we interviewed reported to have benefited from the process, but many others indicated that their post release needs had not been met. According to our interviews with discharge planners, they recognized that under the current conditions it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of all releasees. Their concerns had to do with inadequate resources within corrections, the inadequacies of community-based resources to make referrals, and the absence of policies and program resources to support inmates on remand.

Throughout this study it became clear of that the association between incarceration and homelessness involves a set of processes and events, which arise from economic and social marginality. Survey data collected from this study revealed just how similar the backgrounds were for those currently incarcerated and the men interviewed in the community who had previously been incarcerated. This was the case for both our British Columbia and Ontario samples. The majority were Canadian citizens who had low levels of formal education, most had been incarcerated several times in the past, and many had histories of drug and/or alcohol abuse. Moreover, the percentage of the sample that self-identified as being Aboriginal was much higher than is the case in the general population.

Our interviews with releasees (housed, underhoused and homeless) provided some insights into the relationship between homelessness and incarceration. Men who are homeless are vulnerable to involvement in the justice system because of their poverty, substance use and economic survival strategies, not to mention their criminal records. In addition, the experience of being

homelessness also leads to greater surveillance by law enforcement, and as a result, an increased likelihood of being charged with an offence. Ex-prisoners who become homeless and/or were relying on the shelter system faced a number of barriers to their successful community reintegration. Most of these barriers tended to be associated with:

- Housing

- Income Support

- Health (physical and mental) and Addictions

- Relationships

Examples of such barriers are evident across all domains. For instance, *housed* releasees were shown to be the most likely to have either obtained a job or were able to qualify and collect some form of government assistance. On the other hand, income generation from the informal/illegal economy (i.e., panhandling, stealing and drug dealing) was most prevalent for those releasees who were not properly housed. Recorded levels of mental and physical well-being amongst releasees were also shown to be the lowest for the homeless population. Finally, strained familial relationships were most acute for those who were without stable shelter. These findings are consistent with other research that has focused on this topic in the United States (Petersilia, 2003).

However, though it is clear that the manifestations of social exclusion are greater for homeless releasees than those who are housed, we offer a note of caution. In both our British Columbia and Ontario samples, those releasees who were housed also were marginalized to a great degree. For instance, the unemployment rate for housed releasees, while lower than that of homeless releasees, was still in the range of sixty percent. In addition, it is also important to remember that the three categories of releasees are to some degree fluid. For many housed and under-housed releasees, their shelter situation is precarious. Many have experienced homelessness in the past, and presumably some will again in the future. The line between homelessness and housed releasees may in fact be rather thin.

All of this suggests that greater attention must be paid to supporting inmates prior to and upon release, particularly those deemed to be vulnerable to homelessness. Without putting into place adequate measures that reduce the

risk of homelessness for discharged inmates, we as a society are increasing the likelihood that these people will again face incarceration. The findings from this report have important implications for the kinds of supports that both homeless people and released inmates require so that they are able to stay clear of the criminal justice system. The empirical evidence from this study echoes research from the United States where more than two-thirds of those released from jail or prison will be rearrested (Petersilia, 2003).

While incarceration is intended as a punishment for the range of street crimes that these men have been arrested for, the findings reported in this study suggest that the conditions under which these men are punished and then re-released back into the community is actually a *cause* of much street crime. The institutions that seek to punish, control or manage these individuals draw them deeper into a world that keeps them socially excluded and places them in environments where opportunities to offend are numerous during a time when a person is unable to rely upon socially legitimate means for survival. In fact, this study showed that the majority of participants had engaged in illegal money making in order to survive.

It is well known that a growing criminal record cuts a man off from mainstream society, and the practices of the police, courts and corrections actually perpetuate the reproduction of this culture. With each repeated arrest our participants have less to lose, and have fewer ties and supports that bind them to conventional society. In many respects their poverty is the major reason why they are in conflict with the law. The more often that an individual is incarcerated, the more often one must acquire new identities, new skills and motivations. Successful reintegration is compounded by the fact that employers are reluctant to hire ex-convicts, and landlords are hesitant to rent to them.

According to the research contained in this report, little is being done to break the cycle of what has been referred to by other researchers as: "from the can to the curb." (Novac, et al. 2006).

5.2 Enhancing Transitional Supports

The key goal of prisoner re-entry must be to make the transition from prison to community more effective, in order to reduce the risk of recidivism. It is argued that inadequate transitional supports – manifest in terms of weak or

ineffectual policies, programs and practices to support prisoner re-entry - may in fact jeopardize the successful transition of ex-offenders to the community, and thus pose a public safety risk. Transitional supports include: a) In-prison support programs; b) discharge planning; and c) post-release supports.

While in Ontario, provincial corrections facilities are required to provide a range of corrections programming for inmates who are imprisoned, these are not compulsory, and inmates on remand do not have access to them. It is unclear how well these programs are resourced, and whether inmates have access to the same programming options in different corrections facilities.

Discharge planning appears to be mandated for all convicted inmates in provincial corrections facilities in Ontario, and is provided by prison staff and / or workers and volunteers from organizations such as the John Howard Society and the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care. Again, inmates on remand (60% of the prison population) do not have access to such planning. We argue that discharge planning must be seen as a process, and be linked to post-release supports in the community. Unfortunately, years of cutbacks mean that prisons and non-profit organizations are not well resourced to do the necessary work of transitional support. In addition, transitional programming such as halfway houses are no longer available for provincial inmates.

Based on our research, we argue that a consideration of the following factors should be built into a more robust and comprehensive discharge planning process:

- **Housing** - Obtaining housing as soon as possible is essential for inmates released from prison. Programs that support a transition to housing reduce the likelihood that released inmates will become homeless, a circumstance which undoubtedly exacerbates other risk factors facing ex-convicts, and increases the likelihood of recidivism. Prisoners may require assistance in obtaining either supportive or transitional housing, or housing in the private market, if they are not provided assistance (Baer, 2006:8). Osher et al., argue that offenders with mental illness should be prioritised for supportive housing resources "because the stability of these individuals is both a clinical and a public safety concern" (2003:86).

  Priority should be given to supporting inmates with a history of

homelessness, those who have weak family ties, and those who are identified as having no housing in place before release. This should apply to all inmates, regardless of whether they have been convicted or are on remand. This means a stronger mandate for discharge planning, a greater role for agencies that provide post-release supports, and an investment in transitional housing. Practices which simply involve providing inmates with lists of shelter are clearly inadequate, and in essence increase the risk of homelessness for discharged inmates, while at the same time hand over the responsibility for prisoner re-entry to the homelessness sector.

We are not suggesting that the provinces return to providing halfway houses for supporting discharged provincial inmates, as this is not a practical solution. However, it seems that all levels of government must invest in supportive housing in order to provide inmates with mental health challenges, disabilities, addictions problems and more generally, who are at risk of homelessness, with the supports they need.

- **Employment** - Obtaining employment quickly upon release from prison provides stability and income. Work release programs often assist this transition, and increase the likelihood that prisoners will obtain employment upon release (Visher, et al: 2004; La Vigne, et al., 2004). Project RIO in Texas is a successful program that provides job preparation and work readiness training for released prisoners (Menon, et al., 1992). Programs such as the brick laying pre-apprenticeship program described by an Ontario corrections officer should be evaluated for its effectiveness, and if results are positive, it should be expanded.

  If inmates leave prison without prearranged employment, they will need income support in order to manage the transition from prison to employment and housing. A greater effort should be made to assist inmates in obtaining government benefits, and they should leave prison with sufficient cash to enable them to stabilize their housing situation, and maintain their health and nutritional needs. Such supports should be in place for all releasees, especially for high-risk inmates with physical and mental health problems. A high number of releasees in our study appear to be eligible for disability benefits; they should be supported in obtaining this.

- **Health care** - Where possible, there should be a pre-arranged transfer of care to health care providers for those inmates with identified health and mental health issues. Hammett et al., stress that adherence to treatment regimens for patients with diseases such as HIV or Tuberculosis is critically important to both the health of the patient and to public health (2001: 398), and as such a smooth transition to care in the community is essential. Osher et al., argue that timely support for released prisoners with mental health issues is essential in order to reduce the at risk of homelessness, and may pose a safety risk to themselves or others if they are not provided with appropriate clinical support once released (2001: 83). Considerations must be made to ensure that people are able to pay for such services and medication, if not provided by public health care.

  Those inmates with mental health challenges should not only receive adequate support in prison (whether they are on remand or are convicted), and attention should be paid to managing a transition to care and support in the community post-release. Lack of attention to these supports increases the risk of homelessness for releasees.

- **Substance Use Treatment and Harm Reduction** - Because release is a stressful time, many released inmates find it difficult to avoid alcohol or substance use (Seiter & Kadela, 2003:367). Baer, et al., (2006) argue that there is consensus in the field that In-prison treatment and supports must occur in concert with community-based after care in order to reduce substance use and dependency (Mears, et al., 2003, Moore & Mears, 2003).

  Support for releasees with addictions, then, may mean arranging treatment support, including in-patient detox and / or treatment, individual and / or group based counselling, and outpatient supports. This should be available for those with addiction to alcohol, in addition to illicit drugs. Unfortunately, there is broad agreement that in Ontario, there are not enough treatment spaces or options available. The Toronto Drug Strategy (2005) points out that: "Some types of treatment are non-existent. For example there are no withdrawal management (detox) spaces specifically for youth." There is a need, then, for the provincial government to increase it's investment in treatment programs.

However, support for addictions – whether in prison or post-release – cannot and should not focus only on treatment. There are limits to treatment. It is well established in the literature that less than 20% of those who seek treatment will succeed (Prochaska, et al., 1994). People who are not motivated to abstain will not likely succeed in treatment. More significantly, if other factors that have an impact on addictions are not dealt with (poverty, unemployment, depression, proximity to other addicts), then treatment on its own will only rarely be successful. In other words, getting prisoners into treatment while allowing them to become or remain homeless is a failed approach to addictions.

Finally, harm reduction programming should be mandated in prisons and in post-release programming. Harm reduction is now a widely accepted and pragmatic approach to dealing with substance use. Many prisoners and releasees will find themselves in context where they will be exposed to substances, users and pressures that may feed addictions. In addition, many inmates / releasees may not be ready for – or interested in – abstinence. A responsible approach to addictions that will decrease the risk of recidivism will be to ensure harm reduction methods and programming is widely adopted.

- **Family Support** - Being able to connect inmates with family may lead to temporary or permanent housing, and have a positive impact on employability, if family relationships are close and strong (La Vigne et al., 2004). Wilkinson (2001) describes a successful program where counselling regarding reunification with family and friends is central. Support must also include the family, and ask how they are prepared for the release. If there is a history of dysfunction, planning must be put in place to reduce risk (Travis & Petersilia, 2001:304)

  Individuals with weak connections to family should be identified as high risk for homelessness, and additional resources should be put in place to support the releasee in obtaining – and maintaining – housing.

- **Food and Clothing** - Sometimes prisoners are released without clothing – this appears to be particularly problematic for those on remand. Until prisoners obtain income they lack food security. The lack of food and clothing presents a barrier to obtaining and maintaining housing and employment.

- **Transportation** - Transportation is necessary for released prisoners to return to their communities. Prisoners reported, in a study by Rossman & Roman (2003) that lack of transportation presented a barrier to obtaining employment and accessing services. Transitional planning should account for this.

- **Identification** - People are often discharged from prison without adequate identification. This is even more likely the case if they were homeless prior to incarceration. Support must be provided to ensure people have necessary identification, including birth certificates, SIN cards and health cards. Without such identification, such persons face barriers to accessing employment and benefits that they are entitled to.

- **Support for Sex Offenders and Violent Offenders** – While our research did not explore the circumstances of sex offenders and violent offenders, it is generally agreed that participation in such programs after release is important for such offenders. Unfortunately such programming is not accessible in all communities.

The factors listed here suggest a broad range of needs to be addressed in order to facilitate a successful transition. Some of these require a more focused and intensive level of discharge planning prior to release. Others require a higher degree of managed post-release support in the community.

Different inmates may require different kinds of supports once they are released from prison. Some will be considered to be at higher risk than others. Inmates who are assessed to be low risk are those who require few post-release supports. High risk clients have more extensive and complex needs, either because of the degree to which their health problems (mental health, substance use, for instance) are acute, or because of the multiplicity of risks that they face. This latter point is important, because the risks that offenders face are typically not discrete or isolated. For instance, lack of housing has an impact on employability and vice-versa. Persons with mental health challenges or concurrent disorders may face additional barriers to obtaining housing. As such, then, the potential risks ex-convicts face should not be treated in isolation from each other.

Our research suggests a need for reinvestment in resources both within prisons and the community to support prisoner re-entry. When inmates are discharged and become homeless, they are at increased risk of reincarceration.

If the goal of prisoner re-entry is to enable successful transition to the community and reduce the risk of recidivism, then one would assume that necessary resources must be put in place to ensure that released prisoners do not become homeless.

Unfortunately, the burden of supporting prisoner re-entry often falls upon the providers of services for the homeless. Such services, including homeless shelters, drop-ins, soup kitchens, etc. are not mandated to do the work of prisoner re-entry and reintegration. Staff are not trained in discharge planning and support. Not insignificantly, such agencies are not funded to do this work. In a sense, one could argue that one of the consequences of cuts to social spending and prison reform over the past ten years has been that the task of enabling and managing prisoner re-entry has been downloaded from corrections services to the homelessness sector in many jurisdictions.

The inadequacy of the social safety net in both Canada and the United States produces the conditions whereby people become homeless. In spite of the public investment in a range of supports and services for people while they are homeless (shelters, drop-ins, etc.) the fact that homelessness is not disappearing as a problem suggests that the level of service provision is inadequate to meet the needs of the client population. Inadequate supports for prisoner re-entry means many released inmates will become homeless. In the end, this also means that more people will be incarcerated, *because* they are homeless. As Kushel et al., (2005) argue,

> "high rates of imprisonment among homeless populations may be the end result of a system that does not provide access to timely services, including access to housing, health care, mental health care and substance abuse treatment, and systems that have obstacles preventing receipt of these services by people exiting prison."
>
> (Kushel et al., 2005:1751)

5.3 Remand

The issue of inmates incarcerated under remand has major implications for discharge policy at the provincial level simply because this category of inmate presently has limited access to a discharge planning and transitional supports. In Ontario, a previous policy decision has meant that inmates on remand have been deemed ineligible for such supports, though there are hopeful signs that this is beginning to change. Since the post release needs of sentenced and

remand inmates are similar, there are large numbers of people who are released into the community from correctional institutions that must re-integrate by relying upon what are very often limited individual resources. In fact, it is clear that a large number of inmates who are released into the community in Ontario had been in jail under remand conditions. The issue of remand surfaced in our literature review, in our interviews with planners, and in our interviews with inmates and releasees.

This suggests several things. First, discharge planning should now be made fully available to a significant number of persons who are held on remand should be eligible for discharge planning. Clearly, this does not apply to everyone (some inmates are held on remand only a day or two and then are granted bail). However, for those held for a long time, or for whom being held on remand presents a risk to housing and employment, discharge planning and transitional supports should be available. Second, we question the necessity of holding such a high number of inmates on remand in the first place. Justifications based on a perceived rise in violent crime do not account for the exponential increase in the number held on remand, and the 50 percent increase in average length of stay. Being held on remand, whatever the outcome (release due to finding of innocence, a sentence of time served, bail or return to prison as sentenced) no doubt places many people at risk of losing their housing or source of income. One could argue that the increased use of remand has become a contributing factor to the homelessness problem. Finally, we feel that this policy direction of increased reliance on remand has moved forward over the past decade without a thorough understanding of the implications of such a shift. We feel that there is still much to be understood regarding inmates held on remand. More research will be needed to explore the complex reasons for the rise in the remand population, what brings people to this situation, why some people are granted bail and not others, and the challenges of being on remand. All of this can and should contribute to a more thoroughly evidence-based discussion of the use of remand in provinces across the country.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

Normally in reports such as this, policy recommendations are made by researchers that stem from the research undertaken. This report will not break tradition, as we will offer a select number of broad based policy

recommendations which we feel, if implemented, would be necessary steps to take to help break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness. Yet, before such recommendations are offered, we would like to take this opportunity to examine what we feel is perhaps the most important barrier that needs to be overcome before any meaningful change can occur in these two interrelated areas of social and criminal justice policy. The barrier that we are referring to here concerns the *politics* the surround corrections and homelessness in Canada today.

In the United States a politician would be committing political suicide if he/she were deemed to be 'soft on crime.' In many states across America, calls have been made by a variety of groups for prison expansion, tougher sentencing and release policies and the restriction of inmate's rights and privileges (Petersilia, 2003). In fact, many felons in the United States are ineligible for public housing and are not permitted to vote. While the political climate in Canada has not gone to the extremes that have occurred in the United States, the fact remains that the issue of prisoner rights seldom make its way to either Federal or Provincial electoral platforms. In fact, during the recent 2006 Federal election campaign the Conservative Party made promises to build more prisons, eliminate conditional sentences, and impose mandatory minimum sentences.

At the same time, the media and general public are normally silent when decisions are made by governments to reduce community supports for inmates, such as halfway houses. For example, when the Ontario provincial halfway house system was 'reformed' by the Harris government in 1995, the issue received scant attention in the mainstream media. Similarly, in more recent years, when the harm reduction programs such as safe injections sites, needle exchange programs and harm reduction 'crack kits' are promoted by local public health officials, often times the response from the public, and some media outlets, is that of satire, or even hostility and contempt.

Moreover, the surge in the number of inmates who await trial in custody has not been the subject of attention in the mainstream mass media. The public is much more likely to hear reports of inmates who are free on bail committing heinous crimes, than they are to read about the costs involved in incarcerating inmates while in remand.

Similarly, the issue of homelessness in Canada has not been adequately addressed by governments. Even though thousands of people are without

safe and healthy shelter in Canada, the issue of homelessness has not risen to the top of political agendas at either the federal or provincial levels. As such, it is our contention that unless the issues of prisoner reintegration and homeless receive the level of political attention that they deserve, calls for action will fall upon deaf ears.

5.5 Recommendations

Our research was conducted in Ontario and British Columbia, and as such our findings reflect the situation in those two provinces and may not be generalizable to other jurisdictions. Based on our research, we put forward the following recommendations.

1. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia ensure that inmates are provided with high quality and appropriate discharge planning and transitional supports.

2. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia ensures that corrections programs, discharge planning and transitional supports be extended to longer stay remand inmates, and / or those who are deemed to be at high risk of becoming homeless.

3. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia seek to institute policy and practices intended to lower the number of persons held on remand, as this becomes a risk for homelessness.

4. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia adopt a policy that access to adequate housing becomes a priority in discharge planning.

5. It is recommended that persons released from prison (whether sentenced or on remand) should be provided with adequate clothing, if they do not have any, and resources for food and transportation.

6. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia provide funding for community agencies to provide discharge planning and transitional supports in all prisons.

7. It is recommended that all levels of government work together with the non-profit sector to develop supportive and transitional housing resources for inmates discharged from provincial institutions. This should be seen as an alternative to reinstating halfway houses.

8. It is recommended that the Provincial and Federal governments provide direct funding to municipalities and agencies providing services to the homeless, in recognition of their work and responsibility in assisting with prisoner re-entry.

9. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia mandate that all inmates have access to Harm Reduction programming and supports.

10. It is recommended that the provincial and federal governments of Canada undertake research on remand populations in order to better understand what brings them there and the challenges they face. Such research will contribute to evidence-based policy development.

11. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia fund research specifically on the differential impact of custody on pre-trial (remand) and sentenced populations, including access to institutional services and pre-release reintegration/resettlement planning.

12. It is recommended that the Governments of Ontario and British Columbia fund research on mechanisms and services to ameliorate provincial jail overcrowding. In particular, research should be conducted on provincial bail verification and supervision processes and models, as this mechanism can effectively reduce institutional over-reliance and coincidently address the increasing problem of remand populations in provincial jails while, through-based risk/need assessment, can ensure public safety through effective community supervision.

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