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## DEDICATED HOUSING STREAM NEEDED TO STOP THE REVOLVING DOOR OF JUSTICE: NEW JHSO REPORT

*Providing Housing Options for those Leaving Justice System Key to Reducing Homelessness, Reoffending, and Building Safer Communities*

TORONTO, ON – June 25, 2024 – A new report released today from the John Howard Society of Ontario (JHSO) is calling on the provincial government to establish dedicated housing options for people exiting the justice system to address the unprecedented levels of homelessness in communities across the province and to stop the revolving door of justice, building safer and stronger communities across Ontario.

The report, "[Locked up. Locked Out: The Revolving Door of Homelessness and Ontario's Justice System](#)," demonstrates how justice system involvement is a leading cause – and result – of housing loss. Drawing from data gathered from 175 individuals with experience of homelessness and justice involvement, researchers found that 41% of survey participants reported that their most recent experience of housing loss had been caused by justice involvement. Once homeless, study participants became caught in a cycle of being reincarcerated because they were homeless and released from jail directly into homelessness.

"Everyone knows housing scarcity and affordability have reached crisis levels since the pandemic," said Christin Cullen, CEO of JHSO. "What is less discussed is the deep link between homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system. It's no coincidence that as housing affordability has declined, our provincial jails have become increasingly filled with people who have no fixed address. This report is a crucial call to action, underscoring the urgent need to establish dedicated housing options to break this cycle and enhance community safety."

The report found:

- 40% of study participants reported that they were living in their own private residence before their most recent incarceration, compared to 21% immediately after being discharged from jail, and individuals who became homeless due to incarceration were often still homeless 6 months after their release.
- 43% of participants cited the triple stigma associated with justice involvement, homelessness, and social assistance acts as a significant barrier to securing housing.
- An increasing number of landlords in Ontario are refusing to rent to tenants who do not have a clean criminal record.

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The report recommends prioritizing specialized programs and dedicated housing options for this distinct population by:

- **Creating a dedicated housing stream for justice-involved populations across Ontario**, including short-term transitional housing and long-term supportive housing options;
- **Enhancing social assistance rates and processes to prevent housing loss** through changes to how benefit payments are issued or suspended that would prevent needless housing loss for social assistance recipients who have short jail stays; and,
- **Investing in community-based reintegration and system navigation services** to enhance reintegration supports to facilitate successful re-entry and secure long-term housing.

“A key part of ending revolving-door justice is housing. Without a roof over one’s head, it’s next to impossible to address the risk factors for justice involvement,” concludes Cullen. “Using jails as shelters is a costly waste of taxpayer dollars and human lives. Let’s reserve jail space for people who need to be there, and instead invest in targeted housing with more intensive supports for those exiting the justice system, which is proven to save money and build safer communities.”

## Quotes

“While the findings in the report are not overly surprising, it clearly demonstrates the need for concrete action and housing policy reform if we are truly looking to create “housing for all” communities.” - Michael Braithwaite, Chief Executive Officer, Blue Door

“If we’re serious about solving ‘the revolving door of justice,’ then we need to solve the housing crisis that people exiting the justice system face. Access to adequate housing is a human right, and we must do everything in our power to ensure that Ontario’s justice-involved population aren’t released from jail only to end up homelessness. This report offers important recommendations to make the changes that are needed.” – Elizabeth McIsaac, President, Maytree

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## About John Howard Society of Ontario

**For more than 90 years, we've worked to keep the humanity in justice.** Today we continue to build a safer Ontario by supporting the people and communities affected by the criminal justice system. Our 19 local offices deliver more than 80 evidence-based programs and services focused on prevention, intervention and reintegration across the province. These range from helping youth develop the life skills that will let them achieve their full potential, to helping families navigate issues of criminal justice, to providing job training for those leaving incarceration so they can contribute to their community in a meaningful way. To learn more, please visit [johnhoward.on.ca](http://johnhoward.on.ca).

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