



# 2026 Pre-Budget Submission



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## John Howard Society of Ontario

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### About the 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 18 local offices deliver more than 80 evidence-based programs and services focused on prevention, intervention and re-integration 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. We promote practical, equitable policies while raising awareness of the root causes of crime and calling on Ontarians to share responsibility for addressing them. Within the system itself, we advocate for the fair treatment of every individual. Each year, our work impacts the lives of more than 100,000 Ontarians.

Please accept this document as the John Howard Society of Ontario's (JHSO) submission to the 2026 pre-budget consultations. The following submission outlines recommendations that will advance the provincial government's commitments around public safety and bail reform, as well as address the housing crisis. Together, these recommendations promote opportunities to strengthen communities, reduce costs, and improve outcomes for Ontarians.

1. Increase funding for the Bail Verification and Supervision Program (BVSP) across the province to support expanded case management and ensure greater safety at the bail stage.
2. Expand the number of bail beds throughout Ontario and ensure sufficient funding for them.
3. Invest in dedicated supportive housing for individuals exiting provincial correctional facilities.

## **Bail**

Public safety is a shared priority across communities, legal institutions, and all levels of government. JHSO released a new report in October 2025 that outlines common sense changes that are under provincial jurisdiction, and backed by law enforcement, legal professionals, and community providers to strengthen Ontario's bail system.

The report, entitled [\*Finding Common Ground: Cross-sector solutions to modernize Ontario's bail system\*](#)<sup>i</sup> found overwhelming support for enhanced community-based approaches to supervision and crime prevention with 90% of 106 survey respondents from across the province agreeing that the BVSP and investments in long-term community safety would improve the bail system and reduce system pressures. The Ministry of the Attorney General-funded BVSP is delivered by community agencies that provide bail supervision and case management to individuals who are not considered high-risk and who might otherwise be denied bail for lacking a surety or other forms of assistance. Research supports the value of BVSPs as effective and safe alternatives to pre-trial detention – not only offering bail monitoring but also additional services that address criminogenic risk.

In late 2025, new [provincial legislation](#) was introduced which would create a requirement that an accused or their sureties would have to provide cash deposits upfront to secure release, and deposits would be returned only if all bail conditions are met. JHSO supports the goal of developing solutions that prevent crime and promote safer communities; however, these changes may place additional strain on an already overburdened court and correctional system. Given the rising pressures on correctional facilities that are over-capacity and the financial and social costs of incarceration, bolstering the community supervision infrastructure in the province would ease burdens on the system and improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

At a time when there's both federal and provincial legislation aimed at making bail more difficult to secure for serious offences, potentially leading to greater pressures on courts and jails, we must seize the opportunity to put common sense solutions in place that are proven to support individuals and build safer communities, helping police and courts focus on violent and serious cases.

BVSPs are a critical and ready-to-scale solution to easing pressures in the bail system. Their core functions include assessing risk and suitability for release in collaboration with Crown and defence counsel, supervising individuals released on bail, ensuring court attendance and compliance with conditions, and connecting clients to supports that address underlying risk factors. These supports often include housing assistance, mental health and substance use services, employment and education referrals, and life skills development. By addressing the root causes of alleged offending, BVSPs reduce the likelihood of breaches and failures to attend court while supporting safer communities. With a 96% court appearance rate and the majority of clients completing without new charges, BVSPs are a proven solution that supports public safety.

To fully realize BVSP's potential and meet growing demand, strategic investment is needed. Current caseloads often exceed 60 clients per staff member, nearly double the 35-client standard. As client needs become more complex, increased funding would allow programs to provide the intensive case management required while expanding geographic coverage across the province.

BVSP supervision works best when paired with supportive housing. Residential bail programs (i.e. bail beds) fill this critical gap, providing secure accommodation alongside the supervision and services that reduce reoffending and improve court compliance.

Bail beds serve individuals on bail who are under the supervision of the BVSP and who lack a fixed address or are subject to restrictive release conditions such as no-contact orders. Without access to bail beds, these individuals often remain unnecessarily detained, resulting in prolonged remand stays and costly delays in the court process. Bail beds are not shelters but instead are 24-hour security-staffed residences that provide enhanced supervision alongside access to programming, mental health supports and case management.

Currently bail beds only exist in a few communities in the province. Yet, the need for housing at the bail stage is much greater. Our [research](#) shows over 7,400 releases in 2024 from provincial correctional institutions were flagged as having no fixed address.<sup>ii</sup> Many of these releases are people on bail as more than 80% of individuals in provincial corrections are awaiting their trial.<sup>iii</sup> Strategic investment in both BVSPs and residential bail bed programs represents a cost-effective and evidence-based approach to strengthening Ontario's bail system. By supporting appropriate community supervision, addressing underlying risk factors, and reducing reliance

on pre-trial detention, these programs advance public safety while ensuring a more efficient, fair and sustainable justice system.

## Recommendations

- Increase investments in BVSPs to support expanded case management, and greater supervision capacity. Further resourcing of the BVSP would allow for more intensive case management and enhanced support for clients with complex needs including mental health and addictions issues.
- Expand the number of bail beds throughout Ontario and ensure sufficient funding for them in order to reduce homelessness among individuals on bail, improving individual outcomes and promoting public safety.

## Housing

Homelessness in Ontario is on the rise, with an estimated 84,973 people experiencing homelessness in 2025, reflecting an increase of 7.8% or 6,171 individuals since the previous year.<sup>iv</sup> For those involved in the justice system and exiting corrections, this makes them especially vulnerable. Without a secure place to live, individuals face immense barriers to reintegrating into society, participating in the workforce, and supporting themselves and their families. Developing and expanding housing options, particularly transitional supportive housing models, is essential to addressing both the causes and consequences of poverty for those exiting the justice system.

Many individuals coming out of corrections have no fixed address and are released directly into homelessness, emergency shelters, or encampments. In 2023-2024, there were 7,455 releases from provincial custody recorded as having no fixed address.<sup>v</sup> Housing may also be lost during incarceration due to interrupted income supports and an inability to pay rent. Upon release, individuals often face worsened mental and physical health, disrupted connections to services, and little to no release planning.

The absence of stable housing following release is a direct driver of poverty and recidivism. Without a safe place to live, individuals face significant barriers to securing employment, maintaining income supports, complying with probation conditions, and accessing health and social services. Housing instability increases the risk of reoffending, deteriorating health outcomes and deeper entrenchment into poverty, while placing additional strain on emergency shelters, hospitals, policing, and correctional systems.

Transitional supportive housing can play a role in addressing these challenges. Supportive housing combines affordable housing with wraparound supports tailored to individual needs, such as mental health and substance use treatment, life skills development, employment and education supports, and case management. For those exiting corrections, these supports are

essential to stabilizing their lives and preparing them for independent, long-term housing. Transitional supportive housing is of particular importance during the critical time post-release. Short-term structured housing with supports allows for more gradual and successful reintroduction into the community.

Investing in transitional supportive housing is not only socially necessary but fiscally responsible. The cost of intensive supportive housing can be between \$2,000- \$6,000 per month which is significantly lower than the costs associated with homelessness and institutional stays, including hospitals and mental health facilities which can be upwards of \$60,000, and correctional institutions which can be upwards of \$15,000.<sup>vi</sup>

Investments in 2025 have taken important steps in addressing homelessness and the gaps that can be filled by emergency shelters and supportive housing. Spending on emergency shelters and supportive housing increased from \$540.8 million in 2024 to \$578.7 million in 2025.<sup>vii</sup> Spending on transitional housing also increased from \$143.2 million to \$180.6 million.<sup>viii</sup> However, Ontario still lacks a coordinated, province-wide housing strategy specifically designed to support individuals exiting provincial correctional institutions.

Targeted investments into transitional supportive housing for justice-involved individuals would address a major gap in Ontario's housing continuum. By stabilizing individuals at the point of release and providing appropriate supports, transitional housing can interrupt the cycle of homelessness and incarceration, reduce poverty, improve health outcomes and enhance community safety. As the province considers strategies to address homelessness and housing affordability, it is essential that the unique needs of people exiting correctional institutions are explicitly recognized and that adequate resources are made available within Ontario's housing system.

### **Recommendation:**

- Invest in dedicated transitional housing and establish a transitional housing system for individuals leaving provincial correctional facilities, mirroring the community-based residential model used federally. These housing options should include culturally sensitive programs with comprehensive services and supports, focusing on healing to address underlying social issues and lower repeat offences.

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<sup>i</sup> John Howard Society of Ontario. (2025). Finding Common Ground: Cross-sector solutions to modernize Ontario's bail system. In *John Howard Society of Ontario*. <https://johnhoward.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Rethinking-Justice-Finding-Common-Ground-Remand-Report.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> John Howard Society of Ontario. (2025). From incarceration to encampment: Why so many Ontario prisoners end up homeless. In *John Howard Society of Ontario*. <https://johnhoward.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Rethinking-Justice-Housing-Report-From-Incarceration-to-Encampment.pdf>

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<sup>iii</sup> Statistics Canada (2024) Average counts of adults in provincial and territorial correctional programs. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510015401&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.7&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=1982+%2F+1983&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2022+%2F+2023&referencePeriods=19820101%2C20220101>

<sup>iv</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario. (2026). Municipalities Under Pressure One Year Later: An Update on the Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis. In *Associations of Municipalities of Ontario*. <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Reports/2026/MunisUnderPressure1YearUpdateReport2026-01-13.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> John Howard Society of Ontario. (2025). From incarceration to encampment: Why so many Ontario prisoners end up homeless. In *John Howard Society of Ontario*. <https://johnhoward.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Rethinking-Justice-Housing-Report-From-Incarceration-to-Encampment.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Foran, M. (2025, November 26). *What is Supportive Housing—and why it matters for ending homelessness*. CAEH. <https://caeh.ca/what-is-supportive-housing/#:~:text=At%20Dunn%20House%20in%20Toronto,for%2051%20people%20experiencing%20homelessness.>

<sup>vii</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario. (2026). Municipalities Under Pressure One Year Later: An Update on the Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis. In *Associations of Municipalities of Ontario*. <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Reports/2026/MunisUnderPressure1YearUpdateReport2026-01-13.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid