

John Howard

THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF CANADA
LA SOCIÉTÉ JOHN HOWARD DU CANADA

Tackling Homelessness Amongst Former Prisoners

OTTAWA, ON (Feb 17, 2021) – As part of the National Housing Strategy (NHS), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is providing \$246,000 to explore solutions to the risk of homelessness for Canadians who leave the prison system. The Solutions Lab project “From Prison to Homelessness: Ending a Perilous Trajectory” will explore practical solutions to addressing barriers to access, including options to increase the supply of suitable housing while providing employment skills training. Our belief is that this project will lead to concrete solutions that will benefit both those seeking to successfully return and contribute to communities after incarceration and the communities themselves.

“Every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Finding solutions to housing challenges is key to ensuring that more Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford,” said the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and Minister responsible for CMHC. “Our Government is pleased to be supporting this project because finding ways to help solve Canada’s housing challenges is an essential step in creating the caring, inclusive and prosperous society we strive to be.”

Led by the John Howard Society of Canada, the project offers to explore solutions to a longstanding problem: Research estimates that 30% of the 60,000 Canadians released from prison every year are at risk of homelessness. It can affect up to 18,000 former provincial and federal inmates annually.

“For so many former prisoners, the cards are stacked against them even before they’re released,” said Catherine Latimer, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada. “Making matters worse is the fact that people involved with the criminal justice system who can’t find stable housing are at a greater risk of reoffending and going back to prison. This project aims to break that vicious cycle.”

The John Howard Society of Canada is partnering with Public Safety Canada, Correctional Service of Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice, former prisoners with lived experience with homelessness, John Howard Society of Alberta, John Howard Society of Toronto, John Howard Society of Kingston, and the Lansdowne Consulting Group on this project. The advice of many others will be sought, and we are grateful to Employment and Social Development Canada who are contributing resources to ensure that those with lived experience are able to contribute in a meaningful way.

“Reducing barriers to reintegration helps prevent crime and makes our communities safer by helping people who have been incarcerated transition back to the community as productive and law-abiding citizens,” said the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. “Public Safety Canada is pleased to support this important work to help gain a deeper understanding of the issue of federal prison releases as a contributing factor to homelessness and improve how we assist individuals exiting the correctional system so that they are able to move forward and make positive contributions to our society.”

“We’re so pleased that CMHC recognized this complex housing problem as one deserving of support,” added Latimer. “It’s an amazing collaboration involving community members, prisoner support organizations, housing authorities, those with lived experience, academics, and other key stakeholders.”

Visit the [website](#) for more information on National Housing Strategy Solutions Labs.

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