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June 24, 2021

Deborah Richardson  
Deputy Solicitor General, Correctional  
Services  
Ministry of the Solicitor General  
George Drew Building, 11th Floor  
25 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y6

Kate Manson-Smith  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
College Park, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
777 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Deputies Richardson and Manson-Smith:

I am writing you today about a continuing issue that I hope can be solved by working together with AMO and municipal service system managers as represented by the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

It is about the challenging situation that inmates are still often routinely discharged into homelessness and/or inappropriate housing situations, further contributing to their cycle of homelessness and potentially increasing the likelihood for recidivism back into the homelessness and justice systems, with a risk of repeat incarceration. It also creates a situation that perpetuates the likelihood of living in poverty for these individuals.

As AMO has raised with the Minister and the Solicitor General, the number of inmates that are discharged into homelessness is a longstanding issue of concern. The recent and ongoing efforts undertaken by your ministries to seek to improve the situation is appreciated. There is more to be done. We feel that municipal expertise can assist your ministries and is essential to work toward facilitating discharges into housing, not homelessness, not including into shelters.

To further our shared interest in addressing this issue, all parties could work together to co-design policies, procedures, and protocols. The goal would be to ensure that all inmates are appropriately discharged into housing and adequately supported to transition back into the community in a safe and healthy manner.

We are proposing that a dedicated, time-limited staff working group be established. It would be co-chaired by a municipal service system manager, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Ministry of the Solicitor General along with the

participation of relevant ministries including: Attorney General, the Ministry of Health (Public Health), the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and representatives from AMO, OMSSA, and NOSDA. It would serve a great example of provincial ministries and municipal service managers working together in the spirit of human services integration.

Please find enclosed with this letter some proposed elements for a Terms of Reference for a Provincial-Municipal Solutions Focused Working Group for your consideration. To initiate next steps, your staff can contact Monika Turner, Director Policy at [mturner@amo.on.ca](mailto:mturner@amo.on.ca).

We look forward to working together.

Sincerely,



Brian Rosborough  
AMO Executive Director

cc: Barb Forbes, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Solicitor General,  
Community Services  
Joshua Paul, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing,  
Housing Division  
Janet Menard, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children, Community and Social  
Services  
David Corbett, Deputy Attorney General of Ontario  
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Fiona Kouyoumdjian, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dan McCormick, President, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)  
Fern Dominelli, Executive Director, Northern Ontario Service Deliverers  
Association (NOSDA)

# Facilitating Discharging Inmates into Housing, Not Homelessness

Elements for a Terms of Reference for a Provincial-Municipal Solutions Focused Working Group

## Purpose

Municipal associations, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA), are seeking to work with the provincial government ministries to ensure that discharges from correctional facilities are into housing, rather than homelessness.

**Problem:** Inmates are often routinely discharged into homelessness and/or inappropriate housing situations, further contributing to their cycle of homelessness and potentially increasing the likelihood for recidivism back into the justice system and repeat incarceration.

**Goal:** All parties to work together to co-design policies procedures and protocols to ensure that all inmates are appropriately discharged into housing and adequately supported to transition back into the community in a safe and healthy manner, avoiding risk of recidivism into both the justice and homelessness systems.

**Process:** A dedicated, time-limited working group be established, co-chaired by a municipal service system manager, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of the Solicitor General, with the participation of relevant ministries including: Attorney General, Ministry of Health (Public Health), the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and representatives from AMO, OMSSA, and NOSDA.

## Key Assumptions

- Discharges into housing, with supports when required, will help break the cycle of homelessness and reduce recidivisms back into the justice system and reincarceration.
- Correctional facilities need to be recognized and acknowledged by all parties that they are part of the housing continuum.
- Increased coordination and integration is required between correctional facilities and municipal service system managers.

## Deliverables

- Mapping of the inmate journey and availability of supports from inmate admission to discharge from a correctional facility.
- A solutions-focused document, actionable by all parties involved.

For discussion

## Activities

- Journey mapping.
- Coming up with solutions (examples listed in Appendix A).

## Timeline

By September 2021

## Participants

**Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)** represents Ontario's 444 municipalities and works to support and enhance effective municipal government in Ontario.

**Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)** is a non-profit whose members are Ontario's Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administrative Boards.

**Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA)** develops a collaborative and cooperative approach with municipalities and municipal associations to facilitate the consolidated municipal delivery of services in Northern Ontario.

**Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

**Ministry of the Solicitor General**

**Ministry of the Attorney General**

**Ministry of Health (Public Health)**

**Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services**

### **Appendix A – Potential Solutions for Exploration**

1. Implement a community re-entry planning process that begins at the time an individual is sentenced with discharge planning commencing well before the inmate's release date.
2. Provide information about employment and housing services and options in the area where the ex-offender wishes to live, including applications for affordable housing and social assistance.
3. Establish specialized program supports that target inmates who are more likely to be homeless upon release and who have a history of homelessness, mental illness, and/or addictions.
4. Disseminate aggregate data to municipal service system managers on the number and profile of inmates who are being released for planning services and community supports.
5. Revise policies to recognize that discharge into permanent housing is the primary acceptable outcome.

For discussion

6. In situations where homelessness is likely, establish a process by which municipal service managers jointly develop and sign off on the discharge plan.
7. Establish a system where inmates are transferred to pre-release facilities near the offender's intended post-release home, including hotels or motels. This will allow them to search for housing and work and reintegrate into society.
8. Expand the bail-bed program to allow low-risk and vulnerable individuals to be released back into the community with supervision and supports.
9. That the Ministry of the Solicitor General assess the availability of community supports (e.g., mental health and addictions) for released inmates and identify gaps to the Ministry of Health and other relevant ministries to ensure that the ground gained on treatment or recovery while incarcerated is not lost upon discharge.
10. That the practice of releasing inmates late at night outside of normal service hours be ended.
11. That transportation services be provided to all released inmates to their housing.
12. That correctional facility staff mandatorily participates, upon invitation by municipalities, in local Community Safety and Well-Being planning.