



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Release from Custody Taskforce & Strategy

POSITION PAPER

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Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Service

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) urges the Solicitor General, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), and the Ministry of Health (MOH) to develop a provincial Release from Custody Taskforce with the aim of establishing a strategy to address individuals being released from custody into homelessness or without appropriate supports.

Summary

To address the high provincial recidivism rates, TBDSSAB urges the Solicitor General, MCCSS, MMAH, and MOH to develop a provincial Release from Custody Taskforce and Strategy, to address supports for housing, addictions, mental health, medical care, transportation, and basic needs for individuals upon release from custody.

Background

Provincial recidivism rates for adults sentenced to custody or community supervision are as high as 50% within three years of release, with a custodial sentence resulting in a greater likelihood of reconviction over community supervision.ⁱ Men aged 18 to 34 have the highest incidence of reconviction (56%), followed by women of the same age group (51%).ⁱ Indigenous individuals experience the greatest risk (60%), at an average rate of 30% higher than non-Indigenous people.ⁱ Additionally, mental health and substance use disorders are disproportionately represented in incarcerated populations across the province, with evidence that increased access to post-release substance-use programs effectively reduces recidivism rates.^{ii,iii}

However, individuals released from custody face significant barriers to reintegration, including access to economic supports, employment, housing, medication coverage, mental health care and substance-use programming.^{iv} These supports are important protective factors that prevents future incarceration.^{iv}

Upon release, many individuals lack critical resources, including a place to live, financial means, transportation, and coverage for prescription medications. Additionally, individuals released in Thunder Bay are often far from their hometowns and communities, decreasing their ability to secure housing. These factors significantly increase the risk of reincarceration. For instance, over the past 16 months, TBDSSAB has been involved with the Thunder Bay Community Reintegration Planning Table to support 15 incarcerated individuals' post-custodial release. Currently, five (33%) of these individuals have been reincarcerated, demonstrating the significant need for additional reintegration supports to further reduce these rates.

The current average cost of adult correctional services for a single inmate is \$326 daily or \$9,780 monthly.^v Conversely, the rental cost for a single bedroom apartment in Thunder Bay averages \$1,054 monthly. Even with additional targeted services, development and investment in post-correctional supports would result in significant savings for the provincial government, while also facilitating effective reintegration into society for individuals. Key areas include effective discharge planning, stable housing, mental health and addictions supports, employment training and education, and medical care and coverage. Addressing the complex needs of those released through effective services, practices, and programs is critical for successful integration and therefore decreased likelihood of recidivism.

Therefore, TBDSSAB urges the Solicitor General, MCCSS, MMAH, and MOH to work with DSSABs and CMSMs to develop a provincial Release from Custody Taskforce with the aim of establishing a strategy to address individuals being released from custody into homelessness or without appropriate supports.

ⁱ Pedneault, Lee & Jones, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2024001/article/00002-eng.htm>

ⁱⁱ Lebenbaum et al., 2024, *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol 69 pp 21-32 <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/10.1177/07067437221140385>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ostermann, M., & Matejkowski, J. (2012). Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health and Release Status with Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 31(4), 746–766. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2012.677465>

^{iv} John Howard Society <https://johnhoward.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/No-Fixed-Address-Final-Report.pdf>

^v Statistics Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510001301>