

Key Statements and Questions and Answers

Establishment of a Community Residential Facility
157 McLeod Street, Ottawa

Statements

- House of Hope has been a positive part of the Ottawa's Centretown community since 1974, and a key contributor to safety and security in our central neighbourhoods. The House of Hope has been successfully operating a Community Residential Facility (CRF) or federal halfway house for 43 years at our Gilmour site located within the Golden Triangle.
- House of Hope provides education and employment assistance, individual and group counselling, life skills and community transition supports to offenders upon their release from federal prisons.
- Community Residential Facilities – or halfway houses – are a key step in parolees' responsible reintegration and lifestyle change, so they can get back to work, to school and to their families.
- House of Hope has strict screening guidelines for potential clients to ensure they do not pose a risk to the community, staff members or other clients.
- House of Hope's success rates are impressive – 92.5% successfully reintegrated in a six-year timeframe from April 01, 2009 to March 31, 2015.
- The House of Hope completed a review of all clients from April 01, 2004 to March 31, 2017 and found that only 1.4% were returned to a federal prison for committing a new offence.

Questions and Answers

What is a halfway house?

- A halfway house is a community based residential facility for offenders who have been granted parole and are serving part of their sentence under supervision in the community.
- Also known as Community Residential Facilities (CRFs), they are administered by non-profit agencies such as the House of Hope under contract with the Correctional Services Canada.

What does a halfway house look like?

- A halfway house takes many forms and shapes, but can look like any small university dormitory or community housing facility.
- Federal offenders live there while they look for work, go to school, or attend treatment programs.
- Everyone living there is also expected to follow house rules, work with their case management team and follow their parole conditions.

Who goes to halfway houses?

- The Parole Board of Canada considers applications by federal offenders for release into the community.

- One of the most important components in these applications is a comprehensive risk assessment.
- These assessments look at the offender's previous criminal history, behaviour while incarcerated, and evidence of a readiness and willingness to change – such as taking programs while in prison to address problems like substance use.
- The Board also looks at psychological and psychiatric reports, and the opinions of various specialists.
- Each halfway house has its own set of unique criteria for admission, and they have the right to refuse offenders for a variety of reasons.
- House of Hope has a strict set of admission criteria that includes: no institutional charges or violent behaviour against correctional staff; a network of community support and plans for parole; the successful completion of programs inside prison to address any risk factors; a solid community release plan; and a record of not offending on any prior conditional releases.

Will a halfway house make my neighbourhood unsafe?

- Halfway houses have been found to contribute to community safety.
- Many studies have shown that offenders who are gradually reintegrated back into the community while being supervised in a supportive environment like a halfway house have the greatest success while on parole, and also after their sentences are completed (1; 2 &3).
- Rates of crime commission are low among offenders who are gradually released back into the community using the expert resources of a halfway house. (4)
- One of the most important components in these applications is a comprehensive risk assessment.
- The Board also looks at psychological and psychiatric reports, and the opinions of various specialists.
- House of Hope has a strict set of admission criteria and has the right to refuse offenders for a variety of reasons. These include: no institutional charges or violent behaviour against correctional staff; a network of community support and plans for parole; the successful completion of programs inside prison to address any risk factors; and a record of not offending on any prior conditional releases.

How will the presence of a halfway house in my neighbourhood affect property values?

- Several studies have been conducted to determine the effect of halfway houses on real estate values in neighbourhoods where they are located; no significant changes were observed (5;6;7 &8).
- A study conducted in Ontario-based communities showed that average housing prices were equal to or higher than average housing prices before halfway houses were opened within the study area (9).
- The House of Hope has been successfully operating a Community Residential Facility (CRF) for 43 years at our Gilmour site also located within the Golden Triangle community of Centretown. The real estate in this part of Centretown continues to be above market value and is a highly sought after area to reside.

Why does this facility have to be located here? Aren't there other neighbourhoods that are more appropriate?

- There is a real, defined need for downtown housing for offenders to safely reintegrate back into the community – close to educational upgrading, employment, and other community supports.
- The House of Hope has been successfully operating a Community Residential Facility (CRF) for 43 years at our Gilmour site also located within the Golden Triangle community of Centretown. The Golden Triangle location has proven to be a safe and healthy community to accommodate the House of Hope clients and, thereby, assisting them in their successful reintegration.

Surely criminals who come out of prison are not totally reformed. How many end up back in prison?

- Their success rates for the House of Hope's residential program on Gilmour are impressive – in a six-year timeframe from April 01, 2009 to March 31, 2015, 92.5% of about 460 clients successfully reintegrated. The majority of clients who returned to custody had breached a condition of their parole.
- House of Hope has completed a review of all clients from April 01, 2004 to March 31, 2017 in order to assess the number of clients who have re-offended and received another federal offence. The analysis yielded a total percentage of 1.4%, of the 765 clients reviewed, who had reoffended federally.
- Our staff are trained to detect and defuse any potential issues, and we rely on our community partners – law enforcement and otherwise – to support our clients' effective reintegration back into the community.

What are the benefits of Community Release?

- The average cost of housing an offender in a halfway house is about one third of the cost of keeping them in a federal penitentiary.
- Since most offenders should and do return to the community before the end of their sentence to benefit from this gradual, supervised release, halfway houses are not only effective from a public safety point of view but they are also cost-effective. It costs approximately \$115,000 per year to keep an offender in a federal prison as opposed to \$35,000 at a federal halfway house (10).

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