

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Can I See **your ID?**

The Policing of  
Youth Homelessness  
in Toronto

# Can I See Your ID? The Policing of Youth Homelessness in Toronto

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## Executive Summary

Homelessness, and its visibility, is back in the news in Toronto. Concerns about the scourge of panhandling have once again surfaced in local media with city councillors regularly weighing in on the 'problem'. With little evidence that there is a dramatic increase in the numbers of people sleeping in parks or 'aggressively' panhandling on sidewalks, calls are once again being made for a law and order response to address this highly visible manifestation of urban poverty; to crack down on homelessness with tougher laws and stricter enforcement.



Toronto, ON, Canada

All of this raises important questions about how we respond to homelessness in Canada. What does it say about Canadians when popular thought suggests that the appropriate way to address the problem of homelessness is through law enforcement? Is the use of police in dealing with people who are homeless as much a part of the Canadian response to homelessness as is the provision of shelter beds, soup kitchens and street outreach? And perhaps most importantly, what is the impact of a law and order approach to homelessness on the lives of people who experience such extreme poverty?

This report sets out to document the **criminalization of homelessness** in Canada by exploring the relationship between homeless persons – in particular, street youth - and law enforcement officials (both the police and private security). Drawing from over 240 interviews with street youth in Toronto in 2009, as well as a review of official statistics on Ontario Safe Streets Act tickets in Toronto over the past 11 years, we explore the ways in which homelessness has been criminalized through a law and order agenda. Effective policy should be informed by research, not developed as a response to moral panics. Our research raises serious questions about the use of law enforcement as a strategy to address the visibility of homelessness in Canada.

## Criminalization of Homelessness

When people think about our society's response to homelessness, we typically consider the range of services and supports provided by non-profits, charities and government that are intended to help people who are 'down on their luck'; services such as emergency shelters, drop-in centers and soup kitchens. These important services help people survive the ravages of extreme poverty.

Yet, where there is an insufficient investment in **prevention** and **affordable housing**, there is an over-reliance on emergency services to address homelessness. In these circumstances, the poverty we call homelessness continues to be a highly visible problem on the streets of communities across Canada.

When homelessness is made visible, law enforcement often

becomes a key component of the emergency response. Many jurisdictions in Canada have adopted measures intended to restrict the rights of homeless people to occupy and inhabit public spaces such as street corners and parks, and which prohibit behaviours such as sleeping in public, or earning money through panhandling. This use of policing and the criminal justice system as central features of our response to homelessness is what we refer to as the **criminalization of homelessness**.

We define the criminalization of homelessness as the use of laws and practices to restrict the activities and movements of

people who are homeless, often with the outcome being fines and / or incarceration. Though we use the term 'criminalization' we are including the use of security (including private security) to enforce city / provincial regulation of public space and activities that go beyond the realm of the criminal justice system. The key here is that people who occupy public spaces (because they lack private ones), and whose poverty is highly visible, are subject to extra attention by the criminal justice system not so much for **what** they do, but for **who** they are and **where** they are. The key mechanisms of the criminalization of homelessness include:

## **1 Enactment of new laws and statutes that are intended to curtail or restrict the activities of people who are homeless.**

This includes laws that restrict panhandling and sleeping in public spaces, etc.

## **2 Disproportionate and discriminatory enforcement of existing laws and ordinances.**

This can mean receiving tickets for minor offences or being arrested in ways and circumstances not likely to be experienced by the average citizen.

## **3 Manipulation of the physical environment to restrict its usage by people who are homeless.**

Inhibiting the use of public space by designing park benches so that people cannot lie down and sleep on them, or likewise moving ventilation grates off of sidewalks and into streets.

## **4 Increased surveillance and policing of public and semi-public spaces by police and private security.**

This includes targeted 'stop and searches', moving people along and the use of technology to make inhabiting such space more difficult.

## **5 Increased incarceration of people who are homeless.**

People who are homeless are over-represented in prison populations as a result of disproportionate and discriminatory enforcement, the inability to meet bail conditions, and inadequate access to appropriate legal counsel and defence.

## **6 Discharging prisoners into homelessness.**

In the absence of adequate discharge planning and transitional supports, people leaving prison – either as convicted offenders or those released from remand – are more likely to become homeless and access emergency services.

When we speak of the criminalization of homelessness, we are not suggesting that law enforcement exists in the absence of other efforts to support people who are homeless. Rather, it

becomes a central feature of the response, and may exist in tension with other arguably more progressive approaches.

## About This Report

The second of two reports prepared with *Justice for Children and Youth* (the first being: *Surviving Crime and Violence: Street Youth and Victimization in Toronto*), our research turns to the interactions of homeless people – and street youth in particular – with the police. We engaged in this research wanting to know more about the range of circumstances under which homeless youth come into contact with the police, whether positive or negative. Police may engage homeless persons when they are the victims of crime. They may help homeless people access the supports and services they need, give them a ride when they lack transportation, and otherwise help them.

On the other hand, interactions with police may not be of a helping nature. We know that young people who are homeless are more likely than housed youth to engage in criminal behavior, so police will necessarily intervene to restore law and order. This includes enforcing laws such as the Ontario Safe Streets Act, which is designed to address aggressive panhandling and squeegeeing. Can we then characterize the interactions between police and people who are homeless as

merely a matter of the police doing their job? Or, conversely, do such interactions characterize a more pervasive strategy of criminalizing poverty and the visibility of homelessness in public places in our cities?

In “Can I see your ID: The Policing of Youth Homelessness”, we explore the experiences that street youth living in Toronto have with the police. Two hundred and forty four homeless youth in Toronto were interviewed in 2009 about life on the streets, including their experiences with the police.

Even though street youth are often portrayed as criminal or delinquent, this new research highlights the degree to which many of those who have negative interactions with the police are not, or only marginally, involved in illegal activity. That is, the high level of encounters between street youth and police cannot be explained merely in terms of the criminal wrong doings of a group of young offenders, but rather, can be more broadly understood in terms of the criminalization of homelessness.

## Key Findings

Two main areas of research findings are presented in this report. First, we present data on the implementation of the *Ontario Safe Streets Act* over the past eleven years. Second, we explore the nature and extent of policing of (youth) homelessness in Toronto, through the self-reported experiences of young people who are homeless. Our findings have strong policy implications and are important in considering how policing in Canadian cities is practiced in the context of homelessness. There is very little research on homelessness and policing and in particular the experiences of street youth. Our research identifies the extent to which young people who are homeless encounter the police and under what conditions, as well as the consequences of such encounters. Below is a brief summary of the findings from this research.

## Impact of the Ontario Safe Streets Act

The Ontario *Safe Streets Act* (SSA) exists as one of the clearest and most obvious examples of the creation of new laws that contribute to the criminalization of homelessness. The SSA,

which came into effect in January 2000, in response to the growing visibility of homelessness in Toronto and other major cities in the 1990s, is provincial legislation designed to address

aggressive panhandling and squeegeeing. While never mentioning homelessness specifically, the Act clearly targets homeless persons.

In examining data on SSA tickets in Toronto, we explore shifts and trends in ticketing over the eleven years the Act has been in place. We address whether such shifts may or may not be commensurate with changes in panhandling and squeegeeing behaviour. We also examine the cost of the SSA, both in terms of the debt burden placed on people who are homeless, and the actual cost of policing. The data used for this analysis was obtained through two freedom of information requests from the Toronto Police Service, and the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General. We also draw on our own research findings to address changes in the prevalence of panhandling and squeegeeing in Toronto. Below is a summary of our key findings.

- **Panhandling and squeegeeing are on the decline in Toronto.**

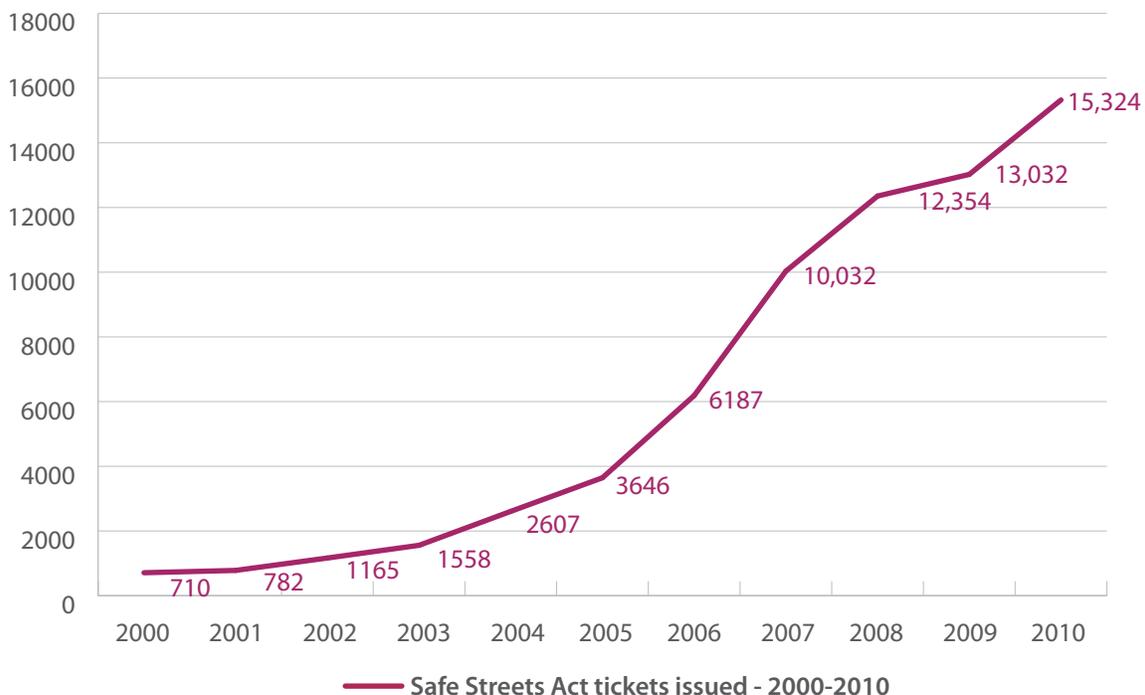
There is evidence that panhandling and squeegeeing have declined over the past decade. At the same time, we have not

seen significant and demonstrable declines in homelessness, per se. Our own research shows a significant decline between 1999 when 29% of our street youth sample reported panhandling and squeegeeing as their main source of income, and 2009 when less than 3% reported such behavior. In addition, the 2009 City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment also shows a decline in panhandling as a source of income, from 17.4% in 2006, to 9.7% in 2009 (their sample included youth and adults). Whether or not the SSA is a major factor in precipitating this decline is not known. However it should be noted that the law is designed to address *aggressive* panhandling and squeegeeing, not as a broader and more general strategy to eradicate these forms of income generation.

- **The number of SSA tickets issued by the Toronto Police Service has increased exponentially over the past decade.**

One might expect that with fewer homeless people panhandling and squeegeeing, there would be a commensurate decline in SSA tickets. The graph below displays the number of Ontario SSA tickets issued by the Toronto Police Service between 2000 and 2010.

SSA Counts - 2000-2010



Over this period the total number of Ontario SSA tickets written up by members of the Toronto Police service increased exponentially, from 710 tickets in 2000, to 3,646 in 2005, and again to 15,224 in 2010, an increase of 2,147%. This raises a very important question: are police responding to a dramatic (and largely unsubstantiated) growth in aggressive panhandling and squeegeeing, or is the increase in ticketing part of a broader strategy to respond to the enduring visibility of homeless persons in public places in Toronto? A review of all Safe Streets Act tickets given out between the period of 2004 and 2010 shows that on average 20% were for aggressive solicitation and 80% were for non-aggressive acts of soliciting a captive audience, such as those standing in line at a bank or waiting for public transit. This suggests the Safe Streets Act is not being used to police a growth in aggressive panhandling and squeegeeing but rather is part of a broader strategy to criminalize homelessness.



- **Issuing of SSA tickets places a heavy financial burden on homeless persons.**

People who are homeless are defined by their extreme poverty, and hence, engage in money making strategies such as squeegeeing and panhandling to provide them with cash on a daily basis. The SSA, designed to address aggressive panhandling, calls for potential fines of up to \$500 for a first offence. The usual fine is \$60 per ticket. In 2009 (the year we interviewed street youth), the number of tickets issued was 13,023, while the total number over eleven years (2000-2010) was 67,388. The total value of the tickets in 2009 was minimally \$781,380, and over eleven years more than four million dollars (\$4,043,280). This is

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1. Based on 15 minutes worth of time (\$13.89) for a Toronto Police Services First Class Constable (\$81,046 + 24.8% benefits = \$101,145) (Toronto Police Service, 2011)  
 2. Based on the number of tickets issued x 15 minutes.  
 3. Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 736(1)

a large financial burden placed upon homeless people living in extreme poverty, and who have limited means to pay.

- **SSA is an expensive use of police resources.**

In addition to the financial cost to people who are homeless, there is also a cost to the residents of Ontario. We estimate that the actual cost to the Toronto Police Service of issuing the SSA tickets was \$189,936 in 2009, and \$936,019<sup>1</sup> over the past eleven years. Note that this does not include the cost of processing tickets, or any follow-up overhead (for instance if a ticket is challenged in court, or if a bench warrant is issued for non-payment of tickets). This also amounts to 16,847 hours of police time<sup>2</sup>, which begs the question: Is this a reasonable use of resources, and may there be other crimes deserving of more attention? These costs have been incurred by the City for the collection of only \$8, 086.56 in fines paid over this eleven year period.

- **The extensive use of tickets, fines and imprisonment to control the use of public space by homeless persons contravenes the spirit of the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.**

Issuing fines to people who are homeless is inherently problematic because their experience of poverty leaves them unable to pay. Jailing people who are unable to pay because they are homeless is highly counterproductive, and contributes to the cycle of homelessness /prison / homelessness. It is also a question of rights. The Criminal Code of Canada states that if an offender does not have the ability to pay a fine immediately, they should be allowed a reasonable time to do so<sup>3</sup>. In addition, according to the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, courts may impose fines to offenders who are between the ages of 13-17 that do not exceed \$1,000. Judges, however, must consider the youth's ability to pay before a fine is levied. In both cases, the spirit of the law implies that police and courts should use restraint in issuing fines to people living in poverty with limited means to pay. It should be assumed that as long as one is homeless, they do not have the ability to pay.

## Homeless Youth and Encounters with Police

Our analysis of the nature and extent of street youth encounters with police is drawn from 244 interviews with homeless youth in Toronto in 2009, conducted at street youth serving agencies across Toronto. We asked a range of questions regarding interactions with police – whether deemed positive or negative – including instances where police aided young people in distress, engaged in stop and searches, issued tickets, or arrested the youth.

The data indicates that street youth receive an inordinate amount of attention from the police, and that this has an impact on street youth attitudes about policing in general. The findings from this research reveal that street youth experience police contact on a regular basis, in large part due to their appearance and the public places they occupy. Below is a summary of our key findings:

- **Street youth receive a great deal of attention from police.**

Encounters between homeless youth and the police go well beyond Ontario Safe Streets Act violations. In fact, police utilize a much broader range of existing laws and practices in their dealings with street youth. A key finding of this research is that homeless youth receive an inordinate amount of attention from police, with 78% reporting some kind of encounter, and of that group 77.5% reported more than one interaction. While some reported incidents of police stopping to help them (13.6%), the majority considered their encounters to be negative, including “stop and searches” (59.8%), being asked to “move on” (36.8%), receiving tickets for a range of minor offences (33%), or being arrested (44%). A sizeable number of youth we interviewed had also been stopped by both private security and TTC security and asked to show their ID.

Young people who are homeless perceive the inordinate amount of attention they receive from the police as harassment and due to the fact they are young and homeless. Some street youth report excessive use of force by the police during these encounters.

- **Police issue a large number of tickets to homeless youth.**

Being ticketed is a major outcome of engagement with police. In our survey, 33% of street youth reported receiving tickets at least once during the past year (39.4% male, 20% female), and 16.5% reported receiving more than one. Only a small percentage of these tickets are for Safe Streets Act violations. More often, street youth receive tickets for drinking in public or loitering. The latter speaks to one of the fundamental conditions of being homeless: when one does not have access to private space, much more of one’s life gets played out in public places and spaces.

While many who received tickets acknowledge they were breaking the law at the time, one third believe the charges to be frivolous, and that they were singled out for offences that the average person would not be cited for. This reinforces their perception of ticketing as another form of harassment.

- **Criminally involved street youth do receive more attention from the police.**

Some street youth are more likely to encounter police than others. In our study, young people who were criminally involved and / or heavy users of drugs (a group characterized by their troubled backgrounds and range of situational adversities) received much more attention from the police. Intuitively, the idea that police are paying attention to criminally involved homeless youth could be interpreted as evidence that the police are simply doing their job by enforcing the law. However, it is clear that homeless youth who are not criminally involved (38% of our sample reported to have not committed a criminal act in the past year) were also receiving considerable attention from the police, however not to the same extent.

- **Young males receive more attention from police, whether criminally involved or not.**

Criminal involvement is not the only factor that predicts police encounters with street youth. In fact, simply being male and

homeless increases this likelihood, regardless of whether one is actually involved in illegal activities or not. This finding suggests that this group of young people is drawing attention from the police mainly because they are viewed as suspicious based on who they are (homeless), how they look, and the fact that they may be congregating in public places at or near major business, shopping and entertainment venues.

- **Black and Aboriginal youth also receive additional attention from police.**

In terms of more serious offences, visible minority street youth receive the same attention from police as do white youth. However, our analysis also reveals that being Black or Aboriginal (“non-white youth”) were statistically significant factors in predicting greater surveillance and harassment by police, including being ticketed while “walking down the street” or when simply “hanging around with friends.” This finding is consistent with other research on Toronto youth—homeless and housed—that was carried out by Tanner and Wortely (2010).

- **Street youth have very negative attitudes regarding policing and the courts.**

Effective policing practice relies on citizens having faith and trust in police, for it is citizens who play an important role in notifying police of crime, and helping police identify perpetrators. Our research demonstrates with great clarity that compared to domiciled youth, young people who are homeless are much more likely to have negative attitudes about the police and courts. This may be partly explained by the fact that young people who are homeless are more likely to be victims of crime (Gaetz, O’Grady & Buccieri, 2010), and may thus feel the police and courts are not adequately protecting them. Perhaps more significant is the fact that they do regularly encounter police, not so much because of their victimization, but rather, because they are regularly being stopped and searched, asked to move on, and receive a large number of tickets often for minor offences that are perceived to be frivolous, and bordering on harassment.

## Understanding the ‘Policing’ of Youth Homelessness

Both our analysis of Ontario Safe Streets Act tickets and our interviews with street youth demonstrate high levels of engagement between the Toronto Police Service and people who are homeless. Whether through the utilization of laws that specifically target the homeless (such as the SSA), or simply through the use of existing laws (such as drinking in public or loitering), it is clear that people who are homeless – including street youth – receive an inordinate amount of attention from police, and that much of the attention is negative.

So, how are we to make sense of the relationship between policing and youth homelessness? Is this conflicting relationship best explained by factors internal to the street youth population (their delinquency), by the approach police take to street youth, or are broader structural factors at play? Is the real or perceived criminality of the street youth population, regardless of its origins, a sufficient explanation for the degree of surveillance, interrogation and charges they receive at the hands of the police?

The argument to be put forward here is that street youth

encounters with the police must be understood in terms of their experience of social exclusion. That is, street youth experience social exclusion in ways that profoundly impact their housing and subsistence strategies and use of public space. Because street youth are highly visible, and a percentage of them are criminally involved, it means that they become an identifiable population stigmatized with a criminal reputation. As a result, young people whose identity becomes defined by their homelessness are increasingly framed by politicians, the mass media, many members of the general public and ultimately, by the police as representing a form of urban disorder that can

and should be contained and controlled. This is at the heart of social profiling and the criminalization of homelessness. The outcome is that street youth become more marginalized and experience social exclusion both in terms of their engagement with the criminal justice system, and more broadly, in terms of increasing restrictions on where and how they are able to use public spaces. Under these policies and practices three key things happen: (1) social supports get reduced, (2) policing gets enhanced, and (3) the blame shifts to those in need.

While acknowledging that in many cases such encounters are a result of the police merely enforcing the law, we argue that the frequency and intensity of encounters suggests something else may be going on: the targeted use of law enforcement to address a broader and visible social issue, namely homelessness. In attributing this response to a manifestation of the criminalization of homelessness, we acknowledge there are several interrelated factors at play here. One must, for instance, explore aspects of police culture, such as the problematic and discriminatory generalizations that contribute to police profiling of groups based on assumed criminality and the propensity to focus efforts on street-based crime, that have a profound effect on how police deal with minority and marginalized populations, and the approaches to enforcing the law that they deem preferable. We also need to understand that policing does not occur in a vacuum; that both policy and practice are framed by a broader socio-political context that creates and supports the agenda of criminalizing homelessness. Several key themes are central to this.

## Police Practice

The practice of policing – both in terms of more broadly sanctioned strategies to address urban crime, and in terms of the discretionary practice of individual police officers – shapes how people who are homeless are policed. There can be no doubt that new approaches to policing over the past three decades, and in particular, place-based neighbourhood or community policing practices, have had an impact. Many jurisdictions have adopted strategies that focus on foot patrols and more aggressive policing of small crimes and minor offences through a framework of ‘zero tolerance’. The

highly controversial strategy of ‘Broken Windows’ policing advocated by Wilson and Kelling is premised upon the notion that the failure to suppress low level symptoms of disorder as aggressively as major crimes can in fact lead to the escalation of crime and urban decay. The idea is to get tough on small crimes to show that we care about our social rules and laws.

## Social Profiling

We argue that the criminalization of homelessness is not merely about enforcing the law when crime is occurring, whether by homeless persons or others. Few would dispute that this is the necessary role of police services. However, a key facet of the criminalization of homelessness is that law enforcement goes beyond neutrally applying the law. Social profiling occurs when an action is taken against a person based on the fact that this person seemingly belongs to an identified group; in this case people who are deemed by police officers to *be* homeless, because of how they look, what they are doing, and where they are doing it. There is extensive literature on policing and racial profiling, which argues that policing involves discretionary practices, wherein people who



The **social profiling of homeless persons** refers to a range of actions undertaken for safety, security or public protection, or in response to public fear, that relies on stereotypes about the danger and criminality of people who are homeless and their uses of public space (for money making, sleeping or resting), rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to be singled out for greater scrutiny or differential treatment.

are visible minorities receive an inordinate amount of attention not because of criminal profiling, but rather, because of explicit and implicit discriminatory practices.

The profiling of homeless persons, particularly those who have been street involved for some time, may be based on a person's "sloppy or neglected appearance," "bad bodily odour or personal hygiene" and "used and ill-assorted clothing" (Sylvestre, 2011). When it comes to homeless youth, social profiling can occur as the result of a broad interpretation by the police regarding who is deemed a 'suspicious' person due to clothing, location, time of day, etc.

## Policing in a Broader Socio-Political Context

The practice of policing and the underlying perceptions that guide police actions do not occur in a vacuum. Understanding police practices helps make some sense of the high level of attention paid to street youth by police in this study. However, police officers and police services in general operate in a much broader socio-political context, which frames how homelessness gets talked about and thought about by the general public, the news media, politicians and ultimately the police. That is, we cannot make sense of the criminalization of homelessness merely through exploring the behaviours of people who are homeless, nor simply by exploring the ways in which individual police officers carry out their duties.

We contend that the conflictual relationship between the police and homeless youth reflects a larger battle over individual rights and privileges to use public space. These interactions occur within a broader social and political context where a link is established between the experience / status of being homeless and criminality. This context frames the very presence of street youth on city streets as a reflection of growing urban disorder.

There is considerable research in Canada and the United States (Smith, 1996; Ruddick, 1996; Hermer and Mosher, 2002; Sylvestre 2010a, b, 2011) that highlight political and economic shifts that underlie growing concerns with visible

manifestations of urban poverty. This is often accompanied by the desire to use a law and order agenda to address the so-called problem. In a context where inner-cities are becoming increasingly gentrified, there are ongoing battles over the use of public space and who has the "right" to the city (Lefebvre, 1996). In addition, as social and welfare supports are dismantled, and the income and wealth of middle and lower income earners decline, marginalized persons increasingly come to symbolize urban disorder, and get framed as "disorderly people" (Hermer and Mosher, 2002); populations defined in the media and in policy contexts as 'welfare cheats', 'coddled prisoners', 'violent youth', etc. Policing practices to 'rid' the city of visibly marginal persons become justified as necessary to the broader strategy of sanitizing modern cities; to help engender a much more positive image of the city and its 'citizens,' thus attracting industry, capital and creative persons in an increasingly competitive global market.

It is through this lens that homeless persons – and in particular, those who squeegee and panhandle – are considered to embody disorder; a disorder that is seen to be delinquent and criminal, and therefore requiring a law and order response. The experience of homeless people (in this case street youth) in engaging the police thus raises questions about citizenship and social inclusion, in reference to: a) who does and does not receive fair treatment by the police, and more broadly, b) who has access to, and what activities are permitted in, public spaces (streets, sidewalks, parks) and semi-public spaces (doorways, shopping malls, unoccupied buildings) in major cities. This reflects a broader struggle regarding who has (and importantly, who lacks) a stronger voice in shaping public policy, dictating the terms of use of public spaces, and influencing the direction of law enforcement practices.

The criminalization of homelessness, then, is not merely about policing and policing practice, but reflects a broader concern with making this form of extreme poverty less visible. When our response to homelessness does not adequately support people struggling to avoid homelessness, or conversely help those in crisis move out of homelessness quickly, we are left with a visibly impoverished population. Criminalizing that population is not a solution. A more effective strategy that houses and supports people living in poverty is a more humane and arguably cost effective solution.

## Recommendations

### 1. Federal and Provincial Governments

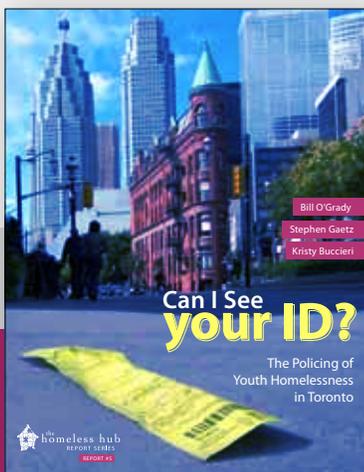
- 1.1 The Government of Ontario should immediately repeal the Safe Streets Act, and instead invest in more effective strategies to end homelessness.
- 1.2 Other provincial governments must refrain from implementing their own version of the Ontario Safe Streets Act.
- 1.3 The Government of Canada, through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), must develop and implement strategies to end youth homelessness that focus on prevention and rapid rehousing.
- 1.4 Provincial governments should establish inter-ministerial committees to develop effective intervention strategies to reduce and end youth homelessness.
- 1.5 The Government of Canada and all provinces must ensure that effective discharge planning supports are available for all inmates leaving correctional facilities.
- 1.6 All levels of government – and the police services they employ – should cease using the practice of ticketing homeless persons as a way to control their behavior or to encourage them to move from public spaces.
- 1.7 Provincial courts should refrain from issuing bench warrants and imprisoning homeless persons who do not pay fines such as Safe Streets Act tickets.
- 1.8 Funding and support for programs such as Justice for Children and Youth’s Street Youth Legal Services (SYLS) program should be made available through legal aid in provinces across Canada.

### 2. Municipal Government

- 2.1 The city of Toronto should refrain from establishing bylaws that criminalize people who are homeless.
- 2.2 Toronto City Council should order a review of police practices in dealing with people who are homeless, and mandate appropriate diversion programs to reduce the harms caused by the criminalization of homelessness.
- 2.3 The City of Toronto, in concert with the Province of Ontario, should develop an amnesty program whereby people who are homeless are able to clear their records.
- 2.4 Shelters for homeless people should be funded to remain open to young people twenty four hours a day.
- 2.5 The City of Toronto’s Streets to Homes Outreach Program should involve more collaboration with Toronto Police Services.
- 2.6 The City of Toronto (and other municipal governments across Canada) must develop a strategy to end youth homelessness.

### 3. The Toronto Police Service

- 3.1 The Toronto Police Service should stop the practice of regularly stopping and searching young people who are homeless.
- 3.2 The Toronto Police Service should establish a Homelessness Policing taskforce to develop a more effective response to homelessness.
- 3.3 The Toronto Police Service should work more closely with the division of Shelter, Support and Housing to develop alternatives to interventions that criminalize homelessness.
- 3.4 The Toronto Police Service should establish a “homelessness community policing unit”.



The full report is available at:

[www.homelesshub.ca/CanISeeYourID](http://www.homelesshub.ca/CanISeeYourID)