

conditional discharges, suspended sentences, supervision of offenders in the community by means of probation, community service orders, fine option programs, restitution, temporary absence passes and victim-offender reconciliation programs. Community dispute mediation centres, community resource centres, halfway houses and therapeutic communities, such as facilities for alcoholics, are also in operation. These programs, developed more extensively in some parts of the country than in others, have met with varying degrees of success.

Over the last 15 years, the use of restitution and community service orders for non-violent offenders has met with considerable approval. These forms of sentences recognize the involvement and grievance of the victim and provide some measure of redress, at the very least in a symbolic way. Moreover, they appear to offer more hope than does imprisonment of achieving the eventual rehabilitation of the offender. More recently, intensive probation supervision, home confinement and alternative sentence planning and management have offered opportunities in the form of intermediate sanctions which permit the diversion from incarceration, or the release back to the community earlier, of offenders who might otherwise be, or who have been, incarcerated. Processes which bring victims and offenders together seem to offer both the greatest hope of sensitizing offenders to the impact of their criminal conduct on their victims and the best opportunities for them to take responsibility for their behaviour. As such, they are consistent with the Committee's proposed purpose of sentencing.

Nevertheless, our knowledge about how to select the most appropriate community sanctions for individual offenders remains at a relatively rudimentary state. The Canadian Sentencing Commission identified the need for further research to be conducted with respect to the use and evaluation of community sanctions. In particular, it was concerned about the "widening of the net effect" whereby the introduction of a new sanction (for example, home confinement) might not act as an alternative to incarceration if it were to be applied to offenders who would have been subject otherwise only to probation, rather than to imprisonment. When net widening occurs (as it appears to have done with respect to the use of community service orders), costs of community sanctions are increased, prison populations (and, therefore, costs) do not decrease, and the liberty of offenders who remain in the community may be more severely constrained than previously.

The Canadian Sentencing Commission recommended that guidelines be developed for the use of community sanctions in their own right as