

# **A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR SECOND-STAGE HOUSING FOR WOMEN FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Cranbrook, British Columbia

Conducted by Dianna Hurford, Research Coordinator  
BC Non-Profit Housing Association  
On behalf of Canadian Mental Health Association of the Kootenays  
October 2006

It is estimated that 106,000 women or 9% of the population in BC fled an abusive relationship in 2004. These women face unique and significant barriers to accessing housing and support services in BC. Recent research found that economic dependence and lack of income, lack of affordable housing, homelessness, short and long-term psychological effects, and inflexible or mainstreamed services are the most common barriers to a woman's success in permanently leaving the abusive relationship. Services and supports were deemed most effective when designed to be client-focused, streamlined, and specialized to the woman's specific needs.

The Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays (the Association) has recognized that women and children fleeing domestic violence in Cranbrook, and East Kootenay region, require specific housing and support services in order to live violence free. By gathering client data on women accessing the CMHA operated Kootenay Haven Transition House, the Association identified that 75 women in 2004/05 could have potentially been prevented from returning to abusive relationships given ongoing support and longer-term housing provision. Short stay averages at the transition house of approximately 13 days reflect a certain hopelessness these women experience—few alternative affordable housing and ongoing support options necessary to prevent homelessness currently exist, especially for women with complex mental health and addiction issues.

Low vacancy rates and increasing rental costs are a relevant trend in the City of Cranbrook and of the surrounding East Kootenay region. The demand for rental housing is expected to accommodate an additional 533 households by 2031. Women with low-income, including women employed on a part-time basis, unemployed women, and women on Income Assistance, disability pensions, and retirement pensions are particularly vulnerable to changes in the rental market. Considering that economic dependence and lack of both income and affordable housing are two of the most significant barriers for women fleeing abuse, any of the women in these populations fleeing violent homes will require an affordable housing option that lasts longer than 30 days.

Certain demographic factors in Cranbrook are also indicative of a need for longer-stay, intensive type of supported housing for women fleeing abuse. Besides an increasing population struggling with mental health and addiction issues, CMHA for the Kootenays is anticipating an influx of women from Bountiful, BC who will require specialized psychological services, lifeskills, and culturally sensitive services. The Association has also experienced an increasing number of older women and younger women (age 15-17) fleeing abusive homes in Cranbrook. The communal short-term living arrangement at Kootenay Haven is unable to provide the long-term needs of these women under its mandate as a transition house.

Therefore, this needs assessment confirms that second-stage housing in Cranbrook is in high demand, especially for particular populations of women. This type of housing will address the specific housing and support needs of women and children fleeing abuse by allowing them the time and support to deal with the underlying effects of domestic abuse including psychological, physical, and financial issues. In effect, second-stage housing offered with specialized programming will provide women with the time, support, and skills required to re-integrate into the community and live violence-free.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays has commissioned the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) to investigate the need for second-stage housing for women fleeing domestic violence in the Kootenays. CMHA for the Kootenays currently operates Kootenay Haven, a transition house in Cranbrook serving women and children fleeing abusive relationships throughout the region. The Association also delivers an array of support programs and owns and operates several non-profit housing developments in the Kootenay area, including Abbott Gardens where the proposed second-stage building would potentially be located. The City of Cranbrook acts as the service catchment area for the East Kootenay region.

CMHA for the Kootenays feels that there is a significant need for second-stage housing for women fleeing domestic violence in the Kootenays. Through Kootenay Haven, CMHA has experienced an increasing number of women who have complex/multiple barriers to safe and affordable housing and supports once they leave abusive relationships. These barriers will often result in the women returning to their abusers or becoming homeless. Both national and local research has revealed similar trends.

The needs assessment begins with a broader focus, in an attempt to understand the demographic or community profile of women living in the areas surrounding Cranbrook. It will then delve into some of the relevant findings from current research regarding the availability of affordable housing in the Kootenays and specific housing and service barriers for women fleeing domestic violence. Specific data collected during 2005/2006 on women who entered into the Association's Kootenay Haven Transition House, regarding women fleeing domestic violence, will provide specific data on the existing need for more intensive supports and housing for women in Cranbrook. This data will then be analysed in relation to existing affordable housing and support options for women leaving abusive relationships in the area.

The assessment will conclude by assessing whether or not there is a need for second-stage housing in Cranbrook and if so, what kind of second-stage housing and supports may be potentially required.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE OF CRANBROOK

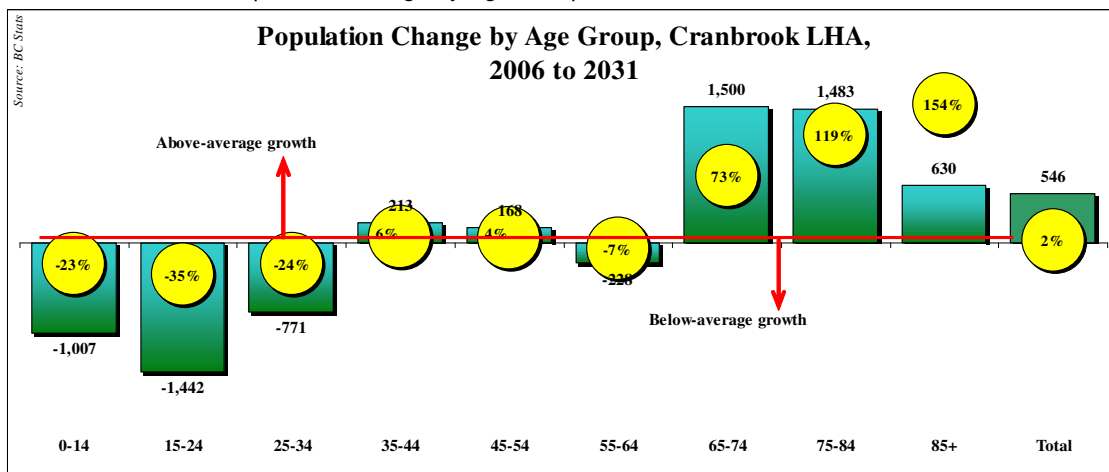
Information attained through community profile data provide an overview of the female population in the Cranbrook area and shows potentially vulnerable populations. These populations are considered vulnerable due to the extent to which access to affordable housing and support services are threatened in the current rental and income markets. The community profile may alert to areas (such as low-income, lone-parents) where increased service and housing support planning may prevent ongoing cycles of domestic violence in a community.

This is not to assume that women in vulnerable population groups currently experience abuse, but rather to determine the number or percentage of women who could not necessarily flee violence successfully in Cranbrook due to economic dependence or lack of income, lack of affordable housing or homelessness, short and long-term psychological effects, and inflexible or mainstreamed services.

### Population of Cranbrook Local Health Authority

In 2006, 26,305 people lived within the boundaries of the Cranbrook Local Health Authority, including the communities of Cranbrook, Wycliffe, and Fort Steele. This represented an 18% population growth (3,971 additional people) since 1991. Population forecasts estimate that a 2% growth (283 additional people) will occur between 2006 and 2031, assuming birth, death, and migration rates remain constant.

Chart 1: Population Change by Age Group, Cranbrook LHA, 2006 to 2031



Source: Urban Futures Institute

In terms of population change by age group, below-average growth is estimated in the number of residents in the 0-34 and 55-64 year old range by 2031. Above-average growth will likely occur for the senior population by 2031, most significantly in the 65-84 age range.

In 2005, there were a total of 13,044 females residing within the Cranbrook LHA; 1,041 of these women were between the ages of 20 and 24 years, 1,030 were between 40 and 44, and 1,023 were between 50 and 54.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cranbrook Local Health Area Profile. Interior Health Authority. August 2005.

## **Marital & Household Status of Women in the City of Cranbrook**

In 2001, the total population of women residing in the City of Cranbrook was 9,510. Of this population 15 years or older, 615 women were in common-law relationships, 3,770 legally married, 395 separated, 735 divorced, 840 widowed, and 1,960 were single. Of the 875 lone-parent families, 720 were female lone-parents.

## **Mobility Status of Women in the City of Cranbrook**

The majority of women in Cranbrook lived at the same address one year ago; however 43% of women changed addresses within the same province/territory 5 years ago (6% higher occurrence than BC). Only 8% of women lived in a different province/territory or country 5 years ago.

## **Aboriginal Women Population**

Of the total Cranbrook population, 590 women are Aboriginal (1,115 Aboriginal peoples total). Aboriginal bands in the Cranbrook area are from the Ktunaxa Nation, comprised of seven Indian Bands, including; St. Mary's Indian Band, Columbia Lake Indian Band, Shuswap Indian Band, Lower Kootenay Indian Band and the Tobacco Plains Indian Band. Mostly established in the late 1870's, the St. Mary's Band comprises six reserves and is located approximately 6 km outside of the City of Cranbrook.

## **Immigration Characteristics & Visible Minority Status of Women**

Of the immigrant population, 845 women were foreign-born; 690 of these women immigrated before 1991, and 160 women immigrated between 1991 and 2001. There are 40 non-permanent residents.

A very small percentage of Cranbrook women (0.3%) are women classified as visible minority. Of the total 285 women in this category, 85 are Chinese, 60 Filipino, 40 South Asian, 25 Black, and 20 Japanese. The average age of immigrant women in the City of Cranbrook was about 55 years of age in 2001, although 21% of immigrant women were over the age of 75 years. Female immigrants tended to work in sales and service, clerical, or as paralegals, social service workers, or occupations in education and religion.<sup>2</sup> The majority of women in Cranbrook speak English only (90%).

## **Education of Women**

It is significant to note that 64% of 15-19 year olds who attended school part-time in 2001 were female (45 out of 70). Although the number of women in younger age groups is increasing in terms of completing high school, this increase is not reflected in higher levels of education completion in the trades, college, and university categories. This may reflect greater economic vulnerability for women in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Community, Aboriginal & Women's Services. *Profile of Immigrants in BC Communities 2001: City of Cranbrook*. BC Stats.

Highest Level of Schooling of Females in Cranbrook by Age Group

	Age Group	Percent
Less than High School Graduation	20-34	13
	35-44	16
	45-64	26
With High School Graduation and/or some Postsecondary	20-34	37
	35-44	31
	45-64	26
With Trades Certificate or Diploma	20-34	12
	35-44	16
	45-64	11
With College Certificate, Diploma	20-34	25
	35-44	27
	45-64	23
With University Certificate, Diploma, or Degree	20-34	14
	35-44	10
	45-64	15

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Community Profiles

## Employment & Income Characteristics of Women

In 2000, the median family income for lone-parent families in Cranbrook was \$25,975, \$27,342 less than the median income for all census families. The median income for a single person was \$18,330.

### Employment

More than 4,500 women working full time in the City of Cranbrook earned an average of \$32,001 in 2000.<sup>3</sup> This figure is more than \$16,000 lower than the average male earnings in the same category. Average earnings of all persons with earnings (including part-time and casual workers) in Cranbrook were even lower for women at a total of \$20,680.

While the majority of men work in the manufacturing and construction industries, business services, and other services sectors, women tend to work in health and education, wholesale and retail trade, and other services.

A recent labour market bulletin found that:

There are fewer people in the Kootenay labour force competing for jobs and this is because young people are leaving the area to attend school or are searching for better paying jobs. The only population group that has increased in the last 5 years is 55 and over. Employment trends also indicate that there has been a decrease in 2,000 full-time jobs between 2000 and 2005 and an increase of 1,400 part-time jobs, a trend that is reversed in other areas of the Southern Interior (Service Canada, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> This income is totalled for women working full time for a full year

Although Employment Insurance claims have dropped in the Kootenays by approximately 13%, it may be worth asking the question whether or not employed women are earning enough to afford the basic necessities for their households. Employers are not required by law to provide health benefits to part-time employees and several employers may not provide the option of increasing the employee's work hours to full-time due to financial constraints. Therefore, the income of single parents and seniors could be understood as particularly vulnerable, considering these are often the targeted populations for part-time employees. Service Canada notes, "There has been an increase in the number of maternity/parental and sickness claims, specifically in the Thompson and Kootenay regions over the last year and over the last quarter."

### **Income Assistance**

According to a 2005 Interior Health report, "Approximately 2.3% of Cranbrook residents, aged 0-64 years, were receiving Income Assistance as of September 2003. This percentage was greater than the comparable percentages for the East Kootenay HAS (2.1%), Interior Health (2.7%), and British Columbia (2.6%)." Over 95% of persons on Income Assistance had received it for less than one year.

### **Mental Health Profile**

In the East Kootenay HSDA, the majority of women 12 years and older self-rated their mental health to be very good or excellent; however approximately 2,000 women reported they had fair or poor mental health. According to recent research, "women fleeing from domestic violence who also suffer from mental health issues are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to accessing appropriate supports, emergency housing, and safe, affordable housing."<sup>4</sup> It was also found that, "women who have experienced abuse will be more likely to use alcohol and drugs in order to relieve stress (i.e. self-medicate) than women who have not been abused."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dianna Hurford and Elizabeth Wolferstan. *Examination of the Housing and Support Continuum for Women and Children Fleeing Abuse: Phase 1, Review of the Literature*. Forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**EXISTING ACCESS/AVAILABILITY TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING & SERVICES FOR WOMEN**

***Trends in Rental Vacancy Rates***

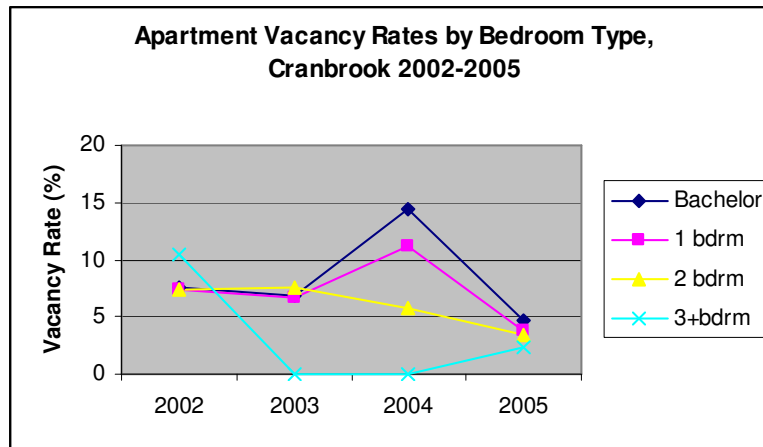
Trends in rental vacancy rates indicate fluctuations of increases and decreases in the period 2001 – 2005 with an overall decrease since 2001. The sharpest decline in vacancy rates can be noted in bachelor and one-bedroom units. In October 2005, there were a total of 39 vacant units in Cranbrook; only 1 bachelor unit and 2 three-bedroom units, followed by 13 one-bedroom units and 22 two-bedroom units.

Number of Private Apartment Units Vacant and Universe in October 2005 by Bedroom Type for Cranbrook CA

Structure Type	Bachelor		One Bedroom		Two Bedroom		Three Bedroom+		Total	
	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total	Vacant	Total
Apartment	1	21	13	344	21	596	1	43	37	1004
Row	**	**	**	**	1	161	1	142	2	303

Source: CMHC Housing Market

Vacancy rates for apartments and row housing in the Cranbrook rental market in 2003 remained above 5%, although they decreased marginally from 7.2% in 2001 to 6.8% in 2002. The largest decrease in vacancy rates (3.5%) occurred between 2004 and 2005.



Source: CMHC Housing Market

***Average Market Rents***

Average market rents in the private sector increased by approximately 2% between 2004 and 2005. The most significant increase was in the bachelor unit category, from \$366 in 2004 to \$391 in 2005. Therefore, single women on Income Assistance and women receiving disability pensions who receive \$325 as a shelter allowance continue to be priced out of the private sector market rentals.

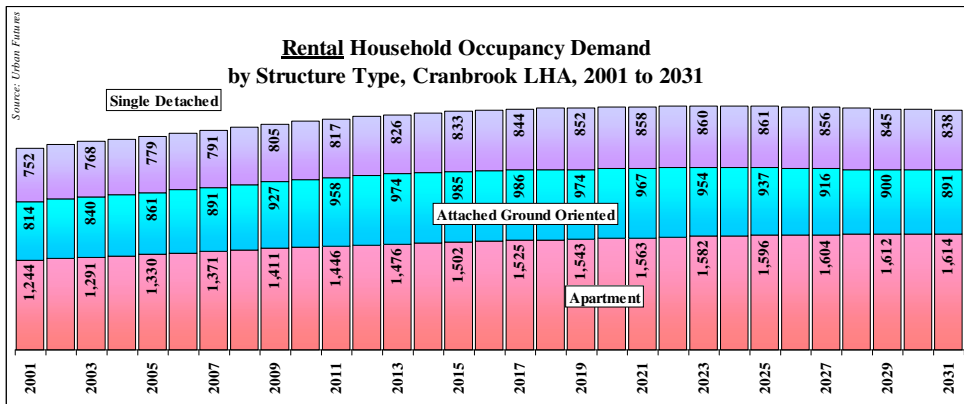
Private Sector Average Rents (in dollars) by Bedroom Type for Cranbrook CA

Structure Type	Bachelor		One Bedroom		Two Bedroom		Three Bedroom+		Total	
	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
	Apartment	366	391	454	473	556	560	620	635	521
Row	**	**	**	**	**	**	624	637	565	583

Source: CMHC Housing Market

**Forecast for Future Rental Household Occupancy Demand**

Another factor to consider in regards to future affordable housing accessibility is future demand on the market. It's expected that the rental housing occupancy demand will increase by 533 units from 2001 to 2031. Apartments represent the largest increase in demand by structure type at an additional 370 units.



Source: Urban Futures Institute

**Existing Shelter & Services Specifically for Women Fleeing Domestic Violence**

A 1995 study estimated that the costs of violence against women in BC from 1994-1995 totalled \$385 million taking into account criminal justice, compensation, medical, shelter and other service costs, and lost productivity.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is recommended that support services provide longer-term, non-emergency alternatives that are both effective in preventing the ongoing cycles of violence and cost-efficient, such as second-stage housing.<sup>7</sup> The preliminary findings of the report, *Examination of the Housing and Support Continuum for Women and Children Fleeing Abuse*, found that:

Although several specialized supports exist for women fleeing domestic violence in BC exist, new trends indicate that existing supports do not meet the full range of needs. These trends include an increasing number of women over the age of 50 years fleeing abusive partners, younger women in their teens fleeing violence with their children, and women with mental health and addiction issues attempting to discontinue the cycles of violence in their lives. These women face significant access barriers to existing service and housing supports. (Hurford & Wolferstan, 2006)

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. *Measuring the Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*.

<sup>7</sup> CMHC. *An Evaluation of the Next Step Program for Second-Stage Housing in Canada*. 1997

The following table shows the existing housing and service supports for women fleeing abuse in the Kootenay region. The manager of one of the existing second-stage housing operators in the region felt an additional second-stage housing facility located in Cranbrook would better serve some populations, particularly Aboriginal women who lived just outside of Cranbrook. These women would travel from the second-stage housing facility in Trail to their families' homes near to Cranbrook every weekend.

Existing Temporary Shelters & In-House Services for Women Fleeing Abuse

<b>Category</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Summary of Services</b>	<b>City/Town</b>
<i>Transition Houses</i>	Kootenay Haven Transition House	Provides 24hour in-house staff, counselling for women and children, support groups, outreach, follow-up, transportation, legal advocacy. Referrals to second-stage, sexual assault services, and addictions counselling.	Cranbrook
	WINS Transition House	Provides 24hr in-house staffing, in-house counselling, support groups, transportation, legal advocacy, and sexual assault counselling. Wheelchair accessible.	Trail
<i>Safe Houses</i>	Castlegar & District Community Services	Offers counselling for children and women in-house, support groups, outreach, follow-up, transportation, and addictions counselling. Referrals to legal advocacy. Wheelchair accessible.	Castlegar
	Safe Home-Irvine House	Offers support groups, outreach, follow-up, and transportation services. Also offers services for the deaf. Referral services for counselling for children and sexual assault and addictions counselling.	Creston
	Elk Valley Safe Homes	Offers follow-up, transportation, legal advocacy and referrals to transition houses, second-stage housing, and support groups, follow-up, and sexual assault and addictions counselling.	Elkford
	Golden Safe Homes	Offers in-house counselling, support groups, outreach, follow-up, and transportation. Referrals to counselling for children, sexual assault and addictions counselling, and programs for assaultive men.	Golden
	North Kootenay Lake Safe Home Program	Offers in-house counselling for children and women, outreach, support groups, follow-up, transportation, legal advocacy and is wheelchair accessible. Also offers home support services. Referrals to programs for assaultive men.	Kaslo
	Columbia Valley Safe Homes Program	Offers follow-up, transportation, and legal advocacy. Also court accompaniment, legal referral, and crisis line.	Invermere
<i>Second-Stage Housing</i>	Nova Vita	Offers support groups, transportation, and sexual assault counselling. Also has an on-site therapist and addictions counselling.	Trail
	Chrysalis House	An 11-unit apartment building for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Tenants can stay for up to one year.	Fernie

Source: BC/Yukon Society for Transition Houses, 2005

## ***Identified Barriers to Existing Housing & Services***

Participants at a recent affordable housing focus group in Cranbrook suggested that, in regards to affordable housing supply, there had been:

[A]n increase in absolute homelessness and an increase in waitlists for non-profit housing. Due to service centralization, many residents from outlying areas are migrating to Cranbrook to receive health and other support services (Hurford, 2006).

As the population continues to increase in the East Kootenays due to second homeownership trends and resort and recreation development in surrounding areas such as Fernie and Kimberly, it is expected that access to safe and affordable housing will decrease. These changes affect affordability in all types of housing options—from emergency housing to homeownership. A recent Statistics Canada report found that:

The need for long-term housing (especially second-stage housing) and affordable permanent housing are issues that have been identified by shelters as ongoing challenges. Affordable housing is often limited and waiting lists for subsidized housing can range from weeks to years. [...] The need for affordable housing was felt most accurately by groups such as lower income families, lone-parent families and singles (Taylor-Butts, 2005).

**CHARACTERISTICS & TRENDS OF WOMEN SERVED BY CMHA FOR THE KOOTENAYS**

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The Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays provides supportive transitional housing (10 beds) for up to 30 days for women and their children who have experienced or are at risk of abuse, threats, or violence. Supportive services include one-to-one support, employment program, women’s outreach program, and an art therapy program for children who have witnessed or experienced abuse. The Women’s Services Program Plan developed the following outcome statements in order to address the short-term, mid-term, and long-term needs of women in the community:

**Short-term Outcome Statements:**

- 1) Provide immediate transitional housing to reduce the safety risk of women experiencing, or at-risk of experiencing, violence;
- 2) To increase persons served understanding of the cycle of violence;
- 3) To increase persons served knowledge of help (resources) available to them in the community.

**Intermediate Mid-Term (Impact) Statement:**

Women will, upon discharge, use their increased understanding of the cycle of violence and increased knowledge of resources available to them in the community to make choices and plans which will assist them to live violence free.

**Long-Term (Impact) Statement:**

Women will live violence free.

Recent trends captured in the CMHA for the Kootenays Women’s Services Outcomes Report suggests that the majority of women served are not able to access the supports required to discontinue the cycle of violence before they exit the transition house. A total of 75 women in the one-year period between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2006 required a longer stay in a supportive environment such as second-stage housing due to the high risk of returning to the abusive relationship.

Summary of Outcomes: Women’s Services Outcomes Report

<p>Average length of stay in residence = 13 days</p> <p>Average estimated number of times a woman will ‘revolve’ in and out of a transition house before permanently leaving an abusive relationship = 28 times</p>	<p>Current residence duration is not enough time for women in a transition house to get out of ‘crisis mode’ and act on a safety plan. Many of these women are involved in a sub-culture of street life with few housing and support options. Therefore, many are caught in the ‘revolving door’ syndrome, in and out of abuse with a focus on survival rather than long-term planning</p>
<p>Access trends in transition house = 25% increase in women = 9% decrease in female children = 45% decrease in male children</p>	<p>More women without children are accessing transition house services due to the risk of homelessness factored into child custody eligibility. Children are often staying with other family members or have been apprehended by the Ministry of Children and Families.</p>

Percentage demonstrating behaviours indicative of mental health problems = 35% increase	Overall, there is an increase of women entering the Kootenay Haven Transition House with concurrent barriers (drug, alcohol, and mental health). Services obtained mostly focused on harm reduction. <sup>8</sup>
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Phase 2 of the study, *Examination of the Housing and Support Continuum for Women and Children Fleeing Abuse* also identified women with concurrent barriers to housing including women with mental health and addiction issues and younger women with apprehended children.

The study also noted that CMHA for the Kootenays has taken several steps to address the emerging issues for women fleeing domestic violence in the region. These include: expanding transition house eligibility requirements to include women with mental health and addiction services; increasing services for women with mental health and addiction issues; and, exploring the need for longer-term specialized support and housing for women fleeing domestic violence in the Kootenays.

CMHA for the Kootenays has anticipated the aging population of women in BC, and the potential influx of women from Bountiful and feels the proposed second-stage separate living arrangements will cater to their specific long-term needs more effectively.

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<sup>8</sup> Nearest Detox centre is located in Kelowna, seven hours from Cranbrook.

## CONCLUSION

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Considering the increasing vulnerability for women and children fleeing domestic violence due to a lack of housing and support services, the needs assessment has found that a second-stage housing facility in Cranbrook will greatly contribute to preventing the cycle of abuse from continuing. Previous research has found that second-stage housing is a cost-efficient means to providing the required support to women fleeing abuse, especially in light of increased use of emergency services by women who are unable to escape the cycle of violence. A 1995 study estimated that the costs of violence against women in BC from 1994-1995 totalled \$385 million taking into account criminal justice, compensation, medical, shelter and other service costs, and lost productivity.

Currently, low vacancy rates, increasing rental costs, low-incomes, and a broad range of mental health and addiction issues act as significant housing barriers to women fleeing domestic violence. This has contributed to the increased number of homelessness and at risk women. It's been suggested that this has also caused a decreased 'stay average' at the Kootenay Haven Transition House, as more and more women 'revolve' in and out of shelter without successfully breaking the cycle of violence.

Generally speaking, the research suggests that women fleeing domestic violence require longer-term supports in order to heal psychologically, moving from 'survival mode' to 'long-term planning'. In survival mode, a woman must attribute most of her energy to staying free from physical, financial, and emotional harm and finding an alternative housing arrangement. Province-wide, transition house staff is finding that more and more women are not able to take care of their basic needs and heal from the abuse within the 30-day stay time at the transition house. Staff also finds that fewer and fewer affordable, safe housing alternatives are available for low-income women and children. As a result, more women have to choose between returning to their abusers and becoming homeless. In these cases, the opportunity to provide long-term support in order for women to re-integrate into society and live violence free is lost.

Previous research has found that, depending on the type and duration of abuse, the psychological effects may require short or long-term support. It has been found that CMHA for the Kootenay's has the specialized resources, skills and networks to provide supports for a range of mental health and addiction issues, from anxiety and low self-esteem to heavy drug use and effects of intergenerational abuse such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

As proposed by CMHA, the second-stage housing should include separate living spaces for women and their children and specialized support services for long-term psychological, financial, and physical well-being. This housing and support will thereby work to effectively reduce the barriers to accessing and remaining in affordable housing and discontinuing the cycle of violence.

- Aboriginal Policing Services E Division- BC Community Profiles Southeast Division.  
[www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/bc/crops/aps/profiles/southeast/cranbrook\\_e.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/bc/crops/aps/profiles/southeast/cranbrook_e.htm)
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