RESEARCH REPORT

CMHC STUDENT HOUSING STUDY
VOLUME 1: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS
WITH STAKEHOLDERS

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CMHC Student Housing Study
In-Depth Interviews with Stakeholders

March 2004

Submitted to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

STUDENT HOUSING IN CANADA: DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY TO COLLECT DATA AND INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2001, an estimated 645,000 full-time students were enrolled in Canadian universities while an additional 410,000 full-time students were enrolled in postsecondary programs in Canadian colleges. Over the last 20 years, students outside the 18- to 24-year-old cohort have accounted for an increasing proportion of university and college enrolments and today, students over the age of 24 account for approximately 25 per cent of university enrolments. While Canada has a high percentage of postsecondary education enrolment, information on how students are housed and on the student housing market is limited. This is despite their meaningful impact on the market, due not only to their sheer numbers but also due to the fact that there has been an important increase in the number of older students who are more likely to seek lodging away from the parent family.

Despite an extensive review of the literature and a search of the major databases available, very little statistical information specific to student populations and their housing was uncovered. The available information is limited, scattered and uncoordinated. No inventory, even of post-secondary-owned student housing seemed to be available and no organization dealing in post-secondary student affairs seemed to have focused on the state of student housing.

Students are faced with a variety of accommodation options while attending postsecondary institutions. These alternatives range from on-campus housing (facilities owned and operated by the college or university) to off-campus choices from living at home or in a family-owned secondary residence to shared or unshared accommodation in the rental market.

OBJECTIVE

The intent of the study was to assess the feasibility of developing a data collection methodology that is actionable and which would be able to generate student housing-related data that is valid, reliable and timely. The developed methodology would then be assessed to determine its ability to gather information on the state of student housing in Canada and the housing options available to students. Benchmark student-housing data and information would focus on, but not be limited, to: student housing costs; housing supply and demand; types of accommodations used by students; and characteristics and location of accommodations, including size, quality and amenities.

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METHODOLOGY

To address the research objectives, a comprehensive research design consisting of a number of different elements was used. The approach focused on all Canadian post-secondary institutions and on all types of post-secondary students. In order to provide scope to the research, definitions for these variables were needed:

1) Post-Secondary Institutions ("eligible" institution): All institutions in Canada based on the lists compiled by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) in co-operation with provincial/territorial education ministries and the National Association of Career Colleges (NAAC). Only post-secondary institutions who owned housing stock, offered programs of nine months in duration or more and had a total student population of 500 or more were included in the scope of the methodology.

2) Post-Secondary Student: An individual enrolled at an "eligible" institution and registered as either a full-time student or part-time student registered in a minimum of nine hours of course/program work per week. Part-time students were excluded if working 30 or more hours per week. Co-op students are considered full-time students. Distance learning students are excluded.

The research design included qualitative and quantitative components and all activities were geared towards the development of a comprehensive, actionable methodology to obtain reliable, representative student housing data.

The purpose of the qualitative research elements was to gain a broader understanding of the issues of post-secondary student housing and to aid in the development of the quantitative methodology. These elements included:

- key informant interviews that increased the level of understanding of how post-secondary institutions provide and facilitate access to student housing;

- in-depth interviews with stakeholders including post-secondary institution staff, students and student association representatives to better understand the student housing market from a variety of perspectives and to obtain robust qualitative data on the issues of relevance;

- focus groups to pre-test the content of the surveys and related collateral materials.

FINDINGS

The results of the interviews and focus group sessions shaped the methodology for an online survey targeted to both post-secondary institutions and students. These were deemed as the best instruments and medium to use to obtain the desired data. Interview and focus group results also helped to narrow the content of the surveys and provided insights to maximize participation rates and data collection results. Aside from the content found in the post-secondary institution survey and the student survey, the following are key findings from the interview and focus group sessions.

- A variety of issues were seen as important to post-secondary student housing stakeholder groups. These included: the cost of various types of units, types of units being constructed, costs associated with student housing, residence-type information (for example, upkeep), amenities included in rental costs, types of public/private partnerships for accommodation management.

- Most institutional representatives indicated that institutions should have no concerns or issues in providing the information requested, as long as it did not include any requests for personal information about students.

- It was unlikely that institutions would provide direct contact information for students for the administration of the student survey. Limiting access to students has always been an important issue in post-secondary institutions.

- The complexity of the data and information required and the quantitative nature of that data suggested the use of surveys. The multiple audience types necessary to retrieve all desired data elements suggested the use of two survey instruments for student and post-secondary institution audiences.

- The best manner to contact students to achieve a random sample would be through in-person contact at selected and representative campuses in each test centre.

- An online survey was deemed the more appropriate quantitative data collection method than focus groups, paper or hard-copy surveys or telephone surveys. Target respondents (post-secondary housing providers and students) are extremely familiar in the use of the technology and were likely to have e-mail addresses. Additionally, using an online survey complements the typical lifestyle of students as target respondents—as there is no set schedule for delivery and completion and students can complete it at their leisure.

- The best time of year to implement both surveys would be February or March, before or after the study break, before the pressure of final exams. Also, students will have more to say about their housing as they will have been living there a while.

- Intercept interviews, e-mail reminders and incentives, such as prizes, were uncovered as ways to encourage student participation in the survey.

- Sharing findings was recommended as the best way to encourage post-secondary participation, particularly information allowing comparison between institutions.

Data and information collection using the developed methodology proved to be useful. The supporting qualitative research helped to ensure appropriate survey content and optimum qualitative data collection design. The student and post-secondary institutional surveys proved to be actionable and provided valid and reliable housing data. Based on the assessment of the quality of the data, the survey instrument was strong overall and data found to be reliable and useable. Response rates were sufficient to provide representative data for all data. However, despite the positive assessment, a few areas warrant mention in an effort to improve these rates for each survey type to allow for greater analysis.

- The present length of the survey may be a hindrance to an optimal response rate. The majority of uncompleted surveys contained data up to the first 10 per cent of the survey. The survey length for this type of audience might have been considered lengthy following the first 10 per cent of survey completion.

- An analysis of the questions contained within the survey performed well. There was a low incidence of "don't know/refusal" and unambiguous responses for all questions.

- The fieldwork was undertaken from March 29th through May 31st. The research was designed to coincide with the student pilot test, as well as to accommodate the typical schedules of housing officers. That is, through the qualitative phase of this research, it was determined that mid-way through a semester would likely be the least busy time for housing departments. In terms of future administration, it is advisable to implement the survey mid-way through either the fall or winter semesters.

- The selected methodology represents a very economical way to administer a survey to this target audience without compromising efficiency and accuracy. Through the qualitative research components, it was also clear that this was also the preferred way for housing officers to participate in a survey of this kind. The budget for the pilot test, aside from professional time, was negligible. Alternative methods of survey deployment include telephone, mail-back and online. A brief analysis of these alternatives demonstrated that significant cost savings were realized by deploying the survey instrument online.

Survey of Post-Secondary Institutions

Feasibility of the Methodology

The institutional survey, designed to obtain information about the housing stock supply, structure types, amenities offered, vacancy rates and other issues, was administered to 288 post-secondary institutions across Canada. Targeted institutions were based on the lists obtained from the CICIC and the NAAC and amended to be reflective of the predefined research definition of "post-secondary institution." The finite and manageable list of "eligible" institutions provided the opportunity to conduct a census of post-secondary institutions rather than surveying a representative sample. In total, 88 institutions responded, representing a 31 per cent response rate. Based on a sample of this size, the findings can be considered accurate within +/-8.8 per cent, 19 times out of 20 (adjusted for a finite population). The response rate for this survey fell within relatively standard range for this type of survey method and target audience.

Post-Secondary Institution Survey Results

The following are summary results from the survey of post-secondary institutions.

- The schools who responded to the survey had a range of on-campus housing capacity. Over half (60 per cent) of responding schools own student housing (either on or off-campus) with 77 per cent of these schools saying their student housing was located on-campus. Two thirds (64 per cent) of responding schools that own on-campus housing can house less than 400 students and 22 per cent said their capacity was over 1,000 students. Dormitory residences were the most common type of housing on-campus. Among schools that own on-campus housing, 82 per cent offer dormitory-style residences and 63 per cent have apartments, townhouses or houses. Only one in ten responding schools offers family units.

- Smaller post-secondary institutions appear to have greater on-campus housing options for students than institutions with larger student populations. At the time of the survey, only 23 per cent of institutions responded as having fewer than 1,000 registered students; however, 75 per cent of institutions responded they were capable of housing between 0-1,000 students.

- The results showed a range of rents and amenities available. For example, rents for a single dormitory ranged from a low of $155 to a high of $1,268. Average rents also varied by the number of bedrooms contained in the on-campus unit—the greater number of bedrooms, the lower the average rent (Table 1). The majority of the rents included heat, electricity and laundry. There was considerable variety in the other amenities included in rent, for instance some included meal plans and some did not.

Table 1: Average Monthly Rents (Costs) Reported for Post-Secondary Institution Accommodations to Students
by Type of Unit and Target Market

Type/Target	Average	Rent Range	
		Low	High
Single dormitory	$397	$155	$1,268
Twin dormitory	$405	$145	$948
Bachelor	$412	$215	$692
One-bedroom	$511	$249	$850
Two-bedroom	$466	$210	$884
Three+-bedroom	$413	$155	$885
Family unit	$659	$420	$1,100

- There is a wide variety of amenities included in the average rent of post-secondary institution student housing. Regardless of whether the student housing units were owned or leased by the post-secondary institution, the large majority included heat, electricity and laundry facilities in the cost of the rent. Following these items, there is a considerable variation in the services included in their accommodations.

- Students in all responding institutions face low on-campus vacancies rates when looking for housing. At the beginning of the school year most institutions reported that their housing is filled to capacity. A majority of housing officials said that the vacancy rate for on-campus, off-campus and leased housing has stayed the same in 2004 compared to the past two—three years.

- Only one out of every five post-secondary institutions in Canada has short-term plans to increase student housing. Despite the fact that more than 50 per cent of responding post-secondary institutions expect an increase in student population over the next five years, only 21 per cent of responding institutions have plans to increase student housing on- or off-campus. Some post-secondary institutions have already begun planning for expected student population increases. When asked if they are currently building new student housing units, 15 per cent of post-secondary institutions responded yes.

- Schools commonly provide student assistance to find housing. More than four in five (84 per cent) institutions who responded to the survey provide information or assistance to students looking for off-campus housing.

Survey of Students

Feasibility of the Methodology

The student survey was administered online to a random sample of students enrolled in selected post-secondary institutions in two selected urban centres. Cost considerations and the initial survey response rates were factors that limited the implementation of the student survey to only one larger and one smaller urban centre—Toronto and Halifax. Also, by including only two cities, the pilot was expected to yield data that enabled greater sub-group analysis. Five institutions were selected in each city (Table 2).

Toronto	Halifax
Ryerson University	Dalhousie University
University of Toronto—St. George Campus	University of King's College
	Saint Mary's University
Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology	Nova Scotia Community College—Institute of Technology Campus
George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology	
	Mount Saint Vincent University
York University	

Table 2

Students were recruited through an intercept methodology that involved:

- Interviewers canvassed the selected campuses for either a half or full day and handed out flyers that contained information about the survey.

- Students were asked to read the flyer and were told about the survey, the prize draw, etc.

- Those who agreed to participate in the survey were asked for their e-mail address (for reminders and prize draw notification) and to show their student ID to verify eligibility for the survey.

- Students were given a password/PIN to access the online survey. Use of the password/PIN prevented students from logging back on to complete the survey more than one time.

- Interviewers were instructed to maximize coverage at the institutions by moving through the campus (for example, different faculties, student union centre, residences, etc.) to ensure strong recruitment.

In total, 1,372 random students from various post-secondary campuses were recruited to participate in the online survey—632 students from Toronto and 740 students from Halifax. Of the 1,372 students recruited, 332 students completed the survey for a response rate of 24 per cent. The sub-group response rates are 27 per cent for Halifax and 21 per cent for Toronto. Based on a sample of this size, the findings can be considered to be accurate within +/-5.38 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Student Survey Results

The following are selected summary results from the survey of students.

- Despite the range of on- and off-campus housing options available to students, most students choose to live at home while pursuing their post-secondary education. Nearly half of the survey respondents said they were living at home with their parents/guardians during the school year. In most cases, cost consideration was the primary driver for respondents who choose to stay at home during the school year. There were slight differences in reporting between centres. A greater proportion of post-secondary students attending school in the Toronto area were living at home compared to students in Halifax. At the time of the survey, approximately 54 per cent of students in Toronto were living at home, compared to only 36 per cent of students in Halifax.

- The proportion of students living at home is even greater for those students whose origin was the same as the centre in which the institution was located. Almost three out of every four respondents, whose hometown was the same institutional location, remained at home with their parents/guardians during the school year.

- The majority of respondents who were not living at home with their parents/guardians were living off campus during the school year. The propensity for living in on-campus accommodations was greater in Halifax than in Toronto, with more than 30 per cent of students in Halifax not living at home choosing to live on campus, as compared to approximately 20 per cent of students in the Toronto area living on-campus.

- The foremost choice of dwelling types for off-campus housing was apartment living. This was consistent in both Toronto and Halifax, where more than 60 per cent of off-campus students indicated they lived in this type of accommodations. However, the second most common dwelling type differed by centre, where 21.6 per cent of students in Halifax reported living in a single-detached house (rented or owned) while in Toronto 20.8 per cent reported living in a rooming house or "rented room."

- From the survey results, there did not appear to be a preference for the various bedroom types (such as, number of bedrooms) among students. Overall, students appeared to be almost equally likely to be living in one-bedroom accommodations (27 per cent), two-bedroom accommodations (28 per cent) or three-bedroom accommodations (29 per cent). Students in Toronto were more likely to be living in one-bedroom accommodations while students in Halifax were more likely to be living in two- or three- bedroom units. These results coincide with the likelihood of students to be sharing accommodations, as almost three out of every four respondents shared their accommodations with others.

- On average, the cost of living for off-campus students in Toronto was higher than the cost of living in Halifax. At the time of the survey, there was a lower percentage of students in Toronto paying less than $400 per month for their accommodations, as compared to Halifax. At the same time, there was a greater percentage of students in Toronto paying more than $500 per month versus those in Halifax.

- Reasons for living in on-campus accommodations versus off campus accommodations varied. Students often chose to live in on-campus accommodations for reasons such as location, ease of access to the institution, shared lifestyles with the community and safety. The most commonly cited reasons for choosing off-campus accommodations included the need for privacy, perceived independence, cost and the greater tranquility that is seen to come with off-campus accommodations.

CONCLUSION

The methodology designed to obtain representative, quantitative student housing data in Canada proved to be feasible and provided valid and reliable housing data.

Based on the study's findings-coupled with detailed analysis of the research by CMHC, the following conclusions are made and recommendations offered to enhance the survey methodology:

1) Alternative methodologies were explored and found to have greater cost implications and likely lower response rates from both the post-secondary institution and student perspectives.

a) Costs associated with implementing the methodology can likely be reduced by partnering with post-secondary institutions and others who use the information. Others might include but not be limited to associations, education departments of provincial governments and private stakeholders. Post-secondary institutions and others find value in this data and information for business planning purposes and would likely consider such arrangements.

2) Depending on data and information requirements and funding availability, limiting the implementation of the methodology to the individual urban centre level(s) is suggested:

a) Both institutions and the students that attend them are predominantly found in urban areas, limiting the ability to gather data representative of the provincial or national level. It should be noted, data and information can be collected from a sample of students at institutions across a province(s), region or for Canada to obtain results representative for these jurisdictions.

b) While the proposed methodology proved to be less costly to administer than the suggested alternatives, a national implementation would likely prove to be more challenging and costly than implementing the methodology at individual urban centre level. A national implementation would require conducting the student survey in each urban centre where the more than 250 post-secondary institutions reside, resulting in exorbitant administrative costs.

3) Technical personnel involved in the programming of the online survey should be included in the design phase of the survey to prevent survey design and administrative problems.

4) Although the proposed methodology proved to be the most suitable alternative for gathering housing data and information from the various sources, additional strategies to improve the response rate should be explored.

Housing Research at CMHC

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LOGEMENT DES ÉTUDIANTS AU CANADA : ÉLABORATION D'UNE MÉTHODE DE COLLECTE DE DONNÉES ET D'INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

À l'automne 2001, on estimait à environ 645 000 le nombre d'étudiants inscrits à temps plein dans une université canadienne, et à 410 000 le nombre d'étudiants inscrits à temps plein à un programme d'études postsecondaires dans un collège canadien. Au cours des 20 dernières années, la proportion d'étudiants ne se situant pas dans le groupe des 18 à 24 ans a augmenté de plus en plus dans les universités et les collèges, et aujourd'hui, les étudiants de plus de 24 ans comptent pour à peu près 25 % des inscriptions à l'université. Bien que le Canada puisse se targuer de son pourcentage élevé d'inscriptions aux études postsecondaires, on retrouve peu d'information sur la manière dont sont logés les étudiants, ni sur le marché du logement pour étudiants, et ce, en dépit de l'incidence significative de ce groupe sur le marché immobilier, attribuable non seulement à sa taille, mais également à la forte augmentation du nombre d'étudiants plus âgés et donc plus enclins à se loger hors du foyer familial.

Un examen approfondi de la documentation existante et une recherche dans les principales bases de données accessibles n'ont permis de trouver que très peu de statistiques sur les populations étudiantes et leur logement. Les renseignements disponibles sont limités, épars et fragmentaires. Il ne semble pas exister d'inventaire à ce sujet, ni même en ce qui concerne le stock de logements pour étudiants que possèdent les établissements postsecondaires, et aucune organisation consacrée aux affaires des étudiants de niveau postsecondaire ne semble s'être penchée sur cette question.

Pendant leurs études postsecondaires, les étudiants ont le choix entre une variété d'options d'hébergement Celles-ci vont du logement situé sur le campus (dans des installations que possède et exploite le collège ou l'université) au logement hors campus (les étudiants ont alors le choix de demeurer chez leurs parents ou dans une résidence secondaire appartenant à une famille, ou encore de partager un logement trouvé dans le marché locatif ou d'en assumer seuls les frais).

OBJECTIF

L'étude avait pour objectif d'évaluer la faisabilité de l'élaboration d'une méthode de collecte de données pouvant être appliquée et susceptible de générer des données valides, fiables et actuelles sur le logement des étudiants. On devait ensuite évaluer la méthode élaborée afin de déterminer si elle permet de rassembler les renseignements touchant le logement des étudiants au Canada et les options qui s'offrent à ces derniers en matière d'habitation. Les données et renseignements repères sur le logement des étudiants devaient faire état des aspects suivants, sans toutefois s'y limiter : le coût des logements pour étudiants; l'offre et la demande de ce type de logement; les types de logement choisis par les étudiants; l'emplacement et les caractéristiques des logements, dont la taille, la qualité et les commodités incluses dans le loyer.

MÉTHODE

Afin d'atteindre les objectifs de l'étude, on a utilisé un plan d'enquête exhaustif constitué d'un certain nombre d'éléments distincts. L'approche choisie visait l'ensemble des établissements postsecondaires canadiens et des types d'étudiants de niveau postsecondaire. Pour établir la portée de l'étude, on a dû définir les variables suivantes :

1) Établissement postsecondaire (établissement « admissible ») : Tout établissement canadien figurant sur l'une ou l'autre des listes dressées par le Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux (CICDI), en collaboration avec les ministères de l'Éducation provinciaux ou territoriaux et l'Association nationale des collèges carrières (ANCC). Seuls les établissements postsecondaires qui possédaient un stock de logements, qui offraient des programmes d'études d'une durée de neuf mois ou plus et dont la population étudiante comptait au moins 500 membres ont été inclus dans la portée de l'étude.

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2) Étudiant de niveau postsecondaire : Toute personne inscrite à un programme offert par un établissement « admissible », comme étudiant à temps plein ou comme étudiant à temps partiel ayant au moins neuf heures semaine de cours ou de travaux prévus au programme. On a décidé d'exclure de la portée de l'étude les étudiants à temps partiel qui travaillaient 30 heures ou plus par semaine et les étudiants inscrits à des programmes de formation à distance. Les étudiants inscrits à un programme coopératif ont été considérés comme des étudiants à temps plein.

Le plan de recherche comprenait des composantes qualitatives et quantitatives, et toutes les activités visaient à faciliter l'élaboration d'une méthode exhaustive et propre à être mise en pratique pour la collecte de données fiables et représentatives sur le logement des étudiants.

Les composantes qualitatives avaient pour objectif de permettre une meilleure compréhension des questions touchant le logement des étudiants de niveau postsecondaire et de favoriser l'élaboration de la méthode quantitative. Parmi ces composantes, on retrouvait notamment :

- des entrevues avec des informateurs clés, visant à augmenter le niveau de compréhension concernant la manière dont les établissements postsecondaires fournissent des logements aux étudiants ou leur en facilitent l'accès;

- des entrevues en profondeur avec les intervenants, notamment le personnel des établissements postsecondaires, les étudiants et les représentants d'associations étudiantes, visant à permettre une meilleure compréhension du marché du logement pour étudiants, d'une variété de points de vue, et d'obtenir des données qualitatives solides sur les questions pertinentes à l'étude;

- des groupes de discussion ayant pour objectif de mettre à l'essai le contenu des sondages et le matériel connexe.

CONSTATATIONS

Les résultats des entrevues et des groupes de discussion ont influé sur la méthode utilisée pour les sondages en ligne ciblant les établissements postsecondaires et leurs étudiants. On a présumé que la formule du sondage en ligne constituait le meilleur moyen pour obtenir les données recherchées. Les résultats des entrevues et des groupes de discussion ont également contribué à la précision du contenu des sondages et fourni des idées pour optimiser les taux de participation et les résultats de la collecte de données. Exception faite du contenu trouvé pour le sondage auprès des établissements postsecondaires et pour celui auprès des étudiants, voici quelques unes des principales conclusions tirées des entrevues et des groupes de discussion.

- Les groupes d'intervenants dans le domaine du logement des étudiants de niveau postsecondaire accordaient de l'importance à une variété de questions, notamment au coût des divers types de logements, au type d'unités construites, aux frais associés au logement des étudiants, aux renseignements divulgués sur le logement en résidence (p. ex., les frais d'entretien), aux commodités incluses dans le loyer, aux types de partenariats public-privé conclus pour la gestion de l'hébergement.

- La plupart des représentants d'établissement postsecondaire ont indiqué que les établissements devraient accepter de fournir l'information demandée sans problème, pour autant qu'on ne leur demande pas de divulguer des renseignements personnels sur les étudiants.

- Il est peu probable que les établissements postsecondaires acceptent de divulguer les coordonnées permettant de contacter directement les étudiants, aux fins de l'administration du sondage auprès des étudiants, car les établissements postsecondaires ont toujours eu à cœur la limitation de l'accès aux renseignements personnels des étudiants.

- La complexité des données et des renseignements requis et la nature quantitative de ces derniers nécessitaient l'utilisation de sondages. Les audiences multiples qu'il fallait interroger pour obtenir tous les éléments de données nécessaires commandaient l'utilisation de deux instruments de sondage, l'un conçu pour les étudiants et l'autre pour les établissements postsecondaires.

- Le meilleur moyen de contacter les étudiants pour établir un échantillon probabiliste consisterait à les rencontrer en personne dans les campus représentatifs sélectionnés de chaque centre urbain à l'étude.

- On a déterminé qu'un sondage en ligne représenterait probablement une méthode de collecte de données quantitatives plus appropriée que les groupes de discussion ou les sondages sur papier ou au téléphone. Les sujets ciblés (étudiants de niveau postsecondaires et leurs fournisseurs de logements) connaissent très bien les rouages technologiques et possèdent fort probablement une adresse courriel. Qui plus est, la formule du sondage en ligne s'harmonise très bien au style de vie typique des étudiants. En effet, dans le cadre de cette formule, il n'y a pas de calendrier de livraison fixé, et les étudiants ont la possibilité de remplir le sondage quand bon leur semble.

- Le meilleur moment de l'année pour lancer les deux sondages serait en février ou en mars, soit avant ou après la semaine de relâche, et avant que la pression des examens finaux ne s'installe. Aussi, les étudiants en auraient alors plus long à dire à ce moment sur leur logement, puisqu'ils y habiteraient depuis quelque temps déjà.

- Personne ne s'est opposé à ce que l'on intercepte des participants potentiels, à ce que l'on envoie des rappels par courriel ou à ce que l'on offre des incitatifs, comme des prix, pour encourager la participation des étudiants au sondage.

- Le partage des résultats des sondages a été identifié comme le meilleur moyen de favoriser la participation, particulièrement les résultats permettant une comparaison entre les établissements.

La collecte des données et des renseignements par l'entremise de la méthode élaborée s'est avérée utile. L'étude qualitative à l'appui a favorisé la détermination d'un contenu de sondage approprié et l'optimisation du plan de collecte des données qualitatives. Les sondages menés auprès des étudiants et des établissements postsecondaires se sont révélés réalisables et ont fourni des données valides et fiables sur le logement. À la lumière de l'évaluation de la qualité des données, on constate que l'instrument de sondage était solide en général, et que les données recueillies étaient fiables et utilisables. Les taux de participation ont été suffisamment élevés pour fournir des données représentatives dans chaque segment. Cependant, en dépit de cette évaluation positive, on doit faire mention de certains éléments, dans un effort d'amélioration des taux de participation à chaque type de sondage, cela afin de permettre une analyse plus approfondie de la situation.

- Il est possible que la longueur actuelle du sondage nuise à l'obtention d'un taux de participation maximal. La majorité des participants n'ayant pas rempli complètement le questionnaire ont répondu aux premières questions, jusqu'à concurrence d'environ 10 % de la totalité du sondage. Par la suite, ce type d'audience aura probablement conclu que le sondage était trop long.

- Une analyse des questions posées dans le cadre du sondage a donné de bons résultats. On a constaté une faible incidence de réponses « Je ne sais pas /Refus de répondre » [Traduction] et de réponses ambiguës, cela pour l'ensemble des questions.

- Les travaux sur le terrain se sont déroulés du 29 mars au 31 mai. L'étude avait été conçue pour coïncider avec l'essai pilote sur la population étudiante et pour respecter les calendriers typiques des responsables du logement. C'est à dire qu'au cours de la phase qualitative de la présente étude, on avait déterminé que le milieu de la session constituait probablement la période la moins occupée des services de logement. Aux fins de l'administration future des sondages, on sera bien avisé de les mettre en place au milieu des sessions d'automne ou d'hiver.

- La méthode choisie constitue un moyen très économique de sonder ce groupe cible, sans compromettre l'efficacité, ni l'exactitude de l'enquête. Par l'intermédiaire des composantes de l'étude qualitative, on a également constaté qu'il s'agissait de la formule que les responsables du logement préféraient pour participer à ce genre de sondage. Le budget alloué à l'essai pilote, hormis les honoraires versés aux professionnels, s'est avéré négligeable. Parmi les autres méthodes de sondage, on compte le téléphone, le courrier réponse et le sondage en ligne. Une brève analyse de ces méthodes a révélé que le choix du sondage en ligne a permis de réaliser des économies substantielles.

Sondage auprès des établissements postsecondaires

Faisabilité de la méthode

Le sondage auprès des établissements, conçu pour recueillir des renseignements au sujet de l'offre du stock de logements, des types d'immeubles, des commodités offertes, des taux d'inoccupation et d'autres questions connexes, a été réalisé dans 288 établissements postsecondaires à l'échelle du pays. On a sélectionné les établissements à partir des listes obtenues du CICDI et de la ANCC, que l'on a modifiées pour respecter la définition préalablement établie d'un « établissement postsecondaire ». La liste définitive et traitable des établissements « admissibles » a permis la réalisation d'un recensement des établissements postsecondaires plutôt qu'un sondage auprès d'un échantillon représentatif. De ce nombre d'établissements, 88 ont répondu, ce qui représente un taux de participation de 31 %. Pour un échantillon de cette taille, on peut considérer que les résultats sont exacts à 8,8 points de pourcentage près, 19 fois sur 20 (correction pour une population finie). Le taux de participation au sondage se situait dans une plage relativement normale pour ce type de méthode de sondage et d'audience cible.

Résultats du sondage auprès des établissements postsecondaires

Voici les résultats sommaires du sondage auprès des établissements postsecondaires.

- Les établissements qui ont répondu au sondage disposaient d'une gamme de logements sur le campus. Plus de la moitié (60 %) des établissements participants possédaient des logements pour étudiants (sur le campus ou hors campus). De cette proportion, 77 % ont indiqué que leurs logements pour étudiants se situaient sur le campus. Les deux tiers (64 %) des établissements sondés possédant des logements sur le campus ne pouvaient héberger plus de 400 étudiants, tandis que 22 % ont indiqué que leurs installations pouvaient héberger plus de 1 000 étudiants. La résidence d'étudiants s'est avérée le type de logement le plus commun sur les campus. Parmi les établissements qui possédaient des logements sur le campus, 82 % offraient des logements en résidence, et 63 % proposaient à leur population étudiante des appartements, des maisons en rangée ou des maisons. Seulement un établissement sondé sur dix offrait des habitations familiales.

- Les établissements postsecondaires de moindre envergure semblaient offrir un plus grand choix de logements sur le campus à leur population étudiante que les établissements plus imposants. Au moment du sondage, seulement 23 % des établissements ont fait état d'une population étudiante de moins de 1 000 étudiants inscrits, tandis que 75 % des établissements ont indiqué être en mesure de loger jusqu'à 1 000 étudiants.

- Les résultats ont montré qu'il existait une large fourchette de loyers et de commodités. Par exemple, le loyer d'une chambre individuelle en résidence se situait entre 155 $ et 1 268 $ par mois. Le loyer moyen variait également selon le nombre de chambres de la résidence sur le campus — plus cette dernière comportait de chambres, plus le loyer moyen était bas (Tableau 1). La majorité des loyers indiqués comprenaient le chauffage, l'électricité et les services de buanderie. Une variété considérable d'autres commodités pouvaient être incluses dans les loyers, par exemple, les repas.

- Une grande variété de commodités pouvaient être comprises dans le loyer moyen des logements pour étudiants offerts par les établissements postsecondaires. Dans la grande majorité des cas, que le logement appartienne à l'établissement postsecondaire ou qu'il soit pris à bail par ce dernier, les frais de chauffage, le coût de l'électricité et les installations de buanderie étaient inclus dans le loyer. Mis à part ces commodités de base, les services inclus dans les loyers variaient considérablement.

- Les étudiants de tous les établissements participants doivent faire face à un faible taux d'inoccupation sur le campus lorsqu'ils cherchent un logement. La majorité des établissements ont indiqué que leurs logements sont tous occupés au début de l'année scolaire, et que les taux d'inoccupation des logements situés sur le campus, des logements hors campus et des logements pris à bail sont restés à peu près stationnaires en 2004, comparativement aux deux ou trois années Précédentes.

- Seulement un établissement postsecondaire canadien sur cinq disposait de plans à court terme pour augmenter le nombre de ses logements pour étudiants. Malgré le fait que plus de 50 % des établissements participants prévoient une augmentation de leur population étudiante au cours des cinq prochaines années, seulement 21 % d'entre eux envisageaient d'accroître le nombre de leurs logements pour étudiants situés sur le campus et hors campus. Certains établissements ont toutefois déjà commencé à planifier les mesures qu'ils prendront pour faire face à la hausse prévue de leur population étudiante. Lorsqu'on leur a demandé s'ils étaient actuellement en train de construire de nouveaux logements pour étudiants, 15 % des établissements postsecondaires ont répondu par l'affirmative.

- En règle générale, les établissements d'enseignement aident les étudiants à trouver un logement. Plus de quatre établissements sur cinq (84 %) ayant répondu au sondage ont indiqué fournir des renseignements ou de l'assistance aux étudiants à la recherche d'un logement hors campus.

Sondage auprès des étudiants

Faisabilité de la méthode

Le sondage auprès des étudiants a été administré en ligne à un échantillon probabiliste d'étudiants inscrits dans les établissements sélectionnés des deux centres urbains à l'étude. Des considérations financières et les taux de participation au sondage initial ont fait que l'on a dû se limiter à sonder les étudiants d'un seul grand centre urbain et d'un seul petit centre urbain, soit ceux de Toronto et de Halifax. En outre, le fait d'inclure seulement deux villes dans l'essai pilote devait générer des résultats permettant l'analyse plus approfondie des sous groupes. Cinq établissements ont été choisis dans chaque centre urbain à l'étude (Tableau 2).

Toronto	Halifax
Université Ryerson	Université Dalhousie
Université de Toronto - St. George Campus	Université King's College
Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology	Université Saint Mary's
George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology	Nova Scotia Community College — Institute of Technology Campus
Université York	Université Mount Saint Vincent

Tableau 2

On a recruté les étudiants au moyen d'une méthode d'enquête par interception comprenant les étapes suivantes :

- Les intervieweurs ont examiné les campus sélectionnés pendant une demi journée ou une journée complète et ont distribué des dépliants contenant des renseignements sur le sondage.

- On a demandé aux étudiants de lire le dépliant et on leur a donné de l'information sur le sondage, les prix à gagner, etc.

- On a demandé leur adresse électronique aux étudiants qui ont accepté de participer (pour leur envoyer des rappels et pour les aviser du tirage des prix) et on leur a également demandé de présenter leur carte d'étudiant afin de vérifier leur admissibilité au sondage.

Tableau 1 : Loyers mensuels moyens (coûts) des logements offerts aux étudiants par les établissements postsecondaires par type de logement et marché cible			
Type/marché	**Loyer moyen**	**Fourchette de loyers**	
		de	**à**
Chambre individuelle en résidence	397 $	155 $	1 268 $
Chambre pour deux personnes en résidence	405 $	145 $	948 $
Studio	412 $	215 $	692 $
Logement de une chambre	511 $	249 $	850 $
Logement de deux chambres	466 $	210 $	884 $
Logement de trois chambres ou plus	413 $	155 $	885 $
Logement familial	659 $	420 $	1 100 $

Source : Phoenix SPI, pour la SCHL, juillet 2004

- On leur a ensuite donné un mot de passe ou code d'accès personnel pour accéder au sondage en ligne. L'utilisation d'un mot de passe ou d'un code d'accès avait pour objectif d'empêcher les étudiants de remplir le sondage plus d'une fois.

- Les intervieweurs ont reçu la directive de maximiser leur couverture de l'établissement en se déplaçant dans le campus (c. à d. en se rendant à des facultés, des centres de syndicat étudiant et des résidences différentes) afin d'établir un échantillon solide de participants.

Au total, 1 372 étudiants choisis au hasard dans les divers campus d'établissement postsecondaire ont été recrutés pour participer au sondage en ligne — 632 étudiants de Toronto et 740 étudiants de Halifax. De ce nombre, 332 étudiants ont effectivement rempli le sondage, ce qui représente un taux de participation de 24 %. Les taux de participation enregistrés en fonction des deux sous groupes sont de 27 % à Halifax et de 21 % à Toronto. Pour un échantillon de cette taille, on peut considérer que les résultats sont exacts à 5,38 points de pourcentage près, 19 fois sur 20.

Résultats du sondage auprès des étudiants

Voici quelques résultats sommaires du sondage mené auprès des étudiants.

- En dépit de la gamme de logements sur le campus et hors campus qui s'offrent à eux, la majorité des étudiants ont choisi de demeurer chez leurs parents pendant la durée de leurs études postsecondaires. Presque la moitié des participants ont indiqué qu'ils demeuraient au foyer familial avec leurs parents ou tuteurs pendant l'année scolaire. Pour la plupart d'entre eux, c'est le coût associé au logement qui a principalement motivé leur choix de demeurer chez leurs parents pendant l'année scolaire. On n'a constaté qu'une faible différence sur ce point entre les étudiants des deux centres sondés. Une plus grande proportion d'étudiants de niveau postsecondaire de la région de Toronto que de la région de Halifax demeuraient au foyer familial. Au moment du sondage, environ 54 % des étudiants de Toronto demeuraient chez leurs parents, contre seulement 36 % des étudiants de Halifax.

- La proportion d'étudiants demeurant au foyer familial était encore plus grande chez ceux qui provenaient du centre urbain où se situe leur établissement d'enseignement. Parmi les participants vivant dans la ville où se situe leur établissement d'enseignement, presque trois sur quatre demeuraient à la maison avec leurs parents ou tuteurs pendant l'année scolaire.

- La majorité des participants au sondage qui n'habitaient pas chez leurs parents ou tuteurs demeuraient à l'extérieur du campus pendant l'année scolaire. La propension des étudiants à vouloir demeurer dans un logement situé sur le campus était plus grande à Halifax qu'à Toronto. En effet, plus de 30 % des étudiants de Halifax qui n'habitaient pas le foyer familial ont choisi de demeurer sur le campus, contre environ 20 % des étudiants de Toronto.

- Le choix de logement le plus répandu parmi les étudiants ayant décidé de demeurer à l'extérieur du campus était l'appartement, et ce, autant à Toronto qu'à Halifax, où plus de 60 % des étudiants vivant à l'extérieur du campus ont indiqué habiter ce type de logement. Cependant, le deuxième choix le plus répandu différait en fonction du centre urbain à l'étude. Une proportion de 21,6 % d'étudiants de Halifax a déclaré occuper une maison individuelle (louée ou achetée), tandis que 20,8 % des étudiants de Toronto ont indiqué qu'ils demeuraient dans une maison de chambres ou une « chambre louée ».

- On n'a pu conclure, à partir des résultats du sondage, que les étudiants avaient une préférence pour l'un ou l'autre des divers types de logement (selon le nombre de chambres). En règle générale, les étudiants semblaient presque autant enclins à vivre dans un logement de une chambre (27 %), que dans un logement de deux (28 %) ou de trois chambres (29 %). Les étudiants de Toronto semblaient préférer les logements de une chambre alors que ceux de Halifax semblaient privilégier les logements de deux ou trois chambres. Ces résultats correspondent avec la tendance des étudiants à partager leur logement. En effet, presque trois participants sur quatre ont indiqué vivre en colocation.

- En moyenne, le coût de la vie des étudiants de Toronto demeurant à l'extérieur du campus était plus élevé que celui des étudiants de Halifax. Au moment du sondage, le pourcentage des étudiants dont le loyer mensuel n'atteignait pas 400 $ était moins élevé à Toronto qu'à Halifax. De même, une plus grande proportion d'étudiants de Toronto que d'étudiants de Halifax déboursaient plus de 500 $ par mois pour leur logement.

- Les raisons fournies pour justifier le choix de demeurer ou non sur le campus variaient. Les étudiants ont souvent choisi de vivre dans des logements situés sur le campus pour des motifs comme la proximité, la facilité d'accès à leur établissement, le partage d'un même style de vie avec la collectivité étudiante et la sécurité. Les raisons citées le plus souvent pour justifier le choix de se loger à l'extérieur du campus comprenaient, notamment, le besoin d'une certaine intimité, l'impression d'indépendance, le coût avantageux et la plus grande tranquillité.

CONCLUSION

La méthode conçue pour obtenir des données quantitatives représentatives sur le logement des étudiants au Canada s'est avérée réalisable et a généré des données sur le logement valides et fiables.

À la lumière des résultats du sondage, conjugués à l'analyse détaillée de la recherche menée pas la SCHL, on peut tirer les conclusions suivantes et formuler certaines recommandations pour améliorer la méthode d'enquête :

1) On a étudié des méthodes de rechange et constaté que ces dernières entraînaient des coûts plus élevés et donneraient possiblement lieu à des taux de participation plus faibles que la

méthode choisie, et ce aussi bien pour les établissements postsecondaires que pour les étudiants.

a) Les coûts associés à la mise en place de la méthode pourraient être réduits par la formation d'un partenariat avec les établissements postsecondaires et les intervenants qui utiliseront l'information recueillie. Ces intervenants pourraient comprendre, entre autres, les associations, les ministères de l'éducation provinciaux et les parties concernées du secteur privé. Les établissements postsecondaires et les autres intervenants accordent de la valeur aux données et aux renseignements recueillis. Ils s'en servent à des fins de planification opérationnelle et seraient fort probablement d'accord pour prendre de tels arrangements.

2) Selon les exigences en matière de données et de renseignements et le financement accordé, on recommande de limiter le recours à la méthode au(x) niveau(x) des centres urbains pris individuellement :

a) Les établissements et les étudiants qui y suivent leur programme d'études se retrouvent pour la plupart dans les régions urbaines, ce qui limite la capacité de rassembler des données qui soient représentatives de l'ensemble de la province ou du pays à l'étude. Il faut souligner, toutefois, que l'on peut recueillir des données et des renseignements auprès d'un échantillon d'étudiants fréquentant des établissements situés un peu partout dans une province, une région ou l'ensemble du pays, pour obtenir des résultats représentatifs de ces divers territoires.

b) Bien que la méthode proposée se soit avérée moins coûteuse à administrer que les autres méthodes suggérées, sa mise en place à l'échelle nationale serait probablement plus difficile et plus coûteuse qu'au niveau de centres urbains pris individuellement. Une telle entreprise à l'échelle nationale exigerait la réalisation d'un sondage auprès d'étudiants de chaque centre urbain, là où se trouvent plus de 250 établissements postsecondaires, et entraînerait des coûts administratifs exorbitants.

3) On devrait faire participer à la phase de planification le personnel technique dont on aura besoin pour la programmation du sondage en ligne afin de prévenir tout problème administratif ou touchant le plan du sondage.

4) Malgré le fait que la méthode proposée se soit avérée la plus convenable pour recueillir des données et des renseignements sur le logement auprès de sources variées, on devrait explorer des stratégies supplémentaires pour améliorer le taux de participation.

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Executive Summary

♦ Phoenix SPI was commissioned by CMHC to undertake a comprehensive study of post-secondary student housing in Canada. The purpose was to develop a detailed methodology able to capture valid, reliable information about the state of student housing in Canada, as well pilot test the methodology that was developed. This report presents the results of the main qualitative component of the research: a set of 25 in-depth interviews conducted with stakeholders (primarily institutional representatives and students). The interviews were allocated according to a detailed sample frame developed in consultation with CMHC. The interviews were completed between December 23, 2003 and March 1, 2004.

♦ There was considerable consistency in the feedback provided, not only *within* each of the stakeholder groups (i.e. institutional representatives, students), but also *between* these two main groups. That is, in most areas the same types of issues were identified with similar consistency. Although looked at from different perspectives, there is clearly a strong degree of shared experience and commonality of perceptions not only between the students themselves, but also between the providers and consumers of student housing.

Institutional Representatives

♦ Institutions included in this research varied in size, with student populations ranging from 1,200 to 18,000 (includes both full-time and part-time students). All of the institutions except one, a private institution, own their own housing stock. In all cases, the accommodations are located on-campus. Not surprisingly, the housing stock tended to vary in age in most institutions, being built in various waves or over a certain period of time. The housing ranges in age from the beginning of the 20th century right up until the present. The number of students that can be housed in accommodations owned by these institutions varies widely, from 196 to 2,200. While most housing units are full or nearly full with waiting lists, a few have regular occupancy rates of between 50-75%. The latter are colleges in small towns or cities.

♦ Most of the institutions have increased their housing stock over the past 20 years or so, in proportions that vary from 15% to 35%. In all cases, this expansion took place on-campus. Approximately half indicated that their institutions have plans to increase their housing stock in the future. Planned expansions ranged in proportions from 15% to 50% more beds. Clearly, there has been and continues to be significant building activity to increase the capacity of post-secondary institutions' housing stock.

♦ Most institutions offer a variety of types of accommodations (i.e. dormitory, apartment, townhouses), with some also offering family-type dwellings. Conversely, a few offer only one type of accommodation (i.e. apartment units or dormitories). Most units are furnished, rented on the basis of the academic year, and require students to provide a down payment (except in Quebec). Beyond that, there is variety in the characteristics

of the accommodations offered by the institutions (e.g. number of bedrooms, shared or private washroom) and what is included/excluded in the costs (e.g. laundry facilities, parking, satellite, Internet, television). Prices range from approximately $2,800 for the academic year to as high as $4,600 per academic year. Units of the same type tend to cost the same. Differences in the price of similar units do exist, but are determined mainly by the type of meal plan chosen, but also by the age of the building and whether or not there is a private washroom.

♦ Most of the institutions do <u>not</u> have leases with other landlords or hotels/motels in their community for rooms that are then leased out to their students.

♦ Most institutions offer meal plans, which are usually mandatory (i.e. all students living in institutional housing must be on a meal plan). In a couple of instances, this applies only to students living in dormitory-style residences. Most institutions also offer meal plans to off-campus students. In most instances, students can choose between different plans. Differences in meal plans have to do primarily with the number of meals per week or the original balance included in the meal plan (i.e. some plans work on the basis of debit cards on which you have an amount of money that declines with use).

♦ With the exception of rooms reserved for incoming first year students, most institutions do <u>not</u> reserve housing or a specific number of units for certain groups of students, but some do. These include married students, students with families, disabled students or those with health problems, international students, exchange students, and students on scholarships. In one institution, rooms are reserved according to the year the student is in. Students in first year are assigned double rooms in dormitories, students in second year are assigned single rooms in dormitories, and students in third and fourth year are assigned to apartment-style units.

♦ The process of applying for housing described by representatives of the different institutions was remarkably similar. When students are accepted at an institution, they are sent a registration package that includes, among other things, an application form in the event that the student wishes to apply for institution-owned accommodations. Students fill out the form in which they specify their preferences for housing (e.g. type of room, type of roommate, meal plan). The form is returned to the institution, which then assigns rooms mainly on a first-come, first-served basis. The only requirement for admission identified by all institutional representatives is that students be enrolled full-time. Most, but not all, also require a down payment, and some institutions have an application fee. None of these institutions impose restrictions or conditions on students looking to secure institutional housing after their first year except that the student must be in good standing (some do give priority to first year students). With one exception, the proportion of students applying for housing who are accepted is 80% or more among the institutions represented in these interviews.

♦ Most institutions automatically refer students who have applied for institution-owned housing but have not been accepted to sources of information on non-institutional housing. These include Student Service offices, Off-Campus Housing offices, and off-campus housing listings on the institutional website. All institutions provide referral/support services for students looking to secure off-campus housing, and offer listings of available housing either electronically or in hard copy. Many also provide such things as maps, 'Dos and Don'ts', and information on landlords and tenants.

♦ Institutional representatives were divided when asked if the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is a problem in their community. Those who said that this is a problem identified the cost of housing, hot market/big demand, the number of post-secondary institutions in community, and the double cohort in Ontario.

♦ When asked to describe the rental market in their community, representatives gave quite different descriptions. Some described the market as "hot", "tight", or "competitive", while others described it as "slow" or "not busy". A few described the market as "cyclical" or "up and down".

♦ Asked how the cost of housing owned by their institution compares with the cost of comparable housing in the rental market in their community, all of the institutional representatives suggested that it compared favorably.

♦ All of the institutional representatives interviewed indicated that, as far as they could tell, their institution's accommodations met student expectations. By way of explanation, people pointed to surveys undertaken with students, perceptions that students generally know what to expect in advance and have moderate expectations, and that the buildings themselves are well maintained. Despite general satisfaction with accommodations, one representative felt that the quality of the accommodations is becoming a more important issue. First, students and parents are becoming more picky and choosy when it comes to housing. Second, there is now more competition between institutions to attract students, and some try to do this by promoting their housing accommodations.

♦ While institutional representatives said that students tend to be satisfied with their accommodations, all also indicated that problems do emerge, although these tend to be small. The problems relate primarily to interpersonal relations within institution-owned accommodations rather than to the quality of the accommodations themselves. They include such things as noise, bad behavior, and rule breaking concerning such things as smoking, parties and alcohol. Some indicated that there are problems related to the facilities themselves (e.g. poor water pressure, plumbing, poor air circulation, broken washers and dryers, malfunctioning elevators). However, these problems tend to get repaired quickly, and are most common, not surprisingly, with older buildings. Most representatives could not quantify the number of complaints registered by students, but they all used qualifiers like "few" or "not many". Those who did provide numbers said

that the number of complaints did not exceed 10 a year. Institutional representatives also said that complaints tend to get resolved satisfactorily.

♦ Most institutions' housing accommodations are available to students during the summer, subject to an application on the part of students and as long as they are still enrolled at the institution and in good standing (available primarily to students who are taking summer courses or in a co-op placement). During the summer, accommodations are used mainly for conferences, academic and otherwise, and housing tourists. They are also used for housing sports teams attending events in the area and for students on exchange programs.

<u>Students</u>

♦ Students were asked to describe the accommodations they currently occupy. Students living in on-campus housing (three in total) all live in traditional dorm-style residences. The accommodations are furnished and this includes a desk, dresser, and bed. They all have Internet hook-up. These students have occupied their accommodations since September 2003 and are paying rent for the full academic year. The costs range from $2,800-$3,500 for the academic year, including the Internet. All had to provide a down payment and sign a residence agreement/contract. As well, all have a meal plan which is mandatory and operates on the basis of a debit card with a declining balance (plans range from $400 to $700 per semester).

♦ All students living in off-campus accommodations are renting from someone other than the institution. Most are renting one-bedroom apartments, accommodations that are not furnished. A few are occupying two-bedroom apartments, living with a roommate, and one is occupying a bachelor unit. Most have been in their accommodations since September, but a few have been occupying the accommodations for a full year, while one has been in the same place for three years. Most accommodations include water, power/electricity, and heating in the costs. In all cases, cable and Internet are extra. Most are paying for the academic year but a few are paying for a full calendar year. Their portion of the costs range from $415/month to $850/month. Except in Quebec, students had to provide the first and/or last month's rent in advance. A few also had to provide a safety deposit and have someone co-sign their lease. None are on a meal plan.

♦ The students interviewed were unanimous that housing issues did not play a role in their selection of the institution they are presently attending. In addition, none of them considered distance learning as an option.

♦ Students identified a variety of issues or concerns that went through their minds when they started looking for housing. Of the issues identified by students living off-campus, two dominated: cost and location. Nearly everyone identified one or both of these issues as something they considered when they began looking for housing. Students

living in on-campus accommodations had applied for institutional housing and said they had no real concerns other than whether or not they would be accepted.

♦ When it came to the process of looking for student housing, students living in institution-owned housing followed a standardized process. When they received their letter of acceptance to the institution they also received information about living in institution-owned housing. They filled out a form asking them about their preferences (e.g. type of room, type of roommate, type of meal plan) and returned it. They later received a letter confirming their acceptance into residence, asking for a down payment, and setting out the rules and regulations for institution-owned housing.

♦ Students living off-campus did not tend to follow a process per se. Rather, they tended to take discrete measures or steps to find their accommodations. Some consulted local newspapers for ads, then called or visited the location to see if the accommodations they were interested in were still available. A few said they drove around or took walking tours in areas where they wanted to live and looked for signs advertising rentals. Only two students consulted the off-campus housing office in their institution. One international student relied on a friend because he/she was not in the country and could not search himself/herself.

♦ There was a difference between students living in institution-owned housing and those living off-campus concerning *when* they began looking for housing. Those living in institution-owned housing filled out their application forms for institutional housing in February and sent them to their respective institutions. Students living off-campus tended to look for their housing in June or early July in order to have something secured for September. A few began looking as early as the end of March or the beginning of May.

♦ There was no unanimity in terms of the amount of time it took students to find housing. A few found accommodations very quickly, within one or two days of beginning their search. A few others said it took them one or two weeks of searching, while a few more said it took them as long as one month to find the accommodations. Students living in institution-owned housing indicated that once they sent off their applications for admission, it took three weeks to a month to receive confirmation.

♦ Neither was there unanimity in terms of the difficulty students had finding their accommodations. Some described the process as easy or relatively easy, explaining that they simply called or visited the location in question, expressed interest in renting it for the school year and were accepted subject to their ability to meet whatever requirements were in place. Students living in institution-owned housing also described the process as easy since they simply followed the procedure outlined in their application form. Conversely, some students described the process as difficult or very difficult. Reasons given mainly had to do with the high level of demand or competition for student housing in the community.

♦ Only those students living in institution-owned housing and one foreign student conducted their search for housing remotely. Those who conducted their search on location were most likely to say that they did this because they wanted to see the accommodations before committing themselves to renting them. A few explained that people also rent without any other ad than a sign in the window or on the lawn because of the high demand for student housing.

♦ Students identified a number of sources of information or assistance that they used to help them find housing. The source identified most often was local newspapers. Sources identified less often include word of mouth, walking tours, institutional websites and off-campus housing offices. Newspapers were identified most often as the most useful source of information and the way in which they actually found their accommodations. Students were unanimous that it was easy to find the information or assistance they needed and that they received all the information they needed. Only two students living in non-institution-owned housing said they looked for or received assistance about off-campus housing accommodations from their institution (through an off-campus housing office). Both described the information as very useful.

♦ Students were asked why they chose to live in the accommodations they are occupying (i.e. either on or off-campus). Those living on-campus identified a desire to meet people and convenience (i.e. proximity to campus and classes) as the main reasons. Students living off-campus were more likely to identify a wider variety of reasons. Privacy and independence were identified most often, followed by a desire for more peace and quiet. Reasons identified infrequently included the desire to live with a partner or roommates, a desire for private laundry facilities, a desire for more space, ability to accommodate visiting friends or relatives, and a desire to socialize with more mature people. When asked to identify the most important factors that they considered when obtaining their accommodations, students most often identified cost and location. Other factors were identified by no more than a few students and included the quality of the accommodations, the ability to meet people, size of the accommodations, the types of amenities included, security (i.e. a safe area), and the ability to smoke.

♦ Students in non-institution-owned housing were asked if the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is a problem in the community. Approximately half said it is, and pointed most often to a hot market or high demand, but also cited the double cohort in Ontario, the fact that it is a university town, and general economic growth driving increased demand.

♦ Students living in institution-owned housing were asked how much choice they had in selecting their current accommodations. They all indicated that they had a reasonable amount of choice, but that this did not mean that they got all that they asked for. They were able to specify whether they wanted a single or double room, the type of person they would prefer to live with, and the type of meal plan.

♦ All students expressed satisfaction with their current accommodations, although satisfaction tended to be moderate, not strong. Most also said that their accommodations met their expectations. When asked if there were any problems with their accommodations, most said that there were. No single problem was identified by more than two students. They included loud neighbors, the need for renovations, two-prong electrical outlets, no stand-up shower, poor water pressure, water being cut off without warning, and poor insulation. Only a couple students registered complaints about their accommodations. Specifically, one complained about loud noise and another about the water pressure. Both said they were satisfied with the results. When asked if they thought they could have found better accommodations, students were almost equally divided between those who said yes, those who said no, and those who were unsure.

♦ Although students expressed satisfaction with their accommodations, most said that they would not choose to live in the same accommodations again. This included students living in institution-owned housing who said that they would prefer to find a place of their own next year. Others gave as reasons a desire for a bigger place, the desire to live with a partner, wanting a place with more amenities, and wanting accommodations closer to the institution. That said, most students said they were unsure about their ability to find accommodations as good or better than their current accommodations next year. They felt that this would depend on factors such as when they could begin looking, how much money they would have to spend, the level of demand for accommodations, and the number of accommodations on the rental market.

♦ Most of the students said they would be returning to their family residence once the school year is over. A few will be staying in their present accommodations, and a few still do not know. Students living in non-institution-owned housing were asked what they would do with their school-year accommodations during the summer months. Most will simply leave them and return home, a few will be staying in them, and one is trying to find someone to sublet the place.

♦ In conclusion, students were asked what advice they would give to anyone looking for student housing accommodations. They identified a number of things, but none were identified by more than a few students. Advice included: live in residence in first year, use institutional resources, start looking as early as possible, familiarize yourself with legal rules/regulations regarding rentals, get all the information regarding the rental agreement, and know what to ask about.

Introduction

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. was commissioned by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to undertake a comprehensive study of post-secondary student housing in Canada. The purpose was to develop a detailed methodology able to capture valid and reliable information about the state of student housing in Canada, as well pilot test the methodology that was developed.

Background and Objectives

As Canada's national housing agency, CMHC helps Canadians access affordable and high quality housing. CMHC's Market Analysis Centre provides the housing industry and consumers with the latest statistical information and analysis of housing trends so they can make informed decisions. This project on student housing in Canada was included in CMHC's Market Analysis Centre's work plan for 2003.

Current information on student housing is very limited despite its impact on the market due to the size of the student population (over 1 million full-time post-secondary students in Canada) and the significant increase in the number of older students who are more likely to seek independent accommodation away from parents or family.

This project entails the development of a methodology to capture information about student housing in Canada, including the housing options available to students. It also envisages that a pilot project be undertaken to test the methodology in selected Canadian urban centres. It is expected that the information collected through this research will make a significant contribution to the understanding of the nation's total housing supply, including alternate, temporary, and permanent housing. The information will be used by CMHC in a similar manner as other Canadian housing information that is collected and distributed by CMHC's Market Analysis Centre.

Research Design

To address the research objectives, Phoenix developed a comprehensive research design consisting of a number of different elements, including both quantitative and qualitative components. The research activities are geared towards the development of a comprehensive, actionable methodology for use by CMHC to obtain reliable, representative student housing data.

This report presents the results of the main qualitative component of the research project: a set of in-depth interviews conducted with a cross-section of stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews was to better understand the student housing market from a variety of perspectives on a broad range of issues best explored through qualitative research.

The following specifications applied to the in-depth interviews:

- o A total of 25 interviews were conducted with a mix of stakeholders, including post-secondary institution staff, students, and student association/residence association representatives.
- o The interviews were allocated according to a detailed sample frame developed in consultation with CMHC. Targets were applied to various characteristics to ensure that the research provides comprehensive coverage of the stakeholder universe (see sample frame on page 3 below).
- o Approximately one-quarter of the interviews were conducted in French.
- o Different interview guides were used with different stakeholder groups, while covering issues common to all groups. The interview guides were semi-structured in nature, and designed to generate robust feedback.
- o Institutional staff and representatives of student/residence associations were recruited by phone using contact information obtained through the Internet. The interview guide was sent to these participants in advance of the interview to enable them to reflect on related issues.
- o Recruitment of students was more complicated since post-secondary institutions do not provide contact information for students. See the note on the recruitment of students below.
- o The first five interviews served as a pre-test of the discussion guide. The results of these interviews were retained and are included in this report.
- o The interviews were completed between December 23, 2003 and March 1, 2004. Most interviews were 30-45 minutes in length.

Note on Recruitment of Students

As mentioned, recruitment of students in post-secondary institutions posed a challenge because post-secondary institutions do not provide contact information for their students. This was made clear through the key informant interviews where participants were asked if there was any way to obtain lists of the names and phone numbers of students in their institution.

A strategy was developed based on collecting names of students in various institutions through contacts in post-secondary institutions. Philippe Azzie, Senior Consultant with Phoenix, is also a lecturer at the University of Ottawa. Through his contacts among students and professors at the post-secondary level, he was able to collect a list of students in post-secondary institutions across the country who agreed to participate in the study.

Academic contacts were provided with specifications regarding the type of students needed for the study (e.g. age, type of institution, location, living on/off campus). If the contacts knew anyone fitting the profile, they contacted them, informed them of the study, and asked if they would be willing to participate. If they agreed, their name and contact information was passed on to Phoenix. No one was contacted unless they had agreed to participate in the study. Students were contacted prior to the interview to confirm that they met the requirements for participation.

The table below shows the sample frame established for the in-depth interviews and the extent to which each of the various targets were met. Note that the table only counts the three interviews conducted with Student/Residence Associations under type of stakeholder.

Sample Frame for In-Depth Interviews		
Characteristic	**Number of interviews targeted**	**Number of interviews completed**
Type of Stakeholder:		
Post-secondary institution staff	11	11
Students	11	11
Student/Residence associations	3	3
Type of Institution		
University	11	12
College	5	6
Private Institution	4	2
CEGEP	2	2
Size of Institution		
Large (10,000 and above)	11	9
Medium (2,000-10,000)	6	7
Small (under 2,000)	5	6
Community Size		
Large (CMAs)	11	12
Medium (20,000 to CMAs)	6	7
Small (under 20,000)	5	3
Region		
Atlantic	3	4
Quebec	6	5
Ontario	7	8
Prairies/NWT/NU	3	2
BC/Yukon	3	3
Type of Institutional Staff (11 in total)		
Accommodation office	5	6
Admissions/enrollment	3	2
Residence personnel	2	1
Student Services	1	2
Language		
English	18	19
French	7	6

The report is divided into three parts. The first part presents the results of the in-depth interviews conducted with institutional staff. The second part presents the results of the in-depth interviews conducted with students. The third part presents the results of the in-depth interviews conducted with student association/residence association representatives. The third section is much shorter than the first two because the feedback sought from this group of stakeholders was much more limited in scope.

The report also contains some of the findings collected through a set of key informant interviews conducted in the early stages of this research. These interviews were conducted to help shape the methodological design used for this research, including its various components. While there was no formal reporting to CMHC on the results of these interviews, the feedback received sometimes covered the same issues explored through the in-depth interviews. As such, feedback from these interviews has been included wherever relevant.

As qualitative research, the results of these in-depth interviews cannot be considered to be representative of the various stakeholder groups that took part. Rather, they provide insight into the issues explored, and an indication of the views held by these stakeholders groups. However, the findings cannot be generalized to the full population of students, post-secondary institution housing staff or student association/residence association representatives.

Appended to this report are copies of the discussion guides used for the in-depth interviews.

Institutional Representatives

The interviews with representatives of post-secondary institutions were conducted mainly with individuals from housing/accommodations services, but also included representatives from admissions, enrollment, student services and residences (see sample frame; page 3).

Nature of Student Accommodations

This section presents feedback from institutional representatives on their institution and the housing stock that it owns or operates.

Profile of Institutions & Housing Stock

Size:

Institutions included in this research varied in size, with student populations ranging from approximately 1,200 to 18,000. This includes both full-time and part-time students. CEGEPS had the smallest populations and universities had the largest. One representative was unsure about the student population because of the existence of multiple campuses.

Housing stock:

All of the institutions except one, a private institution, own their own housing stock. In all cases, these accommodations are located on-campus. The representative of one college specified that of the 17 campuses affiliated with his/her college, three have their own housing accommodations. In one location, there is an agreement with a university which reserves some of its housing units for students from the college.

Not surprisingly, the housing stock tended to vary in age in most institutions, being built in various waves or over a certain period of time. In one institution, the housing ranges in age from the beginning of the 20th century right up until the present, while in another, housing units were only built in 2000. Only one institutional representative was unsure as to when the housing stock was built. The age ranges provided by the institutional representatives regarding their housing stock are provided below:

- 20-27 years old.
- Between 1992 and 2002.
- 1961-62.
- The 1970s.
- 1980s.

- All built in 2000.
- From the 1960s to the 1990s.
- 1950s and 60s, and 2003.
- 1930, 1969, and 1999.
- From the beginning of the century (1900s) to the present.

Most of the institutions have increased their housing stock over the past 20 years or so, in proportions that vary from (approximately) 15% to 35%. In all cases, this expansion took place on-campus. One representative specified that the expansion that took place at his/her institution was the result of renovating or altering existing housing stock in order to increase capacity rather than by building new units or buildings. Another noted that increasing and improving residences is not only designed to meet existing needs but is part of a marketing strategy to attract more students. During the key informant interviews, one participant noted that more and more post-secondary institutions are actively engaged in recruiting students from high school by highlighting their housing accommodations.

Approximately half the representatives indicated that their institutions have plans to increase their housing stock in the future. One of these representatives said that these plans were in the 'proposal' stage, but the other representatives indicated that the plans were firm. Planned expansions ranged in proportions from (approximately) 15% to 50% more beds. Clearly, there has been and continues to be significant building activity to increase the capacity of post-secondary institutions' housing stock.

Not surprisingly, the number of students that can be housed in the accommodations owned by these institutions varies widely. It ranges from 196 to 2,200. While most of these housing units are full or nearly full with waiting lists, a few have regular occupancy rates of between 50-75%. The latter are colleges in small towns or cities.

Characteristics of Accommodations

Most of the institutions offer a variety of types of accommodations (i.e. dormitory, apartment, townhouses), with some also offering family-type dwellings. Conversely, a few offer only one type of accommodation (i.e. apartment units or dormitories). Most units are furnished, rented on the basis of the academic year, and require students to provide a down payment (except in Quebec). Beyond that, there is variety in the characteristics of the accommodations offered by various institutions (e.g. number of bedrooms, shared or private washroom) and what is included/excluded in the costs (e.g. laundry facilities, parking, satellite, Internet, television). Prices range from approximately $2,800 for the academic year to as high as $4,600 per academic year.

Units of the same type tend to cost the same price. Differences in the price of similar units do exist, but are determined mainly by the type of meal plan chosen, where such plans are mandatory and include various types. Other things that can alter the price of similar units are the age of the building and whether or not there is a private or shared washroom.

In only one instance were there rooms with more beds and students than originally intended. However, this situation, attributed to the phenomenon of the double cohort, was said to be in place only between September and December 2003. In institutions where there is excess capacity, this problem obviously does not present itself.

Most of the institutions do <u>not</u> have leases with other landlords or hotels/motels in their community for rooms that are then leased out to their students. Three institutional representatives indicated that their institution did have this type of arrangement. However, in only one instance was this described specifically as a situation in which the institution leases buildings from private landlords as residences that are then rented to students. One institution has leased the housing units of a seminary college, while another, a college, has an arrangement with a university through which it sublets a proportion of the latter's housing units.

Meal Plans:

Most institutions offer meal plans to their students. In most cases, this is mandatory (i.e. all students living in institutional housing must be on a meal plan). In a couple of instances however, this applies only to students living in dormitory-style residences (i.e. not other institution-owned units). Most institutions also offer meal plans to off-campus students.

In most instances, students can choose between different plans. Differences between meal plans have to do primarily with the number of meals per week included in the plan (e.g. 16 meals vs. 12 meals) or the original balance included in the meal plan (i.e. some plans work on the basis of debit cards on which you have an amount of money that declines with use). Two institutions do not offer meal plans, but students there have facilities enabling them to cook their own meals.

Reserved Housing:

With the exception of rooms reserved for incoming first year students, most institutions do <u>not</u> reserve housing or a specific number of housing units for certain groups of students, but some do. These include married students, students with families, disabled students or those with health problems, international students, exchange students, and students on scholarships. In one institution, rooms are reserved according to the year the student is in. Students in first year are assigned double rooms in dormitories, students in second year are assigned single rooms in dormitories, and students in third and fourth year are assigned to apartment-style units. During the key informant interviews, one participant indicated that his/her institution reserves one residence exclusively for Franco-Ontarian students and Anglophones wanting to improve their French.

Process to Access Student Housing

This section presents feedback from institutional representatives about the ways in which students learn about and access student housing.

Applying for Housing

Participants were first asked to describe the process(es) whereby students learn about and access student housing owned by their university/college. They were asked to include all relevant elements, including criteria or requirements that students have to meet.

The process described by the representatives of the different institutions was remarkably similar. When students are accepted at an institution, they are sent a registration package that includes, among other things, an application form in the event that the student wishes to apply for institution-owned accommodations. Students fill out the form in which they specify their preferences for housing (e.g. type of room, type of roommate, meal plan). The form is returned to the institution, which then assigns rooms mainly on a first-come, first-served basis. A similar process was described in the key informant interviews.

The only requirement for admission identified by all institutional representatives is that students be enrolled full-time. Most, but not all, also require a down payment once a student is accepted, and some institutions have an application fee. Where meal plans are mandatory, it goes without saying that students are also required to sign up for a meal plan. As well, one housing officer interviewed as a key informant indicated that his/her institution had additional requirements. In addition to being enrolled full-time, incoming student have to have an overall average of 82% and cannot live within the metropolitan area in which the institution is situated.

None of these institutions impose restrictions or conditions on students looking to secure institutional housing after their first year except that the student must be in good standing. As long as the student is not on probation or expelled, he or she may apply as many times as he/she wishes. Some institutions give priority to first year students, but there are no formal requirements that returning students must meet except to fill out an application form before a certain deadline. Moreover, as noted above, a couple of institutions reserve certain types of rooms for students in the second year or more of their programs.

Proportion of Students Accepted

With one exception, the proportion of students applying for housing who are accepted is 80% or more among the institutions represented in these interviews. At two institutions it is 100% (i.e. everyone who applies is accepted). The exception is the University of Victoria, which received 4,500 applications for 1,700 places. In other words, less than 40% of applicants were accepted. Participants in the key informant interviews were asked this

same question. The proportion of applicants accepted into institutional housing in the institutions represented in those interviews varied between 50-75%.

Accessing Non-Institutional Student Housing

The process whereby students learn about and access student housing is similar in most institutions. Most of these institutions automatically refer students who have applied for institutional housing but have not been accepted to sources of information on non-institutional housing. These include Student Service offices, Off-Campus Housing offices, and off-campus housing listings on the institutional website. In a couple of institutions, students are given hard copy lists of available housing in the community, which contain contact information and specifics about available units.

Housing Referral & Support Services

All institutions provide referral/support services for students looking to secure off-campus housing. All institutions offer listings of available housing either electronically or in hard copy format. They also update these lists on at least a monthly basis. Some institutions provide a more interactive database that allows students to specify certain characteristics and search the database for housing that meets their criteria.

Many institutions also provide such things as maps, 'Dos and Don'ts', and information on landlords and tenants. A couple of institutions offer seminars on looking for housing and one has an accompanying service (i.e. someone can go with students to inspect available accommodations). Another institution encourages feedback from students who have used the service and warns students about accommodations that have received poor evaluations from other students.

Partnerships

All but one of the institutional representatives indicated that their institutions have no partnership or relationship with other landlords or housing providers in their community, apart from allowing them to advertise their accommodations for a fee. One institution will provide reference letters for students who have lived in residence and are looking for off-campus housing, and will get in touch with landlords to ensure that residence prices are comparable.

Availability of Student Housing

This section explores the availability of student housing in the local community of the post-secondary institutions.

Degree of Difficulty Finding Student Housing

Institutional representatives were almost equally divided when asked if the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is a problem in their city or community. Those who said that this is a problem identified a variety of reasons, with some identifying more than one reason why this is the case in their own community. Reasons included:

- *Cost of housing*: Some explained that the cost of housing (i.e. rental pricing) makes the availability of off-campus housing a problem in their city/community. Students tend to look for low-rent accommodations. As the cost of housing increases, low-rent accommodations become less available and consequently students have more difficulty finding housing in the price range they are willing or able to afford. One housing officer added that this is becoming a serious problem in his/her community and that the issue is taken up repeatedly at city council meetings. The problem is that students are in competition with low-income earners and families to find cheap accommodations.

- *Hot market/big demand*: Some identified the demand for housing in the community in general as a problem. More and more people looking for housing limits the availability and drives prices upward. Landlords can become more picky and choosy in terms of who they want to rent to because they know they will have no trouble renting their accommodations. Students tend to be at the bottom of the list.

- *Number of post-secondary institutions in community*: A few pointed to the number of post-secondary institutions in their community and the sheer number of students looking for accommodations as a problem. Availability of housing is tight because so many students from different institutions are looking for housing at or around the same time every year.

- *Double cohort*: A few identified the phenomenon of the double cohort as a factor contributing to limited available housing. The sudden and unprecedented arrival of increased numbers of new students looking for housing has caused a problem in some communities. Students who are themselves part of the double cohort tend to reside on-campus and have on-campus facilities reserved for them. This obliges older students to have to look elsewhere in the community for housing which impacts on demand.

A couple of representatives of institutions noted that availability of off-campus housing is not a problem in their city or community per se, but that availability of housing close to their institution is a problem. If students are willing to live far away from campus, there is no problem finding housing. However, this can be very inconvenient for students due to the distance of their accommodations from campus.

Housing Market Varies by Community

When asked to describe the rental market in their community, representatives of institutions gave quite different descriptions. Some described the market as "hot", "tight", or "competitive", while others described it as "slow" or "not busy". A few described the market as "cyclical" or "up and down".

Cost of Institutional Housing Compares Favorably to Housing in Rental Market

Asked how the cost of housing owned by their institution compares with the cost of comparable housing in the rental market in their community, all of the institutional representatives suggested that it compared favorably. They tended to use expressions such as "comparable", "similar", and "competitive" to describe the situation. One representative specified that the institution ensures that their housing is competitive with what is available in the community.

Two representatives who described the cost of housing as comparable or similar added that one factor makes it difficult to make direct comparisons – the cost of food. One noted that the meal plan may slightly increase the cost of institutional housing compared to housing in the community. However, another specified that it is difficult to compare the cost of the meal plan because there is no way to gauge what students will pay for food when they are living in non-institution-owned housing.

Two more added caveats to their comments about comparability. One specified that non-institution-owned housing became cheaper only at the point where a group of students, perhaps three or more, got together to share accommodations. At that point, their respective rent would be cheaper than institution-owned housing. Another specified that the cost of family units in institution-owned housing was lower than what would be charged in the community, but that the cost of other units was about the same.

Quality of Accommodations

This section presents feedback on the quality of accommodations owned and operated by post-secondary institutions.

Accommodations Seen to Meet Expectations

All of the institutional representatives interviewed indicated that, as far as they could tell, their institution's accommodations met student expectations. Some added that they knew this because they administer surveys to students in their housing accommodations and ask them about their satisfaction with the accommodations. People offered a variety of reasons by way of explanation, although none dominated:

- *Knowledge of what to expect in advance*: One reason why students were said to be satisfied with accommodations is that they tend to know what to expect in advance. Through campus tours, visits to institutional websites, and information provided on application forms, students have a pretty clear idea of what to expect in terms of accommodations.

- *Moderate expectations*: Many students also tend to have moderate expectations when it comes to their accommodations. They are looking for a room and reasonable maintenance. Many are satisfied just to get accepted into institutional housing.

- *Good upkeep/maintenance*: Institutions also tend to do a good job maintaining the quality of their housing accommodations either through upkeep or renovations. While students do not have the freedom they had while they were living at home, they are generally satisfied with the quality of their accommodations. A few institutional representatives noted that newly built residences are most likely to meet with approval.

Despite general satisfaction with institutional accommodations, one representative felt that the quality of accommodations is becoming a more important issue for two reasons. First, students and their parents are becoming more picky and choosy when it comes to housing. In part because of the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned accommodations, students and their parents are more likely to "shop around" than to simply accept a room that has been provided by the institution. Second, there is now more competition between institutions to attract students. More and more institutions are now actively recruiting in high schools through presentations to students and one of the ways in which they try to draw students to their institution is by promoting their housing accommodations. This was mentioned earlier in a different context.

Problems Related to Institutional Housing

Just as all the institutional representatives said that students tend to be satisfied with their accommodations, they also all indicated that problems do emerge, even though they tend to be small. These problems relate primarily to interpersonal relations within institution-owned accommodations rather than to the quality of these accommodations themselves. They include such things as noise, bad behavior, and rule breaking concerning such things as smoking, parties and alcohol. In some instances, there are acts of vandalism and pulling of fire alarms, but these tend to be occasional as opposed to regular occurrences.

Some institutional representatives indicated that there are problems related to the facilities themselves which include things like poor water pressure, plumbing, poor air circulation, broken washers and dryers, and malfunctioning elevators. However, these problems tend to get repaired quickly. They are most common, not surprisingly, with older buildings.

Student Complaints Focus Mainly on Life Away From Home

All but one institutional representative indicated that students do tend to lodge complaints about their accommodations. However, complaints are mainly related to getting used to life away from home. Many students who lodge complaints are living on their own for the first time and adjusting to the fact they are no longer living at home with all its rights and privileges. In many instances, this is their first time living with someone else. They are living in situations where there are rules to follow and often roommates to get along with. Consequently many of the complaints that are lodged have to do with such things as noise levels, roommates, vandalism, rules and regulations regarding alcohol and smoking, and food and meal plans. Complaints about the latter usually have to do with the variety of food (i.e. they want greater selection).

There are also some complaints about the facilities themselves such as those listed above (i.e. lack of hot water, plumbing, malfunctioning elevators, poor air circulation, allergies to certain materials, and broken washers and dryers).

Most institutional representatives could not quantify the number of complaints registered by students on average each year, but they all used qualifiers like "few" or "not many" to describe the number. Those who did provide numbers said that the number of complaints did not exceed 10 a year. Institutional representatives also said that complaints tend to get resolved satisfactorily but that this might also involve a student being placed on residence probation or even being expelled

Non-School Year Housing Options

This section explores the use of institution-owned housing units during the non-school year.

Most Accommodations Available to Student During Summer

Most institutional representatives indicated that their institution's housing accommodations are available to students during the summer, subject to an application on the part of students and as long as they are still enrolled at the institution and in good standing. These accommodations are available primarily to students who are taking courses during the summer or in a co-op placement.

Accommodations Used Mainly for Conferences and Tourists During Summer

During the summer, accommodations are used mainly for conferences, academic and otherwise, and housing tourists. They are also used for housing sports teams attending events in the area and for students on exchange programs. One institutional representative noted that non-academic year housing is becoming more and more important in many institutions as a way for them to make money during the summer. Another noted that while this was an ongoing effort at his/her institution, there has not yet been a strong push to fill residences during the summer.

Exploration of Data Collection Methods

This section explores issues related to the survey of post-secondary institutions to be conducted by CMHC.

General Consistency in Contact Person for Institutions

Asked to identify the person best able to provide factual information about the housing stock owned or operated by their institution, institutional representatives most often identified the Director of Housing or Accommodations. Slightly different titles designating a similar individual included the Director of Residence Life, the Chief Housing Officer and the Director of Housing and Conference Services. In some institutions, there is either no specific housing office (i.e. this is handled by another office) or there are multiple campuses. Individuals identified in these instances included the Vice President of Finance and the Vice President of Student Services. Similar feedback was received through the key informant interviews.

Sharing Findings Seen as Main Way to Encourage Participation

Asked if they had any advice on how to encourage post-secondary institutions to take part in such a survey, most institutional representatives recommended sharing the results with the participants, particularly information allowing them to compare themselves with similar institutions. A number of other suggestions were made, but were identified much less often. These included:

- Provide advance notice to allow institutions to prepare their responses.
- Reassure institutions that no private information is being sought.
- Let institutions know how the information will be used.
- Make follow-up phone calls to highlight the importance of the survey.
- Ensure that the invitation comes directly from CMHC.
- Send the survey in February/March. These tend to be the least hectic months for housing officers.
- Do not make the survey too long.
- Send the survey electronically, and make it downloadable.

Variety of Issues Seen as Important

Institutional representatives identified a number of issues they considered important to include in a survey on student housing, but none predominated. Issues included:

- The cost of various types of units.
- Types of units being constructed.
- Costs associated with student housing.
- Is expansion achieved through constructing new residences or renovating old ones?

- ▫ Residence-type information, such as upkeep.
- ▫ Amenities included in rental costs.
- ▫ Types of public/private partnerships/arrangements entered into for building/ managing housing accommodations.

One institutional representative said that facilities management is a very important issue. Many post-secondary institutions are going through a housing construction boom, but once the construction is finished the question will be how to maintain the stock and manage it properly.

Most Anticipate No Problems Getting Information

Most institutional representatives indicated that institutions should have no real concerns or problems providing the information requested as long as it does not include any requests for personal information about students. Some noted that most housing information is already available to the public through the institutional websites.

A few indicated that institutions could be reassured by providing them with a contact person at CMHC. It was noted that CMHC is well regarded among housing officers in post-secondary institutions. One institutional representative identified a possible problem on the assumption that the survey would be administered electronically. He said that the only real problem getting the information could be if the system did not work correctly or shut down while someone was completing the survey. If this happened it might be very hard to persuade someone to try to complete the survey a second time.

These issues were also asked in the key informant interviews and similar feedback was provided. The general sense was that as long as CMHC's presence was evident and no information of a private nature was sought, there would be no problem enlisting the participation of institutions.

Institutions Keep Databases of Housing Stock

All of the institutional representatives said that it was more than likely that all institutions keep detailed databases of their housing stock. Asked what type of information is kept in the database on the housing inventory in their own institution, institutional representatives identified such things as the number and price of various units, amenities, and vacancy rates. A few also identified renovations and reparations. A few said that they did not know what was included apart from budgetary information in general.

Many Institutions Can Contact Students by Email, But Not All

Many, but not all institutions have the ability to send an email to all their students. These are institutions that require their students to have an email address that allows them to be contacted. A few institutions do not require their students to have email addresses but they can contact them nevertheless by phone or mail if necessary (but not email).

Those institutions that do have the ability to send emails to all students would require the permission of the head of the institution (e.g. college president, principal, president of the university) to do this in the case of a survey. Emails are sent to students all the time for various reasons, such as changes to courses, changes to exam schedules, upcoming events, new rules/regulations, etc.

Administering a Survey to Students

In conclusion, institutional representatives were informed that a similar survey would be conducted with students. They were asked about the best way to contact students and the best way to administer the survey.

There was a consensus among the institutional representatives that the institutions would not provide direct contact information for this purpose. Limiting access to students has always been an important issue in post-secondary institutions. This echoes the feedback received in the key informant interviews.

Most suggested that permission should be sought to make information about the survey available to students. This could involve a number of techniques, such as installing booths on campus, distributing flyers, posting bulletins in residences and student federation offices, and placing an ad in student newspapers. Students could be given a contact number or an email address to visit if they were interested. A few did not know students should be contacted.

There was also a consensus among representatives that the best way to administer the survey would be electronically. A number of reasons were given to explain why:

   □ *Paper-based surveys tend to be unpopular*: Some institutional representatives noted that students generally do not like paper-based surveys. Students tend to be ecologically-minded and might see paper used for such a purpose as a waste.

   □ *Familiarity with and access to computers*: Some noted that students are very familiar with computers and the Internet, have access to them, and like to use them.

   □ *Student schedules*: A few noted that students tend to keep irregular hours and schedules. It may take time to reach them by phone and it may take even longer to schedule a time to administer the survey. Having the survey on-line allows the students to complete it when they want.

A few institutional representatives added that it might be good idea to offer incentives or prizes to encourage students to participate. One suggested offering food coupons or gift certificates.

Students

In-depth interviews were conducted with a variety of post-secondary students. The table below shows the sample frame established for the interviews with students and the extent to which each of the various targets were met.

Student Sub-Sample		
Characteristic	**Number of interviews targeted**	**Number of interviews completed**
Age:		
17-20	3	3
21-25	5	5
Over 25	3	3
Status:		
Full-time	8	10
Part-time	3	1
Level:		
Undergraduate	8	8
Graduate	3	3
Type of student:		
Canadian/domestic	9	9
International	2	2
Type of housing:		
On-campus	3	3
Off-campus	8	8
Gender:		
Male	5	4
Female	5	6

Nature of Accommodations

This section presents feedback from students about the nature of the accommodations they presently occupy as students. As the sample table on the previous page indicates, most of the students interviewed live in off-campus accommodations.

Characteristics of Housing Accommodations

Students were asked to briefly describe the accommodations they currently occupy. Students living in on-campus housing all live in traditional dorm-style residences. Two occupy shared two bedroom units (i.e. they have a roommate) and one occupies a single room. The accommodations are furnished and this includes a desk, dresser, and bed (but not bedding). They all have Internet hook-up.

These students have occupied their accommodations since September 2003 and are paying rent for the full academic year. The costs range from $2,800-$3,500 for the academic year including the Internet hook-up. They all had to provide a down payment and sign a residence agreement/contract. As well, they all have a meal plan which is mandatory and operates on the basis of a debit card with a declining balance. The meal plans range from $400 to $700 per semester.

All students living in off-campus accommodations are renting from someone other than the institution they are attending. Most are renting one bedroom apartments, accommodations that are not furnished. A few are occupying two bedroom apartments and are living with a roommate, and one is occupying a bachelor unit. Most have been in their accommodations since September, but a few have been occupying the same accommodations for a full year, while one has been in the same place for three years.

Most accommodations include water, power/electricity, and heating in the costs. In all cases, cable and Internet are extra. Most are paying for the academic year but a few are paying for a full calendar year. Their portion of the costs range from $415/month to $850/month. Except in Quebec, these students have all had to provide the first and/or last month's rent in advance. A few had to provide a safety deposit and have someone co-sign their lease. None of these students are on a meal plan.

Housing Played <u>No</u> Role in Selection of Post-Secondary Institution

The students interviewed were unanimous that housing or accommodation issues did not play a role in their selection of the institution they are presently attending. In addition, none of them considered distance learning as an option which would have allowed them to live at home and study with an institution using the Internet, TV or other technologies.

Process of Looking for Student Housing

This section presents feedback from students about issues related to their search for student housing.

Cost & Location – Main Concerns in Search for Housing

Students identified a variety of issues or concerns that went through their minds when they first started looking for housing. These issues or concerns were identified primarily by students living in off-campus accommodations. Students living in on-campus accommodations had applied for institutional housing and said that they had no real concerns other than whether or not their application would be accepted.

Of the issues identified by students living off-campus, two dominated: cost and location. Nearly all the students interviewed identified one or both of these issues as something that they considered when they began looking for housing.

Most of the students who identified cost as an issue or preoccupation identified it as in absolute terms (i.e. how much it would cost them to rent a room). However, a few defined it in relative terms (i.e. the cost of accommodations in relation to the quality of the accommodations).

Most of those who identified location as a concern or issue meant that they wanted to find housing near their institution. However, in a few instances the preoccupation with location was associated with a specific area in which the student wanted to live (i.e. a nice section of the community or city), and not proximity to campus.

Those for whom location meant proximity to their institution tended to associate this issue with the issue of cost: since many students want to live in accommodations close to their institution, the demand drives prices up. Landlords know that they will have no trouble finding someone to rent their place due to its prime location so they can afford to ask more for it.

Issues identified less often included:

▫ *Competition/housing shortage:* Some students identified competition for housing or a possible shortage of available housing as a concern. This concern was attributed to the double cohort and the fact that they were studying in communities with a number of post-secondary institutions which meant that many students were looking for housing.

▫ *Timing:* A few students were concerned that they had started their search for housing too late in relation to the beginning of the school year and therefore might not be able to find adequate accommodations.

▫ *Transportation:* A few students said they thought about how they would get to and from their institution, how long this would take, and how much it would cost over the course of the school year.

▫ *Don't know city/where to look:* The two foreign students who were interviewed identified their general unfamiliarity with the city they were moving to as one of their preoccupations.

▫ *Laundry facilities:* Two students identified finding accommodations with laundry facilities as one of their concerns.

Process of Looking for Housing

When it came to the process of looking for student housing, students living in institution-owned housing followed a standardized process. When they received their letter of acceptance to the institution in question they also received information about living in institution-owned housing. They filled out a form asking them about their preferences (e.g. type of room, type of roommate, type of meal plan) and returned it to the institution. They later received a letter confirming their acceptance into residence, asking for a down payment, and setting out the rules and regulations governing life in institution-owned housing. This process was described in similar terms by institutional representatives.

Students living off-campus did not tend to follow a process per se, involving a number of interconnected steps. Rather, they tended to take discrete measures or steps to find their accommodations. Some consulted local newspapers for ads, then called or visited the location to see if the accommodations they were interested in were still available. A few said they drove around or took walking tours in areas where they wanted to live and looked for signs advertising rentals. Only two students consulted the off-campus housing office in their institution. One international student relied on a friend because he/she was not in the country and could not search himself/herself.

In terms of criteria that had to be met by students living off campus, all had to sign a rental agreement. Most had to provide the first and last month's rent in advance (those living in Quebec were not required to do this). A few had to pay a damage deposit. Other requirements identified by individual students included such things as not having any pets and not smoking in the room.

Most Sought Housing During the Summer

There was a difference between students living in institution-owned housing and those living in non-institution-owned housing concerning the time of year when they began looking for housing. Those living in institution-owned housing filled out their application

forms for institutional housing in February and sent them to their respective institutions. Students living off-campus tended to look for their housing in June or early July in order to have something secured for September. A few began looking as early as the end of March or the beginning of May. Those who began looking in March or May explained that their institutions were either in small communities or "university communities" which means that available housing tends to be booked very early and very quickly. In their view, there is a relatively small window of opportunity to find choice housing and so it is important to begin looking as early as possible. Those who began looking in June and July explained that the summer months afforded them more time to actually look for housing.

Time to Find Housing Varies, As Does Difficulty Finding It

There was no unanimity in terms of the amount of time it took students to find housing once they began looking. A few students found accommodations very quickly, within one or two days of beginning their search. A few others said it took them one or two weeks of searching, while a few more said it took them as long as one month to find the accommodations they currently occupy. Students living in institution-owned housing indicated that once they sent off their applications for admission to institution-owned housing, it took three weeks to a month to receive their confirmation.

Neither was there unanimity in terms of the difficulty students had finding their housing accommodations. Some described the process as easy or relatively easy, explaining that they simply called or visited the location in question, expressed interest in renting it for the school year and were accepted subject to their ability to meet whatever requirements were in place (see above). One of these students added however that he considers himself lucky to have been able to secure housing easily. Students living in institution-owned housing also described the process as easy since they simply followed the procedure outlined in their application form.

Conversely, some students described the process of securing housing as difficult or very difficult. Reasons given mainly had to do with the high level of demand or competition for student housing in the community. Specific difficulties in this regard included the high price of accommodations, arriving at locations only to find that they had already been rented, landlords being very choosy or picky about whom they rent to, and landlords not returning phone calls or not answering the phone at all. Some institutional representatives also drew attention to high demand and the effect this had on the ability of landlords to be more picky and choosy.

Two students described the process of finding housing as difficult because they had difficulty finding what they wanted specifically. One student was looking for accommodations with a washer and a dryer on location, and another did not want accommodations heated by oil because of the cost of oil heating.

Most Students Conducted Their Search for Housing On Location

Only those students living in institution-owned housing and one foreign student conducted their search for housing remotely. In the case of those living in institution-owned housing, this was because of the way the application process is set up. In the case of the international student, he could not be on location before the start of the academic year and so relied on a friend on location who was relaying information to him.

Those who conducted their search on location were most likely to say that they did this because they wanted to see the accommodations before committing themselves to renting them. A few explained that people also rent without any other ad than a sign in the window or on the lawn because of the high demand for student housing. They don't need to pay for an ad in the newspaper or on the off-campus housing website because they know that students on walking tours or drive-bys will notice their ads.

Newspapers – Main & Most Useful Source of Housing Information

Students identified a number of sources of information or assistance that they consulted to help them find or secure housing. However, the source identified most often was local newspapers. Sources identified less frequently include word of mouth, walking tours, institutional websites and off-campus housing offices.

Newspapers were identified most often as the most useful source of information and the way in which they actually found their accommodations. A few identified friends and walking tours; websites and off-campus housing offices were each identified by one student.

Information Needed was Easy to Find & Comprehensive

Students were unanimous that it was easy to find the information or assistance they needed and that they received all the information they needed. That said, a couple of students specified that some of the information they needed was information that they themselves sought as opposed to information that was simply provided to them. The information in question concerned tenants rights.

Most Students Did <u>Not</u> Look For or Receive Information From Institution

Only two students living in non-institution-owned housing said they looked for or received information or assistance about off-campus housing accommodations from their institution. The information was provided in both cases through an off-campus housing office. One of these students, an international student, was directed to the office and the other student went to the office on his/her own. The information provided included listings of available rental housing, a searchable database allowing specification of criteria, and information on "Dos and Don'ts". Both students described the information as very useful.

Those who did not use information or assistance from off-campus housing offices provided various reasons to explain this. A few said they had not thought of it, and a few others said they already knew where they wanted to look for housing. One student already had specific addresses/possibilities to check out, while another did not know that such a service existed at his/her institution.

Most Would Start Search Earlier in Future

Asked what, if anything, they would do differently in the future in searching for student housing, just over half the students living in non-institution-owned housing said they would start earlier in order to have more time and perhaps more selection in the choice of accommodations. A few said they would expand their search a little in terms of location, and be more picky or choosy. One said he would consult off-campus housing resources. A few said they would do nothing differently.

Students living in institution-owned housing said they would probably look for off-campus housing in the future, not because of any mistakes they made or lessons they learned, but simply in order to have a place of their own or with a roommate of their own choosing.

Housing Selection Criteria

This section presents students' housing selection criteria.

Reasons For Living On/Off Campus

Students were asked why they chose to live in the accommodations they are occupying (i.e. either on or off-campus). Those living on-campus identified a desire to meet people and convenience (i.e. proximity to campus and classes) as the main reasons. One student also identified cost as the reason, explaining that it was less expensive to stay in residence than to rent accommodations in the community.

Students living off-campus were more likely to identify a wider variety of reasons. Privacy and independence were identified most often, followed by a desire for more peace and quiet. Reasons identified infrequently included the desire to live with a partner or room-mates, a desire for private laundry facilities, a desire for more space, ability to accommodate visiting friends or relatives, and a desire to socialize with more mature people.

Cost & Location – Most Important Criteria When Looking for Housing

When asked to identify the most important factors or criteria that they considered when looking for and obtaining their current accommodations, students most often identified cost and location. These were also identified as the two most important concerns or issues that students thought about when they began looking for housing (see above).

Other factors were identified by no more than a few students and included the quality of the accommodations (i.e. whether they were well maintained, clean), the ability to meet people, size of the accommodations, the types of amenities included, security (i.e. a safe area), and the ability to smoke.

Desire for More Freedom & Independence – Main Way Selection Criteria Changes

Asked if their housing selection criteria would change for next year, all the first year students said that they would or probably would. In explaining how, these students focused primarily on a desire to have more freedom and independence. Note that these first year students were also students who were staying in institution-owned accommodations. Perhaps not surprisingly, their emphasis on more freedom and independence included such things as the ability to choose their own roommates, not having to worry about curfews, setting their own rules and regulations, the ability to have a pet, and the ability to bring in their own furniture.

In addition to freedom and independence, however, a couple of first year students also noted that they were looking for more peace and quiet as well. While they do not regret

their experience in residence, there are some things they found very trying and do not want to experience again, such as fire alarms being pulled at 2:00 a.m. in the middle of February, and petty acts of vandalism.

Students in their second year or more were nearly unanimous that their housing criteria had changed since their post-secondary education began. They most commonly identified a desire for more freedom and privacy as the ways in which this had changed. A few also described being more picky and choosy in the choice of their accommodations. This included a desire for more comfortable accommodations, a parking spot, and their own furniture. One upper year student said that his criteria had not fundamentally changed since beginning post-secondary education.

Availability of Student Housing

This section provides student feedback on the availability of student housing at their institution and the availability of housing in the community in which they study.

Availability of Housing Varies by Institution

When asked if availability of student housing is a problem at their institution, students were almost equally split between those who think it was a problem, those who think it was not, and those who simply do not know.

Those who felt that availability of housing is a problem at their institution offered the following reasons:

- *Double cohort*: A few students referred to the double cohort to explain the problem in housing at their institution. The influx of students at their institution has meant that rooms tend to be reserved for incoming students. This means that more and more students have had to look for other accommodations this year.

- *Limited number of rooms*: A few students indicated that the demand for rooms at their institution is regularly higher than the supply, which creates a problem in terms of availability.

- *Rooms reserved for first-year students*: A couple of students said the availability of housing is not a problem for first-year students because rooms tend to be reserved for them. However, it is a problem for students after their first year who might still wish to stay in institution-owned housing.

- *Sharing facilities between institutions*: One student explained that the availability of housing at her institution is a problem because the institution has an arrangement with another institution in the same city by virtue of which a certain number of rooms are reserved for students from that institution.

Students who felt that availability of housing is not a problem pointed primarily to the fact that, according to their information, accommodations at their institution are never full, which suggests that availability of housing is not a problem. A few pointed to the fact that new accommodations have been built to accommodate more students.

Students who said that availability of housing is a problem at their institution were asked how students deal with this problem. Most said that the only way they know of or have heard of is to start looking for available off-campus housing as early as possible. A couple of students added that informal networks have developed through which students are put in

touch with other students who will not be renewing their lease. This allows them to find available housing more quickly than might otherwise be the case since they know in advance who will be vacating certain premises.

Some said that students deal with this situation simply by going to the off-campus housing office on a regular basis and getting the latest or most recent housing announcements. Finally, one student noted that some students will simply stay in their present accommodations throughout the summer in order to retain the same place for the fall, or try to sublet their accommodations for the summer and reclaim them in the fall.

Availability of Housing a Problem in Some Communities

Students in non-institution-owned housing were asked if the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is a problem in the city or community where they go to school. Approximately half of these students said yes, and slightly less said no. A few said that it depended on where one is looking.

Those who said that this is a problem agreed that the problem of availability is due to a hot market or high demand, but pointed to different phenomena to explain this in their communities:

▫ *Double cohort*: A few students pointed to the double cohort to explain the housing problem in their city or community. The influx of students related to this phenomenon has caused an increase in demand for housing.

▫ *University town/community*: A couple of students explained this by pointing out that their communities are essentially university communities containing a number of post-secondary institutions. Housing is a problem because of the sheer number of students in the community looking for housing.

Both these reasons were also identified by institutional representatives to explain why the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is a problem in their city or community.

▫ *Economic growth*: One student suggested that economic growth explained the tight housing market in her particular community. More and more people are moving to this community, which places pressure on the housing market by increasing demand for housing.

Finally, one student suggested that the problem is due, in part, to some landlords who wait until the last minute to publicize rental accommodations, keeping the market tight so as to be able to take advantage of the increased demand at the last minute to charge higher rates.

Those who said it depends on where one is looking explained that the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is a problem in areas close to their institution, but

less of a problem the further away from campus one goes. This creates problems in terms of time and transportation, but strictly speaking, the availability of such housing is not really a problem. This was also mentioned by a few institutional representatives.

Students who said that the availability of off-campus, non-institution-owned housing is <u>not</u> a problem in their community were more likely to say that the rental market had no effect on their ability to find accommodations. Conversely, those who said that the availability of such housing is a problem in their community were more likely to say that it did. When explaining how, they identified such things as having to spend more time to look for accommodations, paying more than they had anticipated, and compromising on location and amenities.

While most of the students living in non-institution-owned housing said they were able to find the type of accommodation they were looking for, some said that they were not. When asked why not they gave reasons that included not being able to find accommodations with a washer and dryer, being unable to find a furnished apartment, and not finding accommodations in the area or location desired.

Students in Institution-Owned Housing Given Choice in Accommodations

Students living in institution-owned housing were asked how much choice they had in selecting their current accommodations. They all indicated that they had a reasonable amount of choice on their application form, but that this did not mean that they automatically got all that they asked for. They were able to specify whether they wanted a single or a double room, the type of person they would prefer to live with, and their type of meal plan, though they had to choose one. One student remembers having the choice between types of dorms (co-ed dorm or not).

All of the students living in institution-owned housing said that they could theoretically stay in these same accommodations next year if they wanted. The only conditions they have to meet are to be a full-time student in good standing and not be on any kind of residence-related probation.

Quality of Accommodations

This section focuses on the quality of students' current accommodations.

Students Generally Satisfied With Accommodations

All the students expressed satisfaction with their current accommodations, although satisfaction tended to be moderate, not strong. Most also said that their accommodations met their expectations. Two students said that their accommodations did not meet their expectations. One specified that he was looking for accommodations with a washer and a dryer. The other said that she had hoped to find a furnished apartment.

Most Have Problems With Accommodations, Few Complained

When asked if there were any problems with their accommodations, most students said that there were. No single problem was identified by more than two students. They included loud neighbors, the need for renovations, two-prong electrical outlets, no stand-up shower, poor water pressure, water being cut off without warning, and poor insulation.

Only a couple students have registered complaints about their accommodations and they were related to the problems identified above. Specifically, one student complained about loud noise and another inquired about the water pressure. Both said they were satisfied with the results.

No Consensus on Ability to Find Better Accommodations

When asked if they thought they could have found better accommodations, students were almost equally divided between those who said yes, those who said no, and those who were unsure. Those who said yes felt that it was possible if they had started to look earlier, looked a little harder, or consulted more sources of information, including the off-campus housing office.

Those who said no focused on their circumstances or conditions to explain why they thought this. In light of such things as the time they had, their budget, the high demand for housing, they felt that they had done as well as they could. One student felt that an improvement in one aspect would probably entail a compromise in another (e.g. better price but worse location).

The remaining students were unsure.

Most Students Would <u>Not</u> Live in Same Accommodations Again

Although students expressed satisfaction with their accommodations, most said that they would not choose to live in the same accommodations again. This included students currently living in institution-owned housing who said that they would prefer to find a place of their own next year. Others who said they would not choose to live in the same accommodations gave as reasons a desire for a bigger place, the desire to live with a partner, wanting a place with more amenities, and wanting accommodations closer to the institution.

A few students said they would choose to live in the same accommodations next year if they could. Reasons included a good landlord, a good location, and good accommodations for the price. Only one of these students is currently trying to do something to secure this by trying to find someone to sublet the accommodations during the summer.

Most Unsure About Ability to Find Equal or Better Accommodations Next Year

Most students said they were unsure about their ability to find accommodations as good or better than their current accommodations next year. They felt that this would depend on factors such as when they could begin looking, how much money they would have to spend on rent for the next school year, the level of demand for accommodations, and the number of accommodations on the rental market. The two foreign students said that they would probably not be in Canada next year.

Students who felt that they would be able to find better accommodations tended to be those currently living in institution-owned housing. Their criteria for "better" accommodations focused mainly on such as having more independence, ability to choose their roommate, having more peace and quiet, and having more privacy.

Those who felt that they would not be able to find better accommodations next year identified the prime location of their current accommodations and the "hot" market as reasons.

Most Students in Second Year of Program or Higher Have Moved at Least Twice

Students in the second year of their program of study or higher were asked how many times they have moved over the duration of their program of study. They were told that this did not include moves home for the summer. Most of them said that they have moved twice. A few have moved three times, and one has moved four times. All said that they moved by choice. This included students who moved into residence for their first year then decided to rent a place of their own the following year. Other reasons included a desire for larger accommodations, the desire to live with roommates, and a simple desire for change. The student who moved four times changed city and program.

Non-School-Year Housing Options

This section explores students' housing plans when the school year is over.

Most Students Will Return Home After School Year

Most of the students interviewed said they will be returning to their family residence once the school year is over. A few will be staying in their present accommodations, including the foreign students, and a few said that they still do not know.

Students living in non-institution-owned housing were asked what they will do with their school-year accommodations during the summer months. Most will simply leave them and return home, a few will be staying in them, and one is trying to find someone to sublet the place while he/she travels for the summer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, students were asked what advice they would give to anyone looking for student housing accommodations. They identified a number of things, but none was identified by more than a few students. Advice included:

▫ *Live in residence in first year*: It was suggested that students moving away from home live in residence during their first year. This was described as a good experience in terms of meeting people, developing interpersonal skills, and becoming more independent. It also helps people develop a sense of what they want or need when it comes to renting a place on their own.

▫ *Use institutional resources*: Students should take advantage of resources made available through their institution for off-campus housing accommodations.

▫ *Start looking as early as possible*: Make sure that students take enough time to do as comprehensive a search as possible for housing accommodations. The later one waits, the more it becomes necessary to compromise on what one is looking for in terms of accommodations.

▫ *Familiarize yourself with legal rules/regulations regarding rentals*: Students should make sure they understand what landlords are legally entitled to do and what they are not allowed to do when it comes to renting.

▫ *Get all the information regarding your rental agreement*: Make sure that students have received all the information they need when renting from someone and that they clearly understand their rental agreement. This helps avoid problems and misunderstandings.

▫ *Know what to ask about*: Students moving away from home for the first time may not know what they should be asking a prospective landlord about. They should have a list of questions to ask their prospective landlord.

Student Association/Residence Association Representatives

This section provides results of the in-depth interviews with student association/residence association representatives. Three interviews were allotted to this group of stakeholders: one was conducted with a student association representative and two with residence association representatives. These individuals were asked a limited number of questions.

Roles & Responsibilities Regarding Student Housing

It appears that student associations, strictly speaking, do not have a role or responsibility in terms of student housing-related issues. That is to say that there is no specific aspect of the student association's mandate that relates to housing-related issues. Students in residence can come to their student association with a problem or an issue that might be taken up by the student association on their behalf as students. For example, there is a university regulation stipulating that any damage or vandalism caused by a student on the floor of a residence is the responsibility of everyone residing on the floor. In other words, the cost to repair the damage is incurred generally by everyone on that floor. Some students find this unfair and have come to the student association for support.

Residence personnel, on the other hand, are the front-line workers when it comes to a number of student-housing related issues. This includes things like dealing with problems between roommates, probation and expulsion from residence, damage to rooms, and repairs and renovations.

There is no formal process for dealing with most of these issues. Problems between roommates or residence mates are usually addressed through mediation. The need for repairs and renovations are brought to the attention of the housing office on a case-by-case basis. The only formal process concerns possible expulsion from residence or being put on probation. This involves a formal letter being sent to the individual in question informing them of the problem(s) and summoning them to a meeting at a specific time and place to deal with the issue.

Problems Associated With Specific Accommodations

Traditional dormitory-style residences seem to give rise to more problems than other types of accommodations in two ways. First, they tend to be the bigger housing units on campus. There are more students in them, a more communal feel to them, and they tend to house people who want to meet other people. All this adds up to dormitory-style residences being more susceptible to being the scene of parties and get-togethers and the consequences this can lead to in terms of noise and damage. Second, they are also usually the older housing units on campus and are more likely to have age-related problems (e.g. plumbing, heating, elevators).

No Role in Provision of Housing Information

Neither student associations nor residence associations tend to be resources for students looking for information on available housing. By the time each of these associations deal with students, they are usually already settled in their housing. If students had housing-related questions, they would be directed to the housing office or the off-campus housing office.

Contacting Students for Survey

From the perspectives of these respondents, the best way to contact students for a survey would be to set up tables or booths in various residences or common areas where students tend to gather. The best way to administer the survey would be on-line for a number of reasons: students like the Internet or at least use it, they are all likely to have email addresses, they can complete it at their ease, when they want, and they tend to have unusual schedules that don't make them easily accessible. These issues were also identified by institutional representatives.

The best time of year to contact students for an interview would probably be in February or March, before or after the study break. By that time they are settled in to their routines, and will have more to say about their housing accommodations which they will have been in for awhile. In addition, the pressure of exams will not have begun yet.

Offering prizes is the best way to encourage students to participate. However, no alcohol or tobacco products should be offered

Issues to Include in Survey of Students

The most important issues to include in a survey on student housing were seen to be the quality of accommodations, cost, satisfaction with accommodations, and the main problems they have encountered in looking for housing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, student association/residence association representatives were asked what advice they would give to anyone looking for student housing accommodations. Some suggestions focused specifically on institution-owned housing:

□ *Take a tour of the residences*: It was suggested that students applying to residence take a tour of their institution's housing accommodations. Post-secondary institutions usually arrange such tours on a regular basis and they give students a very good introduction to residence life.

□ *Read and understand residence rules and regulations*: Students should clearly understand the rules and regulations governing life in residences. These are clearly spelled out, but students don't always take the time to read them before agreeing to

them. Breaking some of these regulations can carry severe consequences such as being expelled from the residence.

▫ *Understand the law regulating landlord-tenant relations*: Make sure to understand the law as it relates to landlord-tenant relations. Students should understand their rights and their obligations when it comes to renting.

▫ *If there's a problem, get help*: If students are having a problem with their landlord they should not be afraid to ask for help or seek assistance. Unfortunately, some landlords take advantage of students and students should know that they have recourse. Information and assistance can be provided by off-campus housing offices and student legal aid.