

RESEARCH REPORT



What We Heard: Family Violence Prevention and Housing



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WHAT WE HEARD

Family Violence
Prevention and
Housing
Consultation, 1994



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WHAT WE HEARD:

Family Violence Prevention and Housing

Consultation Report

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Canada

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 1994, CMHC conducted a Canada-wide consultation as part of a broader effort to develop an integrated strategy to address and prevent violence in society. The objectives of the consultation were:

- a) to review information summarized in the draft evaluation report on the Project Haven program and to disseminate the highlights of the program evaluation; and
- b) to continue a process of consulting to help define future directions, strategies and policies, both in the area of family violence prevention and housing, and in the broader area of violence in Canadian society.

This report summarizes the issues and advice received from the nearly 200 consultation discussants and written submissions. It does not necessarily represent the views of CMHC or the federal government.

Housing Options for Abused Women

The benefits of emergency and second-stage shelters have been numerous, affecting not only the people who use them on a residential or non-residential basis but also their surrounding communities. There was some debate about how much shelters should do and how much they could do; most participants agreed that in any case there should be a range of options available to accommodate a variety of needs. It was generally felt that the central purpose of shelters should be to provide a safe, secure, supportive setting in which the healing process can begin and from which housing and other alternatives can be made accessible.

Need for more emergency and second-stage shelter was often identified; however, some discussants indicated that in a climate of fiscal constraint they would prefer improving existing stock and/or placing more emphasis on long-term housing. There were especially few places for abused women and their children to go to in rural areas and the far North.

Many suggestions were offered regarding improvement of shelter operations. Community involvement, service provision and overall shelter design were

the central issues in shelter delivery. A need was identified to address a high turnover and burn-out rate among shelter workers. The topic of shelter maintenance and repair attracted considerable discussion, which produced a variety of ideas for management and funding strategies to reduce current expenditures and prevent future problems. Shelter services, operational funding and service network integration were all seen as areas which are crucial to shelters functioning adequately and properly, and where changes and improvements are urgently needed.

Several participants noted possible alternatives to both emergency and second-stage shelters, including safe houses and shelter models developed in New York City and Australia. It was suggested that these alternatives need to be further explored.

Most consultation participants agreed that finding affordable, adequate, appropriate long-term housing was a significant challenge for abused women and their children. Staying in the family home, and removing the abuser rather than the abused members of the family, was generally viewed as ideal in theory. However, most noted that, within the existing environment, this approach would often place the safety of the women and children at risk.

A number of discussants highlighted home ownership and equity-building as important for abused women's long-term housing situation. Suggestions to improve accessibility included low-interest mortgage rates, low downpayment requirements, and rent-to-own housing. Others suggested improving accessibility to social housing and other housing options such as co-operatives and co-housing.

Specialized Needs

Participants said there are a number of obstacles for people with disabilities to utilize existing shelters, including dependence on the abuser for care, disruption caused by moving out of an environment which has already been adapted to their needs, limited access to transportation, and lack of information. Special note was made of the complexity and diversity of mental disabilities experienced by some abused women. There was lively

debate regarding the level of accessibility and service integration that shelters might be expected to provide, and the measures that would be needed to achieve these levels.

Most participants agreed that ethnocultural groups and immigrants do not frequently utilize shelters. Opinion was divided as to the appropriateness of the conventional shelter model for these groups, with some arguing that specialized shelters would help overcome discrimination, but others objecting that this could lead to ghettoization, which would only encourage discrimination. Because of the dilemmas minority women face with respect to the power structures both within and outside their communities, representatives of these groups emphasized that the key to creating appropriate, effective options is to ensure that the women in these communities have ownership of the strategies chosen. In addition, a series of suggestions was given to improve the likelihood of successful involvement of ethnocultural groups and immigrants in existing shelters.

Participants noted that aboriginal people tend to take a more holistic, flexible approach to addressing family violence issues. This preference has led to distinct sheltering and healing strategies, ranging from separate "healing lodges" to adaptations within non-aboriginal models. Difficulties which abused aboriginal women may face in finding shelter and support include: lack of support from their home communities, lack of acceptance or understanding at shelters outside their communities, suspicion about public authorities, and jurisdictional gaps in social assistance. In general, aboriginal leaders felt that housing responses to family violence should be built into an overall, longer-term housing strategy.

The majority of shelter occupants are children, and there is strong evidence that they are particularly susceptible to future problems as a result of family violence. In order to end the cycle of violence, participants believed it is imperative that the needs of these children be addressed. Some of the difficulties in doing so were identified, and it was acknowledged that supports for children vary greatly among shelters. Second-stage housing was thought to be an ideal environment for more fully addressing the children's needs.

In many places across the country, discussants noted a major gap in services for older children and youth. Participants suggested that emergency shelters for abused youth are urgently needed.

Most participants did not see shelters as a major solution for abused seniors, but identified education, awareness and service provision as priorities. In view of the diversity of needs among seniors and the different forms of abuse, participants urged that seniors be part of the planning and decision-making about options for addressing senior abuse. The ideas discussed included: extending the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence Program concept and increasing service outreach, forming partnerships with specific kinds of organizations and businesses, designating sheltered units within institutional care facilities and seniors' housing complexes, and looking at housing alternatives such as foster homes or adult-only homes.

Housing and Community Development

Consistent with the broad nature of the consultation, it was widely recognized that what happens inside the home is closely interconnected with what happens in the community. This recognition led to consideration of issues surrounding the built environment, such as overcrowding and safety audits and codes. It also fostered discussion on the ways in which the community could get directly involved in reducing violence, such as through providing respite care, incorporating enabling strategies and programs (particularly within social housing communities), supporting community policing, maintaining a "zero tolerance" standard, and building better and broader partnerships and networks.

Research, Information, Awareness and Education

Many suggestions were offered to improve information availability, to explore under-researched areas, and to focus better on particular research themes and questions. Some discussants felt that enough emphasis has been placed on research and that resources should be used for more direct action about the problem of family violence.

Some participants in the consultation felt that community-based education and awareness programs are the best way to prevent family violence. In addition to the specific information needs of different audiences, a significant priority for participants was closer interaction and information-sharing among service agency staff as well as the general public. They brought forward a number of suggestions, and indicated that housing agencies could have an important role in information distribution.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide participants of the Family Violence Prevention and Housing Consultation (FVPHC) and other agencies with a summary of the issues and advice from this consultation, held in May and June, 1994. It gives a broad overview of the input received from nearly 200 people through submissions and meetings convened across the country with representatives of government and non-governmental organizations, as well as other professionals in the field, to discuss housing-focused family violence prevention issues.

A number of the consultation participants requested this type of report. Benefits of such a report, they felt, would include facilitating communication of different perspectives on family violence prevention, and helping to identify areas of general agreement regarding courses of housing-focused action against family violence.

This report is not meant to be an all-inclusive description of the discussions, but is intended to reflect the main points of the consultation as reported by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) staff. As such, the opinions and recommendations presented in this report are meant to represent the views of the participants in the consultation, and do not necessarily represent the views of CMHC or the federal government.

Overview of the Consultation

During the consultation, CMHC met with a broad range of people and organizations involved in family violence prevention, including federal agencies, national associations, provincial governments, provincial organizations and individual experts. Meetings were held in every province and territory as well as with national groups in Ottawa.

The objectives of the consultation were:

- a) to review information summarized in the draft evaluation report on Project Haven and to disseminate the highlights of the evaluation; and

- b) to continue an ongoing process of consulting to help define future directions, strategies and policies, both in the area of family violence prevention and housing, and in the broader area of violence in Canadian society.

Under the first Federal Family Violence Initiative (1988-1992), CMHC delivered the Project Haven Program on behalf of Health Canada. The Project Haven Program provided capital funds in the form of conditionally non-repayable financing which was made available to non-profit community groups and Indian Band Councils to create emergency shelters for abused women and their children.

In February 1991, the federal government decided to renew the federal Family Violence Initiative for another four years. Under the second phase of this initiative, CMHC delivered the Next Step Program. This program focused on providing capital funding for the development of second-stage shelters, which are shelters that provide secure, supportive housing for up to a year, allowing women more time to adjust their lives after leaving abusive situations. Some additional emergency shelters were developed under this program as well.

Between 1992 and 1994, CMHC undertook an evaluation of the Project Haven Program as part of its responsibilities under the Federal Family Violence Initiative, to assess the extent to which the program was implemented as intended and to report on its performance. Copies of the Draft Final Report on the Evaluation of the Project Haven Program and Update on the Next Step Program Activities and a summary of evaluation highlights were made available to all consultation participants. A presentation of the evaluation was made at the outset of each meeting. These evaluation materials were meant to form an objective basis on which discussants could frame their responses to issues raised during the consultation.

In addition to the evaluation reports, participants received a list of discussion themes and questions entitled "The Role of Housing in Addressing Violence" (see Appendix) prior to each meeting. The purpose of this document was

to assist participants to prepare and focus on some of the housing issues related to violence. Participants were urged to treat these questions as starting points for discussion, and to bring forward any other issues or concerns they wished.

The CMHC consultation team emphasized that they were there to listen to participants' viewpoints and to learn from their experiences. CMHC did not have policy or program options to present at that time, because it was felt important to listen to the opinions of the participants and others involved in family violence prevention prior to developing such options. Further, it was not known whether or not there would be new federal funds for family violence programming after the current phase of the Family Violence Initiative terminates in March 1995. Finally, it was stressed that CMHC was hoping to utilize these consultations as a building block to develop fuller and stronger partnerships with the various agencies involved.

There are three anticipated types of uses for the information collected through the FVPHC:

- a) to finalize the evaluation report on Project Haven;
- b) to assess potential new directions for CMHC in this area as part of its mandate to help improve the quality of living conditions for Canadians; and
- c) to feed into any future federal initiatives regarding family violence, should the federal government decide to undertake such action.

Organization of the Report

The first section of this report examines the overall response to the consultation, summarizing how participants felt about the process and the content of the consultation. The second section looks at housing options for abused women. It outlines discussants' views on the need for shelters, and issues surrounding their operation. Participants' suggestions for housing alternatives are also described. The third section reviews participants'

comments on housing needs for special or underserved groups, including persons with disabilities, ethnocultural groups, aboriginal people, children, youth and seniors. The fourth section notes comments about the role of housing with respect to community development, focusing on environmental quality, community-based support services and community involvement in the area of family violence. The fifth section examines the research, information, awareness and education needs identified by consultation participants. Finally, there is a brief note outlining what happens next and offering an opportunity for feedback from readers.

II. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION PROCESS AND SCOPE

The Consultation Process

While most participants welcomed the opportunity to participate in the FVPHC, a number of participants expressed concern about the level of government response to the issue of family violence. They indicated that given the seriousness of the issue, the commitment of governments to addressing this issue was too weak and too slow. Many of the participants felt that governments are not really listening to what they are told about the problems that many victims of family violence face. Their concern was compounded by funding cuts in government programs and the provision of only short-term funding.

Despite the current level of skepticism about government action, the FVPHC was well received. Many participants were appreciative of the fact that the consultation included a two-way information exchange, that CMHC received information from the participants while participants in turn received information on the results of the Project Haven evaluation. As a result, the process was beneficial to all involved. The other factor that made this consultation a positive experience for many participants was that it included a diverse cross-section of people involved in family violence issues. Many participants had never met each other before, so they were able to gather information and make important contacts.

Not all response to the consultation was positive. In particular, some people indicated concern over groups or people that CMHC was not able to involve in the consultation, either due to limited financial resources (for example, groups unable to afford transportation to the consultation meeting place), due to lack of information (including groups not having been invited because CMHC was not aware of their existence), or due to poor timing (such as conflicting individual schedules). Recognizing these limitations, CMHC requested that these groups and individuals provide written comments.

While appreciative of the FVPHC, many participants noted that still more consultation and dialogue are needed. In particular, they recommended that once government has developed new policies and programs in this area, it is necessary to consult further to ensure those initiatives will be effective and efficient. Such a process should include both interest groups and government agencies.

Scope and Content of the Consultation

Participants expressed appreciation for the open and broad nature of the consultation. The fact that the consultation did not focus too tightly on CMHC's housing issues and recognized the necessary interconnections among different services was well acknowledged.

While discussants recognized that the consultation was housing-focused, many felt that their responses should be understood in the context of two general directions that governments should be taking with respect to family violence:

- a) Federal and provincial governments should be aiming to better integrate initiatives on family violence prevention, services should be better integrated into the community, and services need to be better integrated with each other. Participants are looking for a seamless range of options and a continuum of services for victims of family violence.
- b) Greater emphasis needs to be placed on prevention and enablement support services. It was often noted that community-based education and awareness programs on family violence were cost-effective preventative mechanisms that should be pursued further. In addition, life-skills management, educational and job-training programs are essential to end the cycle of violence; yet at the moment, abused women and youth are having difficulty accessing these services. Considered central to enablement and prevention, and ultimately, to the reduction of the need for shelters, were changes to the various social "systems", including the educational, occupational, legal and political.

III. HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ABUSED WOMEN

What Has Been the Impact of Emergency Shelters?

A shelter facilitates the beginning of the journey to leave an abusive situation. Indeed, according to several participants in the consultation, shelters have "saved lives". Shelters assist women and their children to leave violent environments and offer them a relatively "safe place to heal". With appropriate counselling and support services, women are better able to evaluate their circumstances and develop options for future action. In short, shelters give them opportunities and resources to change their life situations.

It should be pointed out that changing a life situation can include a return to the abuser, temporarily or permanently, and that in the latter case there can be success in healing and renewing the relationship. This success, however, is not necessarily the rule. Temporary returns are frequently part of a pattern of systematically building up alternative supports and increasing a resolve to leave that household permanently. Of great importance is having a range of genuinely workable options to choose from so that the abused person's decision to leave or return is truly a choice. As one submission put it, one of the most striking accomplishments of women who had stayed at the local transition house was that they no longer felt "trapped in unchangeable situations or faced with unsolvable problems."

One of the major contributions of the shelter is the opportunity for abused women to be together, because this helps them recognize their own predicaments and better understand the cycle of violence. This kind of companionship breaks the isolation that some abused women experience, and can provide them with the social support they require.

While shelters serve a variety of women who find themselves in crisis situations, they are of particular importance to low-income women, who often

have difficulty accessing other forms of safe havens. This corroborates the findings of the Project Haven evaluation.

Discussants often said that shelters are not a solution to violence against women. Of those who viewed shelters as a "bandaid" approach to family violence, some felt that emphasis should be placed on "preventative" programs, while others felt that shelters are still needed until the problem of family violence has been solved. Several participants argued against the "bandaid" perspective, holding that shelters constitute more than just a crisis response. The supportive environment and services provided at a shelter, they said, can help end the cycle of violence by enabling women to leave abusive partners; indeed, shelters can be used in preventative ways, with women using them before a major crisis occurs. It was important, they believed, that the "bandaid" perspective be dismissed, as it fails to recognize the true benefits of shelters and it would limit them from taking on a more enhanced role in the future.

Shelters were also seen to have other benefits, for example through increasing public and community awareness of family violence, and representing a visible political commitment to addressing family violence. Moreover, it was noted that emergency residential facilities help address the power imbalance between men and women, which was identified as contributing to violence against women. Without options for women to reside elsewhere, men are often able to intensify their control over women's lives, which in turn increases opportunities for some men to be abusive. Thus, ensuring that women have housing options, whether or not they utilize them, strengthens their own control over their lives, while the message that domestic assault will not be tolerated is reinforced.

Many participants cautioned that shelters, as beneficial as they are, do not and cannot be expected to serve all those who are victims of family violence. As such, they felt that there should be a range of emergency care facilities that would take into account different healing needs. Some thought as well that a "multi-faceted solution" to family violence would need to include stronger linkages with crime and justice issues, in particular, fighting violence on the grounds of "human rights" or "security of the person".

What Should Emergency Shelters Do?

First and foremost, participants felt that shelters should provide a safe and secure environment. Shelters also should offer a supportive setting that would allow women and their children to begin the healing process, and should give them access to alternatives to avoid having to return to abusive situations.

Many discussants said that shelters should be accessible to women of all ages, social backgrounds and individual capacities, that differing needs should be recognized and accommodated within the shelter setting. They believed that creation of two classes of women, based on who could effectively access a shelter and who could not, should be avoided and the need for "universal access" be recognized.

Some recommended that emergency shelters should be the focal point for most or all local programming related to family violence. Shelters could, and in some cases do, provide outreach services to the community; this role ought to be promoted and expanded. As well, some argued that shelters should be the community's centre for information and community development concerning family violence. It was suggested that since shelter staff are experts in this area, their talents should be employed in promoting community awareness and education.

On the other hand, participants frequently pointed out that there are limits to what a shelter can do. Several people expressed frustration over what is often demanded of shelter workers and the limited resources they have to provide these services. Within their current budgets, it is felt that shelter staff are doing as much as they are able. Further, it was noted that there are some physical and social limitations to providing a full variety of services in-house. Many services could be made available to shelter clients by external agencies, so that it is important to consider their availability within the community when developing shelters. In some cases, shelters may not be appropriate for everyone, with respect to both the individual concerned and the other residents of the shelter. To address such cases, specialized shelters or other forms of residential care may be better solutions.

Is There a Need for More Emergency Shelters?

Many participants indicated that there remains substantial need for additional shelters. Several suggested that the lack of shelter spaces in their region was placing women at risk and/or resulting in their not obtaining adequate support services. In a few regions, however, participants said that they do have enough shelters and that future resources should be directed towards other housing options or services.

Even in places where a need for further shelters was identified, some participants indicated a preference to improve what has already been developed. They recommended that resources should be directed, for example, towards repairs and renovations or towards building additional units onto existing structures. One approach to finding more emergency space without creating or buying additional structures was suggested by cooperative housing representatives, who are considering using vacant units as crisis housing. Some discussants were of the view that if resources were directed towards more long-term housing, shelter clients would be more likely to have appropriate places to go to when they left the shelters, thus avoiding staying in the shelters longer than necessary and contributing to over-crowding.

The far North was identified as a region of great concern. One of the territorial governments pointed out that factors such as higher incidence of core housing need, higher building costs, higher rates of documented family violence, and higher birthrates than the rest of Canada all intensified a continuing need for both shorter-term and longer-term housing solutions for abused family members.

Finally, a point was made about women in rural areas. The fact that some of these areas are rapidly losing population is making it increasingly difficult to reach and serve farm women, for example. While geographic isolation increases their vulnerability, moving to an urban area can present significant adjustment difficulties for the women and their children. Therefore, participants argued that it was "essential" that adequate numbers and locations of rural sheltering arrangements be available.

How Can the Operations of Emergency Shelters Be Improved?

a) Shelter Delivery

Discussants frequently referred to the importance of community participation in shelter delivery. The success of a shelter was linked to a community's prior awareness of family violence issues and their involvement in the planning and development stages of the shelter. Because shelters are dependent upon the community both for financial support and for volunteers, local acceptance is of utmost importance, especially in small communities.

Involving ethnocultural and immigrant groups at an early stage of shelter development was also considered important. This encourages the various groups to accept a shelter and helps ensure that the shelter incorporates the features most appropriate for serving the whole community.

Service provision should be treated as an essential part of the decision to initiate a project. Many participants noted that having capital dollars to build a shelter, but a lack of operating dollars to run it, is a significant problem. As such, they suggested that before a shelter is approved, reasonable efforts be taken to ensure that on-going operating dollars are available.

Participants further noted that it was important that the capital funding mechanism and shelter design itself allow for service provision. Indoor and outdoor play areas for children, interview and counselling rooms, space for non-residential services and ceremonial rooms in aboriginal shelters were all considered pivotal. Another design issue concerned the importance of incorporating accessibility features for people having different kinds of disabilities. Some of the submissions received gave very specific details about physically, socially and psychologically desirable aspects of shelter design.

Discussants said that shelter sponsor groups had some difficulties in the planning and development of shelters under the Project Haven Program. Some felt that more time, flexibility and access to expertise were needed to meet the requirements. In contrast, others thought that different building and

social service standards ought to have been used, and more experienced sponsor groups chosen.

b) Shelter Staff

Participants often stated that many shelter staff are overworked and underpaid. Staff must frequently address community and individual social needs, housing issues and administration requirements without prior training or experience. Many have also suffered abuse in their own lives and are still in the process of healing. Moreover, shelter workers may be threatened or feel threatened because of their work.

As a result, there is a high turnover and burn-out rate among shelter workers. In order to help staff cope, some discussants suggested more and improved training for staff workers, appropriate time off to allow staff to heal themselves, and better salaries in recognition of the significance of their work.

c) Shelter Maintenance and Repair

In some regions, repair and renovation needs were considered major problems. It was noted that not only does the poor state of repair of some shelters threaten the health and safety of the clients, but it redirects a significant amount of human and financial resources away from service provision. Suggested solutions to this problem included designating a repair/renovation component within operational funding, developing a repair reserve, and giving shelters low-interest loans or grants to undertake repairs.

Participants also considered how to prevent high repair and renovation costs. They pointed out on several occasions that since shelter staff are not usually experts in building maintenance, repair needs are not always noticed until they have become major problems. Suggested ways that provincial or federal staff could help reduce repair expenditures included assistance with budget planning and providing regular inspections of the shelters. Another strategy could be to require different or more specific building standards at the delivery stage. One submission reminded readers that repair costs for

sheltered housing can be expected to run somewhat higher than average, owing to such factors as propensity for abused children to "act out" and the possibility that adult abusers would damage property in retaliation or break-in attempts.

Several participants suggested a "public housing model", on the premise that use of limited human and financial resources for shelter maintenance and repair undermines shelter staff's capacity to carry out their primary responsibility of assisting abused women and their children. Some felt that it would be beneficial if the provincial and/or federal government took over the ownership of shelters, thus making the state responsible for their maintenance and repair.

In contrast, though, others stressed the importance of keeping the community involved as much as possible in order to "avoid institutionalization". Indeed, a strong empowerment tone was heard in suggestions that women, including shelter residents, could receive training in "non-traditional occupations" such as in plumbing and electricity, so that they could use these skills to maintain the shelter buildings as well as to gain long-term employment.

Finally, it was suggested that the use of older existing structures for shelters is not cost-effective over the long run because of the high repair costs, so that more emphasis should be placed on new construction.

d) Shelter Services

As one participant summarized, "The housing is necessary -- the services are vital". This viewpoint was expressed throughout the consultation, indicating that shelters have to be understood as being more than just bricks and mortar, that the provision of support services is integral to the operation of a shelter. Yet many expressed frustration at not getting recognition or funding support for providing these services (for example, a lot of shelters have their operational funding tied to occupancy levels). Some participants felt that there was no point in receiving capital dollars without operational dollars.

Counselling services for abused women were considered the most important service, but frequently discussants also recommended that each shelter should have a child care worker to deal with the children, who tend to outnumber the women and are often themselves witnesses or direct victims of abuse.

Several participants expressed the view that shelters should act as the "hub" from or around which all family violence prevention services should be delivered to the community. As such, many advocated that each shelter should have an outreach worker to serve both those who have been at the shelter and those who choose other housing options. For some shelters, outreach activities already constitute a significant portion of their overall workload. In addition, the notion of a single access point or "one-stop" approach for information, support and services was given a fair amount of attention in several of the provincial reports received.

e) Operational Funding

Most participants indicated that the greatest problem for shelters is acquiring appropriate operational funds. They reported that for many shelters, fundraising had to support over 40% of their operational costs, and that the constant involvement in fundraising efforts which this entailed inevitably reduced their ability to serve their clients. A significant proportion of shelter representatives indicated that they have to work with insufficient budgets, and thus are unable to properly address their clients' needs.

Lack of operational funds was noted as the largest obstacle to the development of more shelters. Many participants said that in some areas no new operational funds are available even though capital dollars or buildings for shelters are readily acquired or already in hand.

Of concern was not only the amount of subsidy provided for the operation of shelters, but the short-term nature of funding programs and projects provided by the federal government (such as demonstration funds). For example, some provincial government representatives viewed one effect of this federal approach to be the creation of new provincial expenditures which

the provinces concerned would not necessarily have initiated themselves in an era of fiscal restraint. Some participants felt that demonstration program funding created false reliance by women on services which might not exist once the funding was terminated -- that in fact it might be better to have no funding at all rather than to have short-term funding.

The main suggestions by participants were that increased operational funding by both the federal and provincial governments be made available, and that capital funding and funding for services be considered together from inception of new projects, prior to their approval. It was also noted that funding allocations based primarily on occupancy rates should be altered, as this basis does not reflect the significant amount of resources required for non-residential services. Recognizing that fundraising will continue to be a necessary feature for most shelters, participants further suggested that a fundraising staff position be covered by government operational funds. Finally, reverse mortgages were thought by some to be potentially useful as a source of additional operational funds.

Participants identified a number of ways in which shelters might undertake more effective fundraising. The amount of money that can be raised through donations is limited, especially in small communities. Competition among shelters is therefore inefficient; shelters would be better off working together in their fundraising activities, including exchanging information on the best approaches and strategies. A "reverse" type of fundraising could even be employed, through attempting to get reductions in taxes or other municipal costs, for example. Another key factor behind fundraising success is the make-up of the shelter's board. Participants confirmed that well-connected and influential board members who know how to fundraise can be very important to the financial success of the shelter.

f) Service Network

Discussants frequently expressed their concerns regarding the integration of existing services or the lack of complementary services. On several occasions during consultation discussions, participants were surprised to learn of services that already were in existence and accessible in their own

regions. The fact that key representatives were often not aware of these services testifies to considerable problems related to information dissemination and service linkages.

Participants said that First Nations are particularly affected by weaknesses in the service network. First Nations women who leave the reserve due to spousal abuse have difficulty getting appropriate support services, as services off-reserve are not available to those on-reserve. At the same time, it was indicated that on-reserve shelter directors and managers do not receive the same level of support as that provided to off-reserve shelters; more formalized partnerships with provinces and others were therefore recommended.

One complementary service that was often identified as being poor was transportation. This was of particular concern in rural and remote environments where women need access to transportation to get to a shelter. While in some cases satellite shelters or safe homes are available, or women are able to obtain transportation through the police, there remain significant problems for rural women in trying to reach shelters. It was suggested that in some instances a rural taxi service could be viable with a small subsidy. A written submission indicated that more volunteers might be used for transportation in rural areas if they were compensated for their travel and child care costs.

Is There a Need for Additional Second-Stage Housing?

While participants acknowledged that it was too early in the development of second-stage shelters to fully assess their contribution, many felt that second-stage shelters have a very important purpose, and that many additional units are needed. In particular, they felt the second-stage shelters offer a secure environment to women whose safety is threatened. Discussants also said that the two weeks which women and their children generally spend in an emergency shelter is usually not enough time for healing. Readily available access to support services is often required for a substantial period after a woman has left an abusive situation; larger problems may not even surface during the brief time spent at the shelter.

Second-stage housing was described as a good environment for dealing with some of the long-term consequences of abuse, including drug and alcohol addictions, child abuse, and lack of self-esteem. However, it was noted that if second-stage units are to properly address these issues, support services must be accessible to second-stage shelters.

Second-stage facilities were also seen to provide women with more opportunity to develop different lifestyle options. Two weeks in an emergency shelter may not permit a woman sufficient time to gather the information needed and to develop the state of mind necessary to make fundamental decisions concerning herself and her children. As well, participants indicated that second-stage housing allows enough time to find proper permanent accommodation. In a tight housing market, it may be quite difficult to find appropriate, suitable and affordable housing, particularly on short notice. This difficulty may be especially important to overcome where there is dispute over child custody, as timely establishment of the new household can help increase the woman's chances of proving her adequacy as a provider.

Some participants did convey concerns about second-stage shelters. They questioned whether the additional disruption of moving a woman and her children into another transitional residence was beneficial, or whether this delayed them from developing a stable living environment. It was also pointed out that some women may not need the support that much second-stage housing provides. One submission held that the focus of counselling in second-stage housing should be shifted much more towards self-determination, independent living and parenting.

In order to avoid some of the disruption and to ensure service supports are available, several participants suggested building second-stage units onto emergency shelter units. However, others were concerned that this strategy would keep the women in a crisis environment and would prevent them from receiving men in their own homes (whether they be brothers, older sons, other relatives, elders, friends or a new partner). Some discussants suggested that it may be better to incorporate second-stage units within permanent or long-term assisted housing communities, if people living in

those units could be assured access to support services.

Another concern expressed regarding second-stage housing was affordability. Women on social assistance appear to have few difficulties paying rent, but low-income working women sometimes find these units unaffordable. This may occur even though the second-stage units may be relatively more affordable than private market units (due to second-stage rents being geared to income), especially in light of the financial costs associated with re-building their lives. Participants also noted that First Nations women have problems accessing off-reserve second-stage shelters, as their income support is tied to their residing on the reserve.

What Alternatives Are There To Transitional Shelters?

References were repeatedly made to alternatives to both emergency and second-stage shelters. The context for these suggestions was the perspective that they would not replace existing shelter programs, which would still be needed, but that they would help expand the range of available options.

a) Designated Social Housing Units

There was extensive discussion about placing either emergency or second-stage units within social housing communities. This was framed by awareness of several different challenges: using this option as a way to increase the number of shelter units, as a means to decrease disruption caused by moving households from transitional housing to permanent housing, and as a more suitable or comfortable environment for clients.

While there was some interest in this idea, strong support for this approach was not evident. For example, it seems that this model has been tried in the Northwest Territories with limited success. These units had neither the services nor the security normally available in shelters, and few people used them because they were often located in small communities where there was a lack of anonymity.

The strongest interest for transitional shelter within social housing was shown with regard to seniors. Some thought that units within seniors' complexes may be more suitable for abused seniors than conventional shelters.

b) Safe Houses

There was a broad discussion with regard to "safe houses", places where women can lodge with families in private homes, and whether or not such a housing option should be encouraged. Most participants dismissed safe houses as possible alternatives to shelters, as most safe houses do not have the security, the services or the support network needed. Some felt that women would be embarrassed to use such facilities in a small community because of the associated lack of anonymity.

However, there was some interest in developing safe houses in rural environments as "stepping stones" until transportation to a shelter could be arranged. While some participants argued that this approach would create safety risks, others felt that, while not ideal, it would be better than providing no options to rural women, and that in any case the actual development of safe houses should depend on the context and the community.

In order to avoid placing two families at risk, many participants advocated against family homes being designated as safe houses. Instead, they recommended that safe house units be attached to hospitals, health centres, convents or police stations. In order to ensure proper accountability and training of the safe house staff, it was suggested that such staff be linked with an existing shelter. Representatives from one province indicated that their government has already drafted guidelines for safe houses.

A number of participants suggested that the safe house concept should be explored further, possibly as a demonstration. Members of ethnocultural groups expressed some interest in the concept but emphasized that services and training would have to be provided alongside. Delegates from one province expressed interest in investigating the possibility of funding safe houses with CMHC.

c) The Australian Model

Several participants referred to a shelter model that is being adopted in Australia. Instead of building hostels for transitional shelter, the Australians are apparently using secured apartment buildings. The ground floor of such buildings is devoted to office and social service space to provide in-house support services to the residents, and is set up to limit access to the rest of the building. Above the ground floor are both emergency and second-stage units. Integration of both types of shelter in the same building has the benefit of limiting the disruption that can occur when a family is moving from one transition shelter to another. In addition, all of the shelter units are self-contained, which allows for a greater variety of clients, more privacy and a less stressful environment.

Initial feedback appears to indicate that this model not only is more cost-effective than hostel-type accommodation, but is preferred by the residents. Participants noted that this model may be particularly useful to shelter abused seniors. A number of discussants recommended that the Australian model be examined further for the purpose of developing future options for Canada.

d) The New York Model

A few participants also referred to a model being employed in New York City. Here, rather than having a dedicated apartment building to serve battered women, a family violence service centre is located in an area of private apartment buildings, where a number of units are designated for emergency or second-stage accommodation. This model offers clients greater independence and more stability.

Although they raised questions about ensuring client security, participants suggested further exploration of this model as a possible future initiative.

What Should be Done to Address Abused Women's Long-Term Housing Needs?

Most consultation participants agreed with CMHC's Project Haven evaluation finding that it is difficult for women to get long-term housing upon leaving the shelters. Problems in accessing more permanent housing were judged to be contributing to overcrowding at the shelters and to high return rates to abusive situations. In fact, a number of participants felt that future resources should be targeted mainly to provision of long-term housing, on the observation that unless there is a full continuum of housing support, efforts by shelter workers to assist women to get out of abusive environments will often be in vain. In order to address this concern, participants talked about several specific directions.

a) Removing the Abuser

There was much debate about Saskatchewan's draft legislation for removing the abuser from the home rather than the abused family members having to find alternative accommodation. A number of other provinces have also been investigating specific housing measures with this objective in mind, such as using family violence as valid legal grounds for evicting abusers, and strengthening the woman's (and children's) security of tenure in such situations. While participants showed keen interest in how the Saskatchewan legislation would be implemented, they generally felt that there would be both short-term and long-term problems associated with this approach.

The most significant concern was safety. Unless each housing unit were provided with safety features and police were readily available, and/or abusers were in jail for significant periods, the women and children would be at risk. Many participants felt that they would be better off in a more secured environment. Women living in rural and remote areas would be even more vulnerable owing to longer police response times.

In addition, participants cautioned that it may be more difficult to provide abused women remaining in their own homes with the support services and

network they often need. Most felt that this approach did not replace the need for shelters. There were also questions about where the man would go, and about housing options for him. Moreover, there were concerns about whether, over the long term, the remaining family members would be able to financially maintain the home on their own.

Overall, consultation participants thought removing the abuser was ideal -- but not very realistic at present. However, some people felt the legislation would be advantageous to seniors, persons with disabilities and ethnocultural and aboriginal groups, for whom leaving their homes and communities poses special difficulties. In conjunction with this type of approach, some aboriginal representatives advocate mandatory treatment for all abusers, because so many of them do in fact return to their communities and/or their spouses. Others suggested that social housing communities could make abusers' participation in a program to deal with their problem a condition of their being able to stay in the current home.

b) Private Market Housing

Getting into the private rental market is often difficult for abused women and their children. Participants indicated that private landlords often will not rent to a single mother on social assistance, particularly if they know that she has been abused. Some suggest that women who do get into private rental accommodation are at risk of being revictimized by abusive or intrusive landlords.

Women on social assistance can face financial barriers to acquiring private rental accommodation. Participants noted that most private rental apartments require damage deposits, which social services generally will not provide. In some cases, rental accommodation cannot be obtained at all for the amount allocated under the shelter component of welfare. Further, women who share accommodation to reduce their costs often have their rental allotment reduced to the point that it is cheaper for them to live separately.

Some participants suggested that changes are needed in the allocation of social assistance. In particular, they recommended a reasonable stipend for

abused women to set up new homes, which could cover the damage deposit and/or essential household goods such as furniture and utensils.

A number of people argued that social assistance is provided in such a manner as to limit recipients' housing options to rental accommodation, in effect preventing them from building up their own equity. Among the suggestions participants made to help abused women gain greater access to home ownership were low-interest mortgage rates, low downpayment requirements, and rent-to-own housing.

c) Social Housing

Social housing was often identified to be the preferred housing option for low-income abused women. Many participants registered their disappointment with the federal government for not making any new commitments under its social housing programs. However, social housing, too, is not without its problems. Some participants, for example, observed that social problems in the larger social housing neighbourhoods may be detrimental to the healing process, even pressuring some women to return to live with an abusive partner. A common suggestion from participants was to avoid overconcentration of social housing and second-stage housing units.

Participants in the consultation noted that there was a priority placement system for abused women in most of Canada's public housing. While this system worked in some regions, in many places it was not very effective in providing abused women with long-term housing. Participants indicated that this was mainly due to a shortage of suitable space and long waiting lists, combined with the fact that often only women in shelters are eligible (they usually can remain in a shelter for only a few weeks), and that in some regions male-dominated local housing boards are not sympathetic to the plight of abused women. Getting access to on-reserve housing was noted as being extremely difficult, so that if a First Nations woman wishes to continue to live in her community and culture (and in some cases, with her children), she usually has to return to her abusive partner.

In addition to developing more social housing, participants suggested that reserving 5% of public housing for victims of abuse may be a better way of ensuring access than current priority placement practices. They advocated more second-stage housing where women could stay until a public housing unit became available. Moreover, some stressed the importance of providing for adequate alarm systems and safety mechanisms for windows and doors in a long-term social housing arrangement, because "the reality for many women and children is that they are on the run over a period of years" (such systems are available in some jurisdictions). National representatives suggested that safety and security issues should be addressed earlier on and given higher priority in the housing design process, and that some attention should be also given to rehabilitation with an eye to redesigning for safety. With respect to the issue of male-dominated local housing authorities, an education and awareness program on family violence for board members was recommended, along with guidelines to ensure more equitable representation of women on the boards themselves.

Other suggested housing approaches included cooperative housing for women and rent supplement units, although some participants did not think rent supplements were particularly effective over the long run. Both housing options were felt to assist abused women live more independently, with cooperatives having the added benefit of community support. Dealing with family violence has been established as a priority by a number of groups involved in social housing, focusing on education, examination of policies (such as on waiting lists and member selection), and eviction of abusers.

Co-housing as an option was mentioned by a number of participants. Sharing a household with another family was frequently perceived as an appropriate way to balance the need for independence with the need for social support. Discussants suggested that CMHC further explore this option.

IV. HOUSING ISSUES FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIALIZED NEEDS

Persons with Disabilities

a) Persons with Physical Disabilities

Participants discussed why people with physical disabilities were not using shelters to the extent expected, particularly since some research has indicated that people with disabilities are more likely to be abused than people without disabilities. One suggestion was that many people with disabilities gravitate to larger urban areas where there is better access to services, whereas many of the Project Haven shelters were located in smaller centres.

While not everyone felt that women with physical disabilities were being underserved, most participants did point to the difficulties that a physical disability creates for a person trying to leave an abusive situation. In some cases, for example, the caregiver of the person with a disability is the abuser, so that leaving the abuse would mean leaving the caregiver. Often, people with physical disabilities have homes which have been adapted to their needs; moving to a new location may be very disruptive for them. Some persons with disabilities depend on specialized transportation, which may be difficult to arrange on short notice in a time of crisis, especially in a rural or remote environment.

Another obstacle is lack of information. Some of the consultation participants were surprised to find that a majority of Project Haven shelters were accessible to people with mobility disabilities, indicating that this fact was not well known. Some emphasized the importance of more effective information dissemination to people with disabilities, suggesting that the information be made more widely available in alternative formats, distributed in places where people with disabilities would be likely to visit, and supplied directly to key groups and newsletter publishers.

However, many participants were critical of the fact that many emergency shelters, including close to half of Project Haven shelters, were not accessible to people with mobility disabilities and other physical disabilities (such as visual and hearing impairment). Some argued that existing inaccessible shelters should be appropriately retrofitted, and that new shelters should not be developed without basic accessible features. A number of participants held that shelters should be "universally" accessible, as well as having protocols for emergencies, "healing" counselling and workshops pertinent to people who have specific disabilities, and having medical staff on hand.

While agreeing that shelters should be more accessible, some discussants said that there were limitations to the types of disabilities that general shelters could reasonably be expected to serve. To them, most services for persons with disabilities did not necessarily have to be in-house. Improved partnerships and better information networks were seen to be key for helping people with disabilities to use external services for their needs while at the shelter. Participants did suggest that, in some cases, shelters devoted to persons with disabilities could be created, although there were concerns that this approach would lead to marginalization.

b) Persons with Mental Disabilities

Evidence suggests that there is a close, complex relationship between mental trauma or disorder and history of abuse. "If disability leads to abuse, so may abuse lead to disability." (This can apply to physical disabilities as well.) Some of the women who were most difficult to serve at shelters were described by discussants as having mental disorders, whether caused by congenital disability, by the abuse itself or by various forms of illness (including drug or alcohol addiction). A number of participants said that they have had to refuse refuge to people with severe mental disabilities because of concern that they might harm either themselves or other members of the shelter community.

Participants indicated that there was a great need to provide shelter service to abused women with mental disabilities. Some felt that increased staffing

levels would help. As several pointed out, the issue of accessibility includes the presence of appropriately and adequately trained staff. Others suggested that specialized shelters be developed, describing some successful examples, notably serving women with chemical addictions. However, they said, even specialization is not a complete guarantee that a shelter will "work", because of the wide variety of different, sometimes incompatible needs implied by "mental disability".

Ethnocultural Groups and Immigrants

Most participants agreed that ethnocultural groups and immigrants do not frequently utilize shelters. For some this was not a concern, as they argued that different cultures have different healing methods and, for many ethnocultural groups, shelters would not be part of their healing process.

For other participants, however, low shelter use by ethnocultural groups and immigrants was cause for considerable concern. Members of some of these groups stated that, although cultural preservation was very important and racism and immigration status did present significant challenges, "no culture condones violence against women." The dilemma of abused women from these groups is that while power structures within some "ethnic" (and aboriginal) communities may put such women more at risk than other women, they may be unwilling to expose themselves or their loved ones to what they perceive to be discriminatory, non-inclusive or other inequitable treatment by public authorities. Further, there is the possibility that their disclosure of abuse would lead to ostracism from the community. Accordingly, the key to creating appropriate, effective options is to make sure that the women in those groups have ownership of the prevention, remedial and "healing" strategies chosen. This is especially important since different communities are at different stages and levels of awareness with respect to the issue of family violence.

Some participants suggested developing specialized ethnocultural shelters similar to aboriginal shelters, in order to overcome discrimination, but there was no consensus on this approach. Certain discussants felt strongly that services should be integrated, that every cultural group cannot be served

separately, and that separating people according to their ethnocultural background would ghettoize them, thereby feeding racism.

Recognizing that ethnocultural and immigrant groups often see shelters as intimidating, foreign and sources of prejudice, participants proposed several strategies. Gender-sensitive delegates of ethnocultural groups should be involved during the planning stages of a shelter, in order to build a sense of ownership. While communicating with many of the groups was acknowledged to be extremely difficult, it was thought that outreach workers and information networks could be better used to develop close connections between shelters and ethnocultural communities. One idea for this was to set up a women's help line similar to existing kids' help lines. Information about shelters should be provided in various languages and formats. Some participants indicated they had had some success in hiring people from different ethnic backgrounds to work in the shelters, and in training staff regarding racism and cultural sensitivity. Members of immigrant and visible minorities added that shelter staff should be trained in some of the legal complexities surrounding immigration, such as the rights and limitations associated with refugee status and the possible ramifications of sponsorship breakdown.

Aboriginal Peoples

Participants noted that it is more common for aboriginal people to take a holistic, flexible approach to the healing process, whereby home, community, culture and traditions are indivisible. To end the cycle of violence, healing the abusive man is seen to be just as important as addressing the healing needs of the woman. Central to the aboriginal model is traditional spirituality, which is tied to cultivation of self-esteem and mutual respect.

Some participants felt that aboriginal women often face difficulty in getting abuse issues addressed by their own people. "At this point in time First Nations women are not well represented in existing First Nations decision making structures." Chiefs or band councillors may be resistant to acknowledging, let alone attempting to resolve, locally endemic problems of family violence.

Abused aboriginal women who ask for assistance may be ostracized by their communities. In fact, some participants indicated that Native women going to off-reserve shelters often refuse assistance from other members of their band unless those persons are people they trust. Moreover, Native women who travel to shelters run by other bands sometimes found that they were not accepted there either. Metis and Inuit representatives noted that they also experience this lack of acceptance.

In general, Native women do not feel welcome in off-reserve shelters, whether or not they are from reserves. Some discussants suggested that this may be due to the fact that staff and board members are usually not aboriginal themselves. In addition, there are problems of cultural alienation, inappropriate shelter design (such as inability to accommodate large families, give access to elders or provide meeting places for communal ceremonies), language barriers and cultural, racial and class insensitivity on the part of other shelter residents and staff. One submission summarized the difficulty as arising primarily from the Native view that aboriginal violence against women is uniquely related to the process of colonization, whereas many non-aboriginal shelters place greater emphasis on the role of patriarchy.

Added to this situation, not unlike many ethnocultural and immigrant groups, is apprehension about public authorities. Participants indicated that many aboriginal people are unsure that the police, the justice system or various social service institutions are open to their concerns or equitable in their treatment. One specific example was given, that First Nations women often have difficulty obtaining social assistance once they leave the reserve to go to a shelter. According to a number of participants, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) does not financially support women when they leave the reserve, and provincial/ territorial social services usually do not provide assistance because the women are considered to be INAC's responsibility. Hence, the women are often forced to return to their reserve and an abusive situation. Aboriginal participants pointed out that the ambivalent position they hold with respect to public authorities is a further reason why pursuing traditional-style healing practices is so important.

In addition to a request for extensive preliminary consultation on future initiatives, at least three recommendations to address the position of abused women within aboriginal groups were made: to fund the women directly, to provide the women with sufficient training and support to enable them to develop and carry out their own programming and administration, and to encourage training and information sharing among urban and rural shelter councillors. It was also advocated that any future spending on new shelters include provision for some shelters devoted entirely to Inuit and Metis people.

Some representatives of aboriginal groups supported the idea of having aboriginal councillors located within non-aboriginal shelters. A more popular approach was to locate "healing lodges" or centres where aboriginal housing is concentrated, and link them with friendship centres and other facilities. Some representatives felt that these centres might be cost-effectively added on to existing structures. In addition, one submission took the concept further as a treatment strategy by arguing that this holistic, integrative model of aboriginal healing could be usefully directed to women coming out of prison (it is believed that the vast majority of these women have been abused).

Discussants noted that the high incidence of poverty, addiction and self-abuse among aboriginal women, whether from on or off reserve, the far North or urban environments, not only contributes to the risk of aboriginal women becoming exposed to further abuse, but makes attempts to assist them more difficult.

Participants believe that aboriginal women have a far greater return rate to abusive partners than other women do. They suggest that this is due in part to the lack of housing choice, particularly on-reserve and in the far North. A shortage of housing on most reserves means that if an abused woman wishes to return to her community, and in some cases to her children, she has to move back with her abusive partner in the absence of another place nearby for her to live. Several participants recommended that, in addition to more permanent housing, there be more second-stage housing built on-reserve. It was suggested that if more second-stage support were not

provided for Native women, emergency shelters would simply function as "revolving doors", relied on in times of intense crisis but, in the absence of follow-up supports, not able to provide access to long-term solutions. In general, aboriginal leaders preferred that housing responses to family violence be built into an overall housing strategy.

Children

Children being the majority of occupants of Project Haven shelters, the issue of whether or not their needs are being met was often discussed. Several participants noted that one of the strongest motivating factors for women to leave abusive environments to go to shelters is their fear that their children are being abused or threatened with abuse. Also, child welfare agencies sometimes place abused children and their mothers in shelters when they have no other place for them.

Thus, children in emergency shelters have often been witnesses to violence, have been threatened with violence and/or have been abused. Compounding their predicament is the disruption caused by having to come to the shelter, in many cases leaving their father, home, personal possessions, school and friends. According to a number of participants, the constant turmoil in which these children live puts them at risk of developing significant problems over the long term, including drug abuse and violent behaviour. Moreover, many male abusers and abused females were victims of abuse as children. To end this cycle of violence, participants felt it is imperative to address the needs of children in the shelters.

Discussants pointed out that providing for the children's needs can have benefits for the shelters too. As a way of dealing with their problems, children will act out the violence that they have seen or experienced. Hence, it is necessary for their needs to be met in order to avoid destructive behaviour in the shelters and threats to other occupants.

Meanwhile, mothers of the children in shelters are often not in a position to address the needs of the children. In a crisis situation, they are too much in need of support themselves to give support to their children. In addition,

some mothers are also involved in the abuse of their children. As noted above, many abused mothers come from violent family backgrounds, so they may not have acquired a basis for good parenting. Several participants suggested that parenting skills programs are needed in the shelters.

The issue of child abuse creates a dilemma for shelter staff. On the one hand, they try to assist an abused woman to empower herself; on the other hand, the staff have to inform her that if she will be returning to her abusive partner where her children also were abused or threatened with abuse, Children's Aid will be notified. This could result in the woman losing her children. Participants said that women may be keeping their children as well as themselves in abusive situations out of fear of losing the children to Children's Aid if they go to a shelter. This practice may be particularly common among aboriginal groups and ethnocultural groups whose histories suggest that this type of agency cannot be trusted.

The degree to which children's needs are currently being addressed at shelters varies greatly. According to consultation participants, some shelters simply are not suitable environments for children, who have no access to counselling and end up spending their time watching television. Some shelters do provide child care programs, but many of these programs are geared towards watching the child while the mother is busy, rather than towards working with the child's needs. There are a number of shelters that do have child counsellors or access to their services, but the ratio of counsellors to children is much lower than that for women. In addition, there is rarely enough time within the average two-week stay at a shelter to do more than a needs assessment for the child. Discussants said that second-stage shelters provide an ideal environment for more fully addressing children's needs. An alternative suggested by aboriginal representatives consisted of setting up elders' lodges, where children could live and get help with family problems.

Youth

In many places across the country, participants noted a major gap in services for older children and youth. Participants often talked about youth

running away from abusive homes and finding themselves homeless with no services available to them. As a result they may experience further abuse.

Teenage boys are generally not allowed to go with their mothers to shelters, yet they may not be able to remain with their fathers either. This means that they may end up on the street, where they may get involved in crime, drug use or further abuse.

Younger teenage and adolescent girls may join their mothers in the shelters, but if they are leaving abusive situations on their own, they may find themselves in an extremely ambiguous position. Neither fully adults nor fully children, and frequently "minors" from a legal point of view, they may not be accepted into "women's" shelters, yet at the same time they may strive to avoid being placed in foster homes or deemed dependent on the abusers they are trying to escape.

In view of this, many participants suggested that emergency shelters for abused youth are urgently needed. They recommended that such shelters be oriented towards developing independent life skills, and that they provide counselling services to assist youth in the healing process.

Women Without Children

According to several participants, another group of people that have been underserved are abused women on social assistance who do not have children. These women find it very difficult to get long-term housing. Because they are without children, they tend to be low on the priority list for social housing, while for the purpose of private rental, the shelter allowances that they receive from social assistance are much lower than those for women with children. Participants indicated that some of these women's shelter allowances are lower than the rents of available apartments.

Seniors

The issue of senior abuse and the role of shelters was widely discussed during the consultation. It was noted that seniors infrequently use shelters,

although the one shelter in Canada devoted entirely to abused seniors is busy. Most participants did not see shelters as a major solution for abused seniors. While a few thought that more specialized shelters for seniors should be built (such as within seniors' complexes) or that some changes to standard shelter designs could help, most saw the central priorities as education, awareness and service provision. Some representatives from seniors' organizations emphasized that there is considerable diversity among seniors, so that a variety of strategies should be sought. For example, "we have to see older women as needing the same range of services as others." As for other groups with distinct needs, they urged that seniors -- abused men as well as abused women -- be part of the planning and decision-making about options for addressing senior abuse.

Unlike assaults against younger women, which are more likely to be physical or sexual and perpetrated by a spouse, senior abuse is more often financial abuse or neglect, and the perpetrator is frequently the person's child and/or a caregiver. There is a range of opinion as to what constitutes senior abuse, and it should be recognized that some senior abuse is spousal physical or sexual abuse "grown old".

According to discussants, possible reasons for low shelter use by seniors include: lack of awareness of what senior abuse is, low literacy levels among older women, lack of awareness of available services, lack of training for service providers on senior abuse, isolation due to physical limitations and lack of access to transportation, threats of abandonment or institutionalization, the embarrassment that many seniors feel would be associated with disclosure, and the non-physical nature of much of the abuse. In addition, a wish to remain in familiar surroundings may deter seniors from coming forward if they believe that disclosure will result in them leaving their community. Members of ethnocultural and aboriginal groups may find this last dilemma especially difficult because of the importance of extended family and minimal or late exposure to "mainstream" Canadian culture.

Many consultation participants believed that making people aware of the seriousness and prevalence of senior abuse would go a long way towards

addressing the problem. Educational outreach could help "inform and empower seniors themselves and each other". Existing organizations such as banks, churches and seniors' centres, and even local maintenance and utility companies could be involved.

Participants also talked about helping seniors maintain their independence so that they could remain in their own homes. "Control over lifestyle is essential." Thus in addition to programs like CMHC's Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence (HASI), more service outreach was generally considered beneficial, particularly to reduce isolation. A number of participants thought that shelters could have a role in a service outreach program, but many did not feel seniors would be comfortable in the often noisy, chaotic, hostel-like shelter environment. One important service-related issue, whatever the setting or housing option, is physical accessibility, to the extent that frailty may increase with age. To place service issues into perspective, though, discussants pointed out that not all seniors would need special services -- "just a place to go".

A few participants believe that long-term and other institutional care facilities might hold some possibilities for provision of emergency shelter. Further, the option of designating some sheltered units within seniors' complexes was received favourably, with the caveat that this would only work in cities and not in smaller places where anonymity could be compromised. Living in foster homes was another housing option mentioned, but some representatives did not find this attractive because of the compromises to privacy and daily routine. They did feel that adult-only homes could be appropriate in certain communities. The key seems to be to find a balance between what may often be too much isolation and too little personal control.

Finally, participants identified a need for support programs for caregivers, who are frequently part of the "sandwich generation" (that is, simultaneously responsible for the care of their growing children and the care of increasingly frail parents). Discussants felt that if caregivers received more support in attempting to care for elderly persons, abuse would be less likely to occur. Respite care was seen as a central issue in abuse prevention; however, this raised concerns regarding the disruptive impacts of this strategy on seniors.

Male Abusers

The importance of programs for male abusers was raised a number of times during the consultation. Several of the participants said that unless the perpetrator receives treatment, only the symptom, and not the underlying problem, is being addressed. Some felt that male abusers are as much victims of the intergenerational cycle of violence as abused women are, and that only efforts to address the needs of every family member will help keep families together for the right reasons. Suggestions from aboriginal participants regarding mandatory treatment for all abusers, and from social housing representatives on making treatment a condition of secure tenure, reflect this kind of perspective.

A number of participants argued that current policy actions have the wrong focus, that men should be the ones leaving the home, going to a shelter and receiving counselling. Some felt that CMHC should provide shelters for men. However, other participants disagreed, contending that treatment and therapy for abuse does not necessarily change men from acting abusively, and that programs for men would take badly needed resources away from women.

V. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Consistent with the broad nature of the consultation, it was widely recognized that what happens inside the home is closely interconnected with what happens in the community. This recognition led to consideration of issues surrounding the built environment, and ways in which the community could get directly involved in reducing violence.

Environmental Quality

a) Overcrowding

Overcrowding was mentioned several times during the consultation as a contributing factor to violent behaviour. Residing in an overcrowded home was thought to increase household stress, particularly where poverty was already producing stress, this in turn leading to a higher propensity for domestic violence. A number of participants saw a role for CMHC here, in developing a better understanding of the consequences of overcrowding, in promoting affordable housing development where shortages exist, and in helping low-income families enlarge existing residences which are overcrowded.

b) Housing and Community Design

Tools were discussed that could help improve safety in housing and the community, including safety audits and an urban safety code. For many participants, safety audits were a tool worth promoting. Some indicated that safety audits had been used in their communities with positive results; in particular, they helped lend legitimacy to women's concerns, and they formed a solid starting point for developing solutions. Similarly, some felt that an urban safety code would provide people with a tool to assess security provisions in the design of their housing and community, and would increase awareness of safety issues.

However, participants added some important cautionary notes. First, the biggest threat to a woman's safety is from occupants inside the home, not from persons in the street, so resources should not be diverted away from "family violence" solutions. Second, tools like safety audits and codes can help define safety needs, but there is a danger that they can encourage unrealistic expectations if there are insufficient resources available to remedy the problems they identify. Finally, it was suggested that inclusion of safety features might increase housing and municipal costs, which in turn could reduce housing affordability.

Community-Based Support Services

Respite (short-term, temporary) care was frequently seen to be "a necessity" to relieve household stress in certain situations. However, such an approach has limited effect by itself, and some participants felt that there ought to be support and education for the whole family to prevent and minimize the likelihood of abuse in the future.

a) Respite Care for Children

There was general support among participants for provision of respite care for children. Giving low-income (particularly single) parents a break from parenting responsibilities, in their view, would help reduce the potential for family violence. Several participants felt that the need for such a service in their community is quite substantial. They were also generally supportive of a self-help community model for the development of respite care in social housing.

b) Respite Care for Seniors

A number of participants felt that low-income families often have difficulties finding affordable respite care for senior dependents, and that such a service could help reduce the potential for family violence. Need for this kind of service seems to vary from region to region; some discussants noted that in some parts of the country, low-income families, through a needs-test procedure, were able to access respite care with relative ease.

However, some participants objected to targeting the respite care to the seniors, who would tend to prefer to remain in their own homes. It is not the senior, they argued, but the caregiver who most needs respite, and therefore the weight of adjustment, such as coping with a different environment, should not fall to the senior.

c) Respite Care for Persons with Disabilities

Similar concerns as for the other two groups mentioned above were voiced by representatives of people with disabilities. They emphasized that the need for respite as a means of preventing abuse was just as important, if not more so, for children and adults with disabilities as it was for other groups. They described provisions within the existing social service system as limited, and suggested that one remedy might be to build specialized respite care facilities.

Community Involvement

a) Enablement

Many participants talked about providing resources to the community to support and enable individuals to solve their own problems. "In general, programs which enhance the sense of community are beneficial to everyone." Participants often felt that governments should be providing communities with the knowledge, space, tools and financial resources needed to empower individuals and to enhance their own safety and security. These were felt to be cost-effective measures for family violence prevention. Some discussants felt that integrating abused women within the community by avoiding separation and compartmentalization of their supports and services would help "normalize the way of dealing with violence" throughout the community.

Within this context, social housing was mentioned a number of times. Several participants felt that there was a role for housing agencies to play in providing support features (such as for child care, counselling, community

space and playgrounds) as well as enabling programs (including employment training, housing maintenance training, life skills development, financial management, parenting, and conflict resolution). Tenant/community relations workers were also mentioned as important for dealing with family violence in social housing communities. For example, the community relations worker can help increase awareness about family violence and help tenants develop response procedures for when such violence occurs.

Participants recognized that the possibilities for housing-related contributions to enablement would be framed by a range of issues. For example, increased employability and job opportunity could affect shelter and housing concerns over the long term because of the greater range of choices abused women could then find open to them. Some discussants suggested that encouraging economic independence might require additional financial or social incentives to overcome the initially high cost and social disruption experienced by people trying to leave the welfare system. The term "community economic development" was used on several occasions to describe recommended enablement strategies. As section d) below also indicates, participants feel that enablement issues need to be addressed holistically, through extensive partnership and collaboration.

b) Community Policing

Community policing was discussed during the consultation both in terms of residents' direct involvement in their own security and in terms of police involvement in community initiatives. In general, community policing was an approach supported by many of the participants. However, they said, it is often easier to get the community involved than the police. It was felt that police need more training in the area of family violence and community policing, and that resources need to be specifically allocated towards such an approach.

c) Zero Tolerance

Some participants said that housing agencies should adopt a zero tolerance approach, that the perpetrators of violence within social housing should be

evicted and their eligibility for social housing revoked. It appears that this approach has been successful in reducing violence where it has been implemented.

A number of participants questioned what "zero tolerance" is, and whether it should be a goal rather than a policy. Some questioned the whole approach of "legislating" change rather than educating people, arguing that education and awareness programs are more effective than force in creating attitudinal change. In general, debates reflected the extent to which there was consensus on the balance between "education" and "law enforcement" as solutions to the problem of family violence.

d) Partnerships

Throughout the consultation the need for better and broader partnerships and networks was recognized. Coordinated action was considered fundamental to the creation of a range of options and a continuum of services to address family violence. It would especially increase the likelihood that a constellation of social problems interrelated with family violence, including drug and alcohol addictions, could all be addressed together with the specific patterns of person abuse.

Several provinces have already devoted considerable effort to a partnership approach. Several discussants recommended that the federal government pursue further collaborative work by building family violence concerns into related initiatives, such as those on substance abuse. There was a particularly strong indication that more direct and better partnerships with municipalities are needed. In stressing community-based approaches, it was noted that municipal governments are central in assuring their overall success. In general, the direction seems to be towards more "coalition-building" rather than supporting individual groups.

A number of participants indicated that a better partnership with men on this issue is needed. Men should be fully involved and take more responsibility for seeing that the problem of family violence is addressed.

VI. RESEARCH, INFORMATION, AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Research and Information

There were a number of participants who felt that research and information are lacking in certain areas. To start with, a comprehensive bibliography of existing research was thought to be useful. General concerns were expressed regarding an overemphasis on quantification in many government studies, a tendency to perpetuate a stereotype of "sickness" as characterizing battered women, and a lack of fundamental research into the underlying causes of family violence. Participatory action research was strongly recommended by several discussants.

Some discussants felt that enough emphasis has been placed on research and that resources should be used for more direct action on the problem of family violence. According to some participants, money has been spent on informing them of what they already know.

Specific research themes and questions identified by participants included the following:

- a) From an international perspective, what policy approaches have been used in the area of family violence over the last 15 to 20 years?
- b) Why do men batter their wives?
- c) Why do women return to abusive situations?
- d) What are the costs and benefits of ethnoculturally specific shelters?
- e) What are the costs and benefits of women staying in the home while the abusers move out?

- f) To what degree does a lack of affordable, adequate housing (including overcrowding) affect the likelihood, intensity or other aspects of abuse of seniors, children, youth and women?
- g) What is the relationship between availability of affordable long-term housing and incidence of women returning to abusive spouses?
- h) What is the importance of the neighbourhood environment for family violence, such as concentration or dispersion of households with similar income levels and social statuses? Do neighbourhood factors have an impact on households which have moved away from the abuser(s)?
- i) What is the relationship between alcohol or drug consumption and abuse, and why?
- j) Does use of housing safety and security measures prevent violence from occurring? If so, to what extent? Which designs work best?
- k) To what extent do perpetrators attempt to break through security in second-stage housing? What are the costs?
- l) In areas where seasonal employment is common, does violence and demand for crisis/shelter support increase during the "off-season"?
- m) Does violence increase when construction crews come into communities?

Awareness and Education

Some participants in the consultation felt that education and awareness programs are the most cost-effective way to prevent family violence. They indicated that a community-based approach aimed at institutions such as schools, medical facilities, senior citizens' centres, and police departments would be best. Participants noted the need for information by a number of different audiences. There is a demand for information on such topics as: what abuse is; how to handle oneself in a threatening situation; what options are available to abused women, seniors, youth and children, including where

to go for support; what the housing options are for abused persons; and who can help if more information is sought.

Participants often expressed a desire for closer interaction and information-sharing, perhaps facilitated in some way by government. This was a big priority both for "mainstream" and for ethnocultural and immigrant minority women. Inter-departmental or inter-agency committees could be set up to coordinate, streamline and target supports for abuse victims; toll-free telephone numbers and "clearinghouses" could be introduced to integrate information about services; regional or national conferences could be held on a regular basis to encourage sharing of experience and innovation; shelter directors could meet regularly to work on common problems; and computer networking could be coordinated and made accessible not only to front-line workers and professionals but to the general public.

Some participants suggested that housing agencies could have also an important role in information dissemination within the social housing they administer. According to national representatives, less urban locations and smaller sizes of some housing organizations and communities may entail extra effort to ensure they benefit equally from education and information.

Finally, in acknowledging the pervasiveness of domestic violence throughout society, participants also recommended that government and other agencies educate themselves and their own employees about family violence issues, and that they ensure that relevant employee-based programs are available.

VII. WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

With the insights gathered from the provincial and national meetings on Family Violence Prevention and Housing, combined with all other inputs received to date (including the Project Haven evaluation and written briefs and submissions), CMHC has a solid foundation upon which to develop future policy and programs in this area.

However, CMHC recognizes the need for constant dialogue to help build stronger partnerships and to ensure that its activities are as effective and efficient as possible. In particular, CMHC would appreciate your comments on this document to ensure that it reflects the wide range of opinion expressed during the consultation meetings. Please direct all comments to:

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CMHC wishes to thank all those who participated in this consultation.

APPENDIX: Outline for Discussion

THE ROLE OF HOUSING IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE

Introduction

CMHC, through its responsibilities as Canada's housing agency, is committed to enhancing the quality of life experienced by Canadians. At a time when there is rising concern over violence in our society, it is important that we develop a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which housing and community can serve to address this concern.

CMHC is seeking your views and reactions to the issues outlined below as part of developing an integrated strategy to address and prevent violence in society. This will provide important input to planning for future federal government action to address family violence, as well as the larger issue of violence in society.

We have set out below a set of issues related to a housing-focused response to violence and some ways in which the design, features and management of housing and housing communities can contribute. We also look forward to discussing any other issues or options you may wish to raise in this area.

THEME A. Providing Options for Abused Women

This theme encompasses issues related to the provision of emergency shelters, second-stage housing and long-term housing alternatives for abused women and their children. It also includes efforts to address the needs of aboriginal women, women from ethnocultural and visible minority backgrounds, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and women living in rural, remote and First Nations communities.

1. What approaches can be used to meet the emergency and interim housing needs of abused women? How can these approaches be used

to best meet the needs of diverse groups of abused women, including aboriginal women, women with disabilities, ethnocultural and visible minority women, women living in rural and remote communities and women living in First Nations communities?

2. What additional partnership opportunities can be developed among the federal government, provincial/territorial governments, the private sector and community organizations to address the housing needs of abused women and their children?
3. What services are required in conjunction with the provision of emergency and interim (second-stage) housing for abused women and their children? How can they best be delivered?
4. What alternatives to providing emergency shelter or second-stage housing for abused women and their children can be explored?
5. To what extent is sufficient attention given to the maintenance and repair of shelters? How can the need to maintain the existing shelter stock be addressed?
6. How can the need for long-term housing solutions for abused women and their children best be met? To what extent will increasing access to subsidized housing address the long-term housing needs of abused women and their children? Are there special security concerns for women finding long-term housing in either private housing or within the existing subsidized housing stock?

THEME B. Providing Options for Abused Seniors and Children

This theme explores the extent to which housing-based approaches can be used to contribute to the safety and security as well as the prevention of abuse of children and seniors.

1. What housing-based approaches are best suited to meeting the safety and support needs of abused seniors? What housing-based options are

best suited to preventing the abuse of seniors? For example, to what extent can respite care for seniors be used to prevent elder abuse?

2. What housing-based approaches can be developed and promoted to address issues related to child abuse? For example, how can the development and promotion of programs for children in emergency shelters best be supported? Can opportunities be developed within social housing communities (such as child care programs) to address issues related to child abuse?

THEME C. Supporting Communities to Address Violence

This theme explores opportunities for community involvement and participation, particularly within social housing communities, to facilitate awareness and action to address violence and family violence.

1. How can communities best be supported to promote and support action against violence and family violence, particularly within social housing communities? Examples could include: promoting "zero tolerance policies against violence" in social housing communities, facilitating community and outreach programs and developing safety audits for housing communities.

THEME D. Research and Communication Activities

This theme includes initiating research and developing communication and information dissemination approaches to promote awareness of strategies to address violence and family violence.

1. What issues relating to housing and violence and family violence should be explored through further research initiatives?
2. What opportunities for information exchange and promotion on issues related to housing and family violence, violence in general, crime prevention and personal security should be explored?