

A Place to Go:

An Evaluation of the Next Step Program for Second-Stage Housing in Canada

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An Evaluation of the Next Step Program for
Second-Stage Housing in Canada

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Prepared by:
SPR Associates Inc.
2 Carlton Street, Suite 804
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1J3

for:
Audit and Evaluation Services
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Project Manager: Patricia Streich

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : *Un endroit où aller : Évaluation du programme
L'étape suivante de logements de transition au Canada*

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**Some Views of Next Step
and Other Second-Stage Housing (SSH)**

I would not have left my situation if it had not been for SSH. I honestly feel that this service is invaluable. I feel very safe here, and it has given me time to think about my situation and to get myself together, and to make major life decisions without any pressures.

(Woman from Non-Next Step SSH)

Women return to abusive situations out of desperation. If housing isn't available and affordable, they have no other choice. Their priority is food and a place to live and care for their children. Without a longer stay, they feel trapped. There is insufficient special priority and subsidized housing. Women cannot afford the rents and therefore feel trapped. (from Survey of FSS Providers)

The social safety net is shrinking and women [who are abused] don't think there is any support out there for them, so they are staying in bad situations. (Community case study respondent)

I think [society needs] to make sure there are an adequate number of crisis and SSH shelters available in every community. This will stop the women from repeating the cycle and stop the next generation of male abusers from even starting the violence and stop the next generation of females from becoming victims. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

A woman may escape the abuse when she leaves, but a child is a victim and remains so throughout their life. If it wasn't for the transition house/SSH program, I would not have had the strength or support needed to continue to protect my son against his abusive father and a system that does not protect the rights of the child.

(Woman from Next Step SSH)

Executive Summary

1. BACKGROUND

Next Step and Family Violence: An evaluation of the *Next Step Second-Stage Housing Program* was initiated by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in early 1996. The *Next Step Program* provided funding for non-profit groups experienced in family violence to establish Second-Stage Housing (SSH) for women who have left an abusive relationship, and who have (usually) stayed at an emergency or first-stage shelter (FSS).

The *Next Step Program* funded the creation of some 34 SSH shelters across Canada. The primary objective of Next Step was to provide capital funds for building or acquiring SSH in communities with FSSs, but no SSH shelters. Next Step also funded a number of FSSs, after the fashion of *Project Haven*. The Next Step Program was an addition to CMHC's earlier *Project Haven*, which funded FSSs and also a continuation of CMHC historic funding of family violence shelters which began under the non-profit housing program in the 1970's.

As part of the Federal government's Family Violence Initiative (FVI) (1991-95), Next Step represented part of the broader governmental response to family violence, which includes programs in justice and social services. Family violence has been a growing concern of all governments in recent years, as reflected, for example, in rapid growth in Canada's network of family shelters, in the past decade.

These concerns have also been reflected in a wide range of research, for example, periodic surveys of shelters in Canada and surveys of women experiencing family violence. Such surveys have estimated that about 44,000 women, most with children, turn to FSSs in Canada each year.¹ Of the shelter clients that decided to return to their original home, 7% indicated that it was due to having no other place to go (that is, they lacked the resources or were unable to find alternatives).² This would be about 3,000 women out of the 44,000 using FSSs each year. It is the needs of these women which SSH is intended to meet.

The Evaluation involved the review of background and administrative data, surveys of CMHC Branch offices, Provincial/Territorial and Indian Affairs funders, shelter organizations (including FSS and SSH shelters across Canada), and surveys of women using SSH. Unique features of the methodology included Canada's first national survey of women using SSH, multivariate analysis of impacts of SSH, and an exploratory analysis of cost-effectiveness.

The evaluation examined Next Step SSH specifically, and SSH generally as a comparison point, but did not evaluate FSSs built under *Next Step*, because similar shelters were evaluated in the previous *Project Haven* evaluation.³

¹ Statistics Canada, *Transition House Survey*, 1995.

² Statistics Canada, *Violence Against Women Survey*, 1993, estimated 9% of women who return home to a violent relationship return home for these reasons of no alternatives. SPR's Project Haven research in 1994 estimated that 5% of women leaving FSSs return home because of lack of money or lack of housing. For purposes of discussions in this report, this percentage will be pegged at 7%, a mid-point between the Statistics Canada and the Project Haven research estimates.

³ See, for example, *Technical Report on the Project Haven Evaluation and the Client Information System*, SPR Associates Inc., March 1994.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Next Step Program Achievements

Next Step greatly expanded the supply of SSH in 1991-95: Over the period 1991-95, the Next Step Program allocated some \$20.6 million to the development or expansion of SSH for women experiencing family violence. As a result, the Next Step Program had a substantial impact on the overall availability of SSH in Canada. *Total numbers of SSH facilities in Canada increased from 22 in 1992 and 39 in 1994, to 68 in 1996.* Of the 68 SSH shelters operating in 1996, 34 were Next Step shelters. The Next Step shelters added some 174 units of SSH to the 321 units of SSH which were developed before Next Step.

Thus, through the Next Step Program, hundreds of Canadian women who had previously not had ready access to SSH were given that alternative in recent years. Annual capacity of Canada's SSH overall increased from about 550 women served per year to about 850 women per year (assuming an average stay in SSH of 7 months).

Next Step Program delivery was rated highly: Most SSH sponsors were very satisfied with CMHC's delivery of the Next Step Program. As well, most sponsor groups were of the view that their SSH would not have been opened at all without Next Step funding.

Next Step SSH was targetted to communities in need: Next Step SSH was delivered primarily to communities which had not previously had SSH: 28 of the 34 SSH groups funded were in municipalities which previously had not had any SSH. The balance of the Next Step shelters were funded in large metropolitan areas.

Next Step SSH was sponsored by experienced groups: As planned in the Next Step model, most sponsor groups participating in Next Step had previous experience in providing family violence services and many had previously developed FSS shelter projects. As well, most Next Step shelters had linkages to FSSs. As a result, strong FSS support for SSH was usually found in the given communities, and was a key feature of Next Step SSH operations.

Capital leveraging was limited: Although not a prerequisite of program funding, Next Step sponsor groups generally did not use Next Step funding to leverage additional capital funds. On average Next Step sponsor groups were able to obtain only an additional 10% in capital funding, on top of that provided by Next Step. This, it was suggested, was largely because of limited time for project planning and development. In this respect, the program did not work exactly as expected: it had been expected by the Next Step Program that additional funds would be leveraged.

Next Step SSH was similar to other SSH: This was evident in a comparison of Next Step and other SSH programs as regards services offered, reports of positive impacts by women using SSH and related indicators.

Positive impacts of Next Step SSH on women: Next Step SSH evidenced substantial positive impacts for women who experienced family violence. For many of these women, access to Next Step was a critical factor in their decision not to go back to an abusive relationship. In addition, women reported that SSH aided their transition to permanent housing and independent living.

Further, after moving into Next Step SSH, women were substantially more likely to indicate that they had increased their levels of social participation, their feelings of security and their economic situation/behaviour (learned new skills, enrolled in training courses, etc.). These effects indicated strong positive impacts of the services provided in Next Step SSH. In contrast, women who left an abusive relationship and never used SSH and lived in other assisted housing were found to use far fewer services, and they also evidenced less social and economic adjustment to their changed situations.

Positive impacts of Next Step SSH on children: Women using Next Step SSH reported many positive impacts on their children. Many of these women noted that their children have been happier, that they have done better in school, made new friends, and have been easier to get along with after moving to SSH. Given the disruption in a child's life following a (most often) sudden departure from the family home and, in many cases, ongoing harassment by the father, these are important indicators of positive impacts of SSH. Many women participating in the evaluation reported that SSH had enabled them to break the "cycle of abuse", thereby, they believed, reducing the likelihood that their children would grow up to become abusers or victims.

High satisfaction with Next Step housing: Overall, women staying in Next Step SSH were highly satisfied with security of Next Step SSH, and physical characteristics of the housing. Compared to women who experienced family violence and moved to other assisted housing, Next Step women were also more likely to express feelings of satisfaction with their housing, degree of security, etc.

Transition from Next Step to long-term housing, however, was frequently reported to be problematic. All women in Next Step reported difficulties in accessing affordable housing, including assisted social housing.

Next Step finances and services: Next Step projects generally were less likely than other SSH to have Provincial/Territorial funding for support services they provided, and Next Step SSH used many services drawn from affiliated FSSs. In some cases, recent cut-backs in funding were reported to have resulted in reduced services in SSHs (counselling etc.). This was noted as a major concern in the evaluation, since the evaluation showed that support services are a critical part of SSH's positive impacts on women.

Next Step capital costs: The capital costs of Next Step SSH was economical as compared to other social housing, such as non-profit housing developed across Canada in approximately the same period. General comparisons⁴ indicated that Next Step capital costs were less than the capital costs of non-profit family housing for the same time period, in 11 of the 12 Provinces/Territories.

⁴ All types of units, no control for bedroom counts or type of construction.

2.2 SSH Generally: Impacts, Needs and Issues

Positive Impacts of SSH: Overall, other SSH evidenced the same positive features found for Next Step SSH. Women in other SSH were found to obtain safe interim housing, with SSH providing a positive environment and facilitating positive changes for both women and their children. Women using SSH were very likely to report positive changes in feelings of personal security, in social participation, and also to report positive impacts of SSH on their children. Women in all SSH were, as a rule, highly satisfied with physical characteristics of SSH and how SSH met their needs.

Cost-Effectiveness of SSH: An exploratory analysis of cost-effectiveness compared the SSH generally (Next Step and other SSH) to other assisted housing (such as non-profit housing). The analysis examined the ability of each type of housing to achieve positive life changes in social participation, strengthened family life, and economic development for women who left an abusive relationship. This analysis suggested that other assisted housing is a more costly way to achieve positive life changes than is SSH. *The evaluators attributed this relative cost-effectiveness of Next Step and other SSH to mission orientation and philosophy, particularly the emphasis SSH places on support services and security.*

Areas for Improvement in SSH: In spite of generally positive evaluations of both Next Step and other SSH, the research pointed to a number of areas for improvement of Next Step and other SSH. Some of these included: meeting needs more effectively, improving the mix of support services provided by SSH, particularly by providing more economic self-development services; assessing the physical conditions of SSH; and improving linkages to support services.

Unmet Need for SSH: Access to SSH varies greatly across Canada, with higher than average levels of access to SSH in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and P.E.I., and lower levels of access to SSH in Alberta, Newfoundland, and the Northwest Territories. These results, assessments of CMHC Branches and Provincial/Territorial funders, and reported difficulties of women leaving abusive relationships in accessing assisted housing, indicate a significant shortage of SSH in Canada. The evaluators'

assessment was that the current supply of some 500 units of SSH falls short of meeting needs (with tens of thousands of women flowing through Canada's FSSs each year, and perhaps 3,000 women returning to abusive situations each year because of lack of alternatives), a shortfall which could call for up to 1,500 additional units of SSH.⁵

Need for Improved Service Linkages: The evaluation revealed that not all SSH offers the full range of support services suggested by the SSH model. The need for improved linkages to employment and training services is one reflection of the need for basic staff resources for SSH. Clearly SSH, as an effective service model, calls for support services for women, and thus at least a minimal number of staff to provide services and/or link women to services. Careful investment in these areas may support societal goals in the long-run by increasing independence of women who experience family violence. Such changes are almost certain to have impacts in reducing the longer-term need for social assistance, social services, etc. There is a need for ongoing review of these services, to ensure that SSH has the service capabilities needed to ensure maximum success.

Economic-Related Services: The survey of women using SSH revealed that women who are able to access economic-related services (such as skill upgrading and job training), reported improved incomes, obtaining employment, as well as other positive economic impacts. However, relatively few women access these services in either Next Step or other SSH. This may be because the first priorities of SSH groups and women are on secure housing and the social-psychological healing process for women.

Yet, economic stability is a vital factor in a woman's decision to return or not to return to an abusive relationship,⁶ and with improved economic capabilities, women may be better able to develop a new, independent life. Economic-development services could be more accessible in SSH through linkages to Federal/Provincial employment and training initiatives.

⁵ Based on the assumption that a typical stay at SSH is 7 months.

⁶ See, for example, Follow-up Analyses of the CIS (internal working paper), SPR Associates Inc., March 1994, which illustrated the ways in which financial problems contributed to abuse and women returning to an unchanged relationship.

Rent Scales: While rents in Next Step and other SSH are modest and client satisfaction with affordability is high, some women in SSH pay a high portion of their incomes on rent. This is largely because incomes were extremely low (with extensive reliance on social assistance). Some Next Step and other SSH programs have formal rent-geared-to-income subsidy agreements, while others do not. Affordability would be more equitable if formal rent-geared-to-income subsidy agreements were equally available for all SSH facilities.

Need for Assessment of Physical Conditions of SSH: The research for this evaluation suggested that physical conditions and standards (including access for disabled persons) may need to be examined for Next Step SSH and (to some extent) for all SSH. Some of these needs have been addressed with funding in 1995-96 and subsequently in 1996-97, under the Shelter Enhancement Program. To assess the need for other improvements, an audit of physical conditions of Next Step and other SSH structures across Canada would be highly desirable. Results of such a survey could be linked to an assessment of impacts of the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP), and an assessment of need for improvements in physical conditions of shelters.

2.3 Conclusion

Overall, the evaluation findings indicate that Next Step was a highly worthwhile program and that efforts such as Next Step to continue to expand the system of SSH in Canada will be beneficial in containing the social and economic costs of family violence. A renewed or revised Next Step program could be an important part of such an initiative.

1. Overview

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Evaluation: In 1996, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) commissioned an evaluation of the *Next Step Program* as part of its review of activities under the Family Violence Initiative (FVI). One of the objectives of FVI is to increase longer-term housing alternatives for victims of family violence while continuing to make emergency shelters available. CMHC's involvement with the first phase of the FVI concentrated on providing emergency or first-stage shelter (hereafter FSS) units under the *Project Haven Program*. An evaluation of Project Haven was completed in March, 1994.

The Next Step Program is part of the second phase of FVI, intended to provide longer-term transitional housing for women who experience family violence. Such interim housing is generally referred to as second-stage housing (SSH throughout this report). Next Step also funded some additional FSS units. The FSS element of Next Step was not included in this evaluation, since these units were not expected to differ greatly from those provided under Project Haven.

Family Violence and Canadian Women: The Statistics Canada Violence Against Women Survey estimated in 1993¹ that over 1 million Canadian women had experienced violence from their current marital partner. Another 1.8 million reported experiencing violence from a previous partner. These figures denote the widespread nature of the family violence problem to which the FVI responds, and the broad base of demand for FSS and SSH services.

¹ Supplementary Tables, "Highlights of the Violence Against Women Survey", *The Daily*, Nov. 18, 1993.

For many women, leaving the abusive relationship proves difficult: according to existing research, perhaps 7% of women who leave an abusive relationship return because they have no choice -- they have no money, or no place to go.² With some 44,000³ women using Canada's family violence shelters each year, this translates into some 3,000 women annually, who return to an abusive situation simply because of the lack of any alternative.

Impacts of Family Violence: Even when able to leave, the abused woman's problems are substantial. The particular problems of women re-starting their lives after leaving an abusive relationship are emphasized in Statistics Canada's estimates of violence after women separate from an abusive partner. According to the violence against women survey, 20% of women leaving an abusive relationship experience further violence after separation, and of these, more than one-third reported increased violence after separating from their abusive partners. These statistics highlight the importance of security for women leaving an abusive relationship, the need for safe interim housing (often SSH), and the particular significance of security to SSH. Impacts of violence on women were widespread according to the Statistics Canada survey, and included many effects, even when no physical injury resulted. Emotional effects, for example, were reported by 85% of women who experienced violence by their partner, including fear, lack of trust, lowered self-esteem, depression and guilt.

Service Responses: The range of problems resulting from family violence presents a significant challenge for FSS and SSH programs in assisting women who experience family violence to recover their independence. Thus FSS and SSH programs typically include a wide range of support services, from aiding women with household affairs (obtaining clothing and household goods) to assistance with legal matters, counselling, self-help, and referrals to services such as training, education and employment.

² Statistics Canada, *Violence Against Women Survey*, 1993, estimated 9% return home for these reasons. SPR's Project Haven research in 1994 estimated that 5% of women leaving FSSs return home because of each of money or lack of housing. For purposes of discussions in this report, this figure will be pegged at 7%, a mid-point between the Statistics Canada and Project Haven research estimates.

³ Statistics Canada, *Transition House Survey*, 1995.

Costs of Family Violence: Costs of family violence are difficult to estimate, but two recent studies provide estimates of the monetary costs to society of violence against women. Tanis Day, for example, in a paper entitled *The Health-Related Costs of Violence Against Women in Canada*, suggests these costs could be over \$1.5 billion annually. These estimated costs include not only immediate medical expenses and workplace losses, but also the costs of long-term health, psychiatric and second-generation impacts, as well as the spillover costs of social welfare.

Similarly, Lorraine Greaves, in *Selected Estimates of the Costs of Violence Against Women*, examined impacts of family violence, in Social Services/Education; Criminal Justice; Labour/Employment; and Health/Medical. Greaves placed the health-related costs of family violence at \$408 million annually, and provided an overall estimate of costs at over \$4.2 billion, 87.5% of which, she estimated, is borne by society generally.⁴

These substantial monetary societal costs can only be reduced by the prevention of violence against women, and in the medium-term, by providing support and alternatives for women experiencing violence.

Government Responses to Family Violence: In addition to the efforts of Federal agencies, such as the FVI, numerous Provincial/Territorial programs are aimed at providing services and alternatives for women who have experienced family violence. These programs include expenditures for shelters, counselling and prevention, justice and public awareness programs.⁵

⁴ As compared with Greaves' estimate of 11.5% of costs borne by the individual and .9% of costs borne by third parties.

⁵ Greaves op cit. p.31, 1995. Greaves estimated these programs costing all levels of governments over half a billion dollars per year. The estimated expenditures for shelters in 1995 was \$88.5 million, approximately 17% of the total expenditure.

Another key element of this effort are the Provincial/Territorial social assistance programs, which usually aid women who have inadequate incomes when leaving an abusive relationship.

Development of Family Violence Shelters: Investments by CMHC, Provincial/Territorial governments and communities have resulted in the development of a substantial system of family violence shelters in Canada, mostly FSSs. As of 1993, these included some 288 FSSs, 22 SSHs, 11 family resource centres, 13 safe home networks, 4 satellite shelters, 15 emergency shelters and 18 other facilities -- a total of 371 family violence shelters across Canada.

Housing Policies: Housing programs generally have also provided a wide range of supports for women experiencing family violence, as was illustrated by data obtained in the evaluation from Provincial/Territorial agencies.⁶ Indeed, efforts of some Provinces demonstrate a high level of commitment, and useful models for public responses to family violence.

British Columbia makes emergency units available through social services, and Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Manitoba are all involved to varying degrees in owning emergency shelters which are operated by independent shelter groups.⁷ Altogether, these efforts in housing, justice, income security and social services show a substantial public effort to respond to family violence and Next Step has been one important element of this response. Government expenditures for programs to prevent and reduce the effects of family violence have to be viewed in the broader context of the costs to society of violence against women.

⁶ Provincial/Territorial housing departments and corporations provided information on their housing policies for women who are victims of family violence. Information was obtained for all Provinces/Territories, except Ontario and P.E.I.

⁷ In other provinces, however, it appears that more limited measures are taken to assign abused women priority in public housing. In Quebec, for example, additional points on the point-rating scale are given to victims of family violence, but only a small number of the total potential points.

1.2 STUDY OBJECTIVES, TERMINOLOGY⁸

Objectives: The study focuses on evaluation issues and questions relating to the need for, relevance of, impacts and cost-effectiveness of the Next Step Program (see Display 1.1 for detailed evaluation questions). Specifically, the study examines:

1. The concept of and need for SSH in general and the Next Step Program in particular, and the appropriateness of the Next Step Program for meeting those needs in all types of situations and communities.
2. Descriptions of SSH developed under Next Step (including application and development experience, physical aspects, financial viability), their clients, and impacts.
3. Alternative ways of meeting the needs of women experiencing family violence (for example, assisted housing generally), and an assessment of the costs and benefits of the Next Step approach (and SSH generally) in relation to these alternatives.

Terminology: Throughout this report, a number of specific terms have been used to refer to the various types of organizations and persons discussed: *Women staying at SSH* are referred to most often simply as *women using SSH*, and occasionally as *clients of SSH*. Spaces for one woman and her children in SSH are referred to as *units*; spaces for women and children in FSS are referred to as *beds*. Groups responsible for operating SSH are referred to as *SSH providers*, and occasionally as *SSH sponsors*, or *sponsor groups*. Likewise, the terms *FSS providers* and *FSS organizations* are used for emergency shelters.

The terms “assisted housing” and “social housing” are used to refer to rent-geared-to-income accommodation in public or non-profit housing projects funded under Federal and Provincial/Territorial housing programs.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The remainder of Section 1 provides a brief description of the Next Step Program and an outline of the study objectives. Section 2 describes the SSH model in general, and profiles the Next Step Program specifically. Section 3 provides details on study methodology, the evaluation instruments and approaches to analysis.

In Section 4, the evaluation considers the rationale behind SSH, asking whether the Next Step Program is a suitable means of providing such housing to women experiencing family violence. The report also examines what types of housing are accessible and most effective based on reports of stakeholders (funders, shelters, others). The linkage between SSH and FSSs is also considered.

In Section 5, the evaluation examines results, and the extent to which the Next Step Program achieved its objectives: whether it serves the intended clientele, provides medium-term transitional housing, and whether the housing provided is safe, adequate, and suitable. The balance of positive impacts versus negative or unintended impacts for clients, FSSs, governments, and others is also examined.

In Section 6, design and delivery effectiveness of the Next Step Program is examined, taking into account capital costs, capital leveraging, financial viability, linkages with FSSs, fairness and effectiveness of the Next Step funding process, and the timeliness and efficiency of the development process.

Section 7 of the report assesses SSH more generally to provide an assessment as to whether the SSH approach is cost-effective as compared with other approaches to the longer-term housing needs of women who experience family violence. Particular attention is given to assisted housing generally, as an alternative. Section 7 also considers overall needs for SSH, alternative funding arrangements and alternate ways of providing services to women experiencing family violence.

Section 8 provides key conclusions drawn from the evaluation. Information provided throughout has been developed using survey and other methodologies described in Section 3, including quotes from clients and others, obtained in the surveys. Quotes providing client perspectives are presented in shaded boxes throughout the report.

Display 1.1

Detailed Evaluation Questions

A. Program Relevance: Is There a Need for Next Step SSH?

Key Evaluation questions: What is SSH (concept definition)? Does Next Step provide SSH as defined? Is Next Step SSH unique (different from other SSH)? Is SSH more than affordable housing? Is there sufficient need and demand for SSH? Is SSH appropriate in Aboriginal communities?

Secondary Evaluation questions: What is the most appropriate form of SSH (e.g. projects versus scattered units, segregated versus integrated)? Is it appropriate to have SSH without on-site services? Is it appropriate to tie Next Step SSH to communities with emergency shelters? Is it appropriate to target Next Step to experienced sponsor groups?

B. Program Success: Did the Program Achieve its Objectives? Did the Program Achieve Intended Impacts? Was Program Design and Delivery Effective?

Objectives Achievement: Does the program serve intended clientele? Does the program provide transitional housing? Does the program provide safe, adequate, suitable housing?

Impacts: Does the program achieve intended impacts for clients? Does the program achieve intended impacts for FSSs? Does the program achieve intended impacts for governments? Does the program achieve any unintended (positive or negative) impacts?

Design and Delivery Effectiveness: Were capital costs reasonable? Was capital leveraging successful? Are projects financially viable? Are linkages with FSSs effective? Were application and selection processes fair and effective? Were development processes timely and efficient?

C. Program Cost-Effectiveness: Is the Program Cost-Effective? What are the Costs and Benefits? Are There Alternatives?

Key Evaluation Questions: Is Next Step more cost-effective than other funding mechanisms (such as non-profit)? Is this approach more cost-effective than RGI housing plus support services? Is SSH stock viable in the longer term? What is the added-value of SSH for clients? Are there cost savings re FSSs? Are there added costs for clients (e.g. relocation)? What are the costs and value of support services and how are these financed? Are there alternatives to forgivable loans? Are there other sources of capital funds? Is there increased use of social housing portfolio, existing shelters, earmarking social housing expenditures for family violence?

2. Next Step Program Profile

2.1 NEXT STEP AND THE SHELTER MOVEMENT

Next Step is a component of the federal government's FVI Phase II, a set of programs which ran from 1991 to 1995 for which \$136 million was allocated to various programs administered under seven different federal departments. As part of Phase I of the FVI, which ran from 1988 to 1992, CMHC implemented the *Project Haven Program*. Project Haven involved the creation of FSS units for women leaving situations of domestic violence. These FSSs provide temporary crisis accommodation to abused women and their children, and also provide on-site support and counselling services. Project Haven, with a funding allocation of \$22.21 million, created some 458 units (beds) in 78 shelters across Canada, substantially expanding Canada's supply of FSS.⁹

Under the *Next Step Program*, CMHC provided funding of \$20.6 million primarily for the creation of longer-term SSH for women and children referred from FSSs or otherwise still at risk. Of this amount, \$4 million was allocated for the creation of additional FSSs like those created under Project Haven. Funding was "one-time", for capital costs of building or acquiring and renovating housing units for the SSH programs.

Both the Project Haven and Next Step programs were designed to enhance service initiatives which had been developed and widely supported in Canadian communities since the 1970's. Thus Canada saw a substantial increase in family violence shelters of all types in the period 1975-95. In 1975, only 18 family violence shelters were in operation in Canada. By 1993, this had increased to some 371 family violence shelters (all types).¹⁰ Historically, CMHC has played a substantial role in this overall expansion, funding the capital costs of many FSSs through its non-profit housing program over the past two decades.¹¹

⁹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Final Report on the Evaluation of the Project Haven Program and Update on the Next Step Program Activities*, June 1995.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, *Canadian Social Trends*, Autumn, 1994, p. 12.

¹¹ Project Haven Evaluation, CMHC, 1995.

2.2 SSH AND THE NEXT STEP PROGRAM

The SSH Model: Before considering Next Step, it is useful to consider the characteristics of the broader SSH model which Next Step was meant to expand. SSH is intended to be *transitional housing*, as opposed to either crisis or permanent housing, for abused women and their children. SSH accommodation provides women with an adjustment period and support services for women to establish themselves in any number of ways: by finding employment; upgrading their job training; improving their financial situation; arranging the legal matters of separation, custody, and support payments.

SSH in a Broader Policy Context: SSH must be considered as part of a broader range of policy and program tools for combating family violence and -- where it occurs -- minimizing and healing its impacts. In broad terms, this "tool box" includes such elements as public education and law enforcement. It also includes services such as counselling, which may be an effective remedy to some abuse situations without the need to separate the women and their children from the abusive partner.

Next Step Funding: The Next Step Program provided Federal capital funding to experienced non-profit agencies or Indian bands, for the construction of both SSH and some FSS units. This funding was provided in the form of fully-forgivable 15-year mortgages, forgiven at the rate of one-fifteenth of the capital amount per year. Sponsors were encouraged, but not required, to seek additional capital from other sources. No requirements were made for Provincial/Territorial or other operating funding. Operating costs were expected to be covered by the rental payments made by clients. On-site services were not required, but had to be available in the community.

Next Step SSH tended to be located in urban centres where support services would be available to clients through existing FSS programs and other local agencies. Over the period 1991-95, the Next Step Program provided capital funds for the development or expansion of SSH for women experiencing family violence (34 SSH sponsors providing 174 units).¹²

¹² Of these 34, one was not in operation at the time of the survey, but was expected to re-open. This report generally refers to 34 as the total number of Next Step SSH programs.

Next Step also allocated funds for the development or expansion of emergency or FSSs (23 sponsors, 136 beds). Altogether, the Next Step Program allocated some \$20.6 million¹³ to family violence shelters, both for FSS and SSH, in all of the Provinces and Territories.

2.3 OBJECTIVES AND IMPACTS

The Next Step Program was intended to provide secure housing for women leaving abusive situations who are still at risk or who have been referred from FSSs. This housing was to be more independent and self-contained than FSSs, and suitable for women and their children for a transitional period generally not exceeding twelve months.

Expected Impacts on Clients:¹⁴ *The Next Step model anticipated that interim housing would provide a longer adjustment period than is available in FSS to enable women to make changes in their lives and find suitable, secure, and affordable permanent housing for themselves, thereby avoiding repeated use of emergency shelters or returning to an abusive partner for lack of other options.*¹⁵ Respondent return to the unchanged abusive situation and repeat use of FSSs, as found by CMHC's previous Evaluation of Project Haven, is indicative of the cycles of abuse faced by women in these situations. Provision of support and services in SSH can contribute to reducing the cycles of repeated abuse, enabling women to make changes to their lives. Specific security features of SSH were also intended to protect clients from the possibility of further abuse by the abusive partner, or from having to move repeatedly in order to hide from the abuser.

¹³ CMHC Program Report, March 1996.

¹⁴ The discussion on program impacts is partially drawn from: CMHC Program Evaluation Division, *Final Report on the Project Haven Program and Update on the Next Step Program and Update on the Next Step Program Activities*, June 1995, pp. 69-94.

¹⁵ The logic of Next Step, and SSH generally does not preclude a role for programs which may deal with family violence in other ways than the woman leaving the abusive relationship -- for example, by means of therapy and healing of the abuser or family relationship.

Community Impacts: The Next Step model also anticipated a number of effects in communities. It was anticipated that an increased supply of SSH resulting from Next Step would prompt more women to move into violence-free situations, heighten community awareness of and support for measures to reduce family violence, and potentially reduce the incidence of domestic abuse overall. Additionally, shorter stays and fewer repeat visits to emergency shelters were expected to free up more FSS resources for crisis situations thus increasing the capacity of FSS.

2.4 SHELTER ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

As a follow-up to the Next Step Program, the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP) was announced by CMHC in April 1995. This program was part of a one-year (1995-96) FVI involving six Federal government departments. Under SEP, \$4 million was allocated for existing shelters in need of renovations, supplementary facilities (security, playgrounds), or other enhancements (such as access for persons with disabilities). A total of 1,915 shelter units/beds were enhanced by the 1995-96 SEP funding. SEP was extended with additional funding in 1996-97.

3. Methodology and Study Development

3.1 METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Background Research: A preliminary step in the design and planning phase of the evaluation was an examination of literature supplied by CMHC and a review of existing data sources. The evaluation team undertook a number of activities to develop the study. Some of these included: contact with shelter associations; identification of FSSs and SSH across the country; and drafting of survey instruments.¹⁶ For details on these activities, see *Planning Report, Next Step Evaluation*.¹⁷

Completion of the evaluation project required a number of separate data collection and analysis activities. These activities, the results of which were synthesized into this report, were:

- surveys of the shelter sector (FSSs and SSH facilities and shelter associations); funding agencies (CMHC Branch offices, Provincial and Territorial Departments) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada;
- surveys of women who have used SSH; including analysis of a comparison group¹⁸ of women who had left an abusive relationship, and moved directly to non-profit, or other assisted housing for their interim housing; and
- analysis of existing data from CMHC administrative files, Statistics Canada surveys, the Project Haven Evaluation and Next Step background studies; case studies; and an exploratory cost-effectiveness analysis.

¹⁶ The first two surveys were sent to the Executive Directors of five SSH programs and to the Alliance of Canadian SSH for input and feedback as to the appropriateness of the questionnaires. Quebec shelter associations also aided in a first French translation of the questionnaires.

¹⁷ *Planning Report, Next Step Evaluation*, SPR Associates Inc., February 1996.

¹⁸ This group was obtained from surveys previously conducted for CMHC's evaluation of social housing programs, 1996.

3.2 THE SURVEYS

Sampling: Three surveys were conducted for this evaluation: the Shelter Sector Survey; the Survey of Women Using SSH; and the Survey of Funders and Other Agencies. *Shelter Sector:* The shelter sector survey aimed for a complete sample (census) of SSH in Canada, and a representative sample of FSSs and shelter associations. The sample included: all 34 Next Step SSH facilities, 34 other SSH facilities, 60 FSSs and 5 shelter associations.¹⁹ Women using Next Step and other SSHs were generally sampled 100%, for responding shelters, with supplementary samples of past clients selected by shelters based on availability of addresses. FSSs were randomly sampled from lists obtained from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence and shelter associations. *Funders and Other Agencies:* Names of agencies and contacts were provided by CMHC where possible. Respondents included some 100 Provincial and Territorial social service agencies, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada (DIAND), CMHC Branch Offices, and providers of housing (e.g. local housing authorities and non-profit housing companies). Interviews were also conducted with Provincial/Territorial housing corporations and Ministries of Housing.

Questionnaires: The questionnaires for the shelter sector covered organizational issues, services, the need for and impacts and benefits of SSH in general and Next Step in particular, and the Next Step application process. Three questionnaires were designed for the shelter sector surveys, each with some degree of customization for the different types of respondents (Next Step and other SSH, FSSs and associations). *Women Using SSH:* The "Women's Survey" asked women who used SSH about their current housing, experiences with SSH and other services, their assessment of their quality of life and demographic information. Surveys of women using SSH were distributed confidentially and labelled with the name of the SSH facility in order to track the number of responses by SSH and by province. Confidentiality of women's responses was guarded by having completed surveys returned directly to the evaluation office in anonymous pre-addressed envelopes. *Funders and Other Agencies:* The questionnaires for funders and other agencies examined SSH in general and Next Step in particular, impacts, costs, design issues and alternatives. Three similar survey instruments were designed with some customization for CMHC Branch Offices, DIAND and Provincial/Territorial social service agencies and other housing providers. Some additional questions were included in the questionnaire for local housing agencies, about priorities and services for women experiencing family violence.

¹⁹ The Statistics Canada 1994-1995 Transition Home Survey found 39 SSH shelters operating in 1994, 288 transition homes or first-stage facilities, and 12 Family Resource Centres (an Ontario government initiative providing certain services similar to those of transition homes).

Survey Completions: Overall, responses to the surveys were extremely good. The surveys employed a variety of methods to obtain a complete response rate, including reminder letters, and making an 800 number available for inquiries. Thus a good response rate was obtained overall for organizations surveyed, with 76% of FSSs responding, 88% of SSHs responding, 62% of local housing agencies responding, and 85% of Provincial/Territorial funding agencies responding. Follow-up with women in SSH or who had previously used SSH was not possible, since the researchers did not have names addresses or telephone numbers, and so a lower response rate was obtained, estimated at 42%.

3.3 OTHER METHODS

Case studies were conducted to provide qualitative information profiling Next Step and other SSH, their objectives, achievements and role in their community, as seen by key participants (housing personnel, sponsor group), community agencies and funders. Five Next Step sponsors were chosen according to their location (geographical distribution, so that case studies were conducted in all regions of Canada) and four non-Next Step shelters in similar communities were also selected. In the case studies, interviews focused on the need for Next Step and other SSH, its impacts on clients and on the community, and possible alternatives to SSH. Interview guides were designed and tailored for interviews with shelter staff (particularly Executive Directors) sponsor group representatives and community representatives, focusing on clients' needs, and the extent to which SSH meets those needs. Shelter personnel and/or sponsor groups were also asked about shelter management and financing.

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: The evaluation considered several aspects of program costs: overall cost analysis and the reasonableness of Next Step and other SSH costs. The concept of a *cost analysis* as set out in the terms of reference was predicated on the assumption that costs are largely concrete and easily measurable. These analyses examined the *capital costs* of providing Next Step SSH, as compared to other types of housing (for example, non-profit housing was used for a comparative analysis of capital costs). *An exploratory cost-effectiveness analysis also* examined objective measures of benefits or positive outcomes, such as Client Impacts, including increased economic independence, increased social participation, and improved health/mental health (of woman and children).

4. Relevance of the Next Step Program

4.1 NEXT STEP SSH AND RELATION TO SERVICES

4.1.1 Definition of SSH

CMHC has, in the past, given SSH the following definition: *SSH is defined as secure accommodation with support (including peer support from other residents) and referral services for women who have experienced violence or abuse within an intimate relationship, and require a longer stay than that which FSSs are able to offer.*²⁰ The case studies and related research of this evaluation essentially confirmed this definition. Although specific operational practices varied among different Next Step and other SSH programs (discussed in related sections below), all Next Step and other SSH programs were concerned with providing women who had experienced domestic abuse, not only with affordable and accessible housing, but also with personal security and support services.²¹

Centrality of Security: In the views of women using Next Step and other SSH, *personal safety was the single most important need met by SSH. When surveyed, nearly 60% of women using SSH listed personal safety/security as either the most important or the second most important reason they moved into Next Step or other SSH. It far outranked all other reasons for women using SSH.*

Key Role for Support Services: Clients and providers of Next Step and other SSH both emphasized the fundamental importance of providing supports beyond housing itself.

²⁰ CMHC, *Final Report on the Evaluation of the Project Haven Program and Update on the Next Step Program Activities*, June 1995, p.144.

²¹ Largely as a result of scarce resources, a few SSH projects reported they were not able to provide any direct support services to their clients, although they did provide referral to such services.

Although not all women in SSH make equal use of support services, for many women such services were seen as crucial in enabling them to develop self-esteem and re-establish independent lives for themselves. The extent and importance of these supports was confirmed by data from the survey of women who had used Next Step and other SSH programs. These women often commented in the questionnaires on the important role that counselling, support groups, and other services played in "breaking the cycle of violence" for themselves and their children.

Overall, SSH was seen as shown above: as housing which is longer-term, providing security and specific support services to aid women who have experienced abuse, in their transition to independence. This service concept is implemented within a variety of different program models, but all of these appear to reflect a core "mission orientation" of providing security, healing the wounds of family violence, and supporting women to make needed changes in their lives. As we note below, Next Step SSH fits this general model very well.

4.1.2 Next Step and SSH

As is shown below, the data clearly indicate that Next Step does provide SSH, and that the program has considerably increased the supply of this type of housing in Canada.

Appropriate Uses of Next Step SSH: The Next Step Program was initiated to fund sponsor groups wanting to establish SSH. The survey results indicated that the SSH funded under the Next Step Program (and all other SSH examined here) did, in fact, provide SSH units for women experiencing family violence.²² Furthermore, as will be shown in detail further on in this report, Next Step projects provided affordable housing, a good level of security, additional services and supports, such as counselling and referrals, at a level generally similar to that provided by previously operating non-Next Step SSH.²³ *These results indicate that the Next Step housing was used as SSH and produced the intended effects.*

²² About 8% of SSH programs funded under the Next Step program reported having used their SSH units (on rare occasions) as FSS housing.

²³ "Level" in this case refers to the number of services that SSH programs reported providing. The quality of services that programs were able to provide, particularly after recent provincial funding cuts is discussed in Section 4.2.1 below.

Quantity of New SSH Provided: The Next Step Program funded 174 SSH units for 34 sponsor groups across Canada, substantially increasing the supply of SSH in Canada over the program's duration. This increase is shown in Display 4.1. These trends indicate that the number of sponsors providing SSH in Canada nearly doubled in the period 1992-94 and nearly doubled again in the period 1995-96. *This increase in SSH appears to be a direct result of the Next Step Program. Overall, it is clear that Next Step has contributed significantly to the provision of SSH in Canada.*²⁴

4.1.3 Affordability of Next Step SSH

Affordability of SSH to clients was directly assessed in the surveys by funding and other agencies, housing providers, and clients themselves. This is an important issue, as nearly all women leaving an abusive relationship inevitably experience at least short-term income problems.²⁵

Perceptions of Funding and Other Agencies: These organizations generally reported that the Next Step SSH program provided affordable housing to women leaving an abusive relationship. Nearly all SSH sponsor organizations, 71% of CMHC branches, and 57% of FSS housing groups saw Next Step SSH as providing affordable housing (with the remainder of those surveyed responding “Don’t Know” rather than “No”).

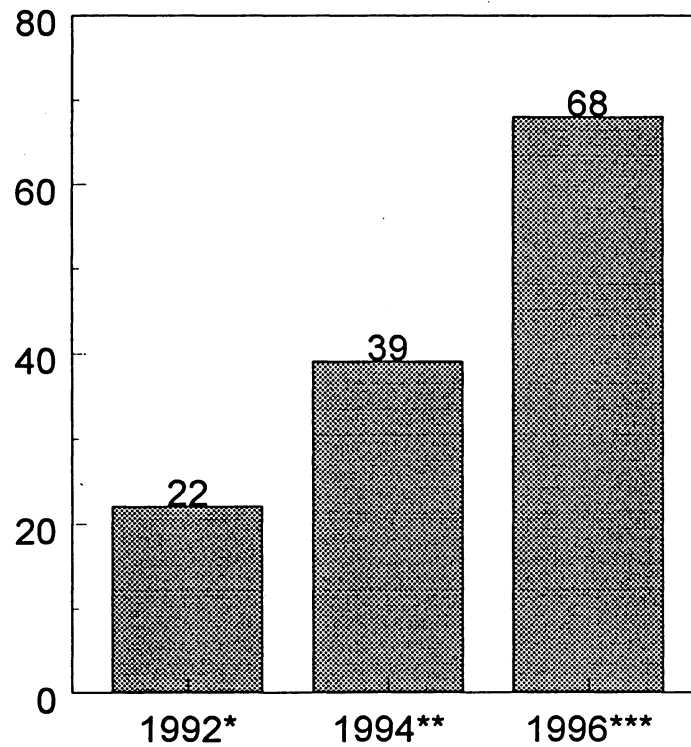
Client Assessments: Virtually 100% of women using Next Step SSH indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the affordability (in terms of rent, utilities, etc.) of their SSH. However, an analysis of actual rent ratios indicated that many women in Next Step SSH paid over 30% of their incomes in rent while in SSH, and rent ratios varied across Provinces and Territories.

²⁴ Next Step also funded some 26 sponsor groups to establish FSSs with some 131 beds. This increase, not examined in detail here, was a substantial increase in the supply of FSS spaces in Canada. Altogether, Canadian FSSs accommodated up to 1,269 women at any given time, according to Statistics Canada's May 31, 1995 survey. Thus, Next Step provided approximately a 10% increase in the number of FSS beds available in Canada.

²⁵ For example, in the evaluation survey of women who had left an abusive relationship, over 40% of the responding clients indicated that they were experiencing greater financial difficulties as a result of leaving their abusive relationship. Only a minority (less than 8%) indicated that they had increased their household income or personal earnings. Most of these women have very low incomes, and must rely on social assistance, at least when first leaving the abusive relationship.

Display 4.1
SSH in Canada and the Impact of Next Step
1992, 1994, 1996

of SSH projects
in operation



* Statistics Canada, *Canadian Social Trends*, Autumn 1994, p.12.

** Statistics Canada, 1994-95 Transition House Survey, Data Tables, 1-20, December 1995. Of these 39, 21 were estimated by SPR to be Next Step SSH.

*** SPR Associates Inc., Field Surveys, 1996. Of these 68, 34 were Next Step SSH.

4.1.4 Differences Between Next Step SSH and Other SSH

Similarities/Differences: The survey of SSH characteristics suggests that in most respects, Next Step and other SSH programs are very similar in purpose and operations. (These results were further supported by comparisons of Next Step and other SSH clients (see below, Section 4.2.1), which suggest that the impacts of both groups of SSH facilities are similar as regards impacts on women's self-development after leaving the abusive relationship.) *Two areas of differences stood out, however, the sources of services funding for Next Step SSH, and the relative youth of Next Step SSH.*

Sources of Funding: Only 36% of Next Step programs receive Provincial/Territorial funding for services,²⁶ while over 75% of other SSH programs receive Provincial/Territorial funding to assist with daily operational costs and support services. As the most important other sources of funding reported by SSH programs are rent and fundraising, it must be concluded that Next Step programs must draw more heavily on these sources to meet their services and operating expenses.

Newness of Next Step Groups: Next Step SSH programs are all very "young" -- all opened since 1993. Other SSH programs in Canada are, in comparison, much older. Of currently existing non-Next Step SSH programs, 70% opened in 1990 or before, while only 9% have opened since 1993. Sponsor groups involved in Next Step are also generally younger. Only 48% of Next Step sponsor groups have been involved in providing shelter for women experiencing family violence for more than five years, compared with 80% of other SSH sponsor groups.

²⁶ 'Operating' funding refers to ongoing grants from Provincial/Territorial social services budgets to shelters for support of staffing costs and other costs associated with running shelters, their buildings, and programs. The Provinces/Territories make other contributions to aid women in SSH, for example, through social assistance, which is the main source of income for about 75% of all women using SSH. These monies contribute to shelter operating expenses through the rents paid by women using the SSH.

The Impact of Services as Seen by Women Using Next Step and Other SSH

The support from the staff has been of great assistance, and the information they've provided me with has improved my chances of success in my goals in life. The seminars and support groups meetings are very helpful. The interaction with other women in similar situations has been a comfort. It is the one-on-one counselling though that has really made a difference. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

I have broken the cycle of abuse so that myself and my son will not repeat the cycle again. I have done this through the help of shelters and SSH, through counselling and support without these services I know for myself the cycle would be still be going on. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

The follow up by the staff and the advocate has been the main reason why my family has not returned to the abusive dad/partner. I would like to see more staff that can assist women leaving an abusive partner. I thank the staff at the SSH for making it possible for my family and I to live free from violence. (Woman from Non-Next Step SSH)

Without the assistance from the staff at SSH, I would probably not have been able to find housing, which means I may not be alive today. The counselling and support I received in first and SSH is what has kept me productive in society. I have been able to help myself with their support. Otherwise, I would probably be mentally and physically unable to care for myself. With their help, I am not only able to care for myself, but also help others. I feel the counselling of SSH gave me the tools and the will to live. (Woman from Non-Next Step SSH)

4.2 NEXT STEP SERVICES AND DESIGN ISSUES

4.2.1 Next Step Services and SSH

Costs of Services: The costs of support services vary according to the size of the Next Step SSH facility and the level of services provided. Some SSH facilities have full-time counsellors, including children's counsellors, for SSH residents, while others borrow counsellors on a part-time basis from the sponsor group (usually the FSS). Most SSH facilities receive partial funding from provincial governments, although in some cases this amount is a very small percentage of the operating budget. Other sources of operating funding include rents and fundraising.

Availability of Services: In practice, it is rare for Next Step or other SSH to operate without associated services, although these are not always provided "on-site" or by SSH staff. Services such as referrals, accompaniment, counselling services for women, and support groups were most frequently reported by SSH (over 80% of Next Step sponsors reported providing these services). Self-help groups, counselling for children, child care, transportation assistance and having a manager on-site were less frequently reported. None of the Next Step SSH groups studied provided only housing services. The majority of Next Step sponsors (60%) provided between six and nine different types of services; another 16% provided more than nine services.

Services in Next-Step and Other SSH: Next Step and other SSH programs reported providing generally similar levels of services to their clients. As well, there were several differences in the types of support services provided by Next-Step and other SSH facilities (see Display 4.2). Next Step facilities reported providing counselling services for women in more cases, provided counselling services for children more often, and ran accompaniment services in more cases. Other SSH sponsors, in comparison, were twice as likely to provide child care -- the most substantial difference between these two "generations" of SSH. Other SSH facilities were also more likely to provide organized self-help groups. Provision of services related to training or employment appeared to be rare for all SSH.

Women from Next Step SSH were more likely to report making use of services than women from other SSH. About twice as many women from other SSH (30%) report using no services at all provided by their SSH as do women from Next Step SSH (15%).

Display 4.2
Services Provided by SSH Sponsors*
(data from the survey of Next Step and other SSH sponsors)

	Next Step SSH	Other SSH	All SSH
Services Provided To SSH Residents			
Referrals to other services (family violence services)	100%	96%	98%
Accompaniment services (to court, to social services)	88	76%	82
Counselling services for women	92	84%	88
Counselling services for children	68	56%	62
Self-help group	44	52%	4
Support groups	92	80%	86
Child care	28	48%	38
Transportation assistance	48	48%	48
Manager available on-site for emergencies	40	40%	40
Help with household goods and/or moving	60	60%	60
Other	36	24%	30
Do not provide services other than housing/referrals	0	8%	4
Total Number Of Services Provided			
None	0%	8%	4%
Any 1 - 3 types of services	8	8	8
Any 4 - 5 types of services	16	4	10
Any 6 - 9 types of services	60	64	62
Any 10 types or more services	16	16	16

- * These numbers must be interpreted with some caution. Case study evidence indicates that, when an SSH program lacks sufficient resources to offer a full complement of services, it may avoid narrowing its range of services by providing services more sporadically, to fewer clients (e.g. servicing the "most needy" clients), or less intensively (for example, by cutting back on hours of counselling per client). There is supporting evidence for this in the evaluation survey of women using SSH. There, clients of SSH reported using certain supports, such as child care and counselling for children, significantly less often than SSH projects reported providing them. Thus, the "true" level of service provided by Next Step SSH may in fact be lower than the survey of shelters would suggest.

4.2.2 Design of Next Step SSH

Type of Construction/Acquisition: The survey of Next Step and other SSH sponsor groups indicated that sponsors created their housing by constructing new buildings (35%) or, more often, by renovating existing buildings (45%). Only one sponsor group reported that they created SSH units by adding dwelling units to or otherwise expanding an existing FSS, and 17% of sponsors reported other combinations of construction/acquisition methods.

Physical Forms: Next Step and other SSH sponsors were also found to use a variety physical designs. In about two-thirds of cases, SSH sponsors reported having at least one building with multiple units. A small proportion of SSH had units in different buildings on one site and/or had individual units on different sites. Units, in turn, appeared to vary considerably in structure: bachelor; one-; two-; or three-bedroom. Two-bedroom units were the most common, however, followed by three-bedroom units. Bachelor units were seldom found in SSH.

Both Next Step and other SSH was found in a variety of forms. Neither survey nor case study data indicated that different housing design types were associated with better or worse outcomes. Similarly, a regression analysis testing housing design type against a variety of outcome indicators found no significant variation in program success by housing design. These results suggest that there may be no “best” way to implement SSH structurally, and imply that the current situation is reasonable, in which design is determined by local circumstances and by the program philosophies of providers.

4.3 NEED/DEMAND FOR NEXT STEP SSH

4.3.1 Need and Demand for Next Step SSH

The evaluation addressed the question: *Is there sufficient need and demand for SSH?*

Role of Next Step and Other SSH in Leaving an Abusive Relationship: The results of the survey of women using Next Step and other SSH indicate that there was a considerable need for Next Step SSH, and that SSH generally fulfills an extremely important function for women leaving abusive situations.

Over 60% of women using SSH indicated that access to SSH was a factor which strengthened their decision to leave an abusive relationship.²⁷ This finding underlines the importance of the supply of SSH: if the supply of SSH is insufficient, then each year thousands of women who need housing assistance are likely to return to an abusive relationship simply because they have "no place else to go".²⁸

Applications for Funding: CMHC Branches responding to the evaluation surveys reported receiving about twice as many applications for Next Step than were granted. Thus, demand for Next Step appears to have been approximately double the Next Step applications that could be funded within the program budget. This result suggests a substantial unmet need for this type of housing in other communities.

Similarly, nearly 89% of FSSs surveyed reported a need for more SSH in their areas. This need was also echoed in reports by about 40% of Provincial/Territorial Departments and local housing organizations.²⁹

²⁷ A roughly equal number listed easy or fast access to emergency (first-stage) shelter as a factor, while just under 40% listed easy access to affordable housing as a factor.

²⁸ See footnote #2, Executive Summary.

²⁹ Almost no respondents indicated that there was no further need for SSH; most of those who did not affirm that there was a need answered "don't know".

Demand for Next Step SSH: Need for Next Step and other SSH was reflected also by demand for SSH, as noted in the evaluation case studies. In case studies, community respondents unanimously reported a demand for more SSH in their communities. *Consistent with these indications, in the survey of women using SSH, 14% of women using Next Step SSH indicated that there was no SSH available in their community, so that use of SSH required moving to another community. Such lack of SSH was reported by 22% of women using other SSH.*

These suggestions of insufficient supply of Next Step and other SSH were mirrored in the reports of women's repeated moves after leaving an abusive relationship, and the reasons for these moves. Many of these women moved several times (to family, to FSS, to friends or back to family again before arriving at SSH). Of the women using Next Step SSH who initially had moved into other types of housing, about 40% did so because they did not know about SSH, found no available SSH, or were put on a waiting list for SSH.

Waiting Lists: The survey of Next Step SSH sponsors indicated that 80% of Next Step sponsors use waiting lists when no space is available for a prospective client. Next Step programs were somewhat more likely to use waiting lists than other SSH (68%), and were more likely to have women currently waiting for a vacancy (60% of all Next Step programs had women on their waiting lists). At the time of the survey, some Next Step and other SSH units were vacant, primarily because of turnover and need to fit families to units. *Overall, however, more than twice as many women were on waiting lists as Next Step or other SSH units were vacant.*³⁰

Aside from using waiting lists, about half of all Next Step and other SSH sponsors reported that they arrange extended stays at emergency shelters for women turned down for SSH due to lack of space.³¹ *Overall, these findings are consistent with the conclusion that in spite of the noteworthy expansion of SSH programs resulting from Next Step, there continues to be a demand for SSH across Canada which substantially exceeds the supply.*

³⁰ Some 7.5% of all SSH units were vacant at the time of the survey, and another 8% of SSH units were "closed" -- not in operation due to lack of funding/staffing.

³¹ Other steps taken when no space is available include: referrals to local housing authorities (used by 89% of projects), providing women with information on other services (89%), organizing a placement with another SSH project (50%), and referring women to non-resident services (54%).

4.4 TARGETTING NEXT STEP SSH PROJECTS

4.4.1 Targetting Next Step to Communities With FSSs

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Was it appropriate to tie Next Step SSH to communities with FSSs?*

The survey of SSH sponsors indicates that as a rule, Next Step SSH was delivered as planned to communities which already had FSSs. Next Step SSH was also found to be delivered primarily to communities which previously had not had SSH. Of the 34 Next Step SSH programs identified in this evaluation, 29 were established in municipalities which previously had not had SSH (the other 5 Next Step SSH which were established where there was already SSH were in major metropolitan areas: Montreal (2); Winnipeg; Regina; and Victoria).

Case study evidence indicates that SSH was considered appropriate in communities with FSSs, as the need for SSH was generally determined by the flow of clients leaving FSSs. In cases where clients had moved from their original communities in order to access FSSs (either for their personal safety or because there were no FSSs in their home community), SSH sponsors felt that it was best if those clients could access SSH without having to move again to another community. As well, survey data indicated that many clients of SSH made extensive use of support services provided by FSSs, suggesting gains in service efficiency from locating SSH where FSS already existed. (These important support services which FSSs provide to SSH are discussed in detail in Section 7.3 of this report.)

4.4.2 Targetting Experienced Sponsor Groups for Next Step

The survey of SSH sponsors asked how long sponsor groups had been involved in providing housing for women experiencing family violence. Overall, over 90% of Next Step sponsor groups were found to have been in operation more than 2 years, with close to half operating for more than 6 years.

About 68% of the SSH sponsor groups were found to have previously developed FSS housing units for abused women, while 27% of them previously developed other SSH. Another 23% of the sponsor groups were reported to have previously developed both other SSH units and other FSS units.³²

These findings suggest that Next Step sponsors were experienced groups, generally having a track-record in dealing with family violence issues, and also in managing programs. It is significant then, that *clients of Next Step shelters generally reported as much satisfaction, and evidenced as much impact of programs, as did clients of the older and more established non-Next Step programs. This suggests that the targetting of Next Step housing to experienced sponsor groups was appropriate and resulted in high quality results.*

4.4.3 Suitability of Next Step and SSH for Aboriginal Communities

The evaluation addressed the question: *Is SSH appropriate in Aboriginal communities (and was/is delivery of Next Step-type programs desirable for these communities)?*

This question was, to some extent, a “needs” question, since the SSH operations currently serving Aboriginal populations are too few and have been in operation for too short a time to provide conclusions regarding “best practices”. Therefore, survey respondents from DIAND, and SSH and FSS organizations serving Aboriginal women, were asked questions about the issue of appropriate SSH in Aboriginal communities, the need for SSH in Aboriginal areas, the appropriateness of SSH both on- and off-reserve, and related socio-cultural considerations.

Need for SSH in Aboriginal Communities: Those interviewed on this evaluation issue generally agreed that there is a great need for SSH for Aboriginal women. On reserves, it was noted, there is usually a shortage of housing to begin with, and once the time in a FSS has ended, a woman often has trouble finding adequate housing where she is safe from her abusive partner.

³² From 1995 Profile of Next Step shelters, SPR Associates Inc.

Evaluation interviewees noted that due to this general lack of housing, many women go back to their partners because they have no other options short of leaving the community. As regards Next Step specifically, it was observed that women were far more likely to move on with their lives, and were less likely to go back to their abusive partners, after staying in Next Step SSH. Thus key informants were supportive of Next Step delivery in Aboriginal communities.

Location Issues: A more specific question, given the need for SSH for Aboriginal communities, is whether SSH is more appropriate on-reserve or off-reserve. About half of the DIAND and First Nations respondents interviewed indicated that having SSH off-reserve was the most effective model, with problems more likely to occur on-reserve. These respondents noted that even though the woman is removed from the immediate problem by moving into another house, the reserve is still a very small community within which she cannot really escape from the abuser.

It was also suggested that having SSH off-reserve was beneficial because it could provide service to a larger area, and house women from other communities. However, other respondents felt that SSH is more effective when it is placed on-reserve, as long as it has effective security measures. By staying on-reserve, the women and children remain close to their families and support systems in the community.

These trade-offs point towards the need for more focused evaluation of the effects of these alternative models.

5. Impacts of Next Step SSH

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Did the Next Step program achieve its objectives? Did the program achieve intended impacts? Was program design and delivery effective?* These questions are addressed in terms of both clientele and services.

5.1 NEXT STEP SSH CLIENTELE AND SERVICES

5.1.1 Clientele of Next Step SSH

The evaluation asked the question: *Did the Next Step program serve the intended clientele?*

Profile of Next Step and Other SSH Clients: Most respondents to the survey of women using Next Step SSH had stayed at a FSS at one time or another; for over 60%, the FSS was the first place they had moved to after leaving their abusive situation. Clients were generally in a poor position financially; almost 70% of indicated that their main source of income was social assistance, while only 16% of Next Step clients had full-time or part-time employment income.³³ As well, the great majority of Next Step clients had one or more children living with them (Display 5.1).

Women in Next Step SSH were somewhat younger and less well educated than women in other SSH programs. More women in other SSH were older, compared with Next Step women. Also, other SSH women were more likely to have completed a university or college education, than were Next Step women.

Financial difficulties are reflected in the fact that the majority of women who move out of Next Step SSH move into public or non-profit assisted housing, while only a small portion (under 10%) move into private market housing other than their original home.

³³ The low income potential of this client population was also reflected in their education: more than 60% of SSH clients had high school education or less.

Display 5.1
Personal Characteristics of Women
Staying at Next Step and Other SSH
(from Survey of Women Using Next Step and Other SSH)

	Next Step SSH	Other SSH	All SSH
Age			
Younger than 20 years old	1.7%	3.0%	2.4%
20-29	20.0	28.4	24.4
30-39	53.3	38.8	45.7
40-49	21.7	16.4	18.9
50 +	3.4	13.4	8.7
Highest Level of Schooling Completed			
Elementary school	16.7%	23.2%	20.2%
High school	48.3	37.7	42.6
Trade/technical school	16.7	8.7	12.4
University/college	15	27.5	21.7
Other	3.3	2.9	3.1
Special Needs as Considered by Herself			
Immigrants to Canada	4.9%	5.7%	5.3%
Aboriginal/First Nations people	8.2	18.6	13.7
Visible Minorities	3.3	7.1	5.3
People with physical disabilities	6.6	20.0	13.7
Senior (aged 60 and over)	1.6	2.9	2.3
Other	4.9	2.9	3.8
Currently Living With:			
One or more children	77.0%	60.0%	67.9%
One or more adults	8.2	11.4	9.9
Both children and adults	6.6	5.7	6.1
Main Source of Income			
Social assistance	66.7%	80.6%	73.9%
Full-time employment	12.3	4.8	6.4
Part-time employment	3.5	6.5	5.0
Unemployment Insurance	10.5	0.0	5.0
Pension or Old Age Security	1.8	1.6	1.7
Other	5.3	3.5	5.9

Also, many women in Next Step SSH indicated that they have special needs or circumstances, of which physical disabilities were the most common. Other special circumstances noted were: belonging to a visible minority, being of Aboriginal origin, being a senior citizen, and being an immigrant to Canada. Similar client profiles were evidenced in other SSH.

Notably, other SSH contained three times as many women with physical disabilities as Next Step SSH.³⁴ The women in the two types of housing were roughly similar in most other characteristics, however, including source of income, although Next Step clients were more likely to be receiving unemployment insurance. These variations may, of course, reflect the different types of communities served by Next Step, rather than characteristics of the Next Step program or Next Step sponsors.

Next Step SSH served the target group of women intended -- those experiencing family violence. Some results, however, suggest that partly because of design of Next Step SSH, some sub-groups of women may have had difficulty accessing Next Step SSH. This was noted as a particular problem for women with disabilities, who were less likely to be able to access Next Step programs, and also for women with other special needs, such as drug or alcohol problems.

5.1.2 Next Step SSH as Transitional Housing

Length of Stay: The average length of stay in Next Step SSH reported by sponsors varied. The average longest stay was reported to be over 20 months and the average shortest stay was 1 month, with an overall mean of 7-8 months. These patterns were generally similar for other SSH. About 46% of all SSH sponsors reported that the average stay in their housing was 6-10 months, while 33% reported the average stay to be less than 6 months, and 17% reported it to be 11-12 months.

³⁴ This is undoubtedly due to the fact that Next Step shelters are less frequently equipped with facilities to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, as described in Section 5.1.3 below.

Most Next Step and other SSH sponsors reported a maximum length of stay for clients. The maximum length of stay varied, with 12 months reported as the maximum length of stay by a majority of SSH sponsors (about 64% of those with a maximum).³⁵ Next Step sponsors reported longer average and maximum stays in their SSH than did other SSH programs. In general, Next Step sponsors were substantially less likely to limit stays to 6 months or less, and somewhat more likely to allow stays of up to 12 months or longer.

Finding Long-Term Housing: In the survey of women using SSH, about 54% currently staying in Next Step SSH and 63% currently in other SSH indicated that they were having difficulty finding suitable permanent housing. Next Step women fared better in this respect, but all women in SSH faced difficulties in finding affordable housing. Women were unanimous in identifying the lack of affordable housing as a primary reason for this difficulty. Other obstacles included the lack of personal savings, the need for safety from abusive partners, and the need for social support. As well, 67% of Next Step clients reported having insufficient time in SSH to find "the right home", while about 60% of other SSH clients cited landlord discrimination and the need for counselling as difficulties. In case studies, these difficulties were widely attributed to the lack of priority which some local housing bodies gave to providing housing for women in SSH, a view that was reinforced by responses from some local housing agencies surveyed in the evaluation.

³⁵ One "non" Next Step case study shelter has a 24 month maximum.

Display 5.2
Moving on From Next Step and Other SSH
(results from the Survey of Women Using Next Step and Other SSH)

	Next Step SSH	Other SSH	All SSH
<hr/>			
Having Any Problems Finding Suitable Permanent Housing			
Yes	53.7%	62.5%	58.0%
No	46.3	37.5	42.0
 Difficulties Faced In Finding Suitable Permanent Housing* #			
Lack of affordable housing	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Lack of savings (e.g. first/last month's rent)	91.7	92.0	91.8
Need for safety/security from abuser	63.6	80.0	72.3
Need for social support	58.3	56.5	57.4
Landlord discrimination	50.0	63.6	57.1
Insufficient time in SSH	66.7	45.8	56.3
Need for counselling	43.5	58.3	51.1
<hr/>			

* Percentages shown combined responses of "Created Great Difficulty" or "Created Some Difficulty" vs. "Created No Difficulty".

Based on the sub-sample of respondents indicating difficulty in finding suitable permanent housing.

Security As Seen by Women Using Next Step and Other SSH

What I liked most about SSH was the security it provided--from anyone getting in and the insecurities in my own mind. I was afraid if he found me again he would kill me or I would not be self-confident enough to say no to him and would end up going back. SSH provided the peace of mind I needed to go on with life. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

If it were not for the shelter and SSH, I would be dead now. My ex-husband threatened my life many times and there is no doubt he would have done it. If the lives of myself and two children are worth anything, you wouldn't have to be asking all of these questions. You might already say that 3 lives have been spared and how many more after that, we'll never know. (Woman from Non-Next Step SSH)

I feel the shelters and housing are a great necessity for women in situations that I and many other women find ourselves in. I feared for my own and my newborn's life 24 hours a day. When our time is up at the shelter, I pray God is on our side, and keeps us safe out there. Women who are brave enough to leave need a safe, secure place to go, for their children and themselves, to heal, and get their lives on track again without pressures. We are all different, but we need help, desperately, we're human, just like you. (Woman from Non-Next Step SSH)

5.1.3 Safety and Suitability of Next Step SSH

The evaluation addressed the question: *Did the Next Step program (and does SSH generally) provide safe, adequate, suitable housing?*

Safety and Security as a General Issue: Although Next Step and other SSH sponsors generally agreed that SSH should provide a safe environment for women, they differed in the extent to which security measures were in place, and in their views on the degree to which security should take priority over other concerns in housing (comfort, social access, atmosphere).

Survey results indicated that Next Step SSH (and also other SSH) make widespread use of security measures (Display 5.3), with electronic security being a particular strategy for Next Step SSH. The most frequently reported security measures or procedures were meetings with residents to explain safety rules, and providing written copies of rules and policies to all residents (these activities were reported by over 90% of SSH sponsors). Security/police patrols and electronic security were least frequently reported, provided by only one-third and one-half of SSH sponsors, respectively.

Next Step SSH was twice as likely as other SSH to employ electronic security, while other SSH was more likely than Next Step to have intercom systems in operation. The greater use of electronic security systems in Next Step projects likely reflects the ease of access to this type of technology in new construction and recent renovations. Next Step and other SSH were generally similar in most other aspects of security, but a substantially lower percentage of Next Step sponsors reporting security problems (44% for Next Step, as compared to 62% for other SSH) suggested good value for the newer Next Step security systems.

Over 95% of Next Step clients indicated that they were (somewhat to very) satisfied with the security of their units, and nearly all Next Step SSH sponsors felt that they provided safe housing for women. Similarly, 75% of CMHC branches and Provincial/Territorial organizations, and just under 60% of FSSs expressed the same view. Clients of other SSH also were highly satisfied with security (94% satisfied).

Display 5.3
Security in Next Step and Other SSH
(from Sponsor and Client Surveys)

	Next Step SSH	Other SSH	All SSH
Sponsor Reports of Safety/Security Measures Or Procedures			
Intercom system	48.0%	64.0%	56.0%
Fence around property	56.0	52.0	54.0
Security/police patrols	36.0	32.0	34.0
Electronic security	52.0	20.0	36.0
Smoke detectors	96.0	100.0	98.0
Meeting with residents to explain safety rules	88.0	96.0	92.0
Written copy of rules and policies	88.0	92.0	90.0
Verbal or written warnings for residents	76.0	92.0	84.0
Other	20.0	32.0	26.0
Sponsor Reports of Any Problems With Safety/Security In SSH?			
Yes	44.0	62.5	53.1
No	56.0	37.5	46.9
From Survey of Women:			
Satisfaction with safety & security of housing rated "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied"	96.2	94.2	95.2
Has your spouse contacted you/your children against your will	28.8	28.3	28.6

Sponsor Assessments of Adequacy of SSH: Next Step SSH differed from other SSH in some respects. Non-Next Step sponsors were more likely to be prepared to accommodate clients with special needs, reporting more frequently than Next Step SSH that they were equipped for residents with physical disabilities, had interpreters or other language services available, had culturally adapted services or policies, and made referrals to special needs agencies/organizations.

Client Assessments of Adequacy and Suitability of Next Step SSH: The overall housing satisfaction level of women who were staying in or had stayed in Next Step SSH was also very high. Nearly all women who used Next Step SSH indicated satisfaction with management of the buildings/units, furniture and appliances in the unit, the lease/rental agreement, and affordability of the unit. Other features such as staff quality, counselling, support services, and convenience of location were also given ratings of satisfied or very satisfied by the vast majority of respondents. *Over 90% of women currently living in Next Step SSH indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current accommodation (Display 5.4).*

As regards satisfaction with specific features of their housing, women using Next Step SSH were most likely to be satisfied with the apartment unit or house generally (88.1% very satisfied), affordability (74.6% very satisfied), availability of services nearby (74.6% very satisfied), and safety/security (79.7% very satisfied). Women using Next Step SSH were somewhat less satisfied with the length of time they were allowed to stay (43.5% very satisfied), or the suitability of SSH for children (49.2% very satisfied). Only a minority of these women were satisfied with availability of child care (39% very satisfied).

Women staying at Next Step SSH were more substantially likely than women currently staying with other SSH programs to rate themselves as "very satisfied" as opposed to "somewhat satisfied" with their current housing generally, and with the safety and security of their current housing, than women from other programs (Display 5.6). Ratings of other SSH by clients were generally similar to Next Step clients, but in these two areas Next Step was rated substantially higher. This reflects well on the quality of the housing provided by Next Step.

Despite the overall high levels of satisfaction with Next Step and other SSH, some complaints were revealed by women in some SSH. These included, for some SSH facilities: restrictive visiting rules, which made it difficult for male family members to visit; lack of adequate funding for counselling staff; lack of facilities and services for children; and lack of privacy resulting from communal features found in a few SSH facilities.

Display 5.4

Ratings of Satisfaction With Current Housing by Women Currently Staying in Next Step and Other SSH (from survey of women currently in Next Step and Other SSH)

	Next Step SSH	Other SSH	All SSH
The apartment unit or house in general			
Very satisfied	88.1%	66.7%	77.3%
Somewhat satisfied	8.5	21.7	15.1
Affordability (rent, utilities, etc.)			
Very satisfied	74.6	76.7	75.6
Somewhat satisfied	22.0	15.0	18.5
Availability of services nearby			
Very satisfied	74.6	73.3	73.9
Somewhat satisfied	22.0	15.0	18.5
Safety/security of the apartment unit or house			
Very satisfied	79.7	56.7	68.1
Somewhat satisfied	15.3	31.7	23.5
Suitability for children (adequate/safe outdoor)			
Very satisfied	49.2	51.7	50.4
Somewhat satisfied	27.1	11.7	19.3
Length of time allowed to stay			
Very satisfied	47.5	51.7	49.6
Somewhat satisfied	32.2	28.3	30.3
Availability of daycare nearby			
Very satisfied	39.0	28.3	33.6
Somewhat satisfied	8.5	11.7	10.1

Overall Impacts of SSH As Seen by Women Using Next Step and Other SSH

The emergency housing and trained counsellors were very important in helping me, otherwise, I would probably still be in that relationship or would not have survived trying to get out on my own. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

As a woman from an abusive relationship, I would never have made it without SSH. They helped me through the most difficult time of my life and I survived. Without SSH, I would be dead now, if not by his hands then by my own. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

I found the counselling very rewarding. Most importantly, I got self-esteem I never knew I had. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

Being in SSH has totally changed my life for the best. Since being in SSH, I have been able to live my life the way I should and I've never been able to do it before. I have started my counselling and have been able to wake up every morning knowing that I am safe. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

Although my children were young, I was happy to see the changes that occurred [while in SSH]. My oldest (2 years old) was quite aggressive and the child care worker helped him find ways to deal with the anger, and helped me find ways to deal with him. (Woman from non-Next Step SSH)

The counselling my children received helped them and helped me learn how to help them more. (Woman from Next Step SSH)

5.2 IMPACTS OF NEXT STEP SSH

5.2.1 Impacts of Next Step SSH on Clients

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Did the Next Step Program achieve the impacts intended? Did Next Step SSH achieve intended impacts for clients? Are there added costs for clients (e.g. relocation)? Did the Next Step Program result in any unintended positive or negative impacts?*

Impacts were generally positive as expected: *women using SSH generally reported that SSH had a significant positive impact on their lives and general well-being.* When questioned on a variety of areas related to general well-being, respondents indicated many positive changes in their lives since moving into SSH. Overall, Next Step did not appear to produce any significant unintended or unexpected impacts, although some expected effects occurred.

Impacts as Seen by Next Step Clients: Clients of Next Step SSH often reported that they felt more secure in SSH, more settled and able to make a home, and more independent and able to cope; they had expanded their personal friendship networks, talked more with peers, and had generally spent more time with friends (over 90% of Next Step residents reported one or more of these impacts). (Display 5.5.)

As well, many clients of Next Step SSH reported that they made new or greater use of community and social services, and had become more involved in community life (over 55% of respondents reported one or more of these impacts). Over 30% of Next Step clients reported that they had acquired new employment skills or improved old ones, and/or enrolled in formal training/education courses.

Sponsor Views of Impacts: SSH sponsors noted most frequently that Next Step and other SSH decreased the probability of a woman returning to the abusive relationship and changed the behaviour in general of women (over 64% of sponsors reported "great impact" and over 32% reported "some impact"); they also noted that SSH assisted women with the acquisition of life skills (48% reported "great impact").

Display 5.5
Selected Impacts of Next Step and Other SSH on Women
(as reported by women currently living in Next Step and Other SSH)

	Next Step SSH	Other SSH	All SSH
Impacts on Social and Family Life			
Talked more frequently with similar women	91.8%	84.3%	87.8%
Spend more time socializing with friends	85.2	75.7	80.2
Made a larger circle of friends/neighbours	70.5	67.1	68.7
Spent more time with family	57.4	52.9	55.0
Impacts on Personal Feelings			
Felt more secure	90.2%	87.1%	88.5%
Felt more independent/able to cope	86.9	85.7	86.3
Felt more settled/able to make a home	78.7	77.1	77.9
Felt lonely, missed old friends	41.0	31.4	35.9
Felt more stressed	29.5	32.9	31.3
Impacts on Community Services/Social Involvement			
Made new/more use of community or social services	55.7%	60.0%	58.0%
Became more involved in community activities	39.3	44.3	42.0
Made new or more use of health care services	36.1	45.7	41.2
Impacts on Relationship With Abusive Partner			
Abusive partner received counselling	26.2%	25.7%	26.0%
Abusive partner made agreed-upon contact	39.3	31.4	35.1
Abusive partner made agreed-upon contact with children	39.3	30.0	34.4
Abusive partner made contact against respondent's will	29.5	27.1	28.2
No contact with abusive partner	24.6	34.3	29.8
Impacts on Children			
Children have been happier	52.5%	45.7%	48.9%
Have been easier to get along with	42.6	41.4	42.0
Have been more difficult to get along with	34.4	18.6	26.0
Have made more friends	36.1	28.6	32.1
Have been lonely, missed old friends	26.2	18.6	22.1
Have done better in school	32.8	25.7	29.0
Have done worse in school	14.8	7.1	10.7
Impacts on Economic Situation and Behaviour			
Experienced greater financial difficulties	49.2%	41.4%	45.0%
Learned new skills or improved old ones	31.1	35.7	33.6
Enrolled in formal training or education courses	23.0	41.4	32.8

Other areas where Next Step and other SSH was widely perceived by sponsors to have an impact were: increasing the probability that women would better their financial or educational status and increasing the probability of women disclosing violence or abuse to begin with. Very few sponsors noted that SSH had "no impact"; those not reporting "some" or "great impact" generally reported "don't know".

FSS sponsors also reported significant impacts of SSH on clients in terms of decreasing the probability of women returning to the abusive relationship, assisting women with acquisition of life skills, and increasing the probability of women bettering their financial and educational status ("great impact" reported by over 40% of FSSs, and either "great" or "some impact" by over 66%). As well, SSH was seen by FSS as changing women's behaviour, increasing the probability of disclosing a violent situation, and reducing the probability of women going into assisted housing.

5.2.2 Impacts of Next Step and Other SSH on Children

Clients of Next Step SSH reported many positive changes for their children since moving to SSH (see Display 5.5 above). Residents of Next Step SSH noted in over 50% of cases that their children have been happier, and also reported that the children have done better in school (rather than worse), made new friends, and have been easier to get along with (rather than more difficult) (between 30% and 50% of Next Step residents reported these effects). Negative effects were less common in the areas of children being "easy" or "difficult" to get along with, children making friends or being lonely, and children doing well in school.

Given the tremendous disruption in a child's life following a (most often) sudden departure from the family home and, in many cases, ongoing harassment by the abusive partner, it is remarkable that any substantial positive impacts are reported at all. Furthermore, many survey respondents expressed the opinion that SSH had enabled them to break the "cycle of abuse" and prevent their children from growing up to become abusers or victims themselves.

5.2.3 Impacts of Next Step and Other SSH on FSSs

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Did Next Step SSH achieve intended impacts for FSSs?* and *Are there cost savings which the existence of SSH provides for FSSs?*

Case Study Results: In the case studies, the greatest impact of Next Step and other SSH on FSSs was reported to be the extra work load placed on FSS staff who provided support services. In most communities, Next Step SSH was developed on the premise that some services to SSH residents would be provided by FSS staff. In some cases, this created time difficulties for staff and, in at least one case, this approach was abandoned in favour of hiring full-time staff exclusively for SSH operations. However, for most SSH, funding for additional staff was simply not available.

Survey Results: Responses from the shelter sector survey on these issues were mixed. Half of FSS sponsors and two-thirds of SSH sponsors reported that SSH shortened the length of stay in FSSs, reduced the incidence of repeat stays at FSSs, and increased FSSs ability to deal with crisis needs. Just under half of SSH and one-third of FSSs, however, noted that SSH had the effect of increasing the demand on FSS. These results may warrant further research on the relationship between FSS and SSH, as well as the underlying (unexpressed) demand for both FSSs and SSH. Overall, SSH appears to increase the efficiency of the shelter system generally, so that Next Step impacts in this area are positive. But new SSH shelters do not appear to produce actual savings for FSSs, whose resources continue to be utilized as much as or more than before SSH was available.

5.2.4 Impacts of Next Step and Other SSH on Communities

In the evaluation, case study interviewees noted many areas where Next Step and other SSH programs had a great impact on the community at large as regards family violence. The most typically reported were an increased awareness of family violence issues and a change in community attitudes towards domestic violence (less tolerance etc.). These effects were reported by both FSS and SSH representatives. Next Step and other SSH representatives also reported an increase in community support for addressing family violence issues.

**Delivery of the Next Step Program
(Comments of Sponsors and Funders)**

An aspect that did not work was the requirement for budgeting funds to be spent by the federal government's year end. The time frame between commitment and completion of work and expenditure of funds was too tight each year. (from Survey of CMHC Branches)

Operating dollars should have been provided to ensure support services and overall coordination with other agency social services, including legal aid. (from Survey of Provincial/Territorial Funders)

Aspects that did not work included: sponsors did not receive confirmation that additional funds would be available for project operation; lack of recognition that occupants would require ongoing social support/counselling; need for better consultation with province and regional client groups to ensure program design meets needs of client group. (from Survey of CMHC Branches)

There is a definite need for more awareness and education of violence amongst Aboriginal women. (from Survey of SSH Sponsors)

Rural areas were left out in the Next Step Program. (from Survey of SSH Sponsors)

6. Design and Delivery Effectiveness of Next Step

6.1 NEXT STEP CAPITAL COSTS

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Were Next Step capital costs reasonable? Was Next Step more cost-effective than other funding mechanisms (such as Non-Profit Housing)?*

Capital Costs³⁶ of Next Step SSH: Capital costs for Next Step SSH projects (Display 6.1) varied substantially, reflecting the costs of land, construction and renovation in the various Provinces/Territories, and major urban areas. For example, the highest capital costs (project maximums) were in B.C. (high urban land costs) followed by Ontario (also high urban land costs) and Northwest Territories (high construction costs).

Display 6.1
Capital costs for Next Step SSH Units,
by Province/Territory

Province	Number of Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Newfoundland	1	\$67,500	\$67,500	\$67,500
Nova Scotia	3	52,600	85,000	68,650
New Brunswick	2	65,333	81,250	73,291
P.E.I.	2	82,500	82,500	82,500
Quebec	2	53,333	77,833	65,583
Ontario	6	71,250	126,375	92,375
Manitoba	3	34,063	45,292	40,979
Saskatchewan	4	30,000	76,000	41,500
Alberta	3	42,498	86,250	67,298
B.C.	8	27,778	132,500	77,460
Canada	34	27,778	132,500	72,000

³⁶ 'Capital costs' refer to the funding for acquisition and/or renovation or construction of the buildings for shelters, provided under Next Step in the form of fully-forgiveable, 15-year loans or mortgages.

Lowest capital costs, in comparison were found in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The national average was \$72,000 capital cost per unit, substantially under the target upper limit of \$85,000 per unit which had been set for the program.

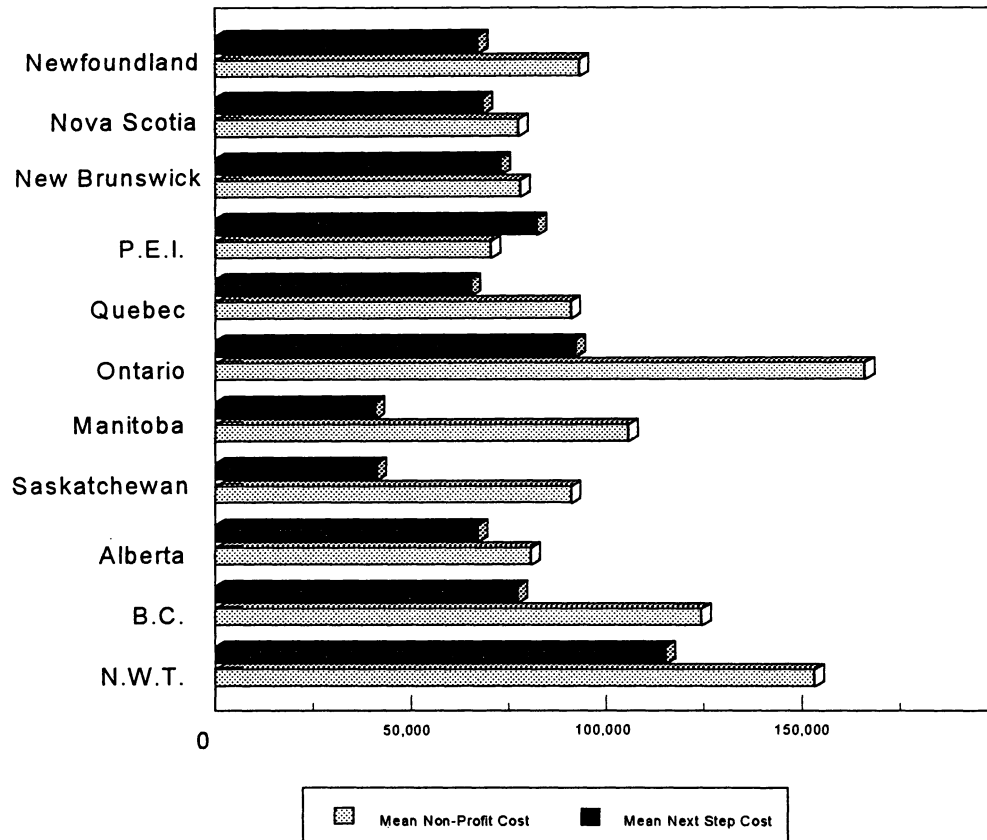
A Comparison to Non-Profit Housing: To provide a comparison of Next Step SSH capital costs relative to other social housing, a comparison was drawn to non-profit family housing developed in approximately the same period (commitments from 1991-93). These data are very general, since it was not possible to control for unit size (number of bedrooms) in the non-profit data base.³⁷ Yet these data (Display 6.2) indicate that Next Step unit capital costs were almost always lower than non-profit family unit capital costs, and as a rule, considerably lower.

These results could be indicative of good cost-efficiency of Next Step, but also may point to some differences in Next Step housing. For example, funder surveys and client characteristics indicate that Next Step SSH is less likely than other SSH to facilitate access by women with disabilities. Evidence of other limitations in SSH may be reflected in the fact that a number of Next Step Projects have come forward for Shelter Enhancement funds, even though Next Step units were built or renovated in the past few years. Indeed, concerns on these matters were also expressed by some Provincial agencies.

These concerns notwithstanding, the Next Step program and the participating sponsors appear to have placed a substantial volume of new SSH in place at comparatively low capital costs -- evidence of generally effective program management and planning on the part of sponsors, and efficient implementation by CMHC offices.

³⁷ Overall, these results, of lower costs for Next Step SSH must be regarded as exploratory rather than definitive, and some of them may relate in part to variations in the bedroom count, quality of housing provided, and also in the location of units, as many Next Step projects were in smaller communities or rural areas. As well, somewhat different standards may have been applied to Next Step SSH and Next Step was more likely to use existing buildings rather than construct new buildings. An examination of the unit-size mix of Next Step, however suggests that bedroom counts are probably not very different from that of most family housing.

Display 6.2
Capital Costs of Next Step and Non-Profit Housing
by Province/Territory
 (from CMHC Program Data)



6.2 CAPITAL LEVERAGING AND NEXT STEP

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Was Next Step capital leveraging successful? Are there other sources of capital funds for SSH?*

Next Step funding was highly incremental in creating this new SSH. Indeed, about two-thirds of the SSH sponsors reported that their housing would not have been built/acquired without Next Step funding. A small proportion of SSH sponsors (13.6%) reported that they had looked for other sources of capital funding, and 8.5% secured additional funding. Less than one out of ten sponsors felt that capital funds could be raised by the fundraising of sponsor groups, and less than one in ten thought it could be raised through private organizations.

Low levels of capital leveraging may have been because the program did not provide any leveraging incentives (for example, as would have occurred, had Next Step matched additional funds raised over a certain threshold). Leveraging may also have been limited by the timing of the program -- that Next Step applications and decisions often had to be made in a short-time, a factor working against the negotiation of supplementary funds (see Section 6.4 below).

At the same time, lack of additional capital funding from other government sources may have had positive effects for Next Step shelters such as less dependency on government funding, making them less vulnerable to funding cut-backs.

Views on Operational Funding for Next Step and Other SSH

Everyone else in the community is also using fundraising as a means of supplementing their group's income, so people get turned off by so much going on that it has become very difficult to raise any funds. (from Survey of SSH Providers)

In order to provide the [emergency and SSH] services for both women and children and to work with the community to end family violence against women, we need \$200,000 annually. We were cut \$120,000 of a \$200,000 budget. This meant closure or struggling to survive. We have turned to the community for support, but unfortunately they have not responded as well as we had hoped. 3 staff positions were terminated. We now have 2 staff to do the work of 5 and we must also raise funds. The 2 remaining staff are burning out quickly. (from Survey of SSH Providers)

[We] used to provide counselling services for women and children, self-help and support groups, child care, transportation and accompaniment services. Now provide nothing but housing and referral services because all funding was cut. (from Survey of SSH Providers)

[The Province] withdrew 100% of funding to SSH -- total amount was (several) million. Loss to us -- caused the Board to permanently lay-off (several) persons. All programming [for SSH] ended in December, 1995. (from Survey of SSH Providers)

6.3 NEXT STEP AND OTHER SSH PROGRAM VIABILITY

The evaluation addressed the question: *Are Next Step projects financially viable?* This question was considered in light of recent government restraints on funding for shelters in some jurisdictions.

6.3.1 The Funding Climate for SSH

Governments generally have restricted funding for social services in the mid-1990's. These restrictions were reported by sponsor groups and funders alike to be having a substantial impact on the shelter sector. As reflected in the surveys, SSH sponsors in some provinces report that they have been markedly affected by recent cutbacks in Provincial funding.

6.3.2 Program Viability

The survey of SSH sponsors revealed that Next Step SSH obtains most operating funding from rent and most of the balance from fundraising. Other SSH facilities were more likely than Next Step SSH to get operating funding from Provincial/ Territorial governments or local governments. In comparing funding cutbacks between Next Step and other SSH, it was found that 46% of Next Step SSHs reported being affected by restraints, as compared to 58% of other SSHs. It appears that Next Step programs are somewhat less affected by restraints because they operated from the beginning with less Provincial/Territorial funding. This appears to reflect, in part, the efficient coordination of FSS services with Next Step facilities (also see Section 7.3), but restraints have still resulted in problems for Next Step as well as other SSHs.

These impacts of funding restraints raise an important question regarding a fundamental Next Step Program assumption: that rental payments of clients could cover SSH operating expenses. In comments on the surveys, *CMHC branches and SSH providers both expressed the view that it was not realistic to assume that rental payments would cover all of these SSH costs.*

As well, the assumption that FSSs could provide support services, may have been too sweeping, with some FSSs unable to carry the extra workload, particularly where

service funding has been reduced. Financial viability of Next Step (and other) SSH is an important ongoing concern, particularly as regards services such as counselling, which are critical to the unique impacts of SSH. Thus, for both Next Step and also other SSH, it appears that significant uncertainties exist as to the long-run viability of programs, mainly because of uncertain funding for support services.

6.4 DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES FOR NEXT STEP

The evaluation addressed the questions: *How was Next Step implemented? Were Next Step development processes timely and efficient? Were Next Step application and selection processes fair and effective?*

Selection for Next Step Funding: Next Step Program selection criteria listed as “very important” by about half of CMHC branches, and rated as “important” by most of the rest, were: prior experience of the sponsor group; existence of emergency housing for women; and lack of SSH in the community. Other criteria rated as important by over 70% of branches were: availability of existing support services; cost-effectiveness per unit; design appropriateness; location and fit in the neighbourhood; ability of the sponsor group to secure funding; rationale for choice of new construction/acquisitions, and prevalence of family violence.

Roles of Funders: Slightly over half of the CMHC branch respondents indicated that they had played the lead role in program selection; about 27% of CMHC branches reported that they collaborated with other agencies (such as Provincial/ Territorial agencies) in the selection of programs and about 20% reported that they supported the proposals and priorities of Shelter Sponsor groups.

About half of the CMHC branches reported that Provincial/Territorial social services departments had a role in program delivery; less than half indicated that the Municipal/Regional government was involved; about one-third indicated that Provincial/Territorial transition house associations had a role in Next Step SSH program delivery.³⁸ This relatively modest level of Provincial/Territorial co-participation may have been encouraged by the lack of a requirement for Provincial/Territorial funding in Next Step.

³⁸ Of these results, the relatively low percentage of branches reporting Provincial/Territorial collaboration stands in stark contrast to the high level of Provincial/Territorial involvement previously reported for Project Haven (see Project Haven Evaluation Report, 1995, page 137).

Development Process: In general, SSH sponsors considered CMHC branch offices to be effective or very effective in nearly all aspects of delivery of the Next Step Program. However, a minority of SSH organizations indicated dissatisfaction with the time given to submit the proposal, guidelines and information provided on the program, and the proposal call method.

Timing appeared to be a key issue in the program process. This was reflected in case studies, where three of the five Next Step sponsors reported they were not satisfied with deadlines imposed for Next Step. One, for example, reported that it would have benefited from more time to shop for a suitable property. Others reported that they only had a short time to draw down the CMHC guaranteed mortgage, forcing them to buy a property that they were not 100% satisfied with.

As well, the short development time given reportedly reduced the opportunities for sponsors to secure funding from other sources (capital, leveraging and services). *Thus, some shelters reported they could not make informed decisions on availability of funding or develop independent fundraising abilities. CMHC branches also indicated that the time frame between commitment and completion of work and expenditure of funds was sometimes a problem.*

6.5 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT NEXT STEP PROGRAM FUNDING

Overall, Next Step was found to be delivered by CMHC in a cost-sensitive manner, with good satisfaction on the part of participating sponsor groups. However, some important areas for improvement noted, which would be relevant for future programs, included increased collaboration with Provincial/Territorial agencies, and the need for more planning time for program delivery.

7. SSH Generally: Impacts, Needs and Other Issues

7.1 IMPACTS AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS

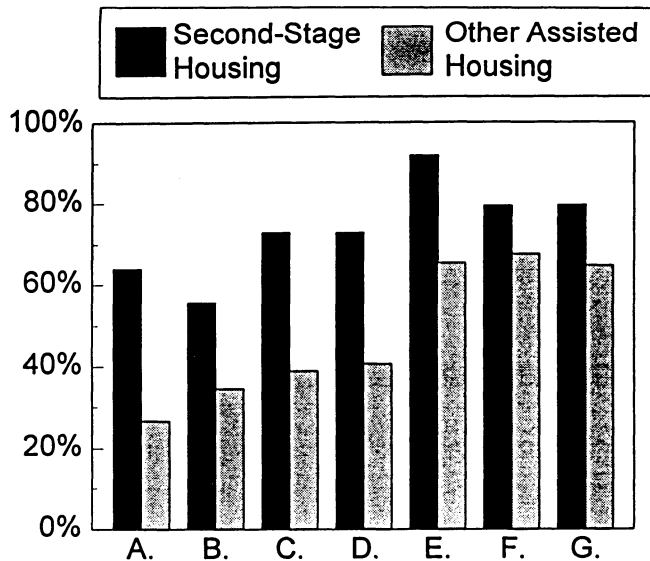
7.1.1 Impacts and Cost-Effectiveness of Next Step and Other SSH

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Is Next Step more cost-effective than other funding mechanisms (such as public or non-profit housing programs) for providing interim housing for women who have left an abusive relationship? Is the Next Step program (and SSH generally) cost-effective? What are the costs and benefits? Are there alternatives? Is this approach (Next Step SSH) more cost-effective than assisted housing plus support services? What is the added-value of SSH for clients?*

General Effectiveness of SSH: As can be seen in Display 7.1, the number of previously abused women who made new or more use of community/social services, made larger circles of friends and neighbours, and spent more time with family was about a third higher among women who resided in SSH than among women who resided in other assisted housing. The number of previously abused women reporting feeling more secure and safe was about 25% higher among women who resided in SSH, reflecting the greater attention given to security by providers of SSH.

The number of previously abused women reporting feeling more independent and able to cope, and becoming more involved in community activities was higher among those who resided in SSH than among those residing in other assisted housing; while the percentage of women reporting that they felt more settled and able to make a home was also higher among those who resided in SSH. These results suggest that the model of SSH, with its emphasis on support services and security, plays an important part in the stabilization of the lives of the women and children affected, with the positive impacts of SSH not seeming to be matched by other types of assisted housing.

Display 7.1
Womens' Assessments of Impacts on Lives Since
Moving to SSH or Other Assisted Housing
(women using Next Step and other SSH versus other assisted housing)



Impacts:

- A. Made new or increased use of community & social services.
- B. More involved in community activities.
- C. Made larger circle of friends & neighbours.
- D. Spent more time with family.
- E. Felt more secure/safe.
- F. Felt more settled/able to make a home.
- G. Felt more independent/able to cope.

Impacts of Services in SSH: A multiple regression analysis³⁹ was conducted to examine the impact of services in Next Step and other SSH on success of women in adjusting. Success indicators included positive changes in personal security, social participation, and economic development (increases in training, education, obtaining new employment). The key independent variable was use of services, with control variables including various demographic factors. The regression analysis indicated that the number of services received was a significant predictor of personal, social and economic change for clients of SSH and that some particular services played a key role. For example, counselling had substantial effects on personal development and education, while training and employment services had a significant impact on economic development of women using SSH.

³⁹ Multiple regression is a statistical technique for estimating the impact of one process or variable on another, controlling for extraneous factors. For example, a multiple regression analysis of the impacts of training programs on the incomes of women leaving a family violence situation would ideally control for extraneous factors such as women's age, education, prior work experience, etc.

These results appear to verify the importance of specific support services as part of successful SSH. But while the analysis indicated that services were extremely important overall for SSH, no conclusions could be drawn about the importance of delivering services on-site versus off-site. This, to the evaluators was consistent with the evidence supporting the concept of the *SSH mission* as key, rather than specific operational characteristics of SSH.

A Regression Analysis of Impacts of SSH on Clients: A multivariate analysis was conducted to test the impact of SSH on women, controlling for various background characteristics. The analysis compared the evaluation's national survey of women using SSH, to a national sample of women using other forms of assisted housing. Both groups of women had recently left an abusive relationship before completing the survey.

The analysis was conducted using multiple regression, with three separate outcome variables predicted by use of SSH: (1) individual social participation (e.g. participation in community organizations); (2) personal self-development ("felt more secure"); and (3) economic development (e.g. "got a new job" or "increased income"). Control variables included age, education, income source, Aboriginal status, number of children and number of adult household members.

Results indicated significant impacts of SSH on personal and social development (controlling for background characteristics). Some of these results showed that *women who had used SSH were more likely to participate socially, and more likely to experience positive personal development*. Economic development, however, was only affected in cases where women received training and employment services while at shelters. *Overall, SSH had clear positive impacts, and support services generally were found to be positively associated with all of these success outcomes.*

These exploratory results suggest that the effects of SSH are significantly more positive for women leaving abusive relationships than is a direct move to assisted housing (non-profit, rent supplement) -- a finding again supportive of the "mission" explanation of the success of SSH.

An Exploratory Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: As noted earlier, questions of cost-effectiveness are complex, since many of the questions posed relate to longer-term impacts. For example, the proposition may be put forward that women using SSH will later on obtain higher economic productivity (less probability of reliance on social assistance, net taxpayers), and improved health (mental health of women and children etc.).

An exploratory analysis was developed to look at the ways in which SSH compared to other assisted housing in cost-effectiveness. This analysis -- a relatively simple "if-then" comparison -- contrasts an estimate of the cost of SSH versus assisted housing (using non-profit housing as a comparison), with a control for service utilization, and success rates. Comparisons are made to a global success indicator, where "success" was measured as personal, social and economic development of women leaving abusive relationships.

Considering costs for housing, management and support services indicated that overall SSH was nearly three times as cost-effective as assisted housing in aiding personal, social, and economic development success for women experiencing family violence. This analysis is primarily illustrative. To definitively assess cost-effects of SSH, more substantial long term research is needed, including research which focuses not only on social development factors, but also on such important long-term indicators as economic independence (reduced reliance on social assistance). Nonetheless, the general conclusion of this analysis suggests that more cost-effective outcomes can be achieved through the SSH mechanism, than through assisted housing generally.

Since both types of programs (assisted housing generally, and SSH) provide housing, and both allow access to support services, albeit at somewhat different levels, *it is difficult to avoid the conclusion suggested earlier that the fundamental difference in SSH's achieving greater positive impacts comes from the mission orientation of SSH groups, and the unique configuration of services they provide: high security, emphasis on healing of abuse, mutual aid among women who have experienced abuse, etc. This conclusion underlines the importance of the delivery of Next Step-type SSH programs through sponsor groups which are experienced with and committed to such programs.*

7.2 UNMET NEED FOR SSH

A key evaluation question was: *How much SSH is actually needed?*

Current Access to SSH as an Indicator of Need: To examine unmet need for SSH, we first examined the equity of access to SSH across Canada. The estimated distribution of SSH units across the Provinces and Territories was examined relative to the population of women aged 20+ experiencing family violence using shelters and not returning to the abusive relationship.⁴⁰ For example, in Newfoundland, there is one SSH unit for every 122 women in potential need. In Quebec, there is one SSH unit for every 47.3 women in potential need. At the other extreme, New Brunswick has one SSH place for every 11.3 women in potential need. Half of the Provinces/Territories appear to have moderate access with 10-25 women in potential need of SSH for each SSH unit (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I. and Yukon) (see Display 7.2).

Since there is no evidence that SSH is over-built in any Province or Territory, the evaluators took as one current standard: the availability of SSH in the 6 more accessible Provinces/Territories. This was taken as representing a point of reference for assessing needs (on grounds that women in all Provinces/Territories deserve equal access to service, and on the assumption that no decrease in access to SSH would be planned for any provinces). *To meet this benchmark, some 430 new SSH units would be required across Canada -- nearly doubling the current supply of SSH.*

The 7% solution: Another way to quantify needs is to consider the number of women who, after leaving an emergency shelter, return to the abusive relationship (estimated to be about 3,000 women per year, based on the estimate of 44,000 women using shelters each year (Statistics Canada, 1995), and the estimated 7% of women who return home because of a lack of alternatives). Assuming that each such woman on average requires 6-8 months residence in SSH, this translates into a need for up to 1,500 more SSH units than now exist in Canada.

⁴⁰ Estimates of potential need based on Statistics Canada Transition House Survey, and Project Haven surveys.

These estimates of significant unmet need -- of from 430 to up to 1,500 additional SSH units -- are supported by a variety of observations by key groups surveyed (Federal and Provincial/Territorial funders, local housing bodies, and the shelter sector), as was noted in Section 4.3.

Display 7.2
Estimated Numbers of SSH Units per population
by Province/Territory, and for Canada
 (ordered by level of availability of SSH)

	Estimated # of SSH Units**	Population* Exposed to Family Violence and in Potential Need of SSH	Population* Exposed to Family Violence Per SSH Unit
New Brunswick	23	258	11.3
Nova Scotia	36	526	14.6
Saskatchewan	26	391	15.0
P.E.I.	4	58	15.0
Manitoba	41	908	22.1
Yukon	5	112	22.4
Ontario	211	5,644	26.8
Quebec	61	2,885	47.3
B.C.	52	2,678	51.5
Alberta	34	1,838	54.0
Newfoundland	1	122	122.0
Northwest Territories	1	160	160.0
Canada	495	15,580	31.5

* Number of women experiencing family violence, using shelters and not returning home, where use of shelters is estimated for the 1995 Transition House Survey, and an estimated 35% of women in shelters are expected not to return home.

** Numbers of units available for women experiencing family violence may vary slightly because a few non-Next Step shelters, particularly in Quebec, serve women with other types of transitional housing needs than those resulting from family violence.

7.3 ROLE OF FSS IN SSH

The Key Role of FSSs: The nature of the relationship between FSSs and SSH was particularly strong for Next Step operations, but varies in form across the country.

Women in SSH reported making use of a wide variety of services after leaving the abusive relationship,⁴¹ with more reporting receiving services from FSSs rather than from SSH (see Display 7.3). Short-term and crisis counselling was obtained from SSH sponsors by 43% of women using SSH; with other forms of counselling obtained from SSH including long-term counselling (36%), counselling for one's children (27%), and support groups (46%). Clients of SSH also obtained a variety of material supports from the SSH, such as help with household goods (45%), housing referral (37%), education/training information (26%), and parenting skills programs (income 24%).

In general, where SSH organizations provide only low levels of support services to their clients, it is often FSS organizations who fill service gaps. This finding suggests that low levels of funding for SSH draws resources from the FSS system more generally. In two case studies, it is the *referring* FSS which provides individual follow-up to SSH residents, and not necessarily the "parent" FSS of the SSH. This service delivery model is not seen as ideal, but was established in response to funding restrictions. Although this model allows for a more efficient distribution of resources in situations where funding is scarce, it is very demanding on FSSs, and one SSH sponsor reported that many shelters will not refer clients because of their inability to provide follow-up services. Indeed, evidence from the shelter sector surveys indicated that because of recent funding cutbacks in certain provinces, SSH organizations, which previously provided a wide variety of services, were no longer able to do so, and now only provided housing and referral services.⁴²

⁴¹ It is worth noting that, after the need for safety, the most important factor in respondents' decisions to move into SSH was the provision of counselling and support. This was listed as a key factor in the decision to leave the abusive relationship by 18% of women using SSH.

⁴² Among the services which shelters reported were no longer available were children's counselling, which had been cancelled altogether in one case and reduced to 4 hours per week in another. This was an important concern for many respondents, particularly women using SSH. For the SSH sponsors, counselling for children is seen as vital to preventing or breaking generational patterns of abuse.

Display 7.3
Services Used by Women Staying at Next Step and Other SSH
(data from the survey of women using Next Step and other SSH)

	From/ Through FSS	From/ Through SSH	From/ Through Other Agencies	Services Ever Used*
Services Used By Women In SSH				
Short-term/crisis counselling	64.1%	43.0%	20.3%	84.0%
Crisis telephone line	43.0	8.2	9.0	53.1
Accompaniment services (to court)	19.1	18.8	11.7	43.0
Housing referral	35.2	36.7	7.8	64.8
Education/training information	9.4	25.8	25.0	50.0
Employment services	4.3	9.8	19.5	30.5
Income assistance (welfare)	34.8	28.1	21.1	69.5
Help with household goods	33.2	45.3	24.6	73.4
Child care (babysitting)	10.2	12.9	17.6	33.6
Tutoring for children	3.1	3.9	3.9	9.8
Long-term counselling for yourself	19.1	35.5	33.2	65.2
Counselling for children	19.9	27.0	16.4	46.9
Family counselling (with abusive partner)	3.1	2.7	9.8	14.5
Support groups	28.5	45.7	26.6	74.2
Parenting skills programs	11.3	23.8	19.1	43.4
Child protection/family services	10.5	13.7	15.6	29.7
Police service	18.0	14.5	16.8	38.3
Other	2.7	2.0	2.0	5.9
Number of Above Services Being Used				
None	25.4%	24.6%	33.6%	5.1%
Any 1 - 3 types of services used	28.1	25.8	27.7	7.0
Any 4 - 5 types of services used	18.4	18.8	18.0	12.5
Any 6 - 9 types of services used	19.5	23.8	16.4	33.6
Any 10 types of services used	8.6	7.0	4.3	41.8

7.4 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO SSH

The evaluation addressed the questions: *Is there a need for increased use of social housing portfolio, existing shelters, earmarking social housing expenditures for family violence? Are there other alternatives?*

Is Assisted Housing A Substitute for SSH? In the evaluation surveys, Transition House Associations, Provincial/Territorial departments, and CMHC branches were asked to consider the best alternative to SSH, to meet the medium-term housing needs of women leaving an abusive relationship.

If sufficient SSH was not available, a priority placement policy for subsidized housing and/or specially designated units within subsidized housing seemed to be the first and the second choices for all of the funding organizations. In addition, an extension of stay in FSSs was suggested by the FSSs and local housing agencies. Some evaluation respondents, however, felt that some of the need for SSH could be filled by *designating units within other types of housing programs* (such as non-profits or co-operatives) for women who are victims of family violence, and their children.

In practice, only a few of the local housing agencies surveyed reported that they provided a high priority for women who had experienced family violence and who have housing needs. Although priority access to housing for women who had experienced family violence, and who had longer-term housing needs was reported by three-quarters of the local housing agencies. This was usually only reflected in a small part of their point-rating systems (a typical public housing body among those allowing for special consideration for family violence, for example, reported that 5 of 100 points could be based on experience of family violence).

Only a few local housing agencies were found to provide aid in accessing support services and additional security for women in their housing who had experienced family violence. About one out of ten local housing agencies surveyed reported that they provided any special access or support services to women who have left an abusive relationship, and none reported that they provided any special security services -- a particularly critical gap, given the central importance of security to the housing needs of women from abusive relationships.

These results suggest strongly that while the need for SSH is extensive, assisted housing, as a rule, does not, at this time in Canada, provide a satisfactory working alternative to SSH, and that such housing would require substantial changes in order to meet the demand for transitional housing and the specific needs of women who have left abusive situations.

At the same time, various provincial initiatives suggest the possibility for providing additional SSH through the innovative use of existing social housing stock, involving mutually beneficial partnerships between housing bodies and SSH provider organizations. This notion builds upon the view of some evaluation respondents that the need for SSH could best be filled by designating some assisted housing units as specifically for women experiencing family violence.

8. Conclusions

Regarding Next Step Specifically: The evaluation led to a number of clear conclusions about the Next Step Program.

- **that Next Step was effectively delivered** as reflected in a high level of satisfaction by sponsor groups across Canada;
- **That the Next Step Services Model was efficient**, making very good use of existing FSS services to meet the needs of women residing in Next Step shelters;
- **that Next Step greatly expanded SSH in Canada**, with an approximate doubling of the supply of SSH in the period of Next Step implementation, the number of SSH facilities increasing to 68 shelters between 1992 and 1996 (of which 34 were Next Step);
- **that Next Step was economical**, as reflected in modest capital costs (lower than non-profit housing in 11 of 12 Provinces and Territories examined), and an efficient service model (use of existing sponsor groups and linkages to FSSs);
- **that women using Next Step were very satisfied:** women using Next Step SSH reported high satisfaction with security, quality of housing, affordability and other service features of the housing;
- **that Next Step demonstrated positive impacts:** women using Next Step SSH were found to demonstrate a high level of positive impacts on their lives: Next Step aided them in their decision not to return to the abuse situation, was associated with positive life changes for women and their children, and aided the development of personal and economic independence; and
- **that aspects of Next Step merit emulation:** the evaluation concluded that overall, with some adjustments, Next Step could be taken as a useful point of departure for CMHC in designing future programs in family violence housing.

Some conclusions regarding SSH generally were:

- **that SSH is generally highly effective:** SSH including Next Step, demonstrates a high degree of effectiveness in providing services to women who have experienced family violence;
- **areas for improvement:** that some specific areas for improvement in SSH (including Next Step) can be identified including: need to assess physical condition of units, and need to improve access to economic-related services for women in SSH; and
- **significant need for SSH:** the evaluation indicates that there is a significant unmet need for SSH across Canada. Evaluation estimates suggest that as many as 3,000 Canadian women return to an abusive relationship each year, simply because they have no alternative. A need for up to 1,500 units of additional SSH was suggested by the analysis.

The evaluation also identified a number of issues for which solutions are much needed. These problems include: (1) how to create an expansion of the supply of SSH in a time of financial restraints. This issue was deemed to be extremely important considering that significant shortfalls are evidenced in the current response of assisted housing to women who have experienced family violence; and (2) how to rationalize the financing of services for SSH.

Considering unmet needs for SSH as the single most important issue emerging from the evaluation, CMHC could make an important contribution to dealing with these needs, given its experience: (1) CMHC has a long-standing track record with this sector - most family violence shelters in Canada today would not exist if not for CMHC's past support, through the non-profit housing program, Project Haven, and Next Step; and (2) CMHC has been partner with Provincial/Territorial and local governments and others to create Canada's considerable system of assisted housing, which has been difficult for women experiencing family violence to access, in spite of their generally low incomes.

The question of how to expand the supply of SSH in a maximally cost-effective manner is important, since SSH appears to be the most effective approach to provide interim housing for women experiencing family violence. Answers may be found in some experiments and initiatives of Provincial/Territorial departments of housing, and housing corporations, working jointly with family violence groups. One approach would be leasing appropriate existing housing (generally smaller, stand-alone projects, such as sixplexes, small row-house projects, etc.) to SSH sponsor groups on a long-term basis (15-20 years), with minimum capital costs incurred. Local housing bodies could retain responsibility for the physical maintenance of the housing, and supply rent-geared-to-income linkages, but the operation of the SSH facility would be solely the responsibility of the SSH sponsor group which would provide its expertise and mission orientation.

Through such a process, Canada's half-million or so assisted housing units could play an increased role by setting aside units for SSH for women leaving family violence situations. Provision of these units would substantially remedy problems which women leaving violent relationships (most of whom have very low incomes) have in accessing affordable interim housing.⁴³ These initiatives would tap the synergy of important new partnerships, making the best use of each party's expertise.

Research Needs: The research conducted for this study provides an informative view of Next Step and other SSH and its operation in Canada, including findings of important positive impacts of SSH on the women who have used/are using these services. There is a need for more systematic research in this area, however. There is a particular need for a study which would track the sequence of events which unfold for women who experience family violence and leave the abusive relationship.

Unlike recent national cross-sectional surveys on women and violence, such as the Statistics Canada *Violence Against Women Survey*, research is needed which would be focused on tracking, through time, a sample of women who experience family violence, through the problems which they face, in leaving the abusive relationship, or returning to it, or (having left) making their way to new productive and independent lives. Thus the suggested research would be a longitudinal study much needed for the development of more informed public policy and programs to serve the needs of women who experience family violence.

⁴³ Thus, the proposed partnership model and housing "set asides" do not in any way argue that "women experiencing family violence are more important than low income households".