



Tri-Cities
**Homelessness
& Housing**
Task Group

Tri-Cities Homeless and Housing Task Group

The Housing Needs of Women and Their Children in the Tri-Cities

June 2013

Prepared by:
Michelle Ninow of
M. Ninow Consulting
mninow@smartt.com

Vancity

Funding for this study generously provided by Vancity Community Foundation

Contents

1. Introduction 2

2. Background 2

3. Planned Projects & Initiatives 10

4. Key Research Findings..... 11

5. Priority Projects..... 14

6. Service Implications 16

7. Potential Funding Sources 18

Appendix 19

- List of organizations consulted
- Summary of unmet need in the Tri-Cities
- Detailed information about Housing Registry wait times

Support for this project does not necessarily imply Vancity’s endorsement
of the findings or content of this report

1. Introduction

The Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Group is actively committed to the development of a continuum of housing and supports for those who are homeless or precariously housed in the Tri-Cities. As part of achieving this mission, the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Group is seeking to better understand the housing needs of women who are single parents and their children, including those who are fleeing violence and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This report provides information about the housing needs of women in the Tri-Cities who are single parents and their children. The report includes available demographic information, an inventory of existing housing and supports for women and children in the Tri-Cities and information about vulnerable population sub-groups. The report then identifies project priorities and services which are needed by women and their children in the Tri-Cities.

The information contained in this report has been collected primarily from interviews with service and housing providers in the Tri-Cities and with women who have experienced housing challenges in the community (see the Appendix for a list of the organizations which participated in the interviews).

It should be noted that some incidents of intimate partner violence against men and the occurrence of single parent fathers and their children have been noted in the Tri-Cities; however, for the purposes of this report, the focus will be on women and their children.

2. Background

The women and children who are the focus of this report include those fleeing domestic violence and those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness for other reasons. These two broad groupings have a few clear differences; primarily that women with children who are fleeing violence do have an immediacy of need and a heightened requirement for security and safety. However, several of the interview respondents indicated that whether women are fleeing violence or are homeless for other reasons they are often dealing with a similar range of issues that can include trauma and violence (recent or in their past), mental health concerns, and addictions.

The following supporting data and inventory of existing housing is provided to assist with determining the level of need for housing options for women with children in the Tri-Cities. It should be noted that the data available on women with children who are homeless or fleeing violence is not as complete as one would hope. We will look at several data sets which will hopefully provide the reader with some sense of the scope of the issue. The data pertaining to unmet demand is also presented in summary form in the Appendix.

Supporting Data

Women Fleeing Violence

According to Tri-Cities service providers there is no stereotypical woman who flees violence. A woman fleeing violence could be a stay at home mom, a woman who is looking after her older parents or disabled adult child, a pregnant teen or a sex-trade worker. As a result, a range of housing options are required to meet the needs of this population.

In 2010, the incidence of *Police-reported* victims of intimate partner violence in BC was 427 per 100,000 (the Canadian rate is 363/100,000)¹. This would equate to roughly 935 victims in the Tri-Cities. This statistic includes both men and women although we know that a significant proportion of those experiencing intimate partner violence are women. This rate only includes those incidents that are police-reported, which will certainly not capture all incidents.

Data from Tri-City Transitions indicates that between 200 and 300 women with children fleeing violence stay at the Transition House in the Tri-Cities each year. Roughly double that number are turned away each year and may seek shelter at other facilities in the region.

The reasons for turn aways from the Transition House include:

- Did not fit Tri-City Transitions mandate (e.g. it was primarily a housing issue)
- It was exclusively a mental health or addictions issue
- The transition house was full
- Could not accommodate the family's needs
- There were physical accessibility issues (to be addressed in the new facility)

It is unclear exactly how many of the women in the Tri-Cities with children who are fleeing violence resolve their housing crisis. We know some will receive assistance from their families and friends and others will find facilities and services in other communities. Some women will be able to access affordable/ subsidized housing.

BC Housing's Priority Placement Program is a service for women with low-income who are leaving transition houses. BC Housing works with the transition houses to ensure that women who are leaving abusive relationships and who do not have safe, permanent housing receive priority when affordable housing units become available. For women fleeing domestic abuse, the transition house or second stage housing service provider needs to complete a Supplemental Applicant Form. This will reflect a higher level of need on the application and identify that applicant as a "priority referral" applicant for those leaving transition houses and "priority referral - second stage" for those leaving second stage housing. BC Housing reports that 17 women with children in the Tri-Cities who are fleeing violence have

¹ Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2010, Statistics Canada, 2012 (as referenced in Taking Action on Domestic Violence in BC, 2012; Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, MCFD).

applied for housing through the Housing Registry in the past year (April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013)². (See the Appendix for a municipal breakdown of the data). This rate does not include applications for housing made directly to non-profit housing providers who are not members of the Housing Registry.

According to BC Housing, the wait time for permanent social housing in the Tri-Cities for women fleeing violence with children who have applied to the Housing Registry as a priority referral has ranged from 16 – 28 months over the past three years. There are a number of contributing factors to determining wait times. For instance, we know that for women who are willing to move outside of the Tri-Cities for access to housing the wait can often be shorter. Refer to the Appendix for more detailed information on Housing Registry wait times.

Some of the women fleeing violence in the Tri-Cities may become part of the next group to be discussed in this report, women at-risk of homelessness.

Women At-risk of Homelessness

According to the 2006³ Census there were 9,480 households (out of a total of 66,200) in the Tri-Cities which were spending more than 30% of their income on housing. That is 14% of all households in the Tri-Cities. Of those households 4,155 were at risk of homelessness because they were actually spending at least 50% of their income on housing. We know that of this number there were 750 female single parent head of households paying more than 50% of their income in housing in the Tri-Cities⁴. These women and their children require more affordable housing, most likely including a subsidy. They may also need some supports to ensure that they remain successfully housed.

Female Single Parent Head of Households paying more than 50% for housing (2006)

Community	Number of Households
Coquitlam	430
Port Coquitlam	235
Port Moody	85
Tri-Cities Total	750

Source: Statistics Canada 2006

² Applicant statistics reflect applicant households with active (live) or on hold status in The Housing Registry, a centralized database for participating housing providers; Non-participants of The Housing Registry keep their own applicant waiting list; Households with women and children are single parent family households with a female household head and one or more child under 19 years of age; Women fleeing violence applicants are denoted by priority groups: Domestic Violence/Abuse, Domestic Violence/Abuse - Transition House, and Domestic Violence/Abuse - Second Stage.

³ 2011 statistics are not yet available.

⁴ Statistics Canada 2006 as reported in the Metro Vancouver Housing Data Book. Revised February 2013

BC Housing reports that, as of March 31, 2013 there are currently 153 women with children in the Tri-Cities who have applied to the BC Housing Registry and are waiting for housing.⁵ The table below provides the breakdown by municipality and applicant category.

Number of Women with Children Households from the Tri-Cities in the Housing Registry as of March 31, 2013

Applicant Category	Coquitlam	Port Coquitlam	Port Moody	Tri-Cities Total
Disabilities	0	1	0	1
Family	93	43	13	149
Wheelchair Accessible	1	1	0	2
Pending	1	0	0	1
Total Applicant Households	95	45	13	153

Source: BC Housing, Housing Connections, March 31, 2013

In addition, BC Housing reports that there are currently 308 women with children who are in the Rental Assistance Program as of March 31, 2013. The Rental Assistance Program (RAP) provides eligible low-income, working families with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payments in the private market. Households with women and children are single parent family households with a female household head and one or more child under 19 years of age.

Number of Women with Children Households from the Tri-Cities in the Rental Assistance Program as of March 31, 2013

Community	Number of Households
Coquitlam	194
Port Coquitlam	79
Port Moody	35
Total Households - Tri-cities	308

Source: BC Housing, Rental Assistance Program, March 31, 2013

Women who are homeless

The only emergency housing facility for people who are homeless in the Tri-Cities is a mat program which has been operated at host church facilities for the past 6 winters. The program is currently operating from October 1st to March 31st as the Tri-Cities Bridge Shelter at Northside Church in Port Coquitlam. Data for the mat program is presented below. While women can be accommodated at the shelter, children cannot.

⁵ Applicant statistics reflect applicant households with active (live) or on hold status in The Housing Registry, a centralized database for participating housing providers; Non-participants of The Housing Registry keep their own applicant waiting list; Households with Women and Children are single parent family households with a female household head and one or more child under 19 years of age.

Tri-Cities Mat Program - Individual Use						
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Men	106	172	124	80	80	145
Women	29	51	20	14	21	26

Staff at Hope for Freedom, the organization responsible for the shelter and homeless outreach in the Tri-Cities, report that typically women make up 15% to 25% of the visible homeless population in the community. In their experience, many homeless women have children, although often the children have been apprehended by MCFD or they are living with other family members. They report that homeless women who present at the shelter or are located in the community with children are usually found some form of housing relatively quickly by Hope for Freedom staff.

It is important to note that those in the homeless serving sector in Metro Vancouver have identified that homeless women, especially those with children are difficult to find and count because they are often hidden in the community, doing what they can to stay off the streets. They will couch surf, live in their car, or stay in unsafe housing rather than risk visible homelessness on the streets.

Inventory

For the purpose of this report we will examine two general types of housing and supports for women and children. First, for women and children fleeing violence in Metro Vancouver there is typically a specific set of facilities with support services that are made available. When a woman decides to leave a violent domestic situation with her children, she may turn first to a transition house in her community. Transition houses provide a communal living option with a high level of support. Most transition houses accept children. Typically female children are accepted up to 19 years of age but male children are usually only accepted up to age 12 - 14; these guidelines will vary from house to house. Stays at transition houses in Metro Vancouver are usually about 30 days, although some will extend stays as needed. A few transition houses in the region serving specific needs have longer stays.

If there are concerns for the safety of the woman and her children in regards to her abuser, a safe transition house in another community in the region, province or country will be identified depending on the level of threat. It is common for women fleeing violence to stay at a transition house outside her home community. The locations of transition houses are kept confidential in order to protect the women and children who are living there.

Once a woman has stabilized at the transition house with her children, she may move to second stage housing, if it is available. Second stage housing usually consists of an individual unit with support services, and her stay will be approximately 3 months to 2 years depending on the guidelines of the organization operating the housing and the needs of the woman.

In a few communities in Metro Vancouver, there is also third stage housing, which is much longer term and provides an ongoing level of support to the women and children. This can be particularly helpful if there are other associated concerns such as mental health issues or addictions. Eventually most women will aim to find permanent affordable housing in their community, sometimes through BC Housing’s Housing Registry. Given the financial challenges facing this population, subsidized housing options are often required.

For women with children who are not fleeing violence but who are homeless or precariously housed there is a different, and somewhat limited, set of options both locally in the Tri-Cities and more broadly in Metro Vancouver. Emergency shelters provide the first line of housing, although there are only a few in the region which are able to accept families with children, two are located in New Westminister. Stays at shelters are short term and efforts are made to find longer term housing as quickly as possible.

Elizabeth Gurney House, located in New Westminister, is operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society. It is a shelter for women and their children. While shelters stays are typically up to 30 days, Elizabeth Gurney House often keeps women for much longer periods of time to ensure they can move on successfully to appropriate housing. The shelter facility can house up to 12 women with children and over the course of the year typically serves roughly 77 women. Staff report that approximately 25% of the women and children served by the shelter are from the Tri-Cities. The turn away rate for the shelter is currently high at 1,545 women and children over the past fiscal year. This rate suggests that additional shelters for women and children in the area are needed.

In the region there is some transitional housing for women who are pregnant or who have young infants who are at risk of having their children apprehended and/or are in recovery. This housing is usually available for 6 months to 2 years. There is also a limited amount of supportive⁶ housing for women with children. In the Tri-Cities there is one supportive housing development solely for women with children, the YWCA’s Como Lake Gardens. Most women with children in this category seek permanent affordable housing, often subsidized, through BC Housing or individual non-profit organizations. BC Housing reports that wait times for non-priority applicants (not fleeing violence) who have been housed in the Tri-Cities has ranged from 22-33 months over the past three years.

This graphic summarizes the potential resources that can be available to women and their children seeking housing options.

Fleeing Violence	Homeless or At-risk
Transition House	Emergency Shelter
Second Stage	Transitional Housing
Third Stage/ Supportive Housing	Supportive Housing
Affordable Housing	Affordable Housing

⁶ Supportive housing combines subsidized housing with the supports which assist tenants to stabilize their lives, enhance their independent living skills, and reconnect with their communities.

The following tables provide a listing of the actual options available for women and children in the Tri-Cities and neighbouring communities.

Current Facilities & Housing in the Tri-Cities for Women & Children

Type of Housing or Service	Org/Name	Location	Number of Beds/Units	Notes
Transition House	Tri-Cities Transitions Society – Joy’s Place	Tri-Cities	10	For women and their children who leave their homes due to abuse. Length of stay up to 30 days.
Second or Third Stage		Tri-Cities	0	
Emergency Shelter	Tri-Cities Bridge Shelter	Port Coquitlam	0	Does not accept children
Transitional Housing		Tri-Cities	0	
Supportive Housing	YWCA - Como Lake Gardens	Coquitlam	30	For women and children only; community developer on site; women can stay until their youngest child is 19 or 24 if attending post-secondary.
Social Housing for Families	Non-profit housing societies & BC Housing	Tri-Cities	1,899 units (2012)	1373 of these units are accessible through BC Housing’s Housing Registry; a priority housing placement worker will assist women fleeing violence.
Co-operative Housing	Co-operative Housing Federation of BC	Tri-Cities	1048 units (2013)	
Affordable Market Rental	Homes for Good	Port Coquitlam	variable	Assists people who are homeless (including women with children) to find market rentals; the organization may sign the lease; rental subsidy provided; connection to services provided.
Rental Assistance in private market for women and their children	BC Housing	Tri-Cities	308	

Type of Housing or Service	Org/Name	Location	Number of Beds/Units	Notes
Homeless Rent Subsidies	BC Housing (administered by Hope For Freedom)	Tri-Cities	23	The rent subsidies are administered through the Homeless Outreach Program which connects people who are homeless to housing, income assistance, and community-based support services.

Current Facilities & Housing in Neighbouring Communities for Women & Children

Type of Housing	Org/Name	Location	Number of beds/units	Notes
Transition House	Marguerite Dixon Transition House	Burnaby	10	
Transition House	Monarch Place Transition House	New Westminster	10	
Transition House	Cythera House	Maple Ridge	12	
Second Stage	Burnaby Safe House	Burnaby	4	
Second & Third Stage	Wenda's Place	Burnaby	9	
Second Stage	Chrysalis Place	New Westminster	7	
Second Stage	Cythera Second Stage	Maple Ridge	2	
Emergency Shelter for women and children	Elizabeth Gurney House	New Westminster	12	Approximately 25% of the clients are from the Tri-Cities; accepts boys up to 12yrs and girls up to 19yrs
Emergency shelter for Families	Fraserside shelter	New Westminster	12	Single parents (Men or women) with children, single women, and couples. Length of stay up to 30 days. Screening process for the shelter comprehensive; no alcohol/drugs on site or under the influence; not wheelchair accessible
Emergency Shelter for Women & Children and Second Stage Housing	Maxxine Wright	Surrey	Shelter – 12 Second stage – 24 units	For pregnant and parenting mothers with young children. Able to accept women with addictions and involved with MCFD.

Type of Housing	Org/Name	Location	Number of beds/units	Notes
Transitional Housing	Transition to New Beginnings	New Westminster	4	For women who are pregnant or who have a young infant; who have completed residential addiction treatment or structured relapse prevention and who are waiting for access to safe affordable housing.
Youth Housing	Aunt Leah's House	Burnaby	4	Supported housing for pregnant and parenting mothers under 19 in MCFD care. Support through pregnancy and up to 6 months after the baby is born. Aboriginal mothers a priority.

One Woman's Story

Before going to jail I was in my own apartment for 13 years in the Tri-Cities. I had two kids. When I got out of jail I had no job – how was I going to pay rent? I ended up at Elizabeth Gurney Shelter in New Westminster. One child came with me and the other stayed with a girlfriend. When I went to jail my landlord threw all of my stuff out. When I got out of jail I had nothing.

The shelter staff let me stay as long as I needed, which was 5 months. Normally stays are limited to 30 days. They worked with me to find a place. They gave me stuff from the free store and then provided furniture and food when I moved into my place.

I applied to the Housing Registry but while I was waiting for a place I found a subsidized unit on my own in Burnaby. It is a two bedroom apartment. It is rent geared to income; I can stay there as long as I need to. When my kids move out I will move into a smaller apartment.

3. Planned Projects & Initiatives

The following projects and initiatives underway either in the Tri-Cities or the Province are worth noting for this report:

1. Tri-Cities Transition Society is planning to expand service at Joy's Place Transition House in Port Coquitlam. The Transition House currently has 10 beds; in 2013 the Transition House will be expanded to 14 beds. In addition, 6 units of second stage housing (containing 8 beds) will also

be developed in 2013. This will directly serve the needs of women and children fleeing violence in the Tri-Cities and beyond.

2. RainCity Housing and Support Services Society is developing a permanent Tri-Cities Shelter located at 3030 Gordon. It is currently in the design phase, when complete in early 2015 it will contain 30 emergency shelter beds and 30 studio apartments of transitional housing. Unfortunately this facility will not have the capacity to accept women with children.
3. The City of Coquitlam is currently updating its Affordable Housing Strategy. It will be referred to as the Housing Affordability Strategy. It will not contain any specific references to housing for women and children, but new policies and directions may have an impact on this population group. The City of Coquitlam is currently developing a Rental Strategy as part of the Strategy, which will most likely include new policies for protecting or replacing rental units as well as provisions for assisting people who are displaced by development. The City is also exploring policies to retain rental housing in lower density communities such as Austin Heights and support the redevelopment of aging co-ops and social housing.
4. In March 2012, the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence was opened as the permanent lead for the B.C. government in coordinating and strengthening services for children and families affected by domestic violence. The office is accountable for ensuring all provincial policies, programs and services related to domestic violence are effective and delivered in a comprehensive and unified way across government. It is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and regularly reporting progress as well as consultation with stakeholders to support a coordinated, systemic approach to domestic violence. The office is part of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and works in collaboration with other provincial ministries, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders to ensure the effective delivery and coordination of domestic violence services in communities across the province.

4. Key Research Findings

The research interviews conducted for this project provided some helpful findings in a number of key areas. The topic areas below are not addressed comprehensively, but are mentioned to raise awareness of some key issues:

Addictions

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, women with children who are homeless or fleeing violence are often struggling with a range of issues. If addictions is one of those issues, the path to a successful resolution of the housing crisis can become complicated. The woman will most likely need to begin her healing process by starting to address her addiction early on. Transition houses often do not have the capacity to accept women with addictions.

The Hope for Freedom organization runs Glory House Women’s Recovery in the Tri-Cities. It consists of two houses, one for early recovery which houses 14 women, and one for second stage recovery, which houses 5 women. Women can stay in second stage recovery for up to two years. Women are unable to bring their children with them to the recovery house. Interview respondents indicate that as a result, many women will not chose to go to the recovery house until their addictions worsen and their children have been apprehended by MCFD – when they have nothing left to lose.

Local service providers suggest that what is needed is a local recovery house that is able to accommodate women who wish to keep their children with them. There are currently few options for women who want to keep their children and begin to address their addiction issues, and none of them are located in the Tri-Cities. Existing options include Peardonville in Abbotsford, Talitha Koum – Gianna House and Crabtree Corner in Vancouver, and Maxxine Wright in Surrey.

Regaining Children

It was reported by local service providers that women who find themselves homeless in the Tri-Cities often have children. These children may be living with family or may have been apprehended by MCFD. If the woman is interested in regaining custody of her children she will need support to prepare herself and her home to be ready to regain her children. This will include advocacy support to effectively present her case to Ministry for Child and Family Development (MCFD) workers and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) workers. One of the conundrums these women face is having housing that will accommodate their children should they be allowed to return to their mother. Unfortunately if the woman is receiving income assistance she will have a shelter allowance that will only pay for housing for herself. Service providers indicated that these challenges can be overcome but effective advocacy on the part of the woman is required.

Refugees & New Immigrants

Between January 2012 and March 2013 the Tri-Cities received 174 individuals or roughly 80 families who are Government Assisted Refugees. Most of these families have settled in Coquitlam, many in the Burquitlam area. Service providers estimate that there are roughly 200 refugees and new immigrants in the Burquitlam area in private market rentals in aging low rise walk up apartment buildings⁷.

Many refugees and new immigrants have experienced violence before arriving in Canada, either domestic violence or as a result of their refugee experience. Sometimes this violence or the effects of the trauma continue once settled in Canada. In the case of a refugee or new immigrant woman with children who is seeking to flee from her abusive husband in the Tri-Cities she may face some unique challenges. If it is her abusive husband who is her immigration sponsor, she may believe that she is risking her ability to stay in the country or retain custody of her children if she decides to flee the violence. She may also lose her source of income and be unable to work legally if she is not yet a landed immigrant. Refugee and immigrant women fleeing domestic violence require ready access to accurate

⁷ Unfortunately, much of this low income rental housing is currently at risk of being redeveloped for a more affluent housing market.

information and legal assistance. Culturally appropriate counselling and assistance can also be very helpful.

One Woman's Story

I lived with my husband and daughter. We had come from Chile when my daughter was little. My husband was abusive. I tried to recertify as a teacher; I was trained in my home country. I was so stressed about things with my husband that I failed the recertification (he didn't want me to be successful because then I wouldn't be dependent on him). I had a breakdown.

Our friends at church realized what was going on and they tried to help. Our church friends convinced my husband to leave. He still helped with the rent and child support. I got a better job as a teller.

But then I lost my job and my health got worse – we had to rent out my daughter's bedroom so we could make ends meet. My daughter and I shared a bedroom. Then my husband died and we lost his financial support. I also began having trouble renting out the bedroom – so we did not have that income either. I didn't know what we were going to do.

That is when I heard about the place where we are now and I applied. We got in. It is subsidized; I pay 30% of my income. I can begin to focus on improving my health and getting educated for a new career now that I feel that my daughter and I have the safety and security we need.

Aboriginal Women

According to the 2012 report entitled "Taking Action on Domestic Violence in BC", prepared by the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, Aboriginal women and children in BC face increased risk and vulnerability to domestic violence. Unfortunately, according to local service providers, Aboriginal women often feel out of place in mainstream shelters and housing facilities. They may choose not to access these resources because of this. In addition, Aboriginal women often face discrimination and racism when approaching landlords. Service providers report that in such cases, working with a housing placement worker can be helpful.

Youth

Young women who are pregnant or new mothers who are also homeless or fleeing violence face significant challenges trying to access housing in the Tri-Cities. These challenges are compounded if there is an addiction issue as well. There is very little housing in the Tri-Cities that is available to youth aged 14 – 18. Transition houses typically cannot accept women under the age of 19. Local service providers emphasize that we need to find ways to keep young mothers and their children together – it builds attachment, the mother's well-being improves, and it creates stability for the baby. It also costs more to provide services to two individuals rather than one family.

5. Priority Projects

Interviews with the service providers and women with children who have experienced housing challenges in the Tri-Cities provided suggestions for housing priorities for the Tri-Cities. The priorities listed below were most strongly supported.

Permanent affordable housing

Almost all interview respondents stated that the Tri-Cities municipalities need more affordable housing – many identified it as the highest priority. This is especially the case when one takes into account the potential loss of some existing lower rent housing in areas such as Burquitlam due to redevelopment pressures.

Women and children who are from the Tri-Cities often want to remain in the community. It is where their support networks are, where their children go to school, and potentially where their cultural community is located. However, the high cost of rents in the Tri-Cities can prevent women and their children from staying in the community.

As one interview respondent stated when asked if the new units of planned second stage housing in the Tri-Cities would meet the current need or if more second stage housing was required, “There continues to be an unmet need for affordable housing in the Tri-Cities. Focusing on affordable housing and/or creating affordable housing to meet the needs of women and children in the Tri-cities makes more sense, from my perspective. Women re-establishing their lives want to know that they can settle into secure housing initially and will not have to move again within 12 to 18 months as they do in second-stage.”

Some of the interview respondents indicated that the safety and state of repair of some of the social housing in the Tri-Cities is not acceptable. They identified unaddressed mold issues and physical threats and violence related to illegal drug activity at some housing developments. These are challenging housing environments for people who have experienced abuse and violence. A health and physical safety audit of social housing in the Tri-Cities may reveal key areas where interventions would be helpful.

One interview respondent emphasized that women with children need to access to transit or to be able to walk to schools, grocery stores, medical clinics, support groups, parks etc..., as they will not have the means to spend a lot of money on transportation. The areas they live in also need to be well-lit and safe for children to be in. The co-location of all required amenities in one area would also be helpful.

Supportive housing for women & children

Several interview respondents indicated that housing developed specifically for women and children is very important, especially for those who have experienced recent trauma, violence and/or abuse. For this long term housing the on-site supports do not have to be extensive but a community developer can be very helpful in building connections between the women, creating a sense of belonging and a support network, and linking them to resources available in the community. Some interview

respondents simply said “we need another Como Lake Gardens”. Como Lake Gardens was fully tenanted upon opening in 2012 and received an additional 26 applications from women with children in the Tri-Cities in its first year of operation (more applications came from outside the Tri-Cities). During that same period of time 3 units turned over and became available for new tenants.

Input received from the interviews also emphasized that new and existing social and supportive housing should be flexible and responsive to the strengths and needs of people with diverse experiences and identities, including Aboriginal women and those who are transgendered. This includes: providing accessible housing for people with disabilities; supporting specific cultural needs; facilitating access to physical and mental health care; providing harm reduction housing to support those with alcohol and substance use issues; providing psychological and physical safety; and allowing people to continue to access their social supports and networks.

Further research is required to identify possible locations and appropriate size and configuration of such a development.

Emergency shelter for families

Aside from the Transition House in Coquitlam there are no emergency facilities for women with children in the Tri-Cities. Some service providers suggested that a family shelter could potentially fill a significant gap in the Tri-Cities. It could also potentially serve some of the women with children who are turned away from Joy’s Place Transition House. Given the high turn away rate at Elizabeth Gurney in New Westminster (1,545 over the past fiscal year), this is certainly worth considering further.

Depending on how it is designed, the family shelter could accommodate single women with children, as well as two parent families and single fathers with children. If the family shelter were to accommodate all types of families with young children, the personal safety of all residents would have to be a significant aspect of the design. Further research is needed to determine the potential size of such a facility and most suitable location.

Housing for women with mental health and addictions issues who have children

Some interview respondents identified a specific need for transitional and supportive housing for women with mental health and addictions issues who have children. Respondents felt that with support some of these women could maintain custody of their children and remain successfully housed.

Housing for pregnant and parenting teens

Pregnant and parenting youth have much more limited options in the Tri-Cities. Suggestions for improving options for youth are:

- Housing units for youth aged 14-18
- Transition house beds for youth
- A hub for young mothers which includes schooling, health care, housing and daycare
- More foster placements for young mothers and their babies.

Rent Subsidies for Women and Their Children

Some women may need access to rent subsidies to enable them to find appropriate housing for themselves and their children. These subsidies would differ from BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program, which targets working poor families. These suggested rent subsidies would allow single female led households, which are at risk and have little or no employment income to find housing in the market housing stream.

One Woman's Story

My son and I got into social housing in Port Coquitlam through my doctor who knew something about how to get on the wait list. Once we moved in I realized that there were mold problems. There was a large leak in the ceiling (from the neighbour's unit) and I had to look after the repairs – the landlord did not assist. Also it did not feel safe – once I even overheard these guys talking about how they were going to break into my place. After that I kept my son really close and I did not sleep well there.

I applied to another social housing project and got in. Unfortunately, once I moved there I realized the Police were always there because of drugs and violence. The Police even refer to it as the ghetto. The kids couldn't play in the playground because of the car crashes that happened there regularly. My son was physically attacked, which made things worse. He was already sensitive to violence from the abuse that we experienced living at my father's house. He is in counselling now.

I was able to get into the place where we are now after that and things are much better. It feels safe here and that is very important for us. It is affordable and that is important because I am on disability. It is by far the cleanest place we have ever lived – I hope we can make sure it is maintained and stays that way.

6. Service Implications

Along with housing, women and children require a range of services to make their transition to a new life as successful as possible. Recognizing that there are already a range of helpful services in place in the Tri-Cities, service providers and women who were interviewed for this project identified the following services as essential for women and their children:

- Legal assistance for immigration, divorce and child custody issues
- Qualified trauma counselling for women and their children; including those with experience and expertise in refugee, new immigrant, and aboriginal issues
- Personal safety education and training
- Addictions services (including day programs for withdrawal and recovery)
- Physical and mental health services

- Parenting and life skills training
- Transitional supports for those who are moving from homelessness to long-term housing
- Credit counselling and financial literacy training
- Child care including full daycare and occasional child minding for appointments
- Community development through support networks, community kitchens, community development workers
- Peer support groups (including groups for single mothers with young children and groups for single mothers with adult dependent children)
- Employment services including back to work programs – new training and education programs
- Referrals and information about available services
- Youth workers
- Public transit and other forms of transportation
- Food banks
- Provision of furniture, household goods, and clothing
- Moving assistance
- A volunteer handy person to assist with timely repairs and modifications.

To be as effective as possible service providers state that all of the services listed above need to be free of charge or very affordable and delivered onsite where the women and their children are housed. If the services cannot be delivered onsite then they should be centrally located, ideally co-located with other services, easily accessible by public transit and close to where the women and their children are housed.

One Woman's Story

I was living with my husband and son in the Tri-Cities. My husband was abusing me - it was emotional not physical violence but I knew I had to leave. I stayed with him longer than I should have because I was worried about being deported if I left him. I was an immigrant without status; it was illegal for me to work so I did not have any way to earn money to support myself and my child. I did not want to risk losing my child because of working illegally.

Once I made the decision to leave my husband, my son and I moved five times before I ended up where I am now. Initially I went to a Transition House in Vancouver but I ended up returning to my husband because I couldn't find any place to move on to. I then went to Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multi-cultural Family Support Services Society in Burnaby for counselling and assistance. They were very helpful. I was able to work with a volunteer who was from a country close to my

home country. While we didn't speak the same mother tongue we still seemed to understand each other culturally very well.

They were able to help me find a spot at Dixon Transition House in Burnaby. It was like a family house, very clean and the staff were very helpful. I stayed there until I got into Munroe House in Vancouver, a YWCA second stage house. It was challenging to find a place where an immigrant with no status can go. I was there for 2 years. During that time I was able to work with an immigration lawyer to sort out my immigration situation. I am a landed immigrant now. I heard about the place where I am now before it opened and I applied to get in. Luckily my son and I had our application accepted. The housing is subsidized and I can afford it.

Information for women living with violent or abusive spouses needs to be more widely distributed. Many women stay where they are because they fear being deported or losing their children if they leave their husband. The information needs to be in doctor's offices. Everyone needs to go to a doctor's office with their children. Once I finally left my husband I realized that it was easier than I thought it would be.

7. Potential Funding Sources

In interviews with service providers the following potential sources of funding for projects were identified:

- Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (has provided land and funding for projects in the past)
- Board of Trade
- Remax (recently did a campaign for violence against women)
- BC Housing
- Vancity Community Foundation
- Homeless Partnering Strategy
- CMHC Seed Funding
- Private Donors
- Gaming funds
- Churches
- Canadian Tire Community Development funds
- Office of the Attorney General
- City of Coquitlam
- Soroptomists

Appendix

1. List of Organizations Consulted

- Tri-Cities Transitions Society
- Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver
- YWCA Metro Vancouver
- SHARE Family and Community Services
- Immigrant Services Society of BC
- SD 43 Teen Parent Program
- Trinity United Church
- Hope for Freedom Society
- Homes for Good Society
- Ending Violence in Relationships
- BC Housing

2. Summary of Known Unmet Demand

The information in this section is a summary of the data provided in the main body of the report.

Tri-City Transitions Transition House occupancy and turn-aways

Data from Tri-City Transitions indicates that between 200 and 300 women with children fleeing violence stay at the Transition House each year. Roughly double that number are turned away each year.

Elizabeth Gurney House occupancy and turn aways

Approximately 25% (19) of the 77 women with children staying at Elizabeth Gurney House last year were from the Tri-Cities. In the last fiscal year 1,545 women and children were turned away.

Female Lone Parents Head of Households paying more than 50% for housing (2006)

Community	Number of Households
Coquitlam	430
Port Coquitlam	235
Port Moody	85
Tri-Cities Total	750

Source: Statistics Canada 2006

Number of Women with Children Households from the Tri-Cities in the Housing Registry as of March 31, 2013

Applicant Category	Coquitlam	Port Coquitlam	Port Moody	Total Tri-Cities
Disabilities	0	1	0	1
Family	93	43	13	149
Wheelchair Accessible	1	1	0	2
Pending	1	0	0	1
Total Applicant Households	95	45	13	153

Source: BC Housing, Housing Connections, March 31, 2013

Applications for Como Lake Gardens from women with children in the Tri-Cities in the first year of operation that could not be accommodated

Como Lake Gardens was fully tenanted (30 units) upon opening in 2012 and received an additional 26 applications from women with children in the Tri-Cities in its first year of operation. In the first year (March 2012 – March 2013) of operation 3 suites became available when the existing tenants moved out.

Number of Women with Children Households Fleeing Violence from the Tri-Cities who have applied for Housing through the Housing Registry Between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013

Community	Households
Coquitlam	7
Port Coquitlam	8
Port Moody	2
Total Households - Tri-cities	17

Source: BC Housing, Housing Connections, March 31, 2013

3. Detailed Information about Housing Registry Wait Times

The following data has been provided by BC Housing. To fully understand the data please refer to the notes at the end of this section.

Average Time (in months) Waited for Housing Registry Applicants Housed in the Tri-Cities between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2013

	Fiscal Year of Date Offer Accepted			Average Months Waited by Priority Group
	2010 to 2011	2011 to 2012	2012 to 2013	
Priority Referral				
No Priority Referral (Regular)	33	23	22	26
Priority Referral	24	16	28	25
Priority Referral - Second Stage			30	30
Average Months Waited by Fiscal Year	32	23	23	26

Number of Applicants Housed in the Tri-Cities between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2013

	Fiscal Year of Date Offer Accepted			Number of Applicants Housed
	2010 to 2011	2011 to 2012	2012 to 2013	
Priority Referral				
No Priority Referral (Regular)	78	88	70	236
Priority Referral	3	3	7	13
Priority Referral - Second Stage			1	1
Number of Applicants Housed	81	91	78	250

Participants in the Housing Registry in the Tri-Cities and the Number of Applicants Housed Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2013

Development Name	Community	Number of Units	Number of Applicants Housed
Inlet Centre	Port Moody	96	20
Decaire Heights	Coquitlam	39	35
Rose Hill Townhomes	Coquitlam	54	34
Vincent Place	Port Coquitlam	38	19

Development Name	Community	Number of Units	Number of Applicants Housed
Glen Meadows (East & West)	Coquitlam	30	16
Reynard Park	Port Coquitlam	32	7
Tamarack Terrace	Port Coquitlam	83	0
Cranberry Court	Port Coquitlam	22	0
Chateau De Ville	Coquitlam	86	21
Willow Place	Port Coquitlam	40	0
Stewart House	Port Coquitlam	31	3
Chelsea Estates	Port Coquitlam	56	20
Friendship Manor/Friendship Place	Coquitlam	103	32
Moody's Landing	Port Moody	27	21
Coquitlam Kinsmen Estates	Coquitlam	40	0
Earl Haig Retirement Residence	Coquitlam	53	22
Meridian Village	Port Coquitlam	25	0
Park Court	Coquitlam	30	0
Le Chateau Place (HR only)	Coquitlam	24	0
River Woods	Port Coquitlam	111	0
Ozada Village	Coquitlam	61	0
Malaspina Village	Coquitlam	67	0
Moray Place	Port Moody	52	0
Pinetree Court	Coquitlam	57	0
Place Des Amis	Coquitlam	40	0
Sunrise Terrace	Coquitlam	36	0
Cedar Terrace	Port Coquitlam	40	0
Summary		1,373	250

Source: BC Housing: Housing Connections, March 31, 2013

Notes:

1. Applicants Housed are for buildings located in the Tri-Cities (the cities of Port Moody, Coquitlam and Coquitlam).
2. Applicant statistics reflect applicant households with active (live) or on hold status in The Housing Registry, a centralized database for participating housing providers.
3. Non-participants of The Housing Registry keep their own applicant waiting list and therefore not included in these statistics.

4. The length of time waited measures the difference between the adjusted application date and tenancy offer acceptance date.
5. BC Housing's Priority Placement Program is a service for women with low-income who are leaving transition houses. BC Housing works with the transition houses to ensure that women who are leaving abusive relationships and who do not have safe, permanent housing receive priority when affordable housing units become available. For women fleeing domestic abuse, the transition house or second stage housing need to complete a Supplemental Applicant Form. This will reflect a higher level of need on the application and identify that applicant as a "priority referral" applicant for those leaving transition houses and "priority referral - second stage" for those leaving second stage housing. All other applicants are assigned "no priority referral" status.
6. There are numerous 'variances/considerations' regarding how long an applicant may stay on a wait list, **including, but not limited to:**
 - An applicant may have requested a specific property but a unit may not be available (eg low vacancy rate, occupancy standards don't match family composition)
 - An applicant's contact details may change and they do not advise BC Housing and therefore cannot be contacted when a unit is available
 - An applicant may refuse an offer for tenancy due to personal preferences (eg access to work, pet policy, proximity to transit/community/health services etc) and 'resume' their place on the wait list
 - An applicant could have had a change of circumstances and may require a different type of housing to what they initially requested (eg ability issues that a building with an elevator, adaptable/accessible unit etc)
7. The projects identified above are all belonging to societies that are members of the Housing Registry, however, other housing options may be available within the area, but either do not have a partnership with BC Housing (ie they could be privately operated) and/or are not members of the Housing Registry (therefore, manage their own applications).
8. While waiting applicants may be eligible for assistance through the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) or Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) programs.