

WOMEN'S TRANSITION HOUSING

Women's Transition
Housing and Supports
Program Framework

October 2015



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BC Housing wishes to acknowledge and thank the BC Society of Transition Houses, members of the project Advisory Council and all Women's Transition Housing and Support Program service providers for their valuable contributions to the development of this Program Framework.

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Atira Women's Resource Society

Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays

Elkford Women's Task Force Society

Haven Society

South Okanagan Women in Need Society

Prince George & District Elizabeth Fry Society

Shuswap Area Family Emergency Society

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1 BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Women’s Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) in British Columbia is to assist women and their children at risk of violence¹. Transition houses began with communities of women recognizing a need to respond to the issue of domestic violence and who voluntarily housed and supported women and their children in private homes. This grassroots movement evolved into a network of Violence Against Women (VAW) services which focus on the prevention and elimination of violence against women through social change and on other issues relating to women’s equality. Today, most providers approach service delivery through a gendered analysis of violence which recognizes that systemic power imbalances in society expose women and children to many forms of violence.

Three program streams have emerged that are now funded through the WTHSP: Safe Homes, Transition Houses and Second Stage Housing. Provincial funding agreements describe eligible women and their children as those “who have experienced, or are at risk of, abuse, threats or violence”.

The 30-year history of the WTHSP is anchored in responses to domestic (and/or family and/or intimate partner) violence. The dynamics of domestic violence differ from other forms of violence against women and require a specialized response: women in these situations are more likely to be at risk of repeated and increasingly severe violence, and their children are seriously impacted as well. The results of domestic violence often call for complex support needs for those affected.

The unique needs and resources within each community, and differences in service provider philosophies and organizational capacity have influenced and changed how support to women and children impacted by violence, domestic and other forms, is provided through the WTHSP today. Some service providers continue to focus on domestic, family, or intimate partner violence and support women and their children who are affected by other forms of violence when possible, while others serve all women at risk of violence.

1.1 Transfer to BC Housing

On August 1, 2009, administration of the Women’s Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) was transferred from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to BC Housing as part of a provincial initiative to strengthen links to the continuum of housing for women and children at risk of violence. These programs are part of the broader continuum of VAW services, including those funded by the Ministry of Justice.

BC Housing and the BC Society of Transition Houses came together to discuss ways to review the delivery of women’s transition housing and support services. They subsequently agreed to sponsor an independent review to evaluate current services, and assess demand and unmet need for services. Extensive consultation with service providers, clients and other stakeholders took place. The Review Report² was released in September 2010.

Guided by the Review Report’s recommendations, this Program Framework was developed in consultation with service providers and the BC Society of Transition Houses. The

¹ The term “violence” is used throughout this document to refer to numerous forms of violence against women – please refer to the Glossary of Terms.

² “Review of the Women’s Transition Housing and Supports Program: Consolidated Report” is available at <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/women-fleeing-violence/womens-transition-housing-supports>

Framework begins to respond to the recommendations, recognizing that full implementation will require additional time, resources, training and consultation.

1.2 Purpose of the Framework

The Program Framework outlines the key elements of the program, provides guidelines for services and defines the roles and responsibilities of BC Housing and its partners in the delivery and management of the program. It ensures that the program is accountable to clients and the broader public. BC Housing will work with all service providers to provide the support and resources necessary for implementation, as available through current capacity and funding.

For issues not fully covered by this framework or agency Service Agreements, service providers are expected to exercise reasonable judgment and consult with BC Housing.

2 PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

In the delivery of the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program, all program partners are guided by the following principles:

1) *A woman-centred approach to service delivery:*

- Services are provided according to each woman's expressed needs, within the context of service provider and community resources.
- Services for children are provided in collaboration and consultation with their mothers³ and according to each child's individual needs within the context of service provider and community resources. In providing services to children, service providers also recognize and respect diverse parenting styles.
- Services are provided in ways which recognize women as experts of their own lives and that they have the right to make their own decisions based on an informed understanding of their options. Service providers are respectful of those choices, and will not restrict services based on women's decisions about their future⁴. The role of the service provider, in part, is to present the available range of options and to support each woman and her children throughout the service delivery process.
- Services are respectful, welcoming and nonjudgmental, and acknowledge various inequalities and forms of oppression that impact each woman. Service providers will respond to women and children from diverse communities and strive to ensure that appropriate services are available for all women irrespective of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, physical ability, health, mental wellness, social context, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

³ Service providers must obtain mother's (or guardian's) consent prior to providing services to children.

⁴ Research suggests women may be in different stages of coping with violent relationships or situations when accessing transition house services. Not all women will have an end goal of leaving their current relationship or situation. This requires WTHSP service providers to be flexible in the approach they take and the services they offer.

2) *The safety and security of women and children at risk of violence is paramount. The needs of any individual must be balanced against the safety and well-being of others:*

- While the safety and security of women and children is a priority of the program, the safety of staff and security of facilities must also be ensured.
- Intake policies and procedures must provide all eligible women and children with equal opportunity to access services. However, staff may refer eligible women and children to a more appropriate resource when they are considered likely to cause severe disruption to effective service delivery, or where they represent a danger to themselves, other residents, staff or visitors.
- It is understood that service providers may need to adjust service delivery from time to time, based on available resources and client needs.

3) *The role of power imbalances is acknowledged and responded to:*

- Throughout the service delivery process, service providers are informed by and responsive to gender and other power imbalances that cause women to be at risk of violence, and recognize that perpetrators are responsible for their own actions.
- Power imbalances can exist between women and children and those who directly and indirectly provide services to them.

4) *An open and collaborative sector environment:*

- All program partners seek to enhance service delivery through an open and collaborative working relationship.
- Service providers and partner agencies communicate with each other and work together to strengthen and extend the network of services available to women and children at risk of violence.

5) *Transparent and accountable program delivery:*

- Service providers and BC Housing are accountable to the women and children served, to the broader public and the Province.
- BC Housing will develop a consistent and transparent process for negotiating Service Agreements.
- Service providers will maintain secure, accurate and consistent records, and fulfill reporting obligations to BC Housing.
- BC Housing will regularly report to the public and the Province on the effectiveness of the program.
- Service providers will adopt written policies and procedures regarding service delivery in accordance with their Service Agreement, and, where applicable, will communicate these policies to the women served.
- BC Housing will conduct reviews and assessments to confirm that services delivered are effective at meeting the program's objectives.
- Service providers will strive to meet the highest standards of governance.
- Service providers will maintain the confidentiality of the women and children they serve.

3 PROGRAM GOAL

Women and children at risk of violence have access to safe, secure and confidential services which include information and support for decision-making, short-term shelter or housing, referrals to other services, and links to affordable housing.

4 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Safe Home Objective:

Provide support services and access to safe, short-term shelter.

Transition House Objective:

Provide support services and safe shelter.

Second Stage Housing Objective:

Provide safe, affordable short-term housing with support services.

5 CORE SERVICES

There are five types of core services common to all three program streams:

1. Initial Contact Services
2. Safe Shelter/Housing and Immediate Basic Needs
3. Personal Supports for Women and Children
4. Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services
5. Inter-Agency Service Linking

Table 1 lists the core services provided by all Transition Houses, Safe Homes, and Second Stage Housing providers. There may be some variation in the delivery of each service, based on community and service provider resources⁵. Additional information and details on the provision of each Core Service will be included in Service Agreements.

Core services are offered as needed to individual women and children, recognizing that not all women will require all of the services listed below. Services may or may not be provided in conjunction with shelter/housing, depending on the individual needs and desires of each woman, and the resources available at the time. Service providers will also apply the knowledge of the impact and dynamics of violence against women in their delivery of the core services to women and children.

Note that services marked with an asterisk (*) are only offered to clients who access shelter/housing.

⁵The way each core service is delivered will vary, depending on the community context and resources available at the time.

TABLE 1: Core Services

Initial Contact Services	Transition Houses	Safe Homes	Second Stage Housing
24/7 access to initial contact services	✓	✓	
Initial information gathering & relationship building, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial safety assessment and short-term plan • discussion of the woman's immediate needs • discussion of current service availability 	✓	✓	✓
Referrals to appropriate alternate shelter/housing if the woman desires/requires shelter but cannot be accommodated at the time of initial contact ⁶	✓	✓	✓
Referrals to other resources where required/desired	✓	✓	✓
Facilitating access to transportation out of the community where required for safety, as resources permit	✓	✓	✓
Safe Shelter/Housing & Immediate Basic Needs	Transition Houses	Safe Homes	Second Stage Housing
Temporary shelter in a communal setting, with stays typically no more than 30 days	✓		
24/7 on-site staffing	✓		
Temporary shelter in a Safe Home unit with stays typically no more than 10 days		✓	
Short-term housing in independent units, with stays typically ranging from 6 to 18 months			✓
Access to nutritious food for at least 3 meals per day, including access to snacks and beverages throughout the day. Food choices are guided by Canada's Food Guide, and will accommodate the individual needs of women and children, including infant formula and food and utensils to meet specific dietary or cultural requirements	✓	✓	
Personal hygiene supplies (including feminine hygiene supplies & diapers for children)	✓	✓	
Use of on-site laundry facilities where facilities exist	✓	✓	✓
Support in accessing child care	✓	✓	✓
Personal Supports for Women & Children	Transition Houses	Safe Homes	Second Stage Housing
Crisis and emotional support for women and children	✓	✓	✓
Access to information and education regarding the dynamics and impact of violence against women and children	✓	✓	✓
Assistance obtaining key identification and documentation	✓	✓	✓
Transportation, where resources permit*	✓	✓	✓

⁶ It is noted that the availability of alternate, appropriate shelter/housing is outside of the control of the service provider. However, service providers make their best efforts to ensure eligible women and their children have access to safe shelter or housing.

Safety Planning*	✓	✓	✓
Accompaniment to appointments where needed/desired*	✓	✓	✓
Skills support (e.g. parenting support, tenancy skills, budgeting, etc)*	✓		✓
Referrals, Advocacy & Supported Access to Services	Transition Houses	Safe Homes	Second Stage Housing
Referrals to external services and resources	✓	✓	✓
Support and advocacy where appropriate, to assist women in accessing external services and resources	✓	✓	✓
Inter-Agency Service Linking	Transition Houses	Safe Homes	Second Stage Housing
Continuous development and maintenance of relationships with provincial and community agencies involved in the delivery of services, and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence	✓	✓	✓
Promoting community awareness of this program for individual women to self-refer and for potential referral sources in the community	✓	✓	✓

Services marked with an asterisk () are only offered to clients who access shelter/housing

6 ELIGIBILITY

This section discusses program eligibility criteria and principles to inform decision making regarding the provision of support services, shelter and short-term housing.

The intent of the eligibility criteria is to ensure that all women and children experiencing violence, or who are at risk of violence, have access to services funded under the WTHSP. It recognizes that some providers identify domestic, and/or family and/or intimate partner violence as their service focus and respond to other forms of violence when possible, while others focus services on all women and children at risk of violence.

6.1 Eligibility Criteria

All women and their dependent children, who have experienced violence or are at risk of experiencing violence, and who require services related to their risk or experience of violence are eligible for program services. For this program, services are provided to women (over the age of 19) and their dependent male and female children under the age of 19. Program services are also provided to women and their dependent children with disabilities, regardless of age. Where feasible, services are provided to other family members who are dependent on the woman. Service providers are encouraged to accommodate young women under the age of 19, who live independently and are at risk of violence.⁷

Services are provided to eligible women and their dependent children, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, physical ability, health, mental wellness, social context, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. While all eligible women and their children have equal opportunity to access services, decisions to restrict access to shelter or housing are

⁷Service providers are required to work individually with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to establish a protocol for the delivery of services to women under the age of 19.

made on a case-by-case basis in order to balance the needs of those requesting service with the safety and well-being of others and the available resources.

To guide eligibility the following definitions apply:

- **At risk of violence:** Refers to situations where a woman indicates that she and/or her children are at risk of experiencing violence.
- **Violence against women:** Refers to gender based violence that reflects and reinforces women's subordinate status in society. This includes physical, emotional, economic, financial, sexual, spiritual abuse or violence on women because of their gender. This umbrella term includes domestic, family or intimate partner violence.

Where a woman requires shelter or housing but cannot be accommodated, WTHSP providers will offer the following:

- Initial Contact Services, including an immediate safety assessment and short-term plan;
- Emotional support; and
- Referral to an alternative appropriate resource, with facilitated contact between the woman and the agency to which she is being referred, to the extent possible.

6.2 Additional Criteria for Second Stage Housing

Tenant Rents

Tenants in Second Stage Housing must pay a set percentage of their income for rent (currently set at 30 percent). Tenant income and rent will be calculated in accordance with a rent scale provided by BC Housing and included in the Service Agreement.

Tenants on Income Assistance pay the maximum shelter component provided for in the *Employment and Assistance Act* or the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*.

Eligibility for Women with No Legal Status in Canada

Women without legal status in Canada are eligible for all program services, including Second Stage Housing.

Direct Access

Second Stage Housing is designed to support women following a stay in a Transition House or Safe Home; however, these are not eligibility requirements. Some women may need or desire direct access to a Second Stage Housing unit, and may self-refer.

Eligibility for a second stage unit will not be based on a woman's previous housing situation or the absence of a referral. The provider will have discretion in determining whether an applicant's needs can be met by the Second Stage Housing program, or whether referral to an alternate housing option or program is more appropriate.

7 FACILITY GUIDELINES

7.1 Facility Guidelines

Basic guidelines pertaining to each program stream are outlined below:

Transition Houses:

Transition House facilities vary in composition and facility type, but are generally composed of dwellings with a number of bedrooms, with common areas for food preparation, eating, living and service provision. Bedrooms may have more than one bed in order to accommodate families, or be shared by single women. The length of stay in a Transition House is typically 30 days but may be extended to meet individual circumstances.

Safe Homes:

Safe Home facilities may include suites in apartment buildings, or the use of private residences, or hotel or motel rooms. Some Safe Home providers use a combination of facility types in order to serve a diverse range of client needs. The length of stay in a Safe Home is typically 10 days but may be extended to meet individual circumstances.

Where shelter is regularly provided in hotels/motels or in private residences, service providers will ensure written agreements are in place. Service providers are also responsible for ensuring sufficient screening procedures and training for third party shelter providers are in place, in order to ensure the safe and effective delivery of services to women and children.

Second Stage Housing:

Second Stage Housing facilities provide independent housing for women and their children, typically in apartments or townhouses. National Occupancy Standards serve as a guideline for determining the size of unit required for each household (Appendix B). The length of stay is typically no longer than 18 months but may be extended to meet individual circumstances.

7.2 Safety

All facilities are required to comply with all applicable statutory health and safety standards including fire regulations and building codes, and must be maintained in a state of good repair. Where services are provided to children, service providers will ensure that all toys, cribs, and other related furniture or equipment meet current safety standards and regulations.

7.3 Security

In order to achieve the goal of providing eligible women and their children with access to safe, secure shelter or housing, WTHSP facilities and services must have effective safety and security measures.

WTHSP facilities and their unique safety and security measures have evolved over time. Each service provider has implemented a range of physical security measures, policies and procedures that are customized to meet the safety and security requirements in the context of their particular facility and community. Service providers will continue to ensure that their

facilities have adequate safety and security measures in place. In doing so, service providers will regularly:

- Develop and review security policies and procedures for staff, volunteers, clients and visitors; and
- Ensure all staff, clients and visitors are appropriately oriented on the implementation of applicable security policies and procedures.

7.4 Capital Asset Management

Facilities across the sector are extremely diverse with respect to building form, tenure (rent, own or lease) and additional funding sources and agreements (e.g. other operating agreements with BC Housing). Accordingly, Capital Asset Management strategies will be determined on a case-by-case basis with each service provider.

8 OPERATING FUNDING AND AGREEMENTS

8.1 Service Agreements

All WTHSP service providers will enter into a Service Agreement with BC Housing. Service providers with multiple programs within the WTHS Program portfolio will enter into a single Service Agreement with BC Housing that will outline the details of each different program type. The content of all new service agreements will be guided by this Program Framework. BC Housing is committed to working in partnership with all service providers to negotiate the terms of their Service Agreement in a consistent manner.

9 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The success of the program relies upon all partners ensuring the program is accountable and responsive to local needs.

9.1 BC Housing

BC Housing is responsible for the funding and administration of the WTHS Program. Its role includes:

- Working with and supporting providers by:
 - Providing information and assistance; and
 - Supporting capacity development and innovation in service provision through partnership development, best practices dissemination, and service integration.
- Funding service providers by entering into Service Agreements for the provision of services.
- Developing province-wide standards and guidelines in consultation with service providers.

- Approving and reviewing annual operating budgets, expenditures, and where applicable, applications for capital funding.

9.2 Service Providers

Service providers are the primary delivery agent for Safe Home, Transition House and Second Stage Housing and support services. Each provider is responsible for:

- Delivery of shelter and support services as outlined in this framework and in accordance with Service Agreements.
- Collection and timely reporting of accurate financial and statistical data as required by BC Housing.
- Maintaining confidential client service records.
- Ensuring operating policies are in place, including a system for review of complaints and conflict resolution.
- Ensuring the organization meets its contractual conditions, and notifying BC Housing before making any changes that could affect its ability to meet the requirements of its Service Agreement.
- Selecting and overseeing the performance of qualified staff⁸.

10 REVIEW AND REPORTING

10.1 Rationale

Regular review and reporting helps service providers and BC Housing measure progress, work together to better match services to client needs, support improved service delivery, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. The cornerstones of review are risk mitigation (e.g. key health and safety issues), quality assurance and quality improvement. Regular review that engages both providers and women allows both to work with BC Housing to identify successes and challenges with program delivery. Accordingly, the review tools are designed to open dialogue with service providers to help identify and share practices that are working well, as well as elicit feedback from program beneficiaries.

10.2 Principles

- Shared accountability and shared ownership for review between program partners and BC Housing.
- Regularity, relevance and consistency of information gathered.
- Transparency and accountability in gathering, interpreting and reporting information.
- Manageability and simplicity.

⁸ Staff qualifications determined by service provider policy, in accordance with Service Agreements.

10.3 Purpose

Identify and Manage Service Delivery Risks

- Verify that required policies, procedures and service delivery practices are in place to reduce health and safety risks.

Quality Assurance

- Determine whether services are effective in meeting the program goals.
- Ensure accountability to the women and children served by the program, and to the broader public for services delivered.
- Determine whether service providers are meeting contractual obligations.

Quality Improvement

- Identify and promote best practices.
- Support service providers in the identification of issues and in determining appropriate interventions.
- Gain a sense of client outcomes in order to support and improve program effectiveness.
- Build relationships and mentoring among providers.

The information collected through the review and reporting tools supports these goals as well as the development of mutually agreed to action plans.

10.4 The Review Process

The review process is designed to gather quantitative and qualitative information from providers, BC housing staff and women served. Its purpose is to monitor program success, identify emerging needs among women needing Transition Housing and Supports Program services and to shape future program planning.

Several tools are used to elicit a balanced flow of information:

TOOL	Frequency	Completed by
Data Report	Quarterly	Provider
Annual Provider Report	Annually	Provider
Financial Review	Annually	BC Housing
Operational Review	3 Years	BC Housing

Data Report

- The following outcomes are reported by the service provider on the Data Report:
 - Clients receive support in accessing community resources available to them.
 - Clients are provided with strategies that may enhance their safety.

Annual Provider Report

- Verifies compliance with required program standards and provides an open-ended opportunity for qualitative feedback.

Financial Review

- Annual review of budget and expenditures as articulated in service agreements.


Operational Review

- Completed every 3 years (or more frequently as required) by BC Housing staff. It prompts a structured discussion of program successes and challenges and includes interviews with the provider's management, an on-site visit and physical inspection, a review of service policies and procedures and other relevant documents as requested.

11 SIGN-OFF

The Program Framework requires final sign-off by the BC Housing Vice-President of Operations.

Authorized: _____


Craig Crawford
Vice President, Operations

Date Approved: _____

OCT 21 2015

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Access to information and education regarding violence against women and children: In maintaining a woman-centred approach to service delivery, information and education regarding the dynamics and impact of violence against women and children will be offered. This includes offering culturally appropriate resources as available.

Advocacy: To support women to make choices and act on them based on their own values and needs by helping to ensure that their circumstances, needs and rights to assistance are fully understood by relevant service providers and/or systems. To highlight and respond to the barriers and injustices which put women at risk of violence with the aim to end violence and oppression in women's lives. To influence improvements to women's safety by promoting individual and systemic responses that will help ensure these responses are available, accessible and relevant to women and children.

At risk of violence: Refers to situations where a woman indicates that she and/or her children are at risk of experiencing violence.

Domestic violence: A form of violence against women usually referring to violence perpetrated by a woman's intimate partner. May also be referred to as violence against women.

Emotional and crisis support: Refers to offering support to a woman and validating a woman's experience and feelings. Support includes active and reflective listening, offering resources, referrals and information while recognizing and respecting the woman's situation, individuality, needs and preferences. Support can be offered to an individual and/or a group to assist women and children in understanding and coping with the effects of violence.

Facilitating transportation out of the community: When a woman and her children cannot remain safely in the community, service providers make every reasonable effort to secure safe transportation to another community. Service providers are not expected to provide a 'transportation service' for women.

Family Violence: Refers to violence against women and children, usually referring to violence perpetrated by a woman's intimate partner or other family members. May also be referred to as violence against women.

Gender identity: Refers to the way in which an individual identifies, perceives and demonstrates oneself to others with respect to gender. The most common gender identities are "man" and "woman" with many other variations included in the umbrella term trans or transgender.

Inter-Agency Service Linking: Building collaborative working relationships with other VAW service providers, including other WTHSP services in order to ensure that WTHSP service providers can effectively connect women and children who access their services to a broad range of other agencies as required.

Intimate Partner Violence: Refers to violence against women perpetrated by an intimate partner. May also be referred to as violence against women.

Program Partners: Refers to service providers and BC Housing, as well as other partners who support or otherwise influence the delivery of the WTHSP including the BC Society of Transition Houses and related provincial ministries (e.g. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General).

Program Services: Includes the provision of the Core Services listed in Table 1.

Referral: Offering information and/or facilitating the connection to specific resources or services that may address a woman's stated goals or needs.

Safety Planning: A process that utilizes strategies, tools and resources which aim to reduce the risk of harm to women and children. It is a fluid process driven by women and their children that addresses risk to their safety as it relates to changes in their circumstances.

Skills Support: To support women in achieving their individual, self-identified goals, service providers may provide formal and/or informal support and information in such areas as budgeting, tenancy skills, conflict resolution, etc.

Support in accessing child care: Service providers will support women with children in accessing child care where needed. While service providers are not required to provide child care services, they will make their best effort to provide referrals and/or other supports to help women access appropriate child care.

Violence: Refers to violence against women and/or their children including physical, emotional, economic, financial, sexual and/or spiritual abuse or violence.

Violence against women: Refers to gender based violence against women that reflects and reinforces women's subordinate status in society. This includes physical, emotional, economic, financial, sexual, spiritual abuse and/or violence against women because of their gender. This umbrella term includes domestic, family or intimate partner violence.

WTHSP Facilities: Refers to all facilities in which WTHSP funded services are provided, including all Transition Houses, Second Stage Housing units and Safe Homes.

APPENDIX B NATIONAL OCCUPANCY STANDARDS (RE: SECOND STAGE HOUSING)

The National Occupancy Standard (NOS) was developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to guide the number of bedrooms required to provide freedom from crowding, given the size and composition of a household. NOS guidelines can be used as ideal standards for WTHSP service providers housing clients in Second Stage Housing or other affordable housing in the community.

However, it is recognized that meeting NOS guidelines is not always achievable, given the available housing options in a community and the fact that adequate personal space is perceived differently from person to person.

According to NOS requirements, suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households. Enough bedrooms based on NOS requirements means one bedroom for:

- Each cohabiting adult couple;
- Each unattached household member 18 years of age and over;
- A same-sex pair of children under age 18; and
- An additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex children under five years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom.

A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e., a unit with no bedroom).

NOS definition taken from the CMHC website

http://cmhc.beyond2020.com/HiCOCDefinitions_EN.html#_Suitable_dwellings