



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 15, 2022

**BC Housing effectively managed, with some exceptions,
pandemic support for women leaving violence – audit**

VICTORIA – BC Housing helped women’s transition housing providers make up for the space they lost when COVID safety protocols reduced their capacity, the Office of the Auditor General reports.

The audit examined BC Housing’s effectiveness when it provided additional safe spaces for women and children leaving violence during COVID-19, mainly by renting hotel and motel rooms across the province.

The Crown corporation met many of the operational needs of the housing providers, and it monitored and reported on the spaces it provided. The audit also found some gaps in BC Housing’s response.

“BC Housing worked with transition housing providers to find more safe spaces for women and children during the pandemic,” Auditor General Michael Pickup said. “But in some cases, there was a risk women couldn’t get a safe space when they needed it.”

During the audit period, from April 1, 2020, to Sept. 30, 2021, there were more than 1,200 stays (one or more consecutive nights) in the additional safe spaces for women leaving violence. More than half of those stays included kids.

The audit identified key areas for BC Housing to improve its response to similar situations:

- BC Housing did not assess staffing needs of transition housing providers despite known shortages.
- Three hotels rented rooms that should have been held exclusively for women leaving violence.
- BC Housing consulted transition housing providers and used occupancy rates to adjust the number of hotel and motel rooms, but it didn’t allocate rooms based on information about women turned away due to lack of space.
- BC Housing aimed to meet the needs of all women, but it did not collect data on physical ability, mental wellness, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity, to confirm if the spaces provided were accessible and inclusive.

The audit also found that BC Housing supplied funding for additional food costs associated with housing women in hotels and motels, and it provided access to personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies for transition housing providers.

Recommendations

The report, [BC Housing’s COVID-19 Response: Additional Safe Spaces for Women and Children Leaving Violence](#), contains four recommendations to improve BC Housing’s response to the needs of transition housing providers, and its data collection and use. BC Housing has accepted all the recommendations.

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