

Performance Audit of Saskatchewan Housing Corporation: Planning for Social Housing Units in Regina

Why It Matters

Housing insecurity affects an individual's health, safety, stability, and participation in society and the economy. Through its Social Housing Program, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation helps to address core housing need as it aims to provide safe, adequate rental housing and subsidize rents based on financial need.

Why We Did This Audit

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's Social Housing Program offers safe, adequate rental housing targeting low-income families and seniors, and people with disabilities through a portfolio of housing units it owns and operates through local housing authorities. Over the past several years, Regina not only had the most vacancies, but also the highest vacancy rate in Corporation-owned units.

Effective processes to plan for social housing units can help position people for future success and enable them to better their lives.

Key Facts and Figures

- In 2021, Statistics Canada estimated almost 42,000 Saskatchewan households in need of core housing—of these 42,000 households, an estimated 9,600 or 23% resided in Regina
- The Corporation owned about 3,000 social housing units in Regina as of June 2024, and the Regina Housing Authority managed these units
- 51% of social housing units allocated for seniors and about 49% for families/single persons—compared to current demand of about 25% and 75% respectively
- 50% of social housing applicants seeking units with three bedrooms or more as of April 2024
- We estimated \$1.2 million ongoing annual cost to hold chronically vacant units in Regina
- Building conditions of the Corporation's housing portfolio in Regina is currently classified as 'poor' overall
- Target set to reduce units classified as critical or poor but the Corporation has neither identified by how much nor has yet to start analyzing and reporting on its target

What We Found

The Corporation had 534 vacant social housing units (17.8%) in Regina with 364 units out-of-service (i.e., need repairs), compared to 404 households waiting for social housing units.

We found the Corporation does not regularly assess how long applicants wait or why, or types of units requested (e.g., number of bedrooms needed).

It also does not sufficiently track and analyze its vacant units (e.g., types and duration of units under repair) or trends in demand to determine where to focus repairs. Doing so might help the Corporation identify changes needed to its housing portfolio and inform plans to get chronically vacant units back into service (e.g., repairing more units with the right number of bedrooms in preferable locations).

We Made 8 Recommendations

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation needs to:

- Implement plans to get vacant units back into service, including revisiting the mix of social housing units it owns, can help the Corporation address long applicant waitlists and house more people in Regina
- Complete its forecast of long-term social housing needs in Regina to sufficiently identify gaps as it last forecasted core housing need in Regina up to 2026
- Identify and respond to possibly over-housed social housing tenants in Regina (i.e., tenants living in units too large for their needs)
- Enhance its operational reviews of the Regina Housing Authority
- Report progress on improving building conditions of social housing units in Regina