

Chapter 12

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation—Planning for Social Housing Units in Regina

1.0 MAIN POINTS

Having stable housing is important for individuals and families to succeed. Through its Social Housing Program, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation strives to make safe, adequate housing available by providing social housing units and subsidizing rent based on financial need. The Corporation owned about 3,000 social housing units in Regina as of June 2024, and the Regina Housing Authority managed these units.

We assessed the Corporation's processes to plan for social housing units to meet the needs of people in Regina. At June 2024, we found the Corporation had effective processes, except it needs to:

- Assess social housing applicant data and implement plans to help reduce the vacancy rate in Regina.

At May 2024, the Corporation had 534 vacant social housing units (17.8%) in Regina with 364 units out-of-service (i.e., in need of repairs), compared to 404 households waiting for social housing units. The Corporation's mix of social housing units in Regina remained relatively unchanged since 2016, with about 51% of social housing units designated for seniors and about 49% designated for families/single persons—compared to current demand of about 25% and 75% respectively.

Implementing 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. Without a long-term forecast of social housing needs in Regina, there is an increased risk of misalignment between social housing priorities and expected future demand.
- Periodically analyze data to identify and respond to possibly over-housed social housing tenants in Regina.¹ We identified 108 single individuals in Regina residing in two-bedroom social housing units when a one-bedroom unit may suffice and be available.
- Enhance its operational reviews of the Regina Housing Authority, including setting performance benchmarks (e.g., around tenant satisfaction), following up on compliance issues and recommendations, and formally monitoring social housing complaints.

¹ Over-housed tenants refer to situations where household needs change (e.g., fewer people living in a home), resulting in tenants possibly residing in units now too large for their household needs.



- Expand analysis and reporting on improvements made to social housing building conditions in Regina.

Without effective processes to plan for social housing units, vulnerable people are at greater risk of not having access to appropriate, affordable housing when needed.

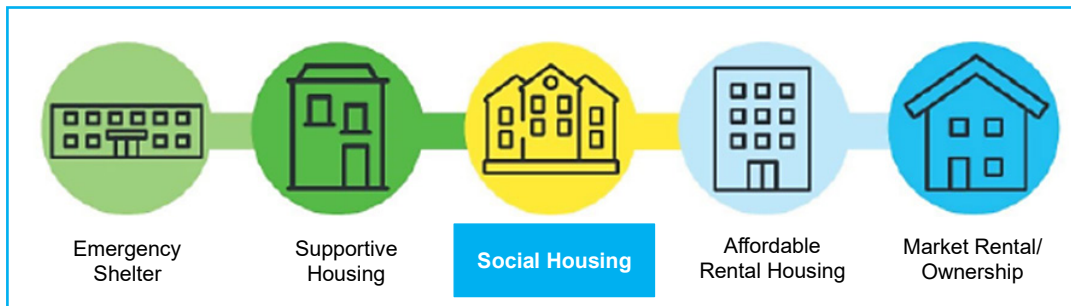
2.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Statistics Canada estimated almost 42,000 Saskatchewan households in need of core housing—meaning they live in unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable dwellings and cannot afford alternative housing in their community.^{2,3,4} Of these 42,000 households in 2021, an estimated 9,600 or 23% resided in Regina.⁵ The core housing need measure does not estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in Saskatchewan.

Social and affordable housing programs help address core housing need. Subsidized by governments, social housing provides accommodation to those who would otherwise be unable to afford to live in suitable and adequate housing. Affordable housing refers to programs where governments do not subsidize rent based on the tenants' income, instead tenants pay rents at lower rates than an area's market rent.

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation provides a range of housing programs and services to support households facing barriers to access adequate, safe, and affordable housing. As described in **Figure 1**, the provincial Social Housing Program falls within a continuum of housing options—additional options available to tenants beyond social housing include supportive housing and the Saskatchewan Housing Benefit.⁶

Figure 1—The Housing Continuum



Source: Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Annual Report for 2023*, p. 9.

² Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Saskatchewan Housing Action Plan 2022–2025*, p. 7.

³ www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022056-eng.htm (11 October 2024).

⁴ Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of a household, adequate housing does not require any major repairs, and affordable housing costs less than 30% of the before-tax total household income. Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2022). *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, Yukon Housing*, p. 1.

⁵ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Saskatchewan—Household Type (Households in Core Housing Need)*.

⁶ The Saskatchewan Housing Benefit helps people with low to moderate incomes better afford market rental housing. Renters eligible for this benefit who do not already receive affordability assistance through another housing benefit (e.g., rent from a housing authority under the Social Housing Program) receive a flat-rate monthly benefit based on their household composition (ranging from \$175 to \$325 per month). www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/housing-and-renting/renting-and-leasing/saskatchewan-housing-benefit#benefits (11 October 2024).

The Social Housing Program offers safe, adequate rental housing targeting low-income families and seniors, and people with disabilities through a portfolio of housing units owned by the Corporation and operated by local housing authorities. The Program subsidizes rent according to the degree of financial need.⁷ All applicants must meet low-income criteria for services and demonstrate the greatest need for social housing.

This chapter outlines the results of our audit of Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's processes, for the 18-month period ended June 30, 2024, to plan for social housing units to meet the needs of people in Regina.

As of May 2024, the Corporation owned about 3,000 social housing units in Regina. The Regina Housing Authority manages these units in Regina on behalf of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.⁸

2.1 Background

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) is a Treasury Board Crown corporation providing housing and housing services to people who could not otherwise afford or access adequate, safe, and secure shelter.⁹ *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act* makes the Corporation responsible for evaluating housing needs and conditions across the province, making housing options available to residents requiring assistance, and taking steps to repair and improve existing housing accommodations.¹⁰

In 2023, the Corporation reported revenues of almost \$226 million with 12% received from the Provincial Government and 36% received from the Federal Government. The remainder came from tenant rents (49%) and other sources (e.g., municipal governments).¹¹

The SHC-owned housing portfolio consists of almost 18,000 units (i.e., social housing, affordable housing, supportive housing, and life lease) in more than 260 communities across the province.¹² The units are managed by 244 housing authorities (e.g., Regina Housing Authority) on behalf of the Corporation.

The Corporation also owns 65 housing units in Regina it leases to 12 third-party organizations (e.g., community-based organizations such as Phoenix Residential Society Inc.) to provide targeted housing for people with disabilities, family reunification services, as well as supportive housing for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.¹³

In addition, the Corporation has operating agreements with 155 non-profit groups that own and operate affordable housing across the province.¹⁴

⁷ saskatchewan.ca/residents/housing-and-renting/renting-and-leasing/rental-housing-for-people-with-low-incomes (11 October 2024).

⁸ The Ministry of Social Services establishes local housing authorities (e.g., Regina Housing Authority) and appoints volunteer Board members who oversee operations of the housing authority.

⁹ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Annual Report for 2023*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act*, section 13.

¹¹ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Annual Report for 2023*, p. 18.

¹² Available in select Saskatchewan communities, the Life Lease Program offers moderate-income seniors with the opportunity to live in an affordable apartment-style home in exchange for a deposit and a monthly occupancy fee.

¹³ Information provided by Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. Supportive housing provides stability and support for people with addictions, mental health conditions, disabilities, or behavioural issues.

¹⁴ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Annual Report for 2023*, p. 7.



The SHC-owned housing portfolio has an associated cost of almost \$633 million and an estimated replacement value of \$3.4 billion.¹⁵ The Corporation is responsible for maintaining its existing units, as well as for constructing new housing units.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the Corporation’s unit vacancies and vacancy rates in Saskatchewan’s three largest cities since 2020. At June 2024, the Corporation had almost 2,500 vacant units across the province—representing a vacancy rate of about 14% across its housing portfolio.

Over the past five years, Regina not only had the most vacancies, but also the highest level of vacancies in SHC-owned units, with a vacancy rate ranging from 16.2% to 24.9% (see **Figure 3**). At May 2024, the Corporation had over 400 households waiting for social housing units in Regina.

Figure 2—Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Unit Vacancies in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert at June 2024

Region	Rentable Units	Available Units	Units Out-of-Service	Total Vacant Units	% Vacant Units
Province-wide	17,362	971	1,477	2,448	14.1%
Regina	3,003	179	307	486	16.2%
Saskatoon	2,417	67	151	218	9.0%
Prince Albert	935	63	81	144	15.4%

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

Figure 3—Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Unit Vacancy Rates in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert 2019–24 (at June of each year)

Region	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Province-wide	19.3%	20.4%	20.0%	17.2%	14.1%
Regina	18.1%	23.2%	24.9%	21.8%	16.2%
Saskatoon	13.2%	18.1%	12.0%	8.5%	9.0%
Prince Albert	10.2%	14.0%	16.8%	16.9%	15.4%

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

2.2 Importance of Planning for Social Housing Units to Meet Needs

Having an affordable, safe, stable place to call home is important for individuals and families to succeed. Stable housing is a key determinant to the health, education, and wellbeing of vulnerable people.¹⁶

Research shows that people facing housing instability are more likely to experience poor health in comparison to others with housing stability. The stress from unstable housing can result in disruptions to employment, social networks, education, and the receipt of social service benefits. Moreover, people experiencing chronic homelessness face substantially poorer physical and mental health and increased mortality.¹⁷

¹⁵ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Annual Report for 2023*, pp. 7, 19, and 33.

¹⁶ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Annual Report for 2022*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, (June 2018), *Housing and Health: An Overview of the Literature*.

Having a significant number of vacant units (including units in disrepair for extended periods), especially during rising housing unaffordability, highlights the importance of effective planning for social housing and the need to minimize the extent of vacancies in social housing portfolios. Planning for social housing can be complex, as housing needs may change and evolve faster than organizations can adapt existing housing supply. Implementing plans for social housing units can help housing authorities to sufficiently provide suitable, adequate, and affordable housing for those unable to afford housing in their communities.

Without effective processes to plan for social housing units, vulnerable people are at greater risk of not having access to appropriate, affordable housing when needed. Effective processes to plan for social housing units can help position people for future success and enable them to better their lives.

3.0 AUDIT CONCLUSION

We concluded, for the 18-month period ended June 30, 2024, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation had, other than the following areas, effective processes to plan for social housing units to meet the needs of people in Regina.

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation needs to:

- **Assess social housing applicant data and implement plans to help reduce vacant social housing units in Regina**
- **Complete its forecast of long-term social housing needs in Regina to sufficiently identify gaps**
- **Periodically analyze data to identify and respond to possibly over-housed social housing tenants in Regina**
- **Enhance its operational reviews of the Regina Housing Authority**
- **Expand its analysis and reporting on progress made against its building conditions target related to social housing in Regina**

Figure 4—Audit Objective, Criteria, and Approach

Audit Objective:

To assess whether Saskatchewan Housing Corporation had effective processes, for the 18-month period ended June 30, 2024, to plan for social housing units to meet the needs of people in Regina.

Audit Criteria:

Processes to:

1. Identify social housing needs

- Collect demographic data (e.g., family size, people with disabilities) to determine needs
- Engage with partners (e.g., local housing authorities, community-based organizations, municipalities, government ministries)
- Forecast social housing needs (e.g., location, type, features) over the short and long term
- Analyze the gap between existing social housing capacity and forecasted needs



2. Establish plans to address social housing needs

- Assess alternatives to meet social housing needs (e.g., repurpose units, establish supportive housing options with community-based organizations)
- Determine the appropriate mix of social housing units to meet needs and quality standards
- Implement plans to address gaps

3. Monitor the provision of social housing

- Set outcomes and measures to evaluate progress made toward addressing social housing needs (e.g., vacancy rates, waitlists, timeliness of repairs and maintenance, tenant satisfaction)
- Analyze achievement of desired outcomes and measures
- Communicate results to interested parties (e.g., Board, senior management, Federal Government)

Audit Approach:

To conduct this audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's processes, we used the above criteria based on our related work, review of literature including reports of other auditors, and consultations with management. Corporation management agreed with the above criteria.

We examined the Corporation's policies and procedures, committee minutes, assessment of housing alternatives, vacancy reports, forecasts, and other key documents related to planning for social housing units to meet the needs of people in Regina. We also interviewed key staff and analyzed data such as unit vacancies, over-housing, and approved housing applications.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Further Analysis of Applicant Data Needed

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation does not sufficiently analyze its approved applicant list for its Social Housing Program in Regina to help determine social housing needs.

The location and design of the social housing portfolio in Regina does not align with current social housing need, demonstrated through persistent unit vacancies yet long applicant waitlists. For example, there are a number of families waiting for housing units at April 2024, and not enough units available to meet this need.

The Corporation has a standard application form that interested Social Housing Program applicants must complete and return to a housing authority (e.g., Regina Housing Authority) for consideration. The form collects applicant demographic information (e.g., size of families, needs for people with disabilities, need for senior housing and family housing), along with other information such as applicant income. Housing authorities assess and approve social housing applications and enter approved applicant information into the Corporation's provincial housing IT system.

The Corporation can produce a current approved applicant list from its provincial housing IT system. Within the list, it tracks information such as:

- Application type (i.e., family, non-elderly single, senior, senior couple)
- Application date
- Point score—determines priority based on an applicant's core needs (affordability, suitability, adequacy of current shelter); for example, applicants in domestic abuse situations are given the maximum score (150) and ranked highest priority

- Number of bedrooms required
- Accessible unit requested
- Days since application
- Building requests—applicants may request specific units (e.g., apartment, townhouse) where they would prefer to live

While we found that although the Corporation considered the approved applicant list in Regina in its capital budget request, it does not analyze its approved applicant list to sufficiently determine and adapt to changes in social housing need. Within its monthly social housing vacancy report for the Regina Housing Authority, the Corporation notes the number of approved family/single and senior households on the approved applicant list in Regina. However, the Corporation does not sufficiently analyze trend information (e.g., changing trends in types of waiting applicants—families/singles, seniors, people with disabilities).

As of May 2024, the Regina Housing Authority approved 308 families/single persons and 96 seniors (404 total applicants) for the Social Housing Program but had not placed them in a social housing unit in Regina. Our analysis found the approved applicant list may be inaccurate or not up to date.

Our analysis of the approved applicant list for the Regina Housing Authority found 16 applicants with a score of 70 or more (i.e., considered high priority).¹⁸ We examined five of those high-priority applicants waiting for more than a year who had not specified a unit preference (i.e., may be easier to accommodate), and found:

- One applicant remained waitlisted because they could not get utilities hooked up due to prior unpaid utilities.
- Four other applicants did not accept units offered by the Regina Housing Authority (indicating they may no longer need to be on the waiting list). Therefore, the Housing Authority may be making decisions from an outdated approved applicant list.

In its operational review of the Regina Housing Authority, the Corporation noted the Housing Authority must ensure it keeps accurate and up-to-date data in the provincial housing IT system (see **Section 4.9**). Management indicated the Corporation is reviewing its business needs to inform the potential replacement of its provincial housing IT system, providing an opportunity to improve available data for decision-making.

Our analysis of the monthly social housing vacancy reports for Regina found the demand for family/single social housing units significantly exceeded available units. **Figure 5** illustrates changes in the approved applicant list during our audit period—the number of approved family/single applicants increased to 308 in May 2024, but the number of vacant units available decreased to 56 in total (with an additional 107 units out-of-service for repairs). Whereas more units were available for seniors than the number of approved

¹⁸ Housing authorities calculate applicants' points score using a standard form based on information from housing applications. The points score provides an objective numerical score based on an applicant's core needs (affordability, suitability, and adequacy of current shelter). The Corporation considers applicants with a score greater than 70 as high priority.



applicants (e.g., 96 approved applicants compared to 114 available units and 257 out-of-service units in May 2024).

Figure 5—Number of Approved Regina Social Housing Applicants Compared to Number of Vacant Units

Monthly Reports Examined	Approved Family/Single Applicants	Family/Single Vacant Units:		Approved Senior Applicants	Senior Vacant Units:	
		Available	Out-of-Service		Available	Out-of-Service
February 2023	181	96	170	65	187	231
October 2023	282	90	145	64	160	241
April 2024	306	72	109	89	118	261
May 2024	308	56	107	96	114	257

Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's Monthly Vacancy Reports.

We found the Corporation does not regularly assess how long Social Housing Program applicants wait or why, or the types of units requested (e.g., number of bedrooms). Doing so might help it identify changes needed to its housing portfolio.

Our analysis of the approved applicant list for the Regina Housing Authority at April 2024 found:

- 114 applicants requested one-bedroom units; 83 requested two-bedroom units; 121 requested three-bedroom units; 53 requested four-bedroom units; 14 requested five-bedroom units; and 2 requested six-bedroom units

This shows almost 50% of applicants at April 2024 seeking units with three bedrooms or more.

Without having accurate data and sufficient analysis, the Corporation is unable to appropriately determine social housing needs. Periodically analyzing data on requested unit size and household compositions can provide insight into the demand for different types of housing units. This can also help the Corporation plan future developments or adjust its housing portfolio to better meet applicant needs in a timely manner.

1. **We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation further analyze social housing applicant data to help determine social housing needs in Regina.**

4.2 Revisit Social Housing Mix to Reduce Vacant Units

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation does not revisit the mix of social housing units (e.g., family/single, seniors) it owns in Regina, to meet the needs of people and reduce the number of vacant units.

Determining the appropriate mix of social housing units to meet peoples' needs is necessary for implementing plans to align the housing mix with the requirements of those most in need.

The Corporation signed a bilateral agreement with the Federal Government (under the National Housing Strategy) in 2019. Under the agreement, the Corporation agreed to continue offering a baseline number of social housing units across the province (16,448 units) and develop new and innovative ways to regenerate housing to contribute to a 15% expansion of units (2,467 units) above the baseline number by 2028.

We found the Corporation does not intend to increase the number of social housing units it owns to achieve this expansion of units. Rather, it expects to invest in and re-commit other units from its housing portfolio that fell under another agreement with the Federal Government (in excess of the baseline), and work with third-parties to develop new units through provincial programs such as the Rental Development Program.¹⁹ Management indicated they take this approach to expand the capacity of the housing market because it enables the Corporation to leverage private equity, creating more choice for tenants and reducing long-term government subsidies.

We found the Corporation's processes to assess proposals through the Rental Development Program appropriately considered the needs of communities and clients, such as prioritizing projects focused on housing for families where circumstances warrant (i.e., low vacancies in family units in a particular location).

However, the Corporation has not revisited the mix of social housing units (e.g., family/single, seniors) it owns within Regina. While we recognize the Corporation places applicants into housing units based on priority point scores, the portfolio of SHC-owned social housing units in Regina does not fully align with client needs (available units do not support approved applicants' needs). For example, it had over 300 family/single approved applicants in Regina but had only 56 units available at May 2024.

At May 2024, the Corporation allocated approximately 51% of its social housing units for seniors and approximately 49% for families/single persons, compared to demand of about 75% for families/single persons and 25% for seniors according to the approved applicant list in Regina. The Corporation's allocated mix of units remained relatively unchanged since 2016.

Revisiting the mix of social housing units it owns in Regina can help guide the Corporation's decisions on how to address unit vacancies (e.g., repurposing seniors' units to meet family/single needs). See **Recommendation 3** about the need to implement plans to help reduce vacant social housing units in Regina.

4.3 Periodic Engagement with Partners Underway

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation engages with partners (e.g., municipal, provincial, community-based organizations) to obtain an understanding of social housing needs in Regina and to consider options to address those needs.

¹⁹ The Rental Development Program provides one-time capital funding in the form of a forgivable loan of up to 70% of the capital cost to assist non-profit corporations, cooperatives, municipalities, and the private sector to develop affordable rental units for low-income households. Sponsors must contribute a minimum of 30% toward the capital cost of their projects and agree to maintain ownership of the project for a minimum of 10 years.



Since January 2023, we found the Corporation met with the following partners to discuss current and future client needs, the local housing market, and housing gaps in the community:

- Regina Housing Authority and City of Regina—meetings included consideration of actions regarding the use of vacant lots (e.g., divestment), as well as potential options (e.g., repurposing) for existing seniors' housing units to help meet long-term housing needs.
- Provincial Ministries (e.g., Health; Social Services; Corrections, Policing and Public Safety)—discussions to coordinate the repurposing of 39 social housing units in Regina's North Central neighborhood (i.e., Lovering Place) to assist with the Government's Provincial Approach to Homelessness project.²⁰ The Corporation repurposed these units as supportive housing because it provided an opportunity to utilize vacant units and address needs in the local community. It also met with representatives from Social Services regarding the use of social housing units for the Keeping Families Together Program.²¹

Additionally, through its Rental Development Program, the Corporation releases an annual expression of interest (EOI) requesting community-based organizations (CBOs) to express unmet housing needs and present proposals for the development of affordable rental units. At June 2024, the Corporation had partnerships with 24 CBOs in Regina to develop affordable housing units to help tenants find housing with lower rent than available in the market.²² The EOI process relates to the provision of supportive housing (rather than social housing) but shows how the Corporation engages with community partners to understand their needs.

As several organizations and levels of government partner to help address housing needs across Regina, the Corporation's periodic engagement with these partners helps maintain its awareness of the community's changing housing needs. Such information is necessary to appropriately respond to and adjust its social housing plans for Regina where warranted.

4.4 Long-term Forecast of Social Housing Needs Incomplete

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation forecasted social housing needs in Regina to 2026, but has not forecasted its needs over the longer term (e.g., next decade).

Forecasting long-term need informs the type of social housing units (e.g., family/single) required. Long-term forecasting provides a broader perspective, enabling organizations to set long-range goals and allocate resources accordingly—it helps to identify potential challenges and opportunities well in advance, allowing for proactive planning.

²⁰ The Provincial Approach to Homelessness (PATH) is an integrated approach between the Ministries of Social Services, Health, and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety to provide a continuum of services with targeted support in appropriate settings aligned with the needs of individuals.

²¹ The Keeping Families Together Program is a family-focused, child-centered, goal-oriented program designed to keep families safe and prevent out-of-home placement of children or expedite family reunification by providing in-home skills building and after-care support services to the family unit. As part of this Program, the Ministry of Social Services provides in-home and after-care support services to families using social housing units owned by Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

²² Information provided by Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

We found the Corporation last forecasted core housing need in Regina in 2019 when it engaged a consultant to prepare a forecast to 2026. Our review of the Corporation's forecast found it:

- Used data from the most recent census available at the time (i.e., 2016).
- Considered core housing needs by different types of households (e.g., single seniors: 1 bedroom unit; senior couples: 1+ bedroom unit; two parent family: 2+ bedroom unit).

Management acknowledged that lack of data (e.g., tenant preferences, requests for repairs) from its provincial housing IT system impacted the breadth of information used in its forecast. Management indicated it is in the early planning stages for modernizing its IT system as of June 2024; a key priority for the Corporation.

- Estimated Regina having about 15,500 households in core housing need by 2026 (compared to almost 12,000 households from 2016 census).

At May 2024, the Corporation owns about 3,000 social housing units in Regina and relies on the private rental market for the remaining units to accommodate households in core housing need—it helps people with low to moderate incomes better afford market rental housing through the Saskatchewan Housing Benefit.²³ Overall, the Corporation's ownership of social housing units in Regina has remained unchanged since 2016.

While the Corporation engaged its consultant to update the core housing need forecast for Regina to 2038, management had yet to validate the forecast using the latest federal census released in 2021. Management explained that data limitations (i.e., concerns over 2021 census data understating housing affordability issues due to individuals receiving the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic) delayed their ability to update their long-term forecast.²⁴ Management indicated they expect to complete this validation work on the forecast in fall 2024.

Without a long-term forecast of social housing needs in Regina, there is an increased risk of misalignment between social housing priorities and expected future demand. Understanding long-term social housing needs can help the Corporation consider changes to planned actions (e.g., timing and extent of repairs to existing units, engaging private market partners to encourage construction of new units where needed).

2. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation complete its forecast of long-term social housing needs in Regina.

²³ Renters eligible for the Saskatchewan Housing Benefit who do not already receive affordability assistance through another housing benefit (e.g., rent from a housing authority under the Social Housing Program) receive a flat-rate monthly benefit based on their household composition (ranging from \$175 to \$325 per month). At June 2024, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation provided this benefit to approximately 3,600 households in the province. www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/housing-and-renting/renting-and-leasing/saskatchewan-housing-benefit#benefits (11 October 2024).

²⁴ The federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) provided financial support to employed and self-employed Canadians who were directly affected financially by the COVID-19 pandemic. www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html (11 October 2024).

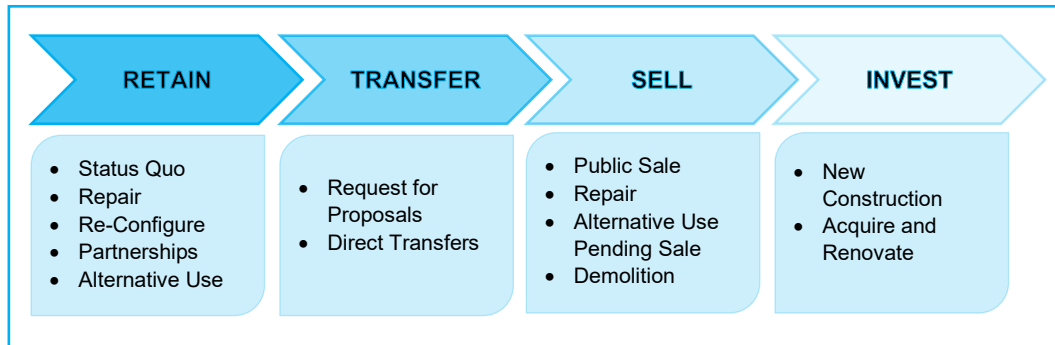


4.5 Implementation of Social Housing Alternatives Underway, But Waitlist Remains

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation evaluates alternatives to deliver social housing and is working toward implementing its community review for Regina. However, it continues to have vacant units in Regina even with a significant number of approved applicants on the waitlist.

We found the Corporation implemented a Portfolio Management Framework in 2023 for the purpose of supporting those in greatest housing need, while assisting with managing fiscal, capital, and operational pressures—all with the intention of reducing vacancies and operating costs across its portfolio (including social housing). As illustrated in **Figure 6**, the Framework consists of four pillars it considers when evaluating housing alternatives: retain, transfer, sell, and invest.

Figure 6—Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Portfolio Management Framework



Source: Adapted from information provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

Additionally, the Corporation uses four committees to assess alternatives for delivering housing (including social housing). **Figure 7** briefly describes these committees and their purposes.

Figure 7—Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Committees Assessing Alternatives for Housing Delivery

Committee ^A	Purpose
Housing Management Committee	Coordinates the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Application of expert knowledge to policy and program changes • Identification and mitigation of risk • Comprehensive policy decisions • Timely dissemination of information accountability of policies, programs, and financial management • Strategic human resource management planning • Oversight and decision-making
Portfolio Management Steering Committee	Makes decisions on the housing portfolio to ensure the Corporation remains financially sustainable, and that housing stock meets the current and future demands of those in greatest housing need
Portfolio Working Group	Considers housing alternatives (e.g., partnering with community-based organizations) and provides recommendations to the Portfolio Management Steering Committee

Committee ^A	Purpose
Project Review Committee	Reviews Expression of Interest (EOI) proposal scoring and makes recommendations to management on which projects may proceed to the proposal development stage and what partners must address prior to conditional approval

Source: Committee terms of reference or minutes obtained from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

^A Various staff throughout the Corporation comprise membership on these committees (e.g., President, Chief Financial Officer, management from Housing Development, Housing Operations, Financial Operations, and Program and Service Design).

Our review of agenda materials for the committees described in **Figure 7** found management considered each of the four pillars when analyzing social housing units in Regina. However, at May 2024, its mix of social housing units for seniors and families/single persons remained relatively unchanged since 2016.

In May 2023, the Corporation completed a community review acknowledging the housing challenges in Regina. The community review recognized a gap in housing for people who cannot live independently and require services (i.e., hard-to-house clients needing supportive housing options) and expected increases in need for seniors and large-family households. The review also recommended consideration of investment and divestment opportunities and housing delivery options (e.g., partnerships, programs) to meet the needs of people in Regina. **Figure 8** sets out the Corporation's actions in response to these options since 2023, including allocating funds to repair 199 social housing units and repurposing units to create nearly 100 supportive housing units.

Figure 8—Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Actions Between 2023 and 2024 in Response to Regina Community Review

Option	Actions
Investment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At March 2024, invested \$9.9 million from the Canada Community Housing Initiative (CCHI) to repair and renew four social housing projects (199 units) toward reducing chronic vacancies^A In 2024–25, investing \$9.6 million in provincial funding to prevent and reduce vacancies and respond to the increasing demand for social housing by ensuring housing units are available across the province, including Regina. Implemented a pilot project in North Central Regina in response to high vacancy rates that places tenants into housing without income or asset testing or point scoring, with tenants paying a set, affordable rent (i.e., monthly rent of \$720 for a two-bedroom unit and \$800 for a three-bedroom unit)^B Considered repurposing existing units (e.g., seniors' units to mix-use or supportive housing) Created 56 new supportive housing spaces through the Provincial Approach to Homelessness—all spaces operational by July 2024
Housing Delivery Options (e.g., partnerships, programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executed leases with third parties for provision of supportive housing—while this is not specifically related to social housing, we observed three such leases providing various supports for hard-to-house clients (leases included supportive housing associated with 38 units)
Divestment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Corporation developed a provincial divestment plan to reduce underutilized units in its housing portfolio and reinvest into other areas (e.g., third-party partnerships, social housing portfolio). The divestment plan does not currently contemplate divesting any housing units in Regina.

Source: The Office of the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan.

^A CCHI is an initiative under the National Housing Strategy that funds the protection, renewal, and expansion of community housing. The Corporation received almost \$65 million of CCHI funding for use across the province between 2019–20 and 2023–24.

^B The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation introduced the pilot project in North Central Regina during 2022 within eight vacant three-bedroom townhouse units. Due to the success of this pilot, it expanded the project to another 21 units in 2023 and 38 units in 2024 (total of 67 units). Management established quantitative measures to help evaluate the project, expecting to do so in 2024–25. As of June 2024, management confirmed it has no vacancies in these 67 units.



As described in **Figure 8**, the Corporation’s provincial divestment plan does not consider divesting any housing units in Regina. We found it last divested social housing units in Regina during 2019. Management indicated its divestment plan focuses on divesting units in declining communities and not in cities with growing populations. The Corporation’s decision to not divest vacant units in Regina is reasonable, as it expects to have a continued need for these units in Regina in the future.

Figure 9 shows that while the Corporation reduced its social housing vacancy rate in Regina since 2022, it continues to have vacant units with a significant number of approved applicants on the waitlist. With 534 social housing units in Regina vacant at May 2024 and with 404 people on its waitlist, it is paramount for the Corporation to implement plans to address these vacancies (See **Recommendation 3**).

Figure 9—Approved Regina Social Housing Applicants, Vacant Units and Vacancy Rates

Year ^A	Approved Applicants	Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate
2021	414	620	20.6%
2022	224	737	24.5%
2024	404	534	17.8%

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

^A Unit vacancies are as at January of each year, except for 2024 (as of May 2024).

Also, revisiting the appropriate mix of social housing units it requires in Regina (see **Section 4.2**) can help the Corporation prioritize possible alternatives to help place people within its vacant social housing units (e.g., further repurposing of existing buildings, expanding the North Central Regina pilot project to other properties within the city).

4.6 More Plans to Address Vacant Housing Units Needed

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation conducts limited analysis of vacant social housing units (e.g., how long vacant, cost associated with holding vacant social housing units, how long in disrepair) nor does it assess costs to hold chronically vacant units. Further analysis of vacant social housing units can help the Corporation to consider and implement plans to address these vacancies.

Within its provincial housing IT system, the Corporation tracks information on each of its units such as address, building type (e.g., elevator apartment, detached dwelling, row house), unit type (e.g., family, senior), and unit status (e.g., available, not rent ready, major repair).

Each month, the Corporation prepares a monthly social housing vacancy report of its largest housing authorities (i.e., Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw) for senior leadership and the Minister of Social Services. It reports vacancy-related data including:

- Rentable units (total number of units owned)
- Vacant units (vacancy rate)

- Available units (availability rate)
- Out-of-service units (out-of-service rate)

While a social housing need exists, the Corporation is facing challenges with accommodating clients' needs with its available social housing portfolio. As described in **Section 2.1**, Regina has not only had the most vacancies in the province, but also the highest level of vacancies over the past five years. **Figure 10** illustrates how, at May 2024, Regina had 534 vacant social housing units (17.8%), but only 170 are available for rent because 364 are out-of-service (i.e., in need of repairs). This is in comparison to 404 households waiting for social housing units (308 of which are families).

Figure 10—May 2024 Social Housing Vacancy Data for Regina Housing Authority

Social Housing Type	Rentable Units	Vacant Units (Vacancy Rate)	Available Units (Availability Rate)	Out-of-Service Units (Out-of-Service Rate)	Units Under Major Repair
Senior	1,518	371 (24.4%)	114 (7.5%)	257 (16.9%)	43
Family	1,485	163 (11.0%)	56 (3.8%)	107 (7.2%)	30
Total	3,003	534 (17.8%)	170 (5.7%)	364 (12.1%)	73

Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's May 2024 Social Housing Vacancy for Regina Housing Authority.

Beyond accumulating the vacancy data, we found the Corporation does not further analyze its vacant units (e.g., types of units under repair), which would allow it to focus repairs on units with higher demand (e.g., larger family units). For example, our analysis of vacant units at May 2024 found:

- Of the 30 family units under major repair (vacant unit with damage that takes longer than 30 days to repair), 11 had two bedrooms, 18 had three bedrooms, and one had four bedrooms²⁵
- 291 of the 364 total out-of-service units were classified as not rent ready (i.e., unit recently vacated and requires normal turnover repairs that take less than 30 days). Of these 291 units, 73 relate to family units (23 had two bedrooms, 45 had three bedrooms, and 5 had four bedrooms)

We also found the Corporation does not track the time a unit available for rent stays empty. While it can determine chronically vacant units (vacant for greater than six months), its reporting does not specify chronically vacant units available for rent versus those under repair.

When comparing the May 2024 chronic vacancy report to the May 2024 vacancy report, we found 334 chronically vacant units and 364 out-of-service units—showing that most of the chronically vacant units appear to be under repair. Additionally, we found these 334 chronically vacant units reside in 32 social housing buildings in Regina, with 23 of these buildings noted as preferable locations by approved applicants. This indicates applicants want to live where these chronically vacant units are located in the city.

²⁵ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation uses Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC) guidance on adequate housing when the dwelling is not in need of major repair. Major repairs include defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings.



Due to data limitations within the provincial housing IT system, the Corporation also does not track how long vacant units are in disrepair. Further, the Corporation was unable to provide data about the number of chronically vacant units it repaired in Regina.

Our analysis of the Corporation's ongoing cost to hold chronically vacant units in an elevator apartment and a detached/semi-detached dwelling found the estimated monthly costs (e.g., property tax, utilities) to be relatively consistent—about \$300 per unit per month at December 2023. However, when applying this estimate across all 334 chronically vacant social housing properties in Regina, the annual cost (about \$1.2 million) could be significant.²⁶

Without analyzing vacancies and tracking costs associated with holding chronically vacant social housing units, the Corporation may not fully understand the financial impact of these vacancies. This increases the risk of inefficiencies in its budgeting and resource allocations. Further, by planning to get chronically vacant units back into service (e.g., repairing more units with the right number of bedrooms in preferable locations), the Corporation can help to address long applicant waitlists and house more people in Regina.

3. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation implement plans to help reduce vacant social housing units in Regina.

4.7 No Analysis of Possibly Over-housed Tenants

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation does not periodically analyze the prevalence of over-housing within its social housing units in Regina. Doing so may identify social housing units the Corporation could provide to families on the approved applicant list.

Households exhibit different housing needs depending on their particular circumstances (e.g., single individuals, parents, couples). Household needs can change (e.g., fewer people living in a home), resulting in tenants possibly residing in units now too large for their household needs—this refers to tenants as over-housed.

The Corporation uses the Federal Government's *National Occupancy Standard* as a guideline when considering the maximum number of bedrooms a household needs.^{27,28} **Figure 11** sets out the occupancy standards the Corporation expects housing authorities to use when assigning social housing units to different types of households.

Figure 11—Social Housing Program Occupancy Standards

Households with children or dependents (including individuals in the third trimester of pregnancy):

- Single parents, or couples, are entitled to their own bedrooms
- Any other adults in a household are entitled to their own bedrooms
- There should be no more than two children to a bedroom

Households without children or dependents should be housed according to the following standards:

- Single adults or couples are entitled to a single bedroom
- If two adults not married or not common-law are in the household, each is entitled to a bedroom of their own
- Senior couples are entitled to separate bedrooms if there are medical reasons why they cannot share a room

²⁶ 334 units chronically vacant at May 2024 x 12 months x \$300 per month = \$1,202,400.

²⁷ Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Social Housing Program Policy Manual (July 2024)*, section 4.3.

²⁸ The federal, provincial, and territorial governments created the *National Occupancy Standard* in the mid-1980s providing a common reference point for 'suitable' housing that establishes how many people a housing unit might accommodate given the number of bedrooms.

Victims of domestic violence must be allocated the first available unit, even if the unit is too large or too small for the applicant's needs

With a household's agreement, a housing authority may under-house a household as long as doing so does not result in health and/or safety risks (i.e., obstructions to windows, doorways, hallways and exits or if windows do not meet minimum size requirements to permit emergency exit)^A

Source: Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, *Social Housing Program Policy Manual (July 2024)*, section 4.3.

^A Under-housing occurs when a tenant's unit does not have enough bedrooms to accommodate the members of their household according to the *National Occupancy Standard*. The Corporation considers tenants to be under-housed if there are more than two people per bedroom.

While the Corporation has specific requirements to help mitigate instances of over-housing, we found it does not analyze the prevalence of over-housing within its social housing units in Regina.

At May 2024, our analysis identified 108 single individuals residing in two-bedroom seniors' social housing units—indicating these individuals may be over-housed when there are applicants currently waiting for two-bedroom units. At April 2024, we found 83 applicants waiting for two-bedroom units. Also, we found the Corporation had 105 vacant one-bedroom units available where single individuals could move.

Periodic analysis (e.g., annually) to identify possibly over-housed tenants can provide valuable information about whether the allocation of units address clients' needs effectively. Such information can provide the Corporation an opportunity to consider changes to existing unit allocations to help meet the needs of more clients (i.e., reduce the applicant waitlist).

4. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation periodically analyze data to identify and respond to possibly over-housed social housing tenants in Regina.

4.8 Existing Housing Portfolio Analyzed, Including Building Conditions

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation assesses and analyzes its social housing portfolio, including building conditions, to inform decision-making.

The Corporation periodically uses a building assessment tool to assess its social housing portfolio, including asset conditions. For each building in its portfolio, the tool assesses community needs that considers population size (declining, stable, expanding), vacancy/chronic vacancy rate, type of community (e.g., bedroom community) and whether alternative housing options exist.

The Corporation assesses each building based on the following (noted as preferred, acceptable, or unacceptable):

- Building attributes (e.g., parking, unit size, onsite amenities)
- Accessibility (e.g., number of accessible units; building modifications such as walk-in showers, bedroom/bathroom locations; support services such as home care)
- Adaptability (e.g., current and ease of modifications to improve the building)



- Locational and neighbourhood influences (e.g., access to, and availability of, services such as transit, schools, grocery stores, medical facilities)
- Asset conditions (e.g., physical condition of property components such as roofing, plumbing, windows, fire alarm system, electrical)

In 2021, the Corporation used its building assessment tool to assess gaps between social housing capacity and the needs in Regina, which showed an expanding need for social housing in the city.

The Corporation also calculates the Facility Condition Index (FCI) following industry standards for classification.²⁹ Annually, housing authorities report on major maintenance and improvement initiatives, and the Corporation uses this information to update the FCI.

FCI Classifications:

- Good: 0–5%
- Fair: 5–10%
- Poor: 11–30%
- Critical: >30%

Management indicated it strives for a 10% (fair) FCI. Using the FCI, in conformity with good practices and generally accepted asset management standards, the state of the Corporation’s housing portfolio in Regina is currently ‘poor’ (average FCI of 22.2%). We found buildings in Regina had FCIs ranging between 0–118%.

The Corporation maintains a summary of the Regina housing portfolio that tracks details of all its buildings, including building type (e.g., elevator apartment, detached dwelling), year built, FCI, current tenant type (e.g., family, senior), number of units, total vacancies, chronic vacancies, and building assessment results.

Figure 12 sets out the Regina Housing Authority’s spending over the past five years on maintaining and modernizing housing units across its portfolio (e.g., social housing, supportive housing)—its spending in these areas increased almost 20% between 2019 and 2023. This increased spending helped reduce the social housing unit vacancy rate by almost 7% between 2022 and 2024 (see **Figure 3**). However, Regina’s vacancy rate still resides at almost 18% and most of the remaining vacant units are chronically vacant and in need of repairs.

Figure 12—Regina Housing Authority Expenses for Maintenance and Modernization/ Improvement from 2019–23 (at December of each year)

Expense Type ^A	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	(in millions)				
Maintenance	\$4.89	\$4.70	\$5.07	\$5.06	\$5.78
Modernization/ Improvements	\$3.67	\$4.48	\$4.18	\$4.69	\$4.40
Total	\$8.56	\$9.18	\$9.25	\$9.75	\$10.18

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

^A The expense categories include the following programs: social housing, life lease, and leased buildings (for supportive housing).

²⁹ The Facility Condition Index (FCI) is a ratio comparing the total deferred maintenance liability to the total portfolio replacement costs, expressed as a percentage.

From a quality perspective, the Corporation tailors its maintenance activities toward meeting quality standards established by the Federal Government. For example, it uses guidance about quality standards from Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation such that housing is considered adequate when it is not in need of major repair (e.g., defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings). We found about 2% of the Corporation's social housing units in Regina (73 units) are undergoing major repair.

In February 2023, the Corporation analyzed its housing portfolio and noted:

- 96% of SHC-owned units in Regina are in poor (71%) and critical condition (25%), impacting occupancy rates (or vacancy rates) of certain units. The remaining 4% of units are in adequate condition.³⁰
- More than 50% of all SHC-owned units in Regina are downtown, with high vacancy rates (29%), and the buildings are in poor condition.
- Regina neighborhoods with the highest vacancy rates: Highland Park (63%) with buildings in poor condition, Regent Park (51%) with buildings in critical condition, and Washington Park (42%) with buildings in critical condition. These neighborhoods are located in central Regina and north of downtown.

Assessing and analyzing existing building conditions help the Corporation understand its social housing portfolio, which informs decision-making on maintenance, repairs, and resource allocation. To reduce vacancy rates, the Corporation needs to perform ongoing maintenance and modernization for its social housing portfolio.

4.9 Operational Reviews Need Enhancing

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation needs to enhance aspects of its operational reviews for larger housing authorities. It has not established benchmarks (e.g., expected timeframes) for measuring a housing authority's performance in social housing delivery. The Corporation also does not have a formal process to follow up on compliance issues and recommendations, and it does not monitor and analyze tenant complaints in its operational reviews.

The Corporation completes operational reviews every three years for its largest housing authorities (e.g., Regina, Saskatoon) and every five years for other housing authorities (managing 100 units or more). The operational review monitors a housing authority's compliance with the Corporation's policies, along with monitoring social housing delivery under four perspectives: customer service, financial management, asset management, and business and governance. For example, it monitors wait times to place applicants in rental units as well as tenant perception of their home's condition, including timeliness of repairs and maintenance.

In 2022, the Corporation conducted an operational review of the Regina Housing Authority and reported the results to the Housing Authority and the Corporation's senior management in 2023. It plans to do another review in 2025–26.

³⁰ Over half of deferred maintenance for units in Regina relates to interior repairs (e.g., kitchen cabinets, flooring, painting).



4.9.1 No Established Benchmarks for Measuring Performance

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation does not include benchmarks for measuring the Regina Housing Authority's performance in its operational review report. The report included some documented analysis.

For example, the Corporation measured the wait time to place an applicant in a social housing unit in Regina. It found:

- Average wait of 55 days for an applicant with a point score of greater than 70 (i.e., high priority)
- Average wait of 99 days for an applicant with a point score of less than 70

The Corporation did not include benchmarks (e.g., expected timeframes) for the Regina Housing Authority to place applicants in a rental unit. However, we found the report provided some written analysis on the findings, noting wait times often correspond to an applicant needing to fulfill obligations related to a current lease or other matters that may delay their ability to move. In many instances, the wait time is tied to an applicant waiting for a unit located in a preferred area of the city or with a specific number of bedrooms.

The Corporation also does not set benchmarks to measure tenant satisfaction with repairs in their units. The operational review report for the Regina Housing Authority noted decreases in tenant satisfaction from the last operational review in 2017. The 2023 operational review report indicated 66% (2017: 76%) tenant satisfaction with the quality of completed repairs and 53% (2017: 64%) regarding the time taken to complete repairs. We found the operational review report did not include analysis of results other than noting satisfaction scores were among the lowest reported in the area over the last decade.

In addition, we found the operational review report did not include trend information. When the Corporation presented to the Regina Housing Authority Board in November 2023, the Board requested more information on how results compared to the last operational review in 2017 and how its tenant survey results compared to other large housing authorities (e.g., Saskatoon). The Corporation provided this information to the Housing Authority in April 2024. While the 2022 operational review did not include trend information, we reviewed a current operational review the Corporation conducted at another housing authority in 2024. We found that operational review contained trend information. Management indicated this type of information is now included in all operational reviews.

As shown in **Figure 13**, the average wait time to place an applicant in a rental unit in Regina increased to 55 days in 2022 for those applicants with a point score greater than 70 (high priority). Tenant satisfaction in Regina decreased compared to the 2017 results and is slightly worse than the other five large housing authorities.³¹

³¹ The other five large housing authorities include Saskatoon Housing Authority, Prince Albert Housing Authority, Moose Jaw Housing Authority, Good Spirit Regional Housing Authority, and The Battlefords Regional Housing Authority.

Figure 13—Regina Operational Review Results (2022 and 2017)

Indicator	Measure	2022 Results	2017 Results	Other Five Large Housing Authorities' Results (Average) ^A
Wait time to place applicant in Housing Authority rental unit	Average wait time (days) for an applicant with a point score of greater than 70	55 days	38 days	N/A ^B
	Average wait time (days) for an applicant with a point score of less than 70	99 days	112 days	N/A ^B
Tenants' perception of the condition of their home	Satisfaction with the time taken to complete repairs	53%	64%	66%
	Satisfaction with the quality of completed repairs	66%	69%	77%
	Percentage of tenants who agree their unit is in good physical condition	71%	64%	73%

Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's *Operational Review Follow-up—Regina Housing Authority*.

^A Average results from the Corporation's last operational reviews (between 2019 and 2021) at its other five large housing authorities (i.e., Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Battlefords, Good Spirit).

^B The Regina Housing Authority Board did not request comparative results for wait time data.

Without setting and monitoring results against benchmarks in its operational review report, the Corporation may be unable to effectively assess whether the Regina Housing Authority meets expectations and takes action where necessary. This increases the risk of the Housing Authority not delivering appropriate services to social housing tenants.

5. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation set performance benchmarks for its social housing operational reviews of the Regina Housing Authority.

4.9.2 Lack of Follow Up on Compliance Issues and Recommendations

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation does not formally follow up with the Regina Housing Authority on compliance issues and recommendations outlined in its operational review report.

During an operational review, the Corporation may indicate compliance issues and make recommendations to help housing authorities improve their processes.

In its operational review of the Regina Housing Authority, the Corporation noted three compliance issues and two recommendations for the Authority (e.g., data entered in provincial IT system needs to be accurate and up to date, improve repair processes to improve tenant satisfaction). We found the Corporation did not formally follow up on either the issues or recommendations. Management indicated they met with the Authority to discuss the results of the operational review. The Corporation expects to implement requirements for the Housing Authority to document its action plans to address issues and recommendations from the operational review. It expects to implement this process in 2024–25.



Without having a formal process to follow up on compliance issues and recommendations, there is an increased risk of the Regina Housing Authority not taking timely action to improve its operations as expected by the Corporation, along with an increased risk of not delivering appropriate services to social housing tenants.

6. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation require the Regina Housing Authority to develop action plans addressing issues and recommendations identified in its social housing operational reviews.

4.9.3 Complaints Not Formally Monitored

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and the Regina Housing Authority do not formally monitor complaints related to social housing.

Both the Corporation and the Housing Authority receive complaints (e.g., face-to-face, phone, email) about social housing. Management indicated complaints relate to different circumstances such as tenant complaints (e.g., pests, repairs/maintenance) or complaints about other tenants. However, we found neither the Corporation nor the Housing Authority track the complaints (e.g., in a spreadsheet) to analyze complaints received. From January 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024, management compiled tenant complaints for our audit and indicated the Corporation received 127 tenant complaints. It was unable to provide details (e.g., types, locations) on the tenant complaints.

Management noted the Corporation informally meets with the Housing Authority weekly to discuss operational matters, including following up on complaints received. They may also discuss complaints received by the Housing Authority that need to escalate to the Corporation.

In its operational review, the Corporation planned to monitor the number of pest complaints from tenants. However, we found it did not track this number in its 2022 operational review of the Regina Housing Authority. The report noted the Housing Authority actively manages pest complaints daily and performs inspections and remediations. Therefore, given the volume of this work, the Corporation did not collect the number of complaints related to pests received during the operational review period.

While we found the operational review did not report complaints related to maintenance and repairs, it did consider tenant feedback on maintenance and repairs (e.g., type of repair, satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of repairs).

Finally, the Corporation does not assess whether the Housing Authority resolves complaints timely.

Without monitoring and analyzing complaints (e.g., pests, repairs/maintenance), there is an increased risk of unresolved social housing complaints.

7. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation enhance its monitoring and analysis of social housing tenant complaints in Regina.

4.10 Further Analysis and Reporting About Building Conditions Needed

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation reports on progress made against some key goals and targets, but more work is required. The Corporation needs to analyze and report on progress made against its Facility Condition Index improvement target related to social housing.

In 2019, the Corporation signed a 10-year bilateral agreement with the Federal Government under the National Housing Strategy to protect, renew, and expand social and community housing across the province—including supporting Saskatchewan’s priorities related to housing repair, construction, and affordability. Over the life of the agreement (2019–28), the Corporation agreed to achieve several goals relating to social housing (see **Figure 14**). It also sets yearly targets in *The Saskatchewan Housing Action Plan 2022–25*.

By 2023–24, we found the Corporation met two of the National Housing Strategy goals and continues to make progress in meeting the other two goals. We found the Corporation annually reports against the Strategy goals to the Federal Government as required.

Figure 14—Saskatchewan Housing Corporation’s 2023–24 Results Relating to the National Housing Strategy Goals

National Housing Strategy Goal (by 2028)	Result at 2023–24
16,448 units continue to be offered in social housing, of which 12,813 will be available to address the needs of households with low incomes.	16,448 units offered; 12,813 units reserved for low-income households
No net loss of Indigenous Housing Units available to low-income households, and affordability of Units is maintained.	249 Indigenous housing units (no net loss)
Develop new and innovative ways to regenerate housing to contribute to a 15% expansion of rent assisted units (2,467) above the baseline number (16,448 units).	2,225 units
At least 20% of the baseline number of social and community housing units repaired (3,290 units).	2,965 units

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

The Corporation had also set a target to increase the number of households housed in SHC-owned units across the province by 300 in 2023–24. This target equates to a 2% vacancy reduction rate—we found this target is comparable to other jurisdictions (e.g., Alberta strives to reduce its vacancies by 3% annually). Management indicated it expected to achieve this target by filling vacant social housing units. We found it provides the Ministry of Social Services’ Executive Committee with quarterly updates on the target. The Ministry reported against this target in its 2023–24 Annual Report and noted the Corporation increased the number of households living in SHC-owned units by 270 new households being housed, including 114 units in Regina.³²

The Corporation provides monthly vacancy reports for the Regina Housing Authority to its responsible Minister (i.e., Minister of Social Services). The monthly vacancy report includes information about the number of households on the approved applicant list (see **Figure 5**), in addition to vacancy-related data including the number of rentable units, vacant units

³² The Ministry of Social Services noted this number captures the net change of move-ins and move-outs throughout 2023–24.



(vacancy rate), available units (availability rate), and out-of-service units (out-of-service rate)—see **Figure 10** for data at May 2024. We tested two monthly vacancy reports and found both reports contained the monthly vacancy rates, and the Corporation sent the reports to the Minister's Office as expected.

In addition, we found the Corporation provides its Board and Housing Management Committee with quarterly dashboard reports for the province. The reports include provincial and large housing authorities' vacancy rates, number of occupied units, availability rate, out-of-service units (number of units under major repair and not rent ready), trend information for lone parent families in social housing and non-senior single tenants in social housing, number of third-party rental units, as well as progress toward National Housing Strategy targets.

The Corporation also established a target to reduce the number of units with an FCI of critical or poor, but has not identified by how much—it has yet to start analyzing or reporting on it. As described in **Section 4.8**, its housing portfolio in Regina has an average FCI of 22.2% (i.e., poor).

Having more information and analysis on its FCI improvement target can help the Corporation identify issues and focus its efforts on buildings of highest need.

- 8. We recommend Saskatchewan Housing Corporation expand analysis and reporting on progress made against its building conditions target related to social housing in Regina.**

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