

# Proposed Amendments to Access the Housing Accelerator Fund

**Letter to Saskatoon City Council**

Thursday, June 27, 2024

## His Worship Charlie Clark

Mayor of Saskatoon

222 3rd Ave North  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 0J5

His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council,

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR), Canada's leading registered charitable organization working to advance the right to adequate housing. For over 35 years, we have worked tirelessly at the intersection of human rights and housing, providing free services to renters facing evictions and human rights violations to remain housed, providing education and training about housing rights across Canada, and advancing rights-based housing policy through research, policy advocacy, and law reform.

We wish to extend our support for the proposed housing bylaw changes in Saskatoon to access funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund. It is heartening to see proactive steps being taken to address the pressing issue of housing availability and affordability and to uphold the right to housing for everyone.

The proposed changes, including amendments to permit multi-unit dwellings in all residential zoning districts and multi-story developments in the Transit Development Area, are significant steps towards alleviating the city's housing crisis. Moreover, streamlining zoning regulations for the development of supportive housing and residential care homes demonstrates a commitment to providing essential support for vulnerable members of our community.

However, as the city seeks to move forward with these positive changes, it is crucial to recognize that there is still much work to be done to fully address the affordability crisis that Saskatoon, like many other Canadian municipalities, faces. Almost 20 per cent of Saskatoon residents are living on low or very low incomes, with annual household incomes of less than \$42,500 and \$17,000, respectively. Seventeen per cent of residents can afford a maximum rent of \$1,063, while those with the lowest incomes can afford only \$425 per month<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, Saskatoon's rental vacancy rate fell from 3.4 to 2 per cent<sup>2</sup>, while the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment increased by nine per cent over the past year to \$1,362, further exacerbating the affordability crisis. The lowest average rent in Saskatoon is \$701 for a studio apartment in the south-west, which is far out of reach for those with the lowest incomes. While the proposed amendments are commendable, they represent only the beginning of a comprehensive solution to advance the right to housing in Saskatoon.

In addition to expanding supportive and transitional housing options, it is imperative that the city prioritize the development of affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of vulnerable communities, including seniors, newcomers, and Indigenous people. A strong, decisive, and

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<sup>1</sup> HART's Housing Needs Assessment. (2024). Income Categories and Affordable Shelter Costs, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> CMHC. (2024). Housing Market Information: Market Rental Report. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

concerted effort to ensure affordability needs to be a central component of the city's housing strategy. This can be achieved by building and maintaining an adequate supply of rent-geared-to-income, affordable, transitional, and supportive housing. This should be complemented by supports and protections for renters through eviction prevention and housing stabilization programs, as well renovation and rental replacement by-laws which can also help preserve affordable housing. We hope that if the city's Housing Accelerator Fund application is successful, grants for non-profit housing development and other programs to protect and increase the supply of affordable housing are prioritized.

Saskatoon's proposal to ensure housing affordability is commendable. We are hopeful that the city will continue to work towards tangible solutions that benefit all members of our community. CCHR looks forward to ongoing collaboration to ensure that Saskatoon remains a place where everyone has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

Thank you once again for your unwavering commitment to our community's well-being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Beyer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sara Beyer  
Manager of Policy  
Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR)