

Walter, Penny

Subject: FW: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council
Attachments: pdcs_letter_-_rising_homelessness.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: August 16, 2021 1:07 AM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED]

Submitted on Monday, August 16, 2021 - 01:06

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

Date Monday, August 16, 2021

To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name Cameron

Last Name Choquette

Phone Number [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Address [REDACTED] Cope Crescent

City Saskatoon

Province Saskatchewan

Postal Code [REDACTED]

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable) Saskatchewan Landlord Association

Subject Concerning Trends in Rising Homelessness

Meeting (if known) SPC on PDCS - August 16, 2021

Comments

Please see the attached letter for consideration at the PDCS meeting on August 16, 2021 for agenda item 6.1.1. In addition to the letter, I am requesting to speak at the meeting and I can be reached at [REDACTED] during the meeting time.

Thank you.

Attachments

[pdcs letter - rising homelessness.pdf](#)

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting? No

August 16, 2021

SPC on Planning, Development, and Community Services
Saskatoon City Council
222 3rd Ave N.
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0J5

RE: 6.1.1 - Concerning Trends of Rising Homelessness

Dear Mayor Clark and Councillors,

In addition to speaking to the issue above, I am submitting this letter to provide additional background information on provincial income assistance changes and their impacts on rental housing providers and community-based organizations in Saskatoon and beyond. We believe that the Community Support Program is seeing increases in homelessness because of the new income assistance program and its systemic barriers.

Background

In June of 2019, the Ministry of Social Services announced that they would be winding down the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP) and Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) and creating the Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) program. These changes were made without any consultation with rental housing providers, community-based organizations, or municipalities. Over the course of the next two years, new income assistance clients would be directed to the SIS program, while existing clients would be transitioned to the SIS program by the end of August, 2021.

Program Changes

Some of the most notable and impactful changes in the SIS program include:

- Eliminating direct payment to rental housing and utility providers
- Centralizing benefit administration to a largely online system
- Only providing a security deposit once every two years
- Consolidating rent and utility payments, effectively reducing the overall benefits provided by the program
- Significantly reducing emergency funding and overpayments to clients, even in extreme circumstances

These changes have created systemic barriers for individuals and families trying to apply for income assistance, which has resulted in landlords seeing dramatic increases in arrears, resulting in more evictions and more homelessness.

In a 2019 survey conducted by our Association and Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, 93% of rental housing providers predicted that the SIS program would lead to increased evictions and homelessness.

The most recent CSP program report seems to validate the trend that rental housing providers predicted almost two years ago. **Reduced benefits, inadequate financial literacy training, and the inability to pay rent and utilities directly to providers, are all factors that are increasing homelessness in our City.**

We know that the SIS program isn't under the City's jurisdiction, but we do know there will be (and already are) downstream effects for the City. As a utility provider, the City will likely experience increased arrears because income assistance clients are now being required to pay their own utility bills from a smaller shelter benefit. The City will also likely see an increased reliance on the Saskatoon Police Service for petty crime, vagrancy, and disturbances caused by an increase in homelessness and housing instability.

Conclusion

Over the next couple of months, we are projecting a dramatic increase in rental arrears and a corresponding increase in evictions, that will have a direct impact on the City of Saskatoon and municipalities across the province. **Our members and numerous other housing providers across the province are all proud and happy to provide housing for people on income assistance, but we need the provincial government's support to do so.**

Without reinstating direct payment and providing adequate financial literacy training, case management services, and realistic benefit amounts, we know that individuals and families on income assistance are only going to face an uphill battle when it comes to accessing stable housing.

Next Steps

Our Association will continue to work with our community stakeholders to gather data on evictions, rental arrears, and to listen to the stories of struggle and exasperation. Everyone deserves a safe and stable home, whether they own or rent it.

We must work together to advocate for an income assistance system that ensures Saskatchewan's low-income population can be safe and healthy wherever they are.

Sincerely,



Cameron Choquette
Chief Executive Officer