

Leadership Questionnaire:

1) If you become Premier, would you support the creation of a comprehensive and coordinated Provincial strategy to end homelessness in Saskatchewan?

Yes. The federal government has begun a National Housing Strategy, but the details, and their impact on provincial programming, remain unclear. The provincial action plan of 2013-14 has seen little in tangible investments or improvements in the rates of homelessness or core housing need.

As premier, I would fully support a comprehensive, outcome-focussed provincial strategy that offers a locally-informed, evidence-based approach to housing in Saskatchewan. I would undertake this work in partnership with key organizations, academic institutions and people with lived experience of housing challenges.

2) If you become Premier, what steps would you take towards preventing and ending homelessness in Saskatchewan?

Finding stable housing for those who are currently homeless or at risk for homelessness is the most pressing problem, and it can be solved. [Housing First](#) is an approach to homelessness that started in the US in the late 1990s. In the past, the approach to people who were homeless and struggling with addictions or mental illness was one of “get your life together and then you can have housing.” Housing First turns that on its head by recognizing that a stable place to stay is an important factor in getting your life together, whether that means an address for applying for benefits or work, a regular place to keep and take medications, or just safety from the elements and the violence of life on the streets.

A growing number of Canadian cities have been following the Housing First model, offering housing and direct support to those who struggle the most to find housing. A recent study of Regina’s Housing First program estimated that housing 26 people saved nearly two million dollars

(<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/housing-first-regina-homelessness-one-year-1.4210744>) as a result of decreased emergency room visits and arrests. The Southern Alberta city of Medicine Hat claims to have “ended homelessness” with this approach, and two years on from that declaration has housed over a thousand people, with shelters seeing occasional brief stays rather than chronic use (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/medicine-hat-homeless-free-update-1.3949030>).

If we build on these successful examples by expanding Housing First province-wide and linking this approach with the collection of real-time, person specific data on homelessness to enable better coordination in local planning, targeted investment in affordable rental housing and an adequate housing supplement, homelessness in Canada could be rare, brief and non-recurring. Not only would this take care of those most in need, it would free up more funds to address elements of our housing challenges that lie further upstream. The cost savings from shelters and emergency rooms could later be applied to the next steps of providing more affordable social housing, preventing more people from falling into homelessness.

On a system level, public investment in affordable housing has many advantages. Job creation at various skill levels occurs near the communities with the highest unemployment. While there are initial investments required, before long public money is saved in health, justice, and social services. By shifting people from homeless to renting, from renting to owning, and from social assistance to employment, a comprehensive housing strategy can decrease costs and increase tax revenues. It can also present opportunities to use what we learn about planning and design to create safe, inclusive, sustainable communities.

As premier, I would approach prevention of and response to homelessness by focusing on health outcomes as an indicator of success. People who experience homelessness are disproportionately impacted by health barriers that prohibit full participation in the work force, and represent a large percentage of minimum wage and entry level positions. By raising minimum wage to \$15/hour and introducing full coverage of drug costs through our Pharmacare policy, we could contribute to successful and sustainable housing opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

3) Projects in many Canadian Cities, including Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina, have proven that Housing First can have a major impact on improving quality of life outcomes for participants, and potentially divert costs from other government services, such as the health care and justice systems. If you become Premier, will your government invest in measures such as Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing in Saskatchewan?

The Housing First model identifies that it is very difficult for people dealing with mental health challenges, addictions or who face other barriers to overcome these challenges when not in stable housing. By providing housing and other supports, a Housing First approach helps people to stabilize their life circumstances and allowing them the space to work on other matters from an established home base. This model has already shown significant success in helping people and decreasing costs in Regina and Saskatoon and should be expanded in those centres and across the province.

Success in housing will come from an integrated approach that provides viable options for people at each stage of the housing continuum. On a systemic level, public investment in affordable housing has many advantages: for instance, creating jobs at various skill levels near the communities with the highest unemployment. While there are initial investments required, the long-term savings in health, justice, and social services expenses more than recoup the initial investment.

I have been fortunate enough to see Housing First at work improving the lives of my patients, and have been a long-time advocate of this approach. In order to succeed across Saskatchewan, Housing First requires leadership from the provincial government to reach its full potential, including cooperation from the Ministries of Social Services, Health, and Justice, and a clear direction from Cabinet. Housing shortages and homelessness hurt every corner of the province; the provincial government needs to engage in the discussion and not leave it entirely to larger municipalities.

4) There is a gross over representation of Aboriginal People in Saskatchewan's homeless population. If you become Premier, what steps would you take to address Aboriginal homelessness?

The disproportionate rates of homelessness amongst Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan represents a consistent and ongoing gap in outcomes between indigenous and non-indigenous communities that is long overdue for prioritized attention. The most successful affordable housing strategies have consistently been those that bring together municipal, provincial, and federal governments, non-governmental organizations, First Nation and Métis organizations, builders, and business leaders to make a plan together. Everyone has a role to play, and the more coordinated the effort, the more we gain from the strengths of each partner.

We need an evidence-based approach to closing this gap, that must be informed by the work already done through research efforts that have focused on Indigenous peoples' homelessness in Saskatchewan. The Aboriginal Homelessness Advisory Board (AHAB) partnered with the Provincial Metis Housing Corporation in 2014

(<http://pmhc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Environmental-Scan-of-Aboriginal-Homelessness-in-SK-FINAL.pdf>) to obtain a better understanding of Indigenous homelessness in the province, and efforts to address this ongoing gap must be informed by the results of projects such as these.

An important and valuable insight obtained from that particular project was the relationship between health and wellness and housing. A lack of housing combined with poverty, overcrowded housing, and mental health barriers related to intergenerational trauma have created

ongoing cycles of housing and health challenges in Indigenous people in Saskatchewan. By extending the Housing First approach to be inclusive of health and wellness to create and sustain the recommendation of a “housing and healing first” model to addressing systemic barriers to housing, we can create a sustainable model for combating homelessness that ensures a response that both provides housing solutions as well as culturally relevant health supports.

5) Homelessness and housing insecurity are present in many Saskatchewan communities. If you become Premier, what will you do to address homelessness outside of Saskatchewan’s major urban centres?

Barriers to accessing adequate housing for Saskatchewan people experiencing homelessness is amplified in non-urban settings. Limitations of availability coupled with insufficient resources create the need for a unique approach to addressing homelessness outside of major urban centres. Further to this, the definition of homelessness is relatively inflexible, leading to a significant number of rural and remote people discounted from statistics around homelessness due to community and kinship networks that may result in immediate supports, but do not create sustainable and long-lasting housing solutions.

Saskatchewan needs to work with non-urban municipalities to ensure a strategic plan that would bring more affordable rental housing to areas that are lacking resources to combat homelessness. Building more affordable rental housing is an essential step for community health and ongoing economic growth. Through this avenue, we can reduce the pressure on tight rental markets in areas where there is low availability, and provide more options for people working low-wage jobs, single parents raising children, seniors living on fixed incomes, and people living with disabilities and other life challenges.

6) The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has recommended that governments earmark 15 percent of all new housing starts as non-market affordable housing to keep up with the demand. Since Saskatchewan has averaged about 6,000 housing starts per year, achieving 15 percent per year of non-market affordable housing would mean targeting 900 units across the province each year to keep pace. For every dollar invested in housing, there is a \$1.40 return in GDP.

Ensuring entry-level housing can be found in smaller municipalities would provide options for people and enhance the diversity of non-urban communities. Inclusionary zoning policies would provide a mandate for new home developers to incorporate a certain percentage of affordable or entry-level housing in new builds, as they are being designed and constructed. Manitoba has legislation allowing municipalities to introduce inclusionary zoning. Langford, British Columbia, has successfully implemented an inclusionary zoning policy that requires that 10 percent of new

housing units are offered at a reduced price to lower-income families. Saskatoon has implemented a process of designating sites within new neighbourhoods as entry-level housing. The province can work with municipalities to develop the incentives to ensure that these projects are viable, that they are integrated into communities across the province, and that they remain affordable for the long term.

In order to address homelessness and core housing need in Saskatchewan we need to increase the supply of purpose-built affordable housing and take clear steps to house those with the greatest barriers to stable housing. Understanding that this is not a cost to the province – but rather a wise investment in our economic, social and physical wellbeing – is the first step. This must be followed with a thorough process to design an effective strategy, and lastly the political will to deliver on these plans. The reason I'm running is to help build a healthier Saskatchewan, and this is an essential piece