

Backgrounder – Social Services' 2018-19 Budget

Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement

As of July 1, 2018, the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS) will suspend the intake of new applications.

Anyone eligible for the SRHS as of June 30, 2018, will not lose their benefits. They will be grandfathered for as long as they are eligible.

Those who apply for the SRHS on or before June 30, 2018 and meet eligibility requirements will receive SRHS benefits.

Applications received on July 1, 2018 or after will not be accepted.

The Province has spent more than \$330 million since the SRHS was introduced in 2005, when the provincial vacancy rate was around 4.5 per cent. The rental market has improved significantly in recent years. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Saskatchewan had the lowest average rent for a two-bedroom apartment at \$1,051 and the highest vacancy rate at 8.9 per cent among the western provinces in 2017.

With this improvement in the market, it makes sense to refocus funding where the need is greatest. The Province's Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP), Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program and Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) will continue to support the most vulnerable households with their shelter needs.

The Federal Government plans to implement a new Canada Housing Benefit in 2020 as part of the National Housing Strategy to help families and individuals in housing need with their affordability challenges. This benefit will be co-developed with the Federal Government and cost-matched by the Province. Social Services will take time to review the existing rental housing supplement in light of the new federal program, while still maintaining benefits for current clients.

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) has some social housing units available for those who are eligible. Anyone impacted by this change to the SRHS may be eligible for the social housing program and is encouraged to apply. This program is aimed at families, seniors and people experiencing disability who have low incomes.

Those who have questions about their benefits or income assistance programs are asked to contact Social Services.

The Ministry forecasts a reduction in the SRHS budget of approximately \$5.0 million for 2018-19.