

## POSITION STATEMENT National Housing Strategy

November 27, 2017

SPPI is committed to keeping members informed on items of National, Provincial and Local significance potentially affecting the planning profession. This position statement is the first of a series of positions that SPPI will issue to members on a range of topics which have the potential to affect Saskatchewan communities, affect the planning profession, and to state an official position on behalf of SPPI. This first position statement is in response to the National Housing Strategy.

The Saskatchewan Professional Planners Institute has reviewed the new National Housing Strategy recently released by the Federal Government on November 22, 2017.

Planners have long shared the concern about lack of proper housing and the number of Saskatchewan residents who are chronically in 'core housing need'. A national housing strategy is over-due and this strategy is applauded for the breadth and depth of initiatives which are aimed at improving housing conditions across Canada, including First Nations communities and the north.

Many Saskatchewan communities remain without the full range of standard acceptable housing attributes in terms of adequacy, affordability and suitability. SPPI agrees with the direction to entrench Housing Rights in Canadian society. It would follow that local and community conditions must change to align and support the strategy to empower these rights at the local level. Other significant directions in the strategy to note are:

1. \$200 M in federally-owned lands will be transferred to housing providers is a smart way to align with many cities plans to intensify their city centres.
2. Many initiatives are matched funding arrangements. SPPI encourages our Province to use resource revenue to fund housing reserves to take full advantage of the Federal programs.
3. Saskatchewan municipalities should also plan to participate and identify strategies, through local housing plans, which can help to extend Provincial and Federal dollars in housing.
4. \$1.1B is allocated towards addressing distinct housing needs. Saskatchewan planners should understand that communities which are most prepared (ie. have adopted housing plans), are more likely to receive funding.
5. Homelessness funding will be expanded and extended for 10 years. This is one of only a few programs where funding is provided directly from the Federal Government to municipalities. Communities should prepare Homelessness Plans to take advantage of the expanded program.
6. \$3.2B being re-invested in the Investment in Affordable Housing Program. This will put money towards Provincial and Territorial programs which are then offered through provincial ministries. This funding often needs to find places within local communities where new community housing developments can be built.

7. Adopt the term Community Housing, in lieu of Social or Subsidized housing. This reflects a more positive stance on housing as a community responsibility.
8. Get ready for demonstrations. \$241M has been allocated for Research, Demonstrations, Capacity-building. Planners should lead and support these.
9. Solution Labs. Good for small communities and those who are affected by sudden economic shifts and have limited capacity.

In order for the National Housing Strategy to reach its goals and housing targets, Planners in Saskatchewan need to evaluate their local and community policy and regulatory framework to support the Federal strategy. Here are a few suggestions for Saskatchewan planners:

1. Arm yourself with facts to combat NIMBY, which exists in many Saskatchewan communities. Learn about housing and understand that community housing does not affect property values. Find reports online which show evidence.
2. Re-evaluate community plans and policies which do not encourage affordable or attainable housing. Require affordable housing in every neighbourhood and in all major concept plans and master plans.
3. Examine your Zoning Bylaws and remove old, antiquated, unnecessary regulations which do nothing but increase the cost of housing, and divide neighbourhoods.
4. Recommend effective incentive programs aimed at increasing the supply and diversity of housing.
5. Adopt local Housing Business Plans with a 5 to 10 year horizon.
6. Saskatchewan planners should begin identify federally-owned surplus land and assess their readiness for the development of community housing.

The complete Housing Strategy can be found here: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/pdfs/Canada-National-Housing-Strategy.pdf>