

# **POVERTY & HOUSELESSNESS IN SASKATCHEWAN**

## **A 2024 FACT SHEET**

### **POVERTY & HOUSELESSNESS IN SASKATCHEWAN: 5 FACTS**

1. **211,630** of Saskatchewan's 1.2 million residents live in poverty. That's **18%** of the population. It's a poverty rate above the 16% rate for Canada as a whole.
2. **68,100** of the 282,000 children in Saskatchewan live in poverty, a child poverty rate of **24%**, well above Canada's national child poverty rate of 18%.
3. **46%** of First Nations in Saskatchewan live in poverty, as do 17% of Métis.
4. **20%** of Saskatchewan families experience food insecurity, the sixth highest among the provinces.
5. The number of unhoused people in Saskatchewan cities is increasing at an alarming rate. Below are the figures for 2021-23 Point-in-Time or PiT-Counts carried out in Saskatchewan's three largest cities. As emphasized in each PiT-Count report, because PiT-Counts "occur on only one date and for a short time frame, it is important to understand they greatly under count homelessness in a city."

**Saskatoon:** **550** people were unhoused, according to the 2022 PiT Count, a 16% increase over the 2018 count. 90% of the unhoused people in the Saskatoon count identified as Indigenous.

**Regina:** **488** people were unhoused, according to the 2021 PiT-Count, a 71% increase over the 2018 count. 79% of the unhoused people in the Regina count identified as Indigenous.

**Prince Albert:** **120** people were unhoused, according to the 2022 PiT-Count, a 24% increase over the 2021 count. 99% of the unhoused people in the Prince Albert count identified as Indigenous.

### **5 CAUSES OF POVERTY & HOUSELESSNESS IN SASKATCHEWAN**

#### **1. INADEQUACY OF SASKATCHEWAN'S 2 INCOME ASSISTANT PROGRAMS**

##### **Saskatchewan Income Support Program or SIS**

SIS "is a program for families and individuals who are unable to pay their basic living expenses due to a variety of factors such as disability, illness, low income, or unemployment."

An individual on SIS gets **\$975 a month**. Out of this they have to pay rent and utilities, as well as cover the cost of food, clothing, transportation +++. The program that SIS replaced covered utilities.

The poverty line for a single adult in Saskatchewan is approximately **\$1,868 a month**.

##### **Saskatchewan Assured Income For Disability or SAID**

SAID is an "income support program for people with significant and enduring disabilities."

An individual on the SAID program gets a monthly living allowance of \$1,094 which is intended to cover rent, food, clothing, transportation +++. SAID also covers actual monthly utilities and includes some special needs. This brings the average monthly payment to a SAID recipient to **\$1,350**.

Though SAID is more adequate than SIS, it is still well below the poverty line.

#### **2. THE LOWEST MINIMUM WAGE IN THE COUNTRY**

On October 1 2023, the Government of Saskatchewan raised the minimum wage from \$13 to \$14 per hour. It remains the lowest minimum wage in Canada.

A person who works an 8 hour day, 5 days a week, will earn approximately \$2,200 a month—a few hundred dollars above the poverty line for a single adult and certainly not enough to sustain a family consisting of a single parent and 2 children.

#### **3. DRASTIC RENT INCREASES**

In 2023, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Regina increased by 13.9%, bringing it to \$1,207 a month, while in Saskatoon, it increased by 8.3%, bringing it to \$1,154 per month.

#### **4. 3,200 VACANT SASK HOUSING UNITS**

In the midst of a houselessness crisis, there are about 3,200 vacant Sask Housing units—that is units owned by the province—across the province: 700 in Regina, 282 in Saskatoon, and 120 in Prince Albert. Rent for a Sask Housing unit is 30% of your income. For a single person on the SIS program, that would be \$293 per month.

Why are these units vacant? According to Social Services Minister Gene Makowsky, many of the vacant units are in need of renovation or repair and some of them are being worked on.

#### **5. ONGOING COLONIAL POLICIES**

A disproportionate number of poor and unhoused people in Saskatchewan are Indigenous.

### **6 ACTIONS TO END POVERTY & HOUSELESS IN SASKATCHEWAN**

1. Make ending poverty and houselessness an election issue in the upcoming provincial election in October. Throw the facts in the face of all parties and candidates.
2. Demand that SIS and SAID rates be raised above the poverty line and that SIS rates cover basic utilities.
3. Demand that the minimum wage become a living wage, which, according to Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, would be about \$18 an hour in Saskatchewan.
4. Demand the implementation of strong rent regulation policies.
5. Demand the immediate renovation of any Sask Housing units that require renovation and the availability for occupancy of all 3,200 vacant units by May 1 2024.
6. Demand the implementation of a fair revenue sharing agreement with all Saskatchewan First Nations.

### **HOW WILL WE PAY FOR IT? DEMAND FAIR INCOME TAX, ALONG WITH FAIR RESOURCE TAX & ROYALTY POLICIES**

#### **PERSONAL INCOME TAX**

A number of very wealthy people live in Saskatchewan. However, Saskatchewan has the lowest top personal income tax rate of all the provinces: 14.5%.

Also, for income tax purposes, Saskatchewan has a relatively low top income bracket: \$148,734. So whether you earn \$148,734 or \$10 million per annum, you are taxed at the same rate: 14.5%.

Those who enjoy the highest incomes in our province could surely contribute a bit more. How about Saskatchewan adopt the top personal income tax rate of one of the other western provinces, say, Manitoba (17.4%) or, better yet, British Columbia (20.5%)? We should also create at least 2 higher income brackets, each with a higher tax rate than the one below it.

#### **RESOURCE TAX AND ROYALTIES**

Saskatchewan is a rich province, with many sought after natural resources. For example, Saskatchewan sold \$18 billion worth of potash in 2022. However, the province collected only about \$4 billion in royalties and taxes, with most of the money going to the potash corporations.

Currently, Saskatchewan potash taxes and royalties amount to little more than 20%. Those for other resources are even lower. Let's raise the combined rate to 40% for all Saskatchewan resources. These resources belong to the people of Saskatchewan. We need to collect a fair return for our resources!

### **MAKE POVERTY & HOUSELESSNESS HISTORY IN SASKATCHEWAN!**