
Policy Statement 1.2

Affordable housing is a provincial and federal responsibility. Failure to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing leads to social and economic consequences that impact our communities and become the responsibility of municipalities to address. A comprehensive housing solution requires both public sector and private sector investment. As the economy grows, demand for housing increases and it is essential that the supply of affordable housing increases to match. SUMA supports FCM in its efforts to develop a comprehensive national strategy on housing. At the provincial level, SUMA advocates for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Housing Affordability, the creation of a provincial strategy to address housing, and provincial support for municipal efforts to stimulate private sector investment. *The key pillar of any provincial housing strategy or program must be an increase in the supply of social housing and rental accommodation.* While municipalities have an interest in ensuring the province takes action on the housing file, local councils should resist assuming responsibility for the provision of housing.

A major challenge facing Saskatchewan is a shortage in supply of affordable housing and rental accommodation. From a social perspective, when demand outstrips supply in the housing market the results include increased risks for disadvantaged groups and low-income families, as well as rising homelessness. From an economic standpoint, the primary byproduct of a housing shortage is constrained growth, as municipalities – and the province – struggle to accommodate the population increases that accompany a growing economy.

All orders of government are involved in housing, both directly through regulation and funding, and indirectly through such activities as urban planning, immigration, tax and monetary policies. The federal government through *The National Housing Act*, and the provincial government through Section 13 of *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act*, have an active role in creating the foundations of a strong, effective housing system. Municipal councils have an interest in upholding local economic, social and environment well-being, which relies on an effective local housing market as a key component. Municipalities can encourage essential private sector investment through the strategic application of land-use and tax policies. Saskatchewan's largest municipalities have already demonstrated leadership through developing and implementing programs to stimulate supply of both social and market-based housing.

Affordable housing includes more than one type of housing, all of which need to be considered in the creation of a comprehensive strategy. These elements include: public-sector funded social housing; private-sector funded market-based housing; tiered-care seniors' housing; health care homes; transition homes; and emergency and shelter beds.

It is SUMA's position that the responsibility for ensuring an effective housing system lies with the federal and provincial governments. However, a partnership is needed as municipalities are ideally placed to understand local housing challenges, stimulate local supply, and advise the federal and provincial government on the issues. A national and provincial strategy on housing that clearly sets out a framework for meeting present and future housing needs is needed.

Strategy:

1. Fully support FCM efforts to establish a national comprehensive strategy on housing.
2. Lobby SHC to develop a comprehensive strategy, which engages and leverages federal support, to adequately address the issue of housing.
3. Lobby the provincial government to engage and support municipalities in stimulating supply in local housing markets.