

Mayor Sandra Master and City Councillors of Regina

I am writing as a resident of the Heritage Community, a health care professional, a citizen of Regina, and a concerned human being.

Our community is a haven for houseless people where they can access community based organizations, health and harm reduction services, meals and drinks, and often warm up places from local community business. I believe that despite the best efforts of CBOs, community associations, local businesses, and individuals, the needs of the houseless are not being met, certainly not with dignity.

As a health care professional working in acute care, I see on a daily basis the costs on the health care system that are a direct consequence of houselessness. I also see the costs to humanity, both for the patients we are trying to serve and the workers trying to help them. Having to send fellow human beings home from the hospital without proper supports in place to set them up for successful recovery is demoralizing.

We know that a majority of people experiencing houselessness are Indigenous. This fact and the fact that the number of people experience houselessness is increasing speaks to the ongoing effects of colonialism.

A working model for housing people and providing them support exists in Regina in the Phoenix Residential Society, a federally funded organization that has been working successfully with high-risk houseless individuals. This model allows for people to live in rental spaces, therefore negating much of the \$92 million dollar infrastructure cost proposed by the city. We must also look at the over 700 Saskatchewan Housing Authority units that are sitting empty, along with the \$1.1 billion dollar surplus that the provincial government is forecasting. Appendix C of the budget must also be taken into consideration, and all the other avenues where money is saved by getting people housed with wrap around services. It is more economically sound to be proactive rather than reactive.

I am asking that the City of Regina add money to the budget to end houselessness in the amount of \$15-20M. I do this fully aware that the provincial and federal government must also be held accountable on this issue, and ask that the City bring them to the table and ask for matching funding, at the least. Our elected officials must stop hiding behind statements that imply houselessness is not their responsibility, that the problem is too complex, or that houselessness is a problem everywhere. I ask that Regina, Saskatchewan be leaders in Canada in creating a functional zero houselessness. I also ask that existing supports services and CBOs to the houseless be brought into the discussions to end the cycle of working in silos where little is accomplished.

Words and promises will not stop our neighbors from freezing to death in the streets. Money and action are needed immediately. The challenge may seem daunting, but with great possibilities if we open our minds.

Sincerely,

Heather Dedman