

Dear Mayor Masters and City Councillors,

I come here today to speak on the growing problem Regina has with homelessness and poverty. The Saskatchewan poverty rate as of 2019 is 19 percent and since 2014 a steady increase in the number of children who live in poverty has been acknowledged. I was born in Regina and was raised in the North Central area, a densely populated area home to more than 12 thousand residents in 183 square blocks. Growing up I was no stranger to roaches and mice, even if we kept the apartment perfectly clean there would be a roach infestation that spread from neighbor to neighbor, and I grew up thinking that was the norm. My parents worked hard to pay rent and keep me fed with clothes on my back and a roof over my head, but that didn't stop me from recognizing that we were struggling. Many of my friends didn't have more than just their mom or their dad, and most of them lived in similar or worse conditions with even more siblings, mouths to feed and bills to pay despite a lot of these adults struggling to provide. There were many days I would use whatever money I had to feed my friend, so he didn't go home to have a few saltines and some homemade juice for supper.

My point being that poverty was very much acknowledged by the community and the people that drove through the area as if they were tourists at a zoo, the decaying condition of my neighborhood was even apparent to me in my youth and as I grew and took advantage of educational programs, I was able to distance myself and open my eyes to the world around me, I've realized there's a very steep obstacle that keeps my people and others who find themselves in poor conditions to stay exactly where they are. The quality of life for low-income families is only getting worse and worse and inflation is a driving factor that's beating these people down while they're already on their last limbs. My people desperately need the divide between classes to become closer and closer, programs for rehabilitation and employment need to be implemented for the community and those who are homeless to make a better life for themselves and the generations that are raised by them.