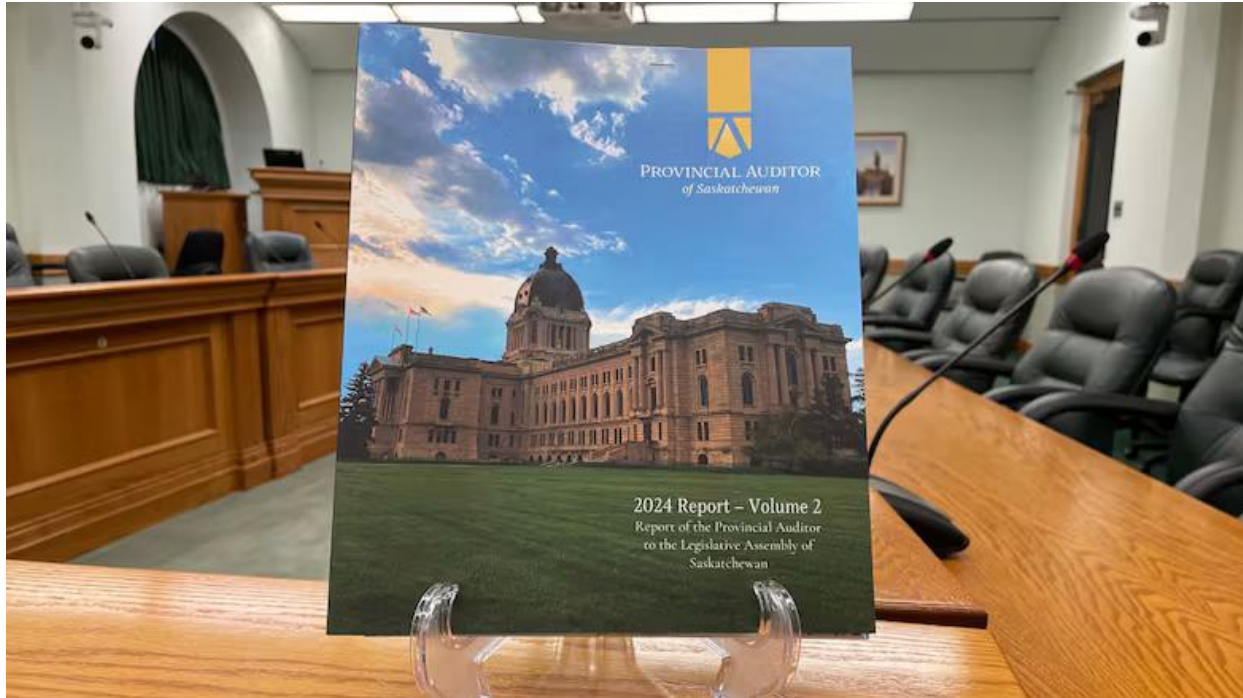


Sask. needs 'to do more, faster' to address empty, damaged social housing units in Regina: auditor

534 vacant social housing units in Regina, 404 households on a wait list in May 2024, auditor's report says

Alexander Quon · CBC News · Posted: Dec 03, 2024 5:00 AM CST | Last Updated: December 3, 2024



Saskatchewan's auditor released her office's latest volume of audits on Tuesday, examining topics such as the Ministry of Social Services' use of hotels and foreign ownership of farmland.

The provincial auditor has sharply critiqued how Saskatchewan is handling its stock of provincially owned social housing units in the province's capital.

In May, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation owned approximately 3,000 units in Regina, of which 534 were vacant — a vacancy rate of 17.8 per cent, according to a report released by auditor Tara Clemett on Tuesday. Of the vacant units, 364 were out-of-service and needing repair.

At that same time, 404 households were waiting for social housing units, Clemett's report said.

"They definitely probably need to do more, faster," she said at a press conference on Tuesday.

The auditor's findings were published as part of her [office's second volume of 2024 audits](#) being filed with the provincial legislature Tuesday afternoon.

The full report examined the Ministry of Social Services' use of hotels, the timeliness of 911 call dispatching for fire or emergencies outside of Saskatoon and Regina, and foreign ownership of farmland.

Social housing in Regina

Among Clemett's findings on social housing were that over the past several years, Regina has had not only the province's largest number of vacant units, but also the highest vacancy rate as a percentage of housing corporation-owned units.

Clemett found the housing corporation does not regularly assess how long applicants to its social housing program wait to get placed in a social housing unit.

The corporation also doesn't assess what type of units are requested, and doesn't sufficiently track and analyze its vacant units or trends in demand to determine where it should focus repairs, her report said.

That may explain why the corporation's housing portfolio in Regina is classified as "poor" quality, according to the audit.



Tara Clemett, Saskatchewan's provincial auditor, says holding on to vacant housing units in Regina is costly for the provincial government. (Kirk Fraser/CBC)

"The government is paying \$1.2 million to have nobody in those units overall," said Clemett. "So should [the province] again spend money to get them repaired so that ultimately people can be living in these units?"

Brent Blakley, the Saskatchewan NDP's social services critic, called on the government to track what units are needed and what units are available.

"One of the things we need to do, I think, is just to get those Sask. Housing units open, get them renovated if they need renovations, and then have a better strategy to track that," said Blakley.

Terry Jensen, the Minister of Social Services, was not made available to media to answer questions about the auditor's report.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/auditor-report-social-housing-farmland-1.7398755>