



Housing and Household Needs in Saskatchewan

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1. Arriving

Q: Where can I stay when I arrive?

Most newcomers stay in a hotel or motel when they first arrive. One way to find hotel information is to use the internet or the *Yellow Pages* of a local Saskatchewan telephone book. You can also search Saskatchewan's [phone books](#) online.

You can contact hotels and motels to find out their rates and what they offer. For instance, some hotels and motels have kitchens with cooking utensils, so you can cook your own food. You might want to find a place close to downtown where you will be applying for your key documents and taking other first steps to settle in Saskatchewan.

If you have already arrived in Saskatchewan, contact your [Regional Newcomer Gateway](#), to see if they can suggest suitable temporary places to stay.

Q: What do I need to know about renting a hotel or motel?

You usually need a credit card to reserve rooms in advance. If you do not have a credit card and you are here for work, your employer may be able to help.

The hotel will tell you at what time of the day you can check-in (this is the time when your room will be ready) and they will tell you at what time of the day you must check-out (this is the time you must leave your room). If you stay in the room after the check-out time on your last day, they may charge you for another night.

Some hotels rent by the week rather than by the day. The weekly rental rate may work out to be cheaper than the daily rate.

Q: How can I get from the airport to where I am staying?

Cities in Saskatchewan have taxi services but smaller communities, towns and villages, usually do not. The two main Saskatchewan airports in Regina and Saskatoon have taxi stands right outside the airport and direct telephone lines inside the airport to call a taxi.

Taxi rates are pre-set in Saskatchewan so there is no need to bargain with the driver. A trip from the Regina airport to the downtown areas costs approximately \$10.00 to \$20.00. A trip from the Saskatoon airport to the downtown areas costs approximately \$15.00 to \$25.00. If your family is large, or if you have a lot of baggage, you can request a van but this may cost more than a car.

If you are going to a community outside Regina or Saskatoon, you will need to arrange to take a bus or ask someone to meet you at the airport.

If you are here for work, your employer may be able to help you find transportation from the airport to the place you will be staying when you first arrive. Your employer may also help you with transportation to the community where you will be working.

Q: Where can I buy the things I need after I arrive, such as food or telephone cards?

You have many options. There are restaurants which offer food at a variety of prices, but it is usually cheaper to cook your own food. To find food to cook, or ready-made food (for example, sandwiches, salads, and cooked meat) look for a grocery store.

In larger centres, there are large, all-purpose stores that sell everything you might need including food, clothing, furniture, personal items (for example, shampoo and toilet paper), and phone cards.

In many neighbourhoods, convenience stores and drug stores sell some food products, telephone cards, and personal items. These stores are usually more expensive than grocery stores and all-purpose stores.

When buying a telephone card, ask whether it provides service to the country you need to call.

2. Housing Options

Q: What are my main housing options in Saskatchewan?

In Saskatchewan you can rent or buy a home. There are many things you need to know about renting or buying a property. For example, it is important to know that renting and buying homes are legal agreements.

[Housing for Newcomers](#) is a website with information on renting, buying and maintaining your home. The website and the resources it contains are available in various languages. One of the resources is [The Newcomer's Guide to Canadian Housing](#). It provides basic information about Canadian housing, quick tips for finding rental homes, and explains the specific terms used in buying and renting.

The [Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan \(PLEA\)](#) provides legal information on renting or buying a home.

3. Renting a Home

Q: How can I find a home to rent in Saskatchewan?

Most rental housing in Saskatchewan is owned by individuals or by companies, not by the government.

There are many kinds of rental housing including:

- Apartments (this is the most common type of rental housing)
- Houses (sometimes called single family dwellings)
- Townhouses
- Condominiums (apartments owned by individuals. If you rent one, you are generally renting from an individual person instead of from a company)
- Individual rooms in houses with shared kitchen and bathroom

To find places to rent, you can:

- Search the internet for websites on renting housing. For example, you may find advertisements on [Rent Saskatchewan](#), [Rental Source](#) or [Kijiji](#).
- Check local Saskatchewan newspapers for advertisements, especially the *For Rent* section of the classified advertisements. Saskatchewan's two major newspapers are [The Star Phoenix](#) (Saskatoon) and [The Leader Post](#) (Regina).
- Call your [Regional Newcomer Gateway](#) for advice on finding rental housing in your area.
- Look for *For Rent* signs placed outside apartments and houses.

Q: How do I choose a suitable place to rent?

The following questions may help you decide if you have found a suitable place to rent.

- Does the condition of the place present any health or safety concerns? For example, is there mould, insects or rodents? Is there electricity, running water, and heating? The landlord (the person who owns the building and is renting it to you) is required by law to make sure that the building is safe and clean.
- Is there enough space for the number of people who will live there? The landlord may only allow a specific number of people (called tenants) to live in the home.
- How much is the rent and what is included in the rent? For example, does it include the cost of water, heat, and electricity?
- How much is the security deposit? A security deposit (sometimes called a damage deposit) is money you pay the landlord in case you damage the apartment, are unable to pay rent, or if cleaning is needed after you move out. It is usually charged when you start renting. The maximum amount your landlord can charge you for a security deposit is one month's rent. It is returned to you when you move out.
- Is it rented on a month-to-month basis or will you be required to sign a longer-term lease? A lease is a rental agreement that outlines the rights and responsibilities of each party (landlord and tenant) for a certain amount of time. This means that you are committed to living there for the amount of time your rental agreement states (for example, leases are often one year contracts). Read the agreement carefully and get help if you don't understand something. You will need to give advance notice when you move out and there may be a cost if you move out before your lease is over.
- Is it a desirable location – close to what you need such as your work place, school, bus route, and grocery store?
- Are pets allowed? In Saskatchewan, many rental places do not allow tenants to keep pets, so if you have a pet it is important to ask this question.

These are some helpful tips about renting:

- Before renting, inspect the place well. If your landlord does not give you a worksheet to keep notes when you inspect the place, use the [Rental Unit Evaluation Worksheet](#).
- Using this worksheet can help you decide whether the home is safe, comfortable, and suitable for your needs. List all the things that do not work or need fixing. If you do not mark broken/damaged areas on the worksheet, your landlord might think you are responsible for the damage. As a result, when you move out, all or part of your security deposit could be used to make those repairs. So it is important to carefully inspect your home when you move in.

- Many landlords ask for character and financial references from those applying to rent a home. Your employer might be willing to provide these references if you do not have any other contacts. Your [Regional Newcomer Gateway](#) may be able to suggest other possibilities.
- Get receipts (confirmation in writing) that you have paid your security deposit, and also get regular receipts for your monthly rent payments.

Q: What are a tenant's and landlord's responsibilities?

When you rent a place, it means that you, the tenant, are entering into a legal rental agreement with the owner of the apartment, the landlord.

The tenant's responsibilities include:

- Paying the rent on time, this is usually at the beginning of each month, or according to your particular rental arrangement.
- Keeping your place clean, including putting your garbage in the garbage bins provided.
- Respecting the building's rules and other tenants' rights. For example, regarding noise levels, parking spaces, or shared areas like laundry rooms.
- Giving proper notice when you are moving out, according to your rental agreement. Notice must be given in writing, not just by telling the landlord. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice provides a [sample](#) of a notice.

The landlord's responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that the building is safe to live in
- Keeping all appliances working
- Making repairs when necessary
- Respecting your privacy

The landlord can only enter your place by asking you in advance, in an emergency, or if you tell them that they can. There are also rules about when and how often the landlord can raise the rent and when they have to tell you about rent increases.

Q: What if my landlord and I have some trouble we cannot resolve?

You need to work with your landlord to find a solution when problems occur. If the problem cannot be settled, contact the [Office of Residential Tenancies](#). People there can help explain what is expected of tenants and landlords, and help to resolve disputes.

4. Buying a Home

Q: Where can I find information on buying a home?

Buying Your First Home in Canada: What Newcomers Need to Know offers useful information for immigrants interested in buying a home.

Q: What types of homes are for sale?

There are various types of homes for sale including condominiums, townhouses, detached homes (sometimes called single-family homes), semi-detached homes, and duplexes.

For definitions of each of these types and for more information on buying a home, please read *Buying Your First Home in Canada: What Newcomers Need to Know*.

Q: What are the costs related to buying and owning a home?

It is important to know exactly how much it costs to buy and own a home. Home prices vary according to size, condition, features, and location. You will need to consider the price of the house and land and other expenses such as property taxes, legal fees, land transfer taxes, mortgage costs (including interest rates), a condominium fee (for condominiums only), insurance, utilities, moving expenses (including any furniture you might need to buy), and potential renovation costs if repairs are needed.

If you want to do large-scale home renovations (such as adding rooms to the house), you will need a building permit from the municipal office and there are rules about what changes will be allowed.

As a homeowner, you will need to pay property taxes on your home every year, an amount that varies according to the type of home, location and size of the land that it is on (sometimes called the lot). You are also responsible to maintain your house and property.

If you buy a condominium, you are only responsible for the inside of your home. When you live in a condominium you pay condominium fees. These fees are used by the company to take care of the outside of the home and to care for shared areas of the property (like parking lots). The condominium fees of different buildings might be applied to different things so make sure to ask how your fee will be used.

Q: Where can I find a home to buy?

You can buy a home through professional real estate agents or directly from a home owner.

To find a home to buy:

- Check for homes (properties) for sale in the local newspapers (classified advertisement section), especially in weekend newspapers, and on websites such as [Multiple Listing Service](#), [Sask Houses](#) or [Sask Homes 4 Sale](#).
- Contact a local real estate agent. Real estate agents are paid for their work by the person selling the home, so you do not pay them to help you buy a home. You can find listings for real estate companies in the *Yellow Pages* of local telephone books or through the [Association of Saskatchewan Realtors](#).
- Visit various neighborhoods you would like to live in and notice *For Sale* signs, then contact the seller.

Q: What do I need to do after I find a home that I would like to buy?

You will need to make an offer to the owner (in writing), put a purchase deposit on the home, arrange for a home inspection, and obtain a mortgage from a bank. A real estate agent or a lawyer can assist you through the process.

5. Housing Assistance Programs

Q: How can I get help with my housing costs?

The Government of Saskatchewan, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC), offers a range of housing assistance for low to moderate-income households (families who earn less than a certain amount of money per year) who could not otherwise afford adequate, safe, and secure housing. [SHC programs and services](#) include affordable rental housing, home renovation and repair, making homes more energy-efficient, adapting homes to special needs (such as adding wheelchair ramps), support to help seniors live independently, and options to help you purchase a home. Some restrictions may apply in certain programs, for instance, for temporary foreign workers and students on study permits.

Q: Is there a tax credit for first time home buyers?

Yes. It is called [Home Buyers' Tax Credit \(HBTC\)](#) and is a federal program.

6. Home Utilities

Q: What are utilities?

Utilities are public services such as electricity, water, sewer, telephone, and fuel (natural gas) that are used in Saskatchewan homes. These services are usually

provided through a provincial or local government agency, except for internet and cell phone services, which are also available from private companies.

Q: How do I get utilities connected at my home?

You must contact the provider of the service. It is often called getting a hook-up. You can do it through a telephone call, by visiting the appropriate office or by booking a service installation on-line on the service provider's website. There is usually a fee for getting connected, which is added to your first month's bill. You can pay utility bills by mail, in person at the service provider's office, or on-line.

Q: Who provides the services?

Fuel - In many areas of Saskatchewan, the main fuel used is natural gas. The provider of natural gas in the province is SaskEnergy. You can find the locations of its offices throughout Saskatchewan at the [SaskEnergy](#) website.

Electricity – This is provided by SaskPower. To find out more about connecting or disconnecting electrical services, visit the [SaskPower](#) website.

Water and sewer service –Your city, town or other local government body is responsible for these services. Look for a water and sewer telephone number in the city section of your local telephone book or on your city's website. If you are living in a town or village, you might have to call the Town or Village Office to arrange for a hook-up.

Internet and Telephone - There are various internet, telephone, and cell phone companies that can provide services to meet your needs. You can find them in the *Yellow Pages* of a telephone book or online using the [Sasktel Phonebook Search tool](#). For example, type Telephone Companies beside Category, type the city or town you are living in beside City/Town, and then choose Search.

When entering into an agreement to get a cell phone, it is important to understand all of the costs involved, including service charges and local or long distance call charges after any free minutes are used. Most cell phone companies have a pro-rated fee charged if you want your phone cancelled.

Q: Is tap water in Saskatchewan communities safe to drink?

Saskatchewan Government regulations require frequent testing of all public and semi-public water sources to make sure the water is safe to drink.

Private wells are not subject to the same regulations.

If you are not sure about whether your tap water is safe, please call your water service provider. Stores sell bottled mineral water, water filters, and water purifiers. You can find more information on water testing [here](#).

**This document contains links and is best viewed online.
This document, along with information on other topics,
is available in various languages at:**

www.saskimmigrationcanada.ca/information-in-various-languages

Questions?

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