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PRESS RELEASE
Saskatchewan Environmental Society
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For immediate release

In the face of the climate crisis, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society calls on the Saskatchewan government to adopt higher building efficiency standards

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society registers its disapproval with the Government of Saskatchewan's recent decision to backtrack on their commitment to make buildings more energy efficient under the National Building Code. Out of five energy efficiency performance tiers designed to achieve net-zero building standards, Saskatchewan had adopted Tier 2 as the required minimum standard for new low-rise residential buildings, with plans to progress to Tier 3 in 2026. Instead, in an unexpected weakening, the government now plans to revert to the lowest efficiency standard – Tier 1, effective immediately.

Because of this regression, new Saskatchewan homes will be less energy efficient and more prone to air leakage. As a result, they will be less resilient to extreme heat and cold, and more susceptible to poor air quality from forest fire smoke or pollution. Homeowners will also be burdened with higher operational costs right now, and increased maintenance issues in the future. This is especially problematic at a time when the cost of living and affordable housing are such critical issues. Truly affordable housing is about more than just lower mortgage payments. Building to Tier 3 instead of Tier 1, for example, can cut energy bills by 20%.[1] This equates to an annual savings of approximately $620 in Saskatchewan. Energy efficient, air-tight homes just make good sense in our variable and unpredictable climate.

"Once again, the Saskatchewan government is signalling its disregard for its citizens in the face of the climate crisis. Their decision to return to Tier 1 will impact the advancement of sustainability and shift more costs onto homeowners, as they end up with higher utility bills in a less efficient home," says Allyson Brady, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society. "This backwards movement will also impact home builders who will likely face challenges in an already volatile marketplace due to this policy shift."

It is imperative that the Saskatchewan government change its course and begin taking climate change seriously. The Saskatchewan Environmental Society, therefore, urges the Government of Saskatchewan to reconsider their baffling and regressive decision to return to Tier 1 of the National Building Code and, instead, adopt higher building efficiency standards that promote safer, resilient, more affordable homes for its citizens, all while limiting energy use and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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[1] Please note: This is an updated calculation from Efficiency Canada, who initially reported that building to Tier 3 rather than Tier 1 will cut energy use in half (~$1,560 annual savings in Saskatchewan). The fact remains that more efficient homes save homeowners money.

For more information, please contact:
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Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) is a non-profit, registered charity that is committed to supporting sustainable living and sustainable resource use in Saskatchewan. We work with, and on behalf of, communities, organizations, businesses, and policy makers to encourage informed decision-making that moves us towards sustainability. SES's current action areas include sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, resource conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances. Our work in Saskatchewan is carried out in Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and our office is in Saskatoon on Treaty 6, the traditional territory of Cree Peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation.