



## Campus housing gets \$15M boost

Cumberland Avenue project to benefit from provincial dollars

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For The StarPhoenix

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Construction will begin on a new residence building near the University of Saskatchewan as early as this fall following a \$15-million funding announcement Wednesday from the provincial government.

The announcement comes only two days after the release of a report detailing a serious shortage of affordable student housing in Saskatoon.

"We know the ability of the university to recruit students in a highly competitive education environment includes the ability to offer residence space," university president Peter MacKinnon said at a press conference.

The funds cement a plan to create a \$34-million, 400-bed housing complex on Cumberland Avenue, across the street from the main campus on university-owned land.

It's been three decades since the last residence was built. In 2008, residences provided 1,190 beds, enough housing for about six per cent of the university's 18,474 students. Already, 1,700 prospective and current students have applied to live in residence next year.

"The fact that the (housing) report came out a couple days ago just helps to reflect and reinforce the urgency of what was needed," said Rob Norris, minister of advanced education, employment and labour.

Wednesday's announcement is part of a government pledge of \$30 million in infrastructure spending targeted at students, seniors, low-income residents and people with intellectual disabilities. The spending is also part of the \$500-million "economic booster shot" announced Monday by Premier Brad Wall.

The U of S Students' Union is pleased with the announcement and would like to see the new residences built to meet or exceed Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

"Personally, I would like it to strive for LEED. I think that's becoming increasingly important," said Shannon Dyck, USSU vice-president of student issues.

She said the four-bedroom, apartment-style complex the university is considering will fit the needs of students. "I think they've done a good job of trying to figure out what students want," she said.

Richard Florizone, vice-president of finance and resources at the U of S,

made no guarantees the building would meet LEED standards, but said it has been discussed.

"We're very interested in sustainability as an overall goal, but we're also interested in financial sustainability."

He added the university hopes to set rents at current market value, which would not have been possible without government funding.

Meridian Development Corp. will be the development partner with the university on the project. The company expects to have plans finalized and construction started this year.

The company is also responsible for two major luxury condo developments, including redevelopment of the King George Hotel.

The developers anticipate a lot of "late nights" getting the project ready for construction. They hope to create buildings that will be economically efficient to build and to set "new standards for environmental sustainability," said Colleen Wilson, director of legal affairs for Meridian.

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