
SUMA Position Statement

SUMA recognizes the important service that STARS provides for the citizens of Saskatchewan, as part of the province's health strategy. However, we are concerned about the transfer of health care costs to municipalities.

Urban municipalities maintain a massive network of infrastructure and provide a wide range of services to their residents. They supply safe drinking water, wastewater treatment, recreation facilities and programs, and so many other things their residents expect.

Increasingly, SUMA members are also being tasked with funding and supporting provincial responsibilities:

- They may already pay a percentage of the cost for new health care facilities, and often help furnish them;
- Many of them struggle to recruit doctors to their communities, often using municipal dollars to attract and retain them;
- Fire departments, located almost exclusively in urban municipalities, already provide landing assistance to STARS, a service for which they receive no compensation.

A \$2 per capita annual donation from every urban municipality would result in the redirection of \$1.6 million *each year*. Those dollars are essential to maintaining services and programs, and addressing infrastructure needs.

SUMA recognizes the importance of STARS; however STARS has access to other funding mechanisms through their existing lotteries and fundraising campaigns. SUMA does not support any "recommended" donation level to STARS from urban governments. Members that do choose to donate should be aware of the future financial implications that decision may have on their municipality.

Key Messages

- STARS provides a valuable service, as part of the Government of Saskatchewan's strategic plan for the delivery of health services.
- While health care remains a provincial responsibility, there has been a recent trend of downloading some of these costs to municipalities.
- Urban government are already responsible for providing a variety of services to their residents, including drinking water, wastewater treatment, recreation and transit. Budgets are already stretched thin addressing these needs without taking on additional costs from other orders of government.
- STARS has access to other funding mechanisms through their existing lotteries and fundraising campaigns, as well as direct funding from the Government of Saskatchewan.
- SUMA does not support any recommended level of donations for urban municipalities.

Current Status

- SUMA provided a letter to all members shortly after the STARS letters were received, outlining our position on suggested donation levels.
- Each municipality must ultimately decide if they will donate to STARS, and at what level. SUMA asks that members keep in mind the significant demand on resources that services and infrastructure have on urban municipalities, and budget appropriately.

Background

- The Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) provides air ambulance services out of bases located in Regina and Saskatoon.
- STARS helicopters are most frequently called out in the event of motor vehicle collisions, for transfers between health facilities, and for incidents occurring in remote areas.
- STARS service has replaced the provincial air ambulance service in many areas of the province.
- The province provides approximately \$11 million dollars to STARS per year, representing approximately 50 per cent of their operating costs. The remainder of STARS' funding comes from corporate and individual donations.
- In October of 2014, urban municipalities began receiving letters requesting a voluntary donation of \$2 per capita. This figure was taken from a 2013 SARM resolution that recommended a \$2 per capita donation level from rural municipalities.
- A \$2 per capita donation level from every urban municipality in Saskatchewan would represent \$1.6 million dollars annually—funds that are essential to ongoing municipal operations and infrastructure development.

Strategic Context

A \$2 per capita donation level from every urban municipality in Saskatchewan would represent \$1.6 million dollars annually—funds that are essential to ongoing municipal operations and infrastructure development.

Conclusion

SUMA does not support urban municipalities providing health care funding, as health is a provincial responsibility. As valuable a service as STARS provides to Saskatchewan, we cannot support a recommended donation level for urban municipalities.

Contacts

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