

2024 Election Concerns

Founded in 1905, SUMA is the voice of Saskatchewan’s urban municipalities—cities, towns, villages, resort villages, and northern municipalities, making up over 80 percent of the province’s population. Through advocacy, SUMA’s primary focus is to improve government legislation, programs, and services. We empower our members to build and maintain safe, healthy, sustainable urban hubs, where people gather to live, work and play.

Municipalities own 60 percent of public infrastructure, which includes resources like roads, water, wastewater treatment, recreation, green spaces, and fire halls. However, in spite municipal resources being the most frequently accessed by residents, municipalities have the least amount of funding available, and the least autonomy to grow and maintain those resources.

SUMA has been continuously advocating other orders of government for solutions to this issue. As we approach elections, SUMA is reiterating the following issues relating to municipal sustainability and autonomy with hopes that future governments will address them:

Municipal Revenues

- **Municipalities need more revenue streams from other orders of government.**
 - Currently, municipalities have only property taxes and grants as income
 - For years, funding of these existing revenue streams has not increased
 - Municipal responsibility to build and maintain resources grows each year
 - Rising populations mean there’s greater need for resources despite the current lack of revenue
 - Municipalities are required to run balanced operating budgets with low funds
- **Municipalities need substantial changes to property assessment and revenue systems to better meet needs**
 - Municipalities need property tax assessment to be simplified in Saskatchewan, and undertaken more frequently, to avoid large swings in assessment values and confusion for taxpayers.
 - We need to decrease the amount of municipal funding that is clawed back by the federal and provincial governments through taxation.
 - Municipalities already receive reimbursement for GST paid, and we need to see something similar at the provincial level—at very least recompense for the

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approximately \$29 million annual cost to municipalities for the province's changes to PST on construction labour.

- We also need to see municipalities receiving a rebate for carbon taxes paid to the federal government, which individuals and small businesses are already receiving. We look to whomever forms the next Government of Saskatchewan to assist us with advocating for this.

- **More funding is necessary for next generation infrastructure**
 - Greater support for landfills, hospitals, and green infrastructure is necessary
 - Will promote growth and mitigate increased long-term effects and costs
 - Changes would create opportunities to retain recruit and retain newcomers in our smaller communities, keeping them vibrant and sustainable.

- **Municipalities want programs and investments that will attract newcomers and help them settle.**
 - Need funding to help with retention of newcomers who are vital to growth
 - Investments will increase the economic growth potential of municipalities
 - Investments will help boost the economy across the province

Municipal Responsibilities

- **Municipalities want changes to the Acts that govern the safety and wellbeing of their residents**
 - *The Police Act* in Saskatchewan is more than 30 years old, and no longer fits the realities of modern police services.
 - Community safety today requires a great deal more cooperation between various agencies, and the use of professionals specializing in things like domestic violence, addiction, and mental health crises.
 - Reworking the act will explicitly lay out expectations for law enforcement and other services, reducing the strain on police services and making best use of resources.

- **Municipalities require help with bylaw enforcement and prosecution**
 - Bylaws can be difficult to enforce, and even more difficult to have heard in the overburdened provincial court system.
 - We need major changes to legislation to provide additional avenues for municipalities to increase bylaw compliance. This may include different court supports, adding the cost of infractions to property taxes, and even greater public education around the bylaw

system as a whole.

Provincial Downloading

- **Municipalities are not equipped to handle social services, housing, and shelters.**
 - Municipalities are not responsible for providing these basic needs, and don't have the fiscal capacity to do so.
 - Homelessness has become a major issue for municipalities, as a direct result of changes to income support programs.
 - Municipalities have had to repeatedly step in to provide resources and relieve the stress their communities feel as a result of other orders of government not doing enough to prevent these issues.
 - Not dealing with issues like social housing, income support, and shelters result in much greater ongoing costs to our policing, health care, and correctional systems, in addition to the cost borne by municipalities.

- **Municipalities need the province to provide consistent help with mental health and addictions, and housing.**
 - The Saskatchewan Income Support Program (SIS) and the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability Program (SAID) need drastic improvements to fulfill their functions and mandate.
 - Neither program provides sufficient funds for basic costs of living in Saskatchewan. Rather than making people more independent, this ensures that they become more dependent on programs like food banks, to try to make ends meet.
 - Evictions of income support clients has increased substantially since the program was introduced, and rates were effectively decreased by removing the direct payment of utilities at cost.
 - While the province's current focus on addictions recovery has resulted in much-needed recovery beds being added in the province, an unwillingness to properly fund harm reduction programming is on track to substantially increase healthcare costs through HIV transmission, and through overdoses.
 - We need much greater upfront investment in things like mental health support, social housing, and harm reduction services to reduce the incredible strain on our healthcare, policing, and correctional systems.

- **Municipalities need future governments to take a firm stance on climate change and provide environmental leadership.**

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- Saskatchewan municipalities and residents are already beginning to experience the effects of climate change, and these effects will only become more challenging and detrimental as time goes on.
 - We need a strong commitment toward disaster resilience in our province, including events such as drought and wildfire.
 - We need a wetland policy to ensure sustainable water management practices, as we are one of the few provinces in Canada without a wetland policy.
 - SUMA is working to develop a Municipal Eco-Action Centre to assist municipalities with climate-change projects, by providing a hub of knowledge and support, but success will require cooperation and funding from the provincial government.
- **Municipalities want support for new technology and education around landfill closures**
 - Municipalities continue to be caught between the inflating costs of meeting environment regulations for landfills, and the prohibitive costs of properly closing and remediating them.
 - In order to meet the environment requirements laid out by both provincial and federal governments for landfill closures, municipalities need direct assistance.

For more information visit www.suma.org

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