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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Throne Speech Addresses Municipal Revenue Sharing and Community Rinks

SUMA is pleased with the Government of Saskatchewan's intention to fulfil previously made promises in healthcare, and its focus on community in today's Throne Speech. We are especially thankful for the ongoing commitment to the Municipal Revenue Sharing formula, and the increase in funding for the Community Rink Affordability Grant. For many years, SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) has advocated the government for changes to improve the affordability and quality of life in Saskatchewan's communities, and some of these announcements today are steps in the right direction. As we move into the new year, we look forward to seeing more improvements in the areas of community safety and healthcare.

Due to the province-wide need, mental health and addictions, and housing (which is closely linked) has been a cornerstone advocacy issue for SUMA for some time, and sadly, the work in these areas is far from over. Included in today's Throne Speech was the promise to open additional urgent care centres in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Moose Jaw and Regina, for access to mental health and addictions services, but the need is greater than the promised resources, and goes beyond urgent care. For Saskatchewan's residents to truly benefit from the help they require, monetary, procedural, and administrative changes must be made to income support programs like SIS and SAID. Right now, the way SIS and SAID programs are administered increases the hardship for those experiencing mental health and addictions and homelessness, placing additional pressure and costs on Saskatchewan's healthcare and public safety systems.

"Over 80 percent of Saskatchewan's population lives in urban municipalities, and every time I speak to a resident, I hear the same concerns: people are worried about their ability to afford everyday necessities, about staying healthy," said SUMA President, Randy Goulden. "The truth is that those facing unfortunate circumstances, needing to access income support, that could happen to anyone. Tomorrow you or I might need help. Let's remember that. Whether it is housing, mental health and addictions, or community safety—there are improvements to make, and they need to happen soon."

Another necessity for maintaining public health is providing residents with access to recreation and recreational facilities. It's because of this importance that we are pleased to see the doubling of the Community Rink Affordability Grant to \$5000. This increase will help maintain many recreation facilities, which will serve both urban municipalities and their surrounding areas.

"For so many urban municipalities, the heart of the community is the rink," said President Goulden. "We're good at sharing resources in this province, so funding to maintain a rink becomes like a hat trick in hockey, but instead of one player's team benefitting, multiple communities score from one goal. The Community Rink Affordability Grant helps more than the community that houses the rink."

Caring for Saskatchewan's municipalities, and by extension the province, requires a holistic approach that considers everything from recreation to health and safety. We hope the government makes more improvements to programs that have a direct effect on the lives of the province's residents.

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