



Our cities, towns, villages, resort villages,  
and northern municipalities are  
urban hubs bringing people together.

# We are URBAN.

October 9, 2024

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **This Election, Help Municipalities Prioritize their Residents' Safety**

As the order of government closest to the people, municipalities understand the changes required for their communities to remain safe and functional. This election, SUMA is advocating for a strong, interconnected, and well-resourced system of municipal bylaws and provincial legislation—essential components for urban municipalities to continue serving as the best places to live, work, and play.

As mental health and addictions issues have increased, our RCMP and police services have taken on the primary burden, even though situations often require different skillsets. To more effectively and efficiently address mental health and addictions issues while keeping our communities safe, SUMA is calling on the next provincial government to modernize *The Police Act*, develop more cooperative arrangements with other specialized service providers, and help municipalities with enforcing bylaws.

“Police officers are experts who understand the law and know how to keep communities safe,” said SUMA President Randy Goulden. “But it’s unfair to expect them to be experts in every field, especially in mental health, where other professionals better understand the care needs of patients. We need a team approach, with many professionals, when circumstances require it.”

SUMA believes modernizing *The Police Act* is the first step toward alleviating pressure on our policing services. The current act is over 30 years old, and doesn’t adequately address our present social situation or the necessary cooperative arrangements with other specialized service providers.

“Mental health and addictions issues affect municipalities all over the province, and there’s much work to be done to help those in need. Part of that care involves how police respond to calls and the partners they bring with them when necessary. The safety of the caller, responder and community all matter. Ensuring that proper help and arrangements exist during the response is critical,” said President Goulden.

Municipalities also need help enforcing and prosecuting bylaws, which offer another layer in community safety, and can work cooperatively with provincial and federal laws, if they can be properly employed. Many communities cannot afford a dedicated bylaw enforcement officer, and the RCMP generally do not provide enforcement for bylaws unless there is a clear public safety threat. Even when a ticket is issued, it may go unpaid and ignored unless the municipality can navigate the already-overburdened provincial court. SUMA wants the next provincial government to implement an alternative, streamlined system for municipalities to prosecute bylaw infractions, and to provide more funding and training for officers to enforce bylaws at the municipal level.

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