



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

We are URBAN.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Future Governments, We Need More Resources for Mental Health, Addictions, and Homelessness

Whether you live in a city, town, village, resort village, or northern municipality, chances are you've noticed a greater need for mental health, addictions and housing resources and services in your community. Unfortunately, the current level of funding available does not match the province-wide need. SUMA is calling on the next provincial government to take greater responsibility for social services, housing, and shelters by allocating more funding and resources to both preventative and recovery-oriented care surrounding drug, alcohol, addictions, mental health and housing-related issues.

Municipalities are the order of government closest to the people, and have a front-row seat for the challenges experienced in communities, but they are not fiscally or legally responsible for social services, housing and shelters; this responsibility falls to the province. However, over the years, municipalities have found themselves stepping in more and more to provide resources and relieve the stress their communities feel because other orders of government are not doing enough to prevent these issues. SUMA wants to see this downloading of responsibilities stopped, and instead for future governments to implement changes that will meet both current and projected needs.

"Each time we apply some temporary fix, or sweep mental health, addictions and housing issues under the rug, it not only places pressure on communities, it also incurs higher costs for our support systems," said President Randy Goulden. "The province is making it harder for policing, health care, and correctional systems--not to mention municipalities--who must bear the cost as well. Why not stop these issues before they begin?"

While the provincial government has made some progress, particularly around adding recovery beds in Regina and Saskatoon, the problem will only continue to grow unless more is done to address root causes of mental health and addictions issues, and to keep people alive until they are able to enter recovery. The province's unwillingness to properly fund harm reduction programming could result in substantial healthcare cost increases through HIV transmissions and overdoses. To truly start breaking the cycle, SUMA suggests upfront investments in mental health supports, social housing, and harm reduction services. Doing so, would relieve the strain our healthcare, policing, and correctional systems feel. Most of all, it will make a difference to those in need.

Commitment and consistency are necessary across existing programs as well. The Saskatchewan Income Support Program (SIS) and Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability Program need drastic improvements to fulfill their functions, meet mandates, and help those in need. Currently, neither program provides enough to cover the basic cost of living in Saskatchewan, and instead of helping the housing insecure, the programs are contributing to the number of evictions across the province.

"We must stop treating mental health, addictions, and housing insecurity as moral problems or individual failures. These are health and social crises that can be experienced by anyone, under the wrong circumstances. Those who are suffering deserve dignity, and we can show our respect by seeing to their most basic needs," said President Goulden.

Mental health and addictions have been cornerstone issues for SUMA for some time, and this election we will continue to advocate future governments for better funding and investments. Urban municipalities want to see real change, to help those suffering most, so their communities can continue being strong urban hubs, bringing people together.

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For more information visit www.suma.org, or to arrange an interview please contact:

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