



Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Provincial Investments Important to Saskatchewan's Hometowns

Provincial investments are important to improving the quality of life in Saskatchewan's cities, towns, villages, resort villages, and northern municipalities. With the release of the 2023-24 provincial budget, SUMA recognizes the province's effort to improve the lives of Saskatchewan's residents, particularly through increased funding for infrastructure and health services.

With members in Saskatchewan's north, SUMA is pleased to see an investment of \$89.4 million to build, operate, and maintain the transportation system in northern Saskatchewan. The additional \$6 million for the preservation and maintenance of northern roads to support the province's forestry industry will also help support economic development in Saskatchewan's northern communities.

All of Saskatchewan's hometowns will benefit from the record investment of more than \$297 million in Municipal Revenue Sharing, a 13 per cent increase from the 2022-23 year. However, with more than 80 per cent of Saskatchewan's population calling an urban municipality home, SUMA believes the funding allocations need to be adjusted to reflect where Saskatchewan's population lives and works, while recognizing the greater cost of providing services in Saskatchewan's northern municipalities.

"Municipal Revenue Sharing helps fund the projects that matter most to our communities," SUMA President Randy Goulden said. "As Saskatchewan's population continues to move to our villages, towns, and cities, we need to ensure the revenue sharing model recognizes that shift and enables our hometowns to provide and maintain the infrastructure and services residents expect."

With a projected \$1 billion surplus, SUMA is disappointed that PST will continue to be applied to municipal construction projects. While the increased Municipal Revenue Sharing is welcome news for Saskatchewan's hometowns, municipalities will be returning a significant portion of the funding to the province through PST on municipal construction projects. Data gathered by SUMA showed that medium-sized cities in Saskatchewan returned 24-39 per cent of their total Municipal Revenue Sharing grant back to the province in the form of PST on municipal construction projects in 2021.

"As costs continue to rise due to inflation, the percentage of Municipal Revenue Sharing that we return to the province in the form of PST on our municipal construction projects also continues to increase," President Goulden said. "We could do so much more in our communities if the funding stayed in our municipalities."

While health is a provincial responsibility, hospitals, health centres, and long-term care homes are in Saskatchewan's hometowns and impact the well-being of residents. SUMA has continued to raise concerns relating to access to health care, particularly in smaller centres. SUMA welcomes the 6.7 per cent increase in health care funding, bringing the total provincial investment to \$6.867 billion. SUMA is especially encouraged by the funding focused on implementation of 250 full-time positions and enhancement of part-time positions in

Saskatchewan's towns and villages. An additional \$8.8 million to enhance emergency medical services and provide more reliable emergency health services is also welcomed.

"No one should have to worry about where the closest ambulance is or how long it will take to access basic health care," President Goulden said. "The investment will help to reduce service interruptions in our communities."

As Saskatchewan's hometowns deal with the complications that arise from mental health and addictions issues in the province, SUMA applauds the provincial government in recognizing the importance of investing in mental health and addictions supports. The additional \$12.4 million to fund targeted initiatives including the expansion of the Police and Crisis Team, new children and youth mental health and addictions supports, and addictions services and supports for vulnerable populations is welcome.

SUMA continues to be concerned with the Saskatchewan Income Support program, as well as funding for housing supports within the province. While an investment of \$7.7 million for supportive housing is an improvement for Saskatchewan's two largest centres, SUMA is disappointed that the province has not addressed the need for supportive housing across the province. The investment in the Saskatchewan Income Support program also falls short with the \$60 per month increase still far below the base cost of living.

A resolution calling on SUMA to advocate for the province to immediately increase SIS rates to meet the basic cost of living, restore direct rent and utilities payments for all that need, and develop more supportive housing options is set to be brought forward during the resolutions session at the 2023 SUMA Convention and Tradeshow on April 17.

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

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Founded in 1905, SUMA is the voice of Saskatchewan's hometowns.