



# City Mayors' Caucus

November 5, 2021

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **City Mayors Concerned with New Income Support Program**

Mayors from Saskatchewan's cities are concerned with the challenges that the province's most vulnerable are experiencing with the new Saskatchewan Income Support program.

"We are only two months into the new support program, and we are already seeing people struggle to pay their rent," Mayor Gerald Aalbers, Chair of SUMA's City Mayors' Caucus (CMC), said. "This program is designed to help our most vulnerable, but instead, we are seeing an increase in homelessness in our communities."

The Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) program replaced the Saskatchewan Assistance Program and the Transitional Employment Allowance Program on August 31. Surveys taken by the Saskatchewan Landlords' Association indicate that more than 30 per cent of SIS clients—more than 4,000 people—did not pay their rent in September or October. SUMA's City Mayors' Caucus met online November 4 to discuss the impact the new program is already having on their cities.

"Safety is a priority in our communities and homelessness creates significant public safety concerns for both those experiencing it and the community as a whole," Mayor Aalbers said. "As municipal leaders, we appreciate the need to make programs more efficient. However, efficiency should not take precedence over the purpose of the program – helping those who need it."

SUMA's Executive Committee expressed similar concerns during a meeting with the Honourable Lori Carr, Minister of Social Services, on November 2. Both SUMA and SUMA's City Mayors' Caucus will continue to work with Minister Carr and her Ministry to identify potential program solutions and address homelessness in Saskatchewan hometowns.

Health was a focus of the CMC meeting on November 4, with a presentation by Dr. Nathaniel Osgood focusing on COVID-19 pandemic modelling, and an update on the CMC's Mental Health and Addictions Working Group. The group is mandated to work with subject matter experts to develop informed solutions for mental health and addiction issues in Saskatchewan hometowns, and meet with elected officials to discuss potential solutions.

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