



City Mayors' Caucus

June 12, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUMA City Mayors Call on the Province to Address Problems with the Saskatchewan Income Support Program and Social Housing

The SUMA City Mayors Caucus recently met in the City of Melville to discuss the shared issues affecting the cities and residents of our province. Some of the most critical issues continue to be homelessness, and the negative effects of homelessness on the homeless themselves and on the neighbourhoods, businesses, and individual residents of our province.

“The Saskatchewan Income Support Program (SIS) continues to worsen our homelessness problem,” said Gerald Aalbers, SUMA’s Vice-President of Cities and Chair of the SUMA City Mayors Caucus. “The barriers put in place for accessing services, the rates that remain far below the cost of living, and the evictions that occur because the province no longer pays landlords directly, are responsible for ever-increasing numbers of people on our streets.”

The recently released Provincial Auditor’s report flagged that over 60 per cent of calls to SIS went unanswered and ignored. Several other barriers to service related to identification, difficulty of the required forms, and a less individualized application process are also making it more difficult for people to access services.

A lack of social housing, and particularly supportive housing for those with mental health and addictions issues, is also feeding the homelessness crisis. There are currently thousands of empty units in the province, but many of those are uninhabitable because necessary maintenance has not been carried out. This lack of operational maintenance has eroded the social housing stock to a point where it will be far more expensive to repair the units and make them habitable.

The alternatives to social housing and income support are both less effective and more expensive. Appropriately funded social housing may be only a few hundred dollars per month. Sufficient income support to meet basic needs is an additional \$1,517 monthly. Alternatively, a bed at a shelter, if available, may cost up to \$2,500 monthly; a bed in a jail is over \$5,000; and a bed in a hospital is even more expensive, as well as draining on an already overburdened medical system. There are also additional costs for policing that occur when people are kept in poverty and people with mental health issues are living on the streets.

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

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“We are living in difficult times. Saskatchewan residents, and the cities they live in, are struggling with high inflation and the ever-increasing cost of services,” said Vice-President Aalbers. “How does the province justify saving a few dollars upfront on SIS and social housing costs only to pay many times that amount through shelters, policing, and health care, at a time when Saskatchewan businesses and residents are struggling to stay afloat?”

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Link to video statement: [LINK](#)

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