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April 8, 2022

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SUMA's Response to the 2022 Federal Budget**

The 2022 budget released by the Government of Canada will assist Saskatchewan's cities, towns, villages, resort villages, and northern municipalities in tackling homelessness, but SUMA is disappointed in the lack of response to address mental health and addictions and ensure equal access to broadband, clean water, and safe transportation.

"Affordable housing is an important element of mental health for many, and housing is top of mind for many in Saskatchewan," SUMA President Randy Goulden said. "We applaud the extension of the Rapid Housing Initiative that funds affordable housing projects, and the Housing Accelerator Fund has the potential to help hometowns get new housing built faster. However, we are disappointed in what we see as an overall lack of support to address mental health and addictions in our communities."

SUMA recognizes the \$100 million over three years for the Substance Use and Addictions Program, but a more proactive focus on mental health and addictions is needed. The budget references the development of a new Canada Mental Health Transfer that will support the expansion and delivery of accessible mental health services across the country, but few details are available.

The association representing Saskatchewan's hometowns is also extremely disappointed that the budget does not address the impact the federally negotiated RCMP labour agreement has on hometowns. Municipal associations from western Canada collectively called on the federal government to cover the costs of the negotiated retroactive pay increases. In Saskatchewan, both the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and the Leader of the Official Opposition supported SUMA's call, sending letters to the federal government echoing the request for the Government of Canada to absorb the entire financial impact of the retroactive wage compensation for 2017-2021.

"SUMA truly values the work of those protecting our communities," President Goulden said. "But we were not at the table when the RCMP retroactive pay increases were negotiated, and the increased costs significantly impact hometown budgets. Our hometowns cannot run deficit budgets, meaning increased costs in policing passed to municipalities need to be funded through increased taxes or reduction of municipal services in other areas."

SUMA, in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), also continues to call on the federal government to make important investments in high-speed internet, clean water and transportation infrastructure, and inter-community bus services.

"Every Saskatchewan resident, whether they live in a city, town, village, resort village, or northern municipality, deserves access to reliable, high-speed internet, clean water, and safe transportation infrastructure," President Goulden said.

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For more information visit [www.suma.org](http://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.*