Dear Editor,

During this federal election campaign, Saskatchewan’s hometowns are highlighting a number of issues that affect people and communities across our province.  One key area that is of particular concern to our cities, towns, and villages — and our residents — is the tools available to address climate change, natural disasters, and emergencies.

Recent years have demonstrated that large-scale natural disasters are happening more frequently with a significant financial impact on all orders of government.

To ensure our hometowns are financially and physically equipped to deal with natural disasters when they strike, the leaders of Saskatchewan’s urban municipalities are calling on a new federal government to:

1. re-open the Canadian Emergency Management College to provide comprehensive, collaborative, and inter-jurisdictional training for municipal and provincial emergency responders;
2. reinvest in the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program to ensure municipal fire departments and other emergency responders have access to the equipment required to respond to emergencies as safely and effectively as possible; and
3. provide communities with access to national climate research and risk assessment tools, as well as funding to build and adapt climate resilient infrastructure.

These changes can significantly reduce the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable communities and provide municipalities with the capacity to take proactive measures to address the causes of these events.

Saskatchewan municipalities are being asked to tackle climate change on the front lines while being simultaneously limited by financial pressures. If municipalities are expected to make progress on building climate resilient infrastructure, the federal government must commit to upholding and following through with the recently announced 2021 single-use plastic ban.

By enhancing the tools municipalities have – providing financial assistance, investing in training, and removing financial and waste barriers to municipalities – the federal government will be strengthening our communities. Climate resilience and disaster prevention should be a priority for everyone, including our federal government.