



Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUMA Calls for *Meaningful* Consultation as Hometowns Reopen Budgets

The Executive Committee from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association showcased a united front today, as they continued to push the provincial government to engage in meaningful consultation with the province's more than 440 hometowns left reeling by the significant cuts and downloading delivered in the provincial budget.

In addition to stripping \$36 million of payments in lieu from 109 hometowns, the provincial budget shuttered the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC), suspended the Community Rink Affordability Grant, further reduced funding to urban parks, suspended the Main Street Saskatchewan Program, further cut funding to the Urban Highway Connector Program — which also funds the Town Urban Highway Program — and slashed funding to libraries.

“We were hopeful the meeting with four cabinet ministers on March 29 was a first step in meaningful consultation and further discussion with the provincial government,” said SUMA Vice-President of Villages, Resort Villages and Northern Municipalities Mike Strachan. “But less than two days later, before we could bring forward any suggestions, Minister Harpauer issued a press release. The decision to cap the payments in lieu cuts — but only for nine out of 109 hometowns and only at 30 per cent of their revenue sharing amount — came out of nowhere for us.”

Strachan said the current situation bears a striking resemblance to when provincial Environment Minister Scott Moe was in Montreal meeting with his counterparts to discuss a Canadian-made solution to climate change when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced in the House of Commons that his government would unilaterally impose a carbon price in provinces that would not do it themselves.

“We thought we were partners in building Saskatchewan, but this isn't how partners act,” Strachan added.

To add insult to injury, within a week of agreeing to work with and listen to Saskatchewan's hometowns to find a better solution, the government introduced Bill 64 (*An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act and The SaskEnergy Act*). The bill would cancel all municipal services agreements — payments in lieu — and take away municipalities' right to legal action against the government or the Crowns in question.

“Almost 100 towns stand to lose their payments in lieu,” SUMA Vice-President of Towns Rodger Hayward said. “Introducing this bill was a clear sign to hometowns that the provincial government is not interested in meaningful consultation with the order of government that spent the last decade on the frontlines of growth. We were doing our

fair share during the boom — providing critical services and creating the quality of life we all expect in Saskatchewan. We were paying, not profiting.”

Almost 80 per cent of Saskatchewan’s population lives in cities, towns, villages, resort villages, and northern municipalities. These hometowns provide the programs, services, and infrastructure people rely on every day: safe drinking water; wastewater management; streets and bridges; police and fire services; snow clearing; public transit; recreation, arts, and culture facilities and programming; economic and community development; garbage and recycling collection.

SUMA Vice-President of Cities Bob Maloney said that while hometowns are grateful the municipal revenue formula was not touched in the budget, continual downloading is gutting the integrity of the program.

“The municipal revenue sharing was designed, through consultation between two orders of government, to pay municipalities for the services we provided on behalf of the Province when we created this program,” Maloney said. “But since they introduced it, the Province has used revenue sharing as an excuse to keep passing responsibilities down to municipalities. I've heard real frustration from many mayors in my area that we have to pass on provincial tax increases to our residents through increased property taxes — on top of a growing list of provincial downloads.”

“A partnership requires meaningful dialogue — in the good and the bad times,” said SUMA Executive Member for Saskatoon/Regina Darren Hill. “Unfortunately that dialogue hasn't happened in this case, and our residents are now being forced to pay twice due to the continued downloading onto hometown municipalities.”

“SUMA members have been very clear: They are angry about provincial cuts and downloading,” SUMA President Gordon Barnhart said.

“We have grave concerns about the lack of respectful, government-to-government discussion leading up to this budget, and what it could mean for our future. SUMA will continue to work diligently on behalf of our members to seek the meaningful consultation they ultimately deserve as duly elected officials, and partners in building Saskatchewan.”

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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 urban Saskatchewan, representing cities, towns, and villages.