

## Bryant, Shellie

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**From:** Penny McKinlay [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** September 27, 2019 9:46 AM  
**To:** City Council  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council

Submitted on Friday, September 27, 2019 - 09:45

Submitted by user: PenelopeAMcKinlay

Submitted values are:

Date Friday, September 27, 2019

To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

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Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable)

Subject Farmers' Market Building Update

Meeting (if known) Saskatoon City Council Regular Business Meeting, September 30, 2019

Comments

Saskatoon has the great good fortune to have one of the best farmers' markets in Canada, and I find it very hard to understand why the City of Saskatoon doesn't recognize that fact. Year after year, Chatelaine magazine proclaims Saskatoon Farmers' Market as one of the top 10 markets in Canada. Bloggers rave about it when listing the top things to do and see when visiting Saskatoon. And yet, the City seems determined to force the Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative out of its present year-round, indoor location.

I would like to speak and reiterate my support for the Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative. Here's why.

If It's Not Broken, Don't Try to Fix It

The Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative has been providing Saskatoon residents with fresh fruit and vegetables since 1975. Over the past 45 years, they've expanded from a small outdoor summer-only market to a year-round indoor market with a full range of locally grown/made/produced/gathered products from Persian baklava to goat cheese, locally-grown strawberries, Saskatoon berries, and a wide range of vegetables.

And the market is so much more than just a food source. As a long-standing market, experienced farmers and vendors are in a position to mentor younger farmers just getting started in the business. And once they have become established, they go on to mentor other new farmers. It's a low-cost, independently run apprenticeship program and is worth its weight in gold to those of us who want to ensure an ongoing supply of locally grown food.

The market is a community centre where people meet and share and enjoy each other's company on a weekly basis. It's a place of learning for kids who might not otherwise have a chance to meet the people who grow their food – and who learn to love vegetables by munching on a free mini cucumber from Grandora Gardens.

### Listen and Learn

With 45 years of experience, Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative members have a wealth of knowledge and experience. The City of Saskatoon repeats, over and over again, that they want more activity in the building 6 days a week. Co-operative members know that they can't operate a market 6 days a week and still be at home working in their fields, canning the fruit and vegetables, or baking the bread.

The Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-Operative has tried many different approaches over the years in an attempt to be as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. They've tried night markets, supper-hour markets, extended hours, and much more. They also make a valiant attempt to populate the space when the farmers' market itself is not in operation. They offered their full support to a Thursday evening art market, but nobody showed up. They've rented the kitchen and the hall to outside groups for events but had limited capacity given the somewhat rundown nature of the building and courtesy to the residents in the condominiums across the street. Some of their events have been a huge success. It's been inspiring to participate in citizenship ceremonies in a community building. Round tables and workshops on urban agriculture and food security have brought people together from a variety of community organizations. The Co-operative proposed an even more ambitious range of activities and community partnerships in their proposals for a new lease. But still it wasn't enough for the City of Saskatoon.

What does the City of Saskatoon know that we don't? How do they expect to keep that property bustling all day long, 6 days a week? There are various stores in the other half of the market building, but I really wonder how much business they do when the farmers' market isn't active. Ideas Inc. has very limited foot traffic due to the nature of their activities. I've been in that area on non-market days and the whole place was deserted.

The City has promised that at least two days a week will be devoted to a farmers' market, but how do they propose to do that if not by bribing current Saskatoon Farmers' Market members to abandon the Co-operative? There is a restricted pool of potential vendors who actually make it, bake it, grow it, or produce it.

### Forced to Move

The City of Saskatoon will tell you that the Co-operative has chosen of its own free will to move to a different location. That's a very deceptive argument. You don't need to evict someone to get them to leave – all you have to do is make their lives miserable.

To function effectively the Co-operative requires stability so that they can make long-term plans and devote the greater part of their energy to building and maintaining the best farmers' market possibly. Instead, they've been in an ongoing battle for survival for the past two years and more. They've been obliged to devote massive amounts of time and energy to developing proposals, pleading their case with uncomprehending City officials. The lack of long-term security has weakened the Co-operative as members worried about their future – Should they buy seeds to plant next year or will they have lost their outlet for selling fruit and vegetables? Should they invest in new equipment, hire more staff, expand their business when the market's future is so tentative? By failing to offer a long-term lease and their full support, the City of Saskatoon has sown insecurity and anxiety. Is it any wonder that the Co-operative's board is actively looking for another location?

The City will tell you that they are forced to shut the building down while it undergoes repairs. What they fail to mention is that the Farmers' Market Co-operative has spoken to the City about the leaking roof for years with no response. Any of us who shop at the market on a regular basis are fully aware that you have to look out for buckets on a rainy day and that you will roast on a hot summer's day. The City has never been willing to work with the Co-operative to make the building a more comfortable, attractive place for both vendors and shoppers. Instead, they've used it as yet another tactic to force the Co-operative out of the space.

It's worth noting that other cities recognize the value of a farmers' market and go out of their way to support them. The City of Edmonton provides free parking around Strathcona Market on market days – and that market is only open one day a week with no pressure to extend their operations.

#### Local Food Security

As part of our efforts to adapt and address the challenge of climate change, the City of Saskatoon needs to put its full support behind achieving reliable local food supplies. The Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative is a key element in any plans for long-term food security. It supports the farmers, mentors new farmers, and educates and provides local residents with a spot to purchase locally grown food. In the process, residents support the local economy, giving their money to their neighbours rather than to large international conglomerates. It's a win-win for all parties and should be a key element in the City's planning for a low emissions future.

#### Attachments

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/node/398/submission/339427>