

October 21, 2019

Mr. Andrew Roberts
Director, Recreation and Community Development Division
City of Saskatoon
222 3rd Avenue North, Saskatoon, SK

Re: Provision of Civic Services

Good Morning Andrew;

Thank you and your team for meeting with me last week to discuss options for how the City will support festivals and events in the future. I have been aware of the consistent shortfall this area has faced in past years, and appreciate the efforts made by various city departments to step up to manage the shortfall while supporting as many of these events as possible.

My comments focus primarily on tourism-related festivals and events and not the many other community events that the program supports.

We know that the cultural sector contributes over \$160 million annually to our city, which exceeds 25% of our total annual visitor economy of \$610 million. This contribution includes cultural attractions such as the Remai Modern and Wanuskewin, but many attractions also host cultural events that draw tourists to Saskatoon.

At a recent meeting I attended in Ottawa with Destination Canada (DC), the provinces and 8 invited cities, DC outlined their new focus on attracting “Learners” to Canada. This psychographic segment includes Cultural Explorers and Authentic Experiencers. Cultural festivals and attractions will be key opportunities for promotion in Canada, the US and for International Travelers. We need to stay aligned with this opportunity as Learners have significantly higher than average daily spend and are most likely to extend stays in Saskatoon.

In 2016 Tourism Saskatoon shone a light on this sector with the writing of an Event Hosting Strategy for Saskatoon. The intention is to support going from “Good to Great” in terms of hosting excellence. I am pleased to report that to this point, 22 of the 40 recommendations have been implemented, a number of these in direct coordination with City Administration.

Financial concerns were the most commonly referenced threat to both established and emerging festivals. **Tourism Saskatoon’s Incubation Fund, Joint Marketing Fund and the City’s Special Event and Festival Funding programs and the Civic Services Program** are always heavily solicited, in some cases with demand exceeding available resources threefold. While Festivals and events are strong visitor attractors, the reality is that they capture only a small fraction of

total tourism expenditures within their own financial programs. This is a global reality of the Festival and Event industry.

You commented that last year 129 events that involved 755,500 residents and visitors, were supported by around \$231,500 contributed through Civic Services. That amounts to less than \$0.31 per person, while we benefitted immensely from the predominantly volunteer-driven sector.

That is a long preamble to our recommendation that The Civic Services Program should expand to more realistically meet the growing demand in a growing city. While I focus on visitor economics, everyone realizes the crucial role these events, small and large, play in knitting the social and cultural fabric of our city together. The scope of the program should support primarily Not-For-Profit events but should also consider events coordinated for philanthropic purposes. If a partial subsidization by the Festivals and Events is necessary to maintain the viability of the program, I suggest that this be modest, and implemented gradually over time as this is one new cost center amongst many including police, increased security demands and insurance that challenge the viability of many events.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Brandt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Todd Brandt
President & CEO