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Saskatoon City Council
222 - 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon SK S7K 0J5

May 14, 2020

Dear Mayor Clark and City Councillors:

I am writing in relation to a recent news report regarding a May 1, 2020 letter to Council from the Mid-West Development Corp. CEO, Mr. Ken Achs, in which he addressed a general perception of a lack of personal safety in Saskatoon's downtown.

I assume that there has been research into the public's perception of safety regarding Saskatoon's business districts and that Mr. Achs is correct that this perception is a threat to the viability of Saskatoon's downtown.

I own commercial property in Saskatoon and have some knowledge of anti-social behavior through my personal experience and my professional research. I was a practising lawyer and a researcher interested in violent and anti-social behavior.

I write to you with the view of making Saskatoon's citizens feel more secure. In furtherance of that goal, I would like to warn against further marginalizing the people who many business people perceive as threatening. I will use the common but unfortunate pejorative term for such people - "street people"¹.

I have come to the conclusion that there are two underlying causes for the tensions between "street people" and the people who make up our dominant culture. Firstly, people who feel that they do not belong, who feel that they are not valued, are more likely form sub-cultures in which they do feel wanted. People in such sub-cultures may resent members of the dominate culture. Secondly, scarcity has a tendency of bringing out the worst in people and "street people" tend to live a hand-to-mouth existence.

I encourage the members of the City Council and the Business Improvement Districts to work with "street people", as good neighbors should, with the view helping each other develop mutual respect and workable win/win solutions. I caution against using aversive measures that attempt to drive people away. Such measures are not effective and are counter-productive.

¹ A Google search was of no help in my attempt to find a suitable alternative.

The provincial government also needs to be involved in developing solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need for a robust health care system as an essential requirement for personal security and a healthy economy. A robust health care system ought to include a robust infrastructure for the mental health and the social services that “street people” often lack.

Also, the methods used when policing are, of course, essential when attempting to make business districts secure. A number of police officers have told me that 70% of their work involves some form a social work. If that is the case, social work ought to be included in a peacekeeper’s official title, training, and job-description. There needs to be a consensus regarding the social service aspect of a peacekeeper’s duties.

Once again, how members of any community treat one another is vital for creating a harmonious, secure environment.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James T.D. Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping tail.

James T.D. Scott