



June 22, 2020

Your Worship and City Councillors,

As part of the Interagency Response to COVID19 access to technology, most specifically Wi-Fi, has been identified as a critical need among residents in our community.

We are writing to draw your attention to a project in the list for potential funding through the MEEP. This project has a relatively small budget, but huge potential impact and we hope it won't be overlooked..

The Public Wi-Fi Pilot (project 2.17) is a project to pilot a basic public Wi-Fi network to improve access to information for residents. We understand that the vision for this work was created between the City and community through the Smart Cities Challenge ConnectYXE project. We're writing to you to share what we've learned through our response to the COVID-19 pandemic about just how important making progress on this work is.

Having engaged with over 65 community organizations who serve thousands of residents, we heard over and over that providing services during COVID-19 was complicated and sometimes made impossible due to connectivity challenges. These services included engaging with clients about their mental health, providing housing support to prevent homelessness, coordinating food hamper delivery, communicating information about testing, testing results, needs for isolation and other essential health supports, access to income assistance and supports for learning. As you know, the need to limit in-person contact continues to make virtual connection to Saskatoon residents especially critical.

The project in front of you would establish a mechanism to enable residents to have basic access to communications city-wide, supporting access to services, information from the City, a voice in engagements, and for many, consistency in basic safety planning, health services and access to emergency services when needed.

Thank you for considering this timely opportunity to fund the public Wi-Fi pilot. This is an opportunity to join other Cities as a leader in addressing the deep connectivity divide that is stalling community progress. COVID-19 has shed a spotlight on this inequity in our community and we are excited to support this initiative of the City to address it.

Sincerely,

Carol Cooley	Saskatoon Public Library
Ali Abukar	Saskatoon Open Door Society
Sheryl Harrow-Yurach	READ Saskatoon
Stephanie Shyluk	Newcomer Information Centre
Sandra Kary	Saskatoon Friendship Inn
Laurie O'Connor	Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre
Len Usiskin	Quint Development Corporation
Toby Esterby	Camponi Housing Corporation
Colleen Christopherson-Cote	Interagency Response to COVID-19