

June 19, 2020

Board of Police Commissioners
C/O City Clerk's Office
City of Saskatoon
222 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK
S7K 0J5

Dear Board of Police Commissioners:

Re: Crime & Safety in Saskatoon City Centre

This letter aims to inform and focus on crime and safety challenges affecting Saskatoon City Centre, as well as to present the importance of further efforts to effectively address these issues.

Increasingly over the past few months, and consistently over the years, concerning developments have shone a spotlight on the question of safety in Downtown Saskatoon and the broader City Centre area. We are proud of the vibrant, dynamic, and diverse district which has evolved over the past number of years and want to ensure we are welcoming to all people, while accepting a growing city has new challenges.

Efforts have been made for many years around building a safe Downtown and Riversdale. While the issues of mental health, addictions, and homelessness are complex, focused and immediate resources are needed to address the safety in these key commercial districts. As business owners are experiencing the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic, Saskatoon City Centre's safety concerns amplify the many challenges these businesses are already facing.

One recent effort put forward by this group was to bring this issue to the attention of Saskatoon City Council. Requested was for a portion of the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program (MEEP) funding be allocated to protective services in the city's core. Some of the initiatives we put forward include:

1. Developing a comprehensive Downtown policing strategy complete with tactics and actions to deal with the realities of policing a Downtown district, and to place community safety as the top priority. This Downtown policing strategy can be modeled after the Centerline Downtown Safety initiative started by the Winnipeg Police Service in 2016, which includes some of the following goals and measures:
 - Improve public perception by focusing resources on public nuisance behavior that is detrimental to the enjoyment of public spaces;
 - Police resources assigned ownership of a geographical area within Downtown.

- Support problem-oriented policing by tackling the cause of the problem, yet ensuring that enforcing existing laws is top of mind when dealing with issues that presently exist and often repeatedly occur;
 - Incorporate performance metrics that include perceived safety in the Downtown and Riversdale areas.
2. Developing a communications plan that will urge Downtown businesses and all citizens to report incidents that require Police attention. The Police need to know where incidents are occurring so they can intervene, act, and analyze trends.
 3. Implementing a pilot project with the Provincial Ministries of Social Services and Health that examines new ways of dealing with mental health and addiction issues that are prevalent to address root causes and focus on treatment and recovery.
 4. Finally, the importance of foot and bike patrols in the City Centre can not be overstated. Not only can police officers enforce laws and play a key role working with service providers to find innovative ways to deal with the issues that present themselves daily.

With a greater understanding of the crime and safety challenges in Saskatoon City Centre, we believe these proposed recommendations will further efforts and resources to ensure the benefit to all citizens.

We look forward to the continued collaboration with the provincial and municipal governments, and concerned organizations, on this highly important matter.

Sincerely,



Silvia Martini
CEO
Greater Saskatoon
Chamber of Commerce




Brent Penner
Executive Director
Downtown Saskatoon
Business Improvement District



Randy Pshebylo
Executive Director
Riversdale Business
Improvement District



DeeAnn Mercier
Executive Director
Broadway Business
Improvement District



Sheldon Wasylenko
Board Chair
Sutherland Business
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Dan Matthews
Executive Director
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Alex Fallon
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Keith Moen
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