

February 1, 2021

City of Saskatoon  
222 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North  
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 0J5

Mayor and Council

Pamela Goulden-Mcleod, Director, Emergency Planning, City of Saskatoon  
Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services Division, City of Saskatoon  
Chief Morgan Hackl, Chief, Saskatoon Fire Department

Dear City of Saskatoon Partners,

I am writing today with a heavy heart to share that the tremendous work being put in by many agencies, partners, and individuals to keep people safe in our community on cold days and nights has fallen short and is in need of increased capacity. Reports have confirmed that cold temperatures have played a role in claiming the lives of two Saskatoon residents in 2021 alone. It is this sort of tragedy that the Cold Weather Strategy is intended to prevent, has prevented, and will continue to prevent many times over.

However, COVID-19 has further complicated the provision of frontline social and crisis services. The need to maintain physical distance has put a tremendous burden on current warm up locations. While community agencies are better coordinated than ever, in part through support by the Interagency Response to COVID-19, and funding from Reaching Home has been utilized to create new warm up locations which have been opened where none were previously, there remains a critical need for more readily available warm up locations. The need is particularly great during the bitter cold Saskatoon nights. We are in the process of quantifying the demand but know that more cold nights are ahead of us this winter, and we need to explore all available solutions.

The City of Saskatoon, and its various agencies and departments are critical partners in the Cold Weather Strategy, providing coordinative support through EMO and the use of the Notify Now system, providing safe transportation and refuge from the cold through the Safe Bus Program, and regular supports from agencies like the Saskatoon Police Service.

Today, we are asking that you consider an expanded partnership by exploring the potential of triggered emergency use of a designated civic facility for overnight sheltering. We understand that such a solution is far from simple, and that many partners would be required to operate any new facility, even if only for a couple of nights at a time. We also understand that any emergency use of facilities would have an impact on regular civic operations and programs. We do not make this request lightly, and believe that with all partners at the table, we will reach the solutions needed to prevent unnecessary future tragedies.

Thank you for your commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all Saskatoon residents in these extra challenging times. We look forward to discussing solutions and opportunities with you.

Sincerely,  
Lyn Brown  
Executive Director, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership