

May 5, 2021

City of Saskatoon
Attn: Governance and Priorities Committee
222 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon SK S7K 0J5

Dear City Council,

RE: Meewasin Update Report and Capital Campaign

Saskatoon wouldn't be the place we know and love without Meewasin. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and for the opportunity to introduce our vision for revitalizing the Meewasin Valley to provide active transportation opportunities and an improved quality of life for all citizens.

The extensive Meewasin Trail system directly contributes to Saskatoon's quality of life, social benefits, reduced air emissions, and the health of Saskatoon residents by providing free public access. The Trail stretches from Wanuskewin Heritage Park to Chief Whitecap Park with many loops and sections in between on the east and west sides of the river. The number of visits is expected to nearly double to 2.8 million visits annually in 30 years. During the pandemic utilization of the busiest sections of trail have doubled.

Meewasin conducted a public opinion survey in 2021 with Inshightrix:

- 89% of city residents recognize the Meewasin Valley as Saskatoon's
- 89% agree Meewasin is a good investment of tax dollars.

Meewasin contributes direct economic benefits to Saskatchewan through tourism, construction, education and research. In 2017, SREDA estimated that the economic value of river valley ecosystem and Meewasin services is \$182.65 million per year. These services include climate and gas regulation, water provision, waste treatment, erosion control, recreation services, biodiversity habitat, and other services. The valley creates new tourism opportunities locally and when it is safe to do so we will be ready nationally and internationally, including walking and bus tours, Indigenous and Eco-Tourism opportunities. The valley also contributes to climate change strategy as Meewasin is the largest urban conservation zone in the country.

The recent announcement of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program provided for a \$4M investment in Meewasin, which will help fund much needed improvements to the River Heights, Kinsmen Park East, and Southwest trail sections. However, the Downtown trail section, the busiest trail section, still requires significant funding to reach our goal of doubling the trail width, improving safety and accessibility for all users, and adding much needed lighting and furnishings. The overall estimated capital costs for all the trail work is in the magnitude of \$13.8 million, so there is more funding still required.

The Meewasin Trail received over 1.87 million visits in 2020 and 94% of



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Saskatoon residents agree that Meewasin improves their quality of life. The Meewasin Trail plays an important role in fulfilling the City of Saskatoon's Active Transportation Plan by providing a safe and accessible area for citizens to walk, run or bike. With over 90km of trail, many areas of the city are accessible with the trail. This funding will support implementation of the recommendations in the Meewasin Trail Study, as outlined as an action item in the City of Saskatoon Active Transportation Plan.

Meewasin has letters of support for our infrastructure project, from the following governments, community groups and organizations: FSIN (Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations), STC (Saskatoon Tribal Council), Whitecap Dakota First Nations, English River First Nation, Thunderchil First Nation, Metis-Nation Saskatchewan & WRIIA, Wansukewin, Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan and Tourism Saskatoon, RHCA (River Heights Community Association), Prairie Lily, and the Sask Hotel Association.

The trail upgrades and expansions benefit not only the City of Saskatoon (as the ultimate owner of the assets) and Meewasin, but also the entire community. Given this, Meewasin is requesting an investment from the City of Saskatoon, of \$1,250,000 over five years to support trail enhancements in four primary areas that include: Meewasin Park in River Heights neighbourhood; Kinsmen Park near Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan and Downtown; and adjacent to Circle Drive south near the Gordie Howe Bridge.

Funding Schedule Requested:

2022: \$500,000
2023: \$187,500
2024: \$187,500
2025: \$187,500
2026: \$187,500

Further to this, Meewasin will direct the existing \$250,000 received annually, from the City for trail upgrades, to the above projects over the next five years. This would then represent a total contribution from the City of Saskatoon of \$2.5million for trail upgrades and expansions, which is approximately 18% of the total costs of the upgrades.

Together, we can continue to support mental and physical health and well-being of Saskatoon residents and visitors, sustain and enhance this environment for the benefit of the community and preserve vital prairie habitat and cultural resources for future generations.

Yours in stewarding the Meewasin Valley,



Andrea Lafond
Chief Executive Officer, Meewasin

