

August 23, 2021

Saskatoon City Hall
222 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK
S7K 0J5

Re: 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget Options

Dear Mayor Clark and Saskatoon City Council,

Thank you for your ongoing deliberation as you work to finalize the City's 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget. A multi-year budget and planning process is complex and challenging as you weigh future opportunities against the current and pressing needs of Saskatoon's residents and business community. We also appreciate your efforts to make the process transparent and consultative. Like you, we believe the perspectives of Saskatoon's businesses and business owners are critical to the process and outcome.

As you explore budget options for 2022-2023 – many of which involve new and/or discretionary spending – consider that a substantial increase to commercial property tax rates will undermine Saskatoon's economic recovery. It would slow Saskatoon's rate of economic growth, weaken the ability of current businesses to reopen, rehire and reinvest in their operations, make Saskatoon less competitive within our region, and ultimately less attractive to any new or expanding businesses looking to set up operations.

It would most adversely affect the independent and small businesses already here – like those in our Riversdale, Sutherland, Broadway, Mayfair and Central Business Districts – that are essential to safety, vibrancy and quality of life in these neighbourhoods and vital to our economy overall.

Critically, for those businesses already operating on the periphery of the city, a significant rate increase could push them to neighbouring municipalities where taxation levels are lower and advantageous.

We need to be competitive among Western Canadian cities, and within our region, to ensure Saskatoon attracts good jobs, more residents and career opportunities for our kids. Now, more than ever, competition among cities for new and expanding businesses will be fierce. We need to do what it takes to compete and win.

As you review the 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget Options prepared by City Administration, we urge you to (1) consider the impact of any commercial rate increase on businesses and their ability to rehire and reopen at this critical time, and (2) find savings, defer spending, freeze non-essential hires and make trade-offs between priorities to ensure commercial property tax rates are affordable for our current businesses and attractive to those looking to start or grow roots here.

We recognize that the City is not immune to the economic challenges of COVID. In the same way, it cannot escape from having to make the same hard choices that businesses and households have had to make over the last 18 months. As budget deliberations get underway, we believe that Council can show leadership by following their example.



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Saskatoon's economic recovery will be a business-led recovery. They will create the jobs, products and activity to lead Saskatoon's comeback if we have the right business climate to support it.

Know that they stand ready to work with you to address today's challenges and ignite a new era of economic renewal and prosperity for our community. As a Chamber, we are a powerful network of businesses, organizations and community-minded leaders who want the best for their city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Aebig', written in a cursive style.

Jason Aebig
CEO