

August 23, 2021

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

Re: Property Tax Penalty Rate Adjustment

Dear City Council,

The COVID-19 pandemic has required a strong response from all levels of government to limit the spread of the virus and mitigate its impacts on our economy. As Saskatoon's voice for business, we continue to engage decision-makers at local and provincial levels to explore options and policy ideas aimed at helping Saskatoon businesses recover, grow and thrive once again.

While businesses have demonstrated incredible resilience and creativity to adapt, full recovery for many remains a challenge as they work to regain lost ground due to COVID-19. In virtually every sector of our economy, businesses were challenged by public health measures that restricted the free flow of goods, employees and customers through their doors. Some businesses were more severely restricted than all others and their climb back to "normal" remains difficult and steep and as they grapple with fixed costs like property taxes and utilities.

These businesses require accommodation and support as they re-open and rehire. It is why we continue to share ideas and opportunities with you, urging you to act on relief measures that will help these businesses find their footing and accelerate Saskatoon's recovery. These opportunities have included extending property tax and utility deferrals and targeted relief for Saskatoon's most heavily effected sectors, like our tourism, hotel and hospitality sectors. Notably, competing municipalities like the City of Calgary have acted aggressively on these fronts. All of these measures have been proposed to kick-start renewal here at home, recognizing that Saskatoon's recovery effort will be private sector led.

A property tax penalty rate adjustment is yet another policy tool we urge you to leverage to create a post-COVID economic climate that supports prosperity, recovery and growth. The effects of the pandemic and the pressures imposed by the reassessment cycle require it – as do the many fledgling business owners who believe in paying their fair share but need the means and flexibility to do it.

When it comes to COVID, Saskatoon's businesses were all in the same storm but not in the same boat. The pandemic affected sectors and businesses differently. No one policy tool will work for all. And, we should not be afraid to implement specific and targeted measures for those businesses most severely affected under the guise of fairness and equity.

For the good of our economy, and the speed of our recovery, it remains in our collective best interest to ensure that Saskatoon's businesses have the opportunity to rebound and get growing again. Financial penalties will do nothing to incentivize or support this growth. Instead, it will erode what little capital they have to reinvest in the trade, jobs and other opportunities we desperately need them to produce at this time.



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We strongly urge City Council to consider the unprecedented costs now facing property owners due to COVID and the reassessment year and provide relief by way of extensions for property tax payment with adjustments applied to non-payment of their 2021 property taxes.

As always, we stand ready to work with you to ignite a new era of economic renewal and prosperity for our community. 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