





November 22, 2023

His Worship, Mayor Charlie Clark  
and Members of City Council  
Saskatoon City Hall  
222 3rd Avenue North  
Saskatoon SK S7K 0J5

Via email city.clerks@saskatoon.ca

Dear Mayor Clark and Council Members:

**Re: 2024-25 City of Saskatoon Budget**

I am writing to you today to express my concerns with the proposed City Budget, specifically the proposed increase of more than 7% to property taxes for the 2024 year.

I operate a small business in Saskatoon, and by small business I mean that my wife and I own and operate our business, with a local contingent of employees. We employ adults and youth, support our local community, participate in local charities/events, and contribute to our local economy. Like most small business we lease property in the city to operate our business.

In the last several years we have been subject to lockdowns and restrictions which, at its peak, reduced our revenue by more than 70%. Having hit our specific industry especially hard, we were forced to lay off employees, and take personal reductions in our salaries. Over the last 3 years, we were forced to take out extreme and onerous loans, due to no fault of our own, simply to continue operating during mandated lockdowns, restrictions, and the resultant economic hardships. As I'm sure you're already aware, many of these loans are coming due and we, like many small businesses in this city and across this country, are struggling to fully repay them. Right now many of us are trying to manage repaying a \$40-60,000 CEBA loan with its immediate deadline looming. At the same time most of our regular operating expenses are also increasing. Not only our building expenses, but especially our vehicle expenses which we use to provide an After School Program for youth in the city. We are servants of this city, but we are also affected by the larger provincial and federal climate.

Saskatoon is already a very expensive city to run a business. Comparative to our population versus many other regions in Canada, our commercial real estate is very costly, and property taxes on that real estate have become so over the last many years, although they are essential to operate a business. This is a fact I have learned in networking with colleagues across Canada from Ontario to BC and everywhere in between. The regular increases to property taxes over the last many years, which largely have each been beyond the costs of inflation, have been very difficult to manage. The currently proposed 7.14% for next year will pile on yet another costly expense to our already strained business. After 13 years of serving Saskatoon, I worry for our own ability to continue operating, and I know that my concerns are shared by other small business owners in Saskatoon; some of which question whether they will have to downsize, move, or fold altogether as Saskatoon continues to be a more and more expensive city in which to make a living. On a larger scale these sorts of regular and extreme increases to business costs contribute to local inflation at a time when we, as citizens, are already facing extreme inflationary costs at other levels of government.

Respectfully, I would like to urge city council to focus on curbing spending as a measure of fiscal responsibility rather than continuing to leverage the extremely tenuous resource of property tax revenue increases. I love this city, and I understand the desire to improve, create, and innovate. However, perhaps now is not the time to continue spending, as we cannot withstand the continued draw on our limited resources, especially at a time where we're still recovering from the last crisis.

With Respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kris Kembel".

Kris Kembel  
Owner/Head Instructor  
Momentum Martial Arts

