

Janzen, Heather

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Request to Speak - Meghan Mickleson - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update - CK 6003-1
Attachments: Swale Watchers - May 29 2024 Letter.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 10:54 AM
To: City Council <City.Council@saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Meghan Mickleson - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update - CK 6003-1

--- Replies to this email will go to swalewatchers@gmail.com ---

Submitted on Monday, May 27, 2024 - 10:53

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, May 27, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Meghan

Last Name: Mickelson

Phone Number : [REDACTED]

Email: swalewatchers@gmail.com

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] 2nd St E

Ward: Ward 6

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Swale Watchers

What do you wish to do ?: Request to Speak

If speaking will you be attending in person or remotely: Remotely

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Regular Business Meeting of City Council

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 10.1.1

Comments:

Letter attached for Council to be attached to the agenda and requesting to speak.

Attachments:

- [Swale Watchers - May 29 2024 Letter.pdf](#)169.03 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No



May 27, 2024

Dear City Councillors,

The recent letter from the Ministry of Highway does nothing to allay the public's concern about the proposed Saskatoon Freeway and its impact on the Northeast and Small Swales. Swale Watchers continue to be dismayed by the province's lack of commitment to protecting these environmentally sensitive areas, as evidenced by this rote response to the Mayor. The Ministry's letter provides no concrete commitments to specific environmental protections or mitigations, no guarantee of an Environmental Assessment, and no meaningful assurance that the protection of these irreplaceable natural areas will be a priority during the construction or operation of the Freeway.

The Ministry's commitment to follow the Environmental Impact Assessment Process is of little value since the power to authorize or deny an EIA lies with the provincial government. It is worth noting that both the North Commuter Parkway (now McOrmond Drive) and the Regina Bypass were exempted from this scrutiny.¹

Page 3 of the letter from the Ministry highlights the "outcomes" of the Functional Planning Study that ostensibly address damage to valued natural areas. Of the seven items listed, only five are relevant to concerns raised by Council about impacts on the Northeast and Small Swales. The changed alignment between Highways 11 and 16 appears to be on the southern outskirts of the city, and the avoidance of a known grouse lek follows provincial guidelines and should surely pass without comment.

Of the five relevant items, three address mitigative measures—wildlife fencing, dark-sky lighting and wildlife underpasses—that are constructive, though in no way commensurate with the damage the Freeway would cause. **The Ministry's letter refers to "a desire" for these features but offers no commitment that they will actually materialize.** It is worth noting that the Banff-style wildlife overpasses envisaged in the Planning Study already appear to have faded from the Ministry's plans.²

¹[http://saskbuilds.ca/projects/ReginaBypass/Project%20Agreement/The%20Regina%20Bypass%20Project%20-%20Schedule%201%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Ministry%20Permits%20Licences%20and%20Approvals%20\(Execution%20Version\).pdf](http://saskbuilds.ca/projects/ReginaBypass/Project%20Agreement/The%20Regina%20Bypass%20Project%20-%20Schedule%201%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Ministry%20Permits%20Licences%20and%20Approvals%20(Execution%20Version).pdf)

² P. 88/1218 and following "5.2 Wildlife Crossings"
https://swalewatchers.org/20230703_659183_SFFPS_RPT_Functional_Ph2_Final_Draft_V00_Appendices_Reduced%20Dec.%207%20DWNLD.pdf

The final items on the Ministry's list concern the footprint of the Freeway itself. Although moving the Central Avenue interchange out of the Small Swale was a necessary shift, constructing it adjacent to both Swales—right in between them, in fact—scarcely begins to resolve the disruption and damage. And while the tweak to the alignment in the Northeast Swale may look flashy, the change was made through discussions around boardroom tables and in online forums without the benefit of detailed analysis.³

There is no evidence that this slight shift in alignment would be of any benefit to the health of the Swales or to the people and other creatures that rely on these special places. Instead, all the evidence points to the devastating consequences of forcing a massive Freeway through these sensitive and irreplaceable assets.

Since the province has failed to demonstrate a serious intention to protect the Swales, Council has no option except to express its dissatisfaction directly by voting No. Otherwise, Council demonstrates that it is weak or that it was acting in bad faith in making the request to the province.

When this issue came to Council in March, hundreds of your constituents wrote letters calling for the protection of these special places, and Swale Watchers presented a position paper, endorsed by more than a dozen community organizations, urging you to reject the Ministry of Highways flawed proposal.⁴ In public engagement exercises conducted by the Ministry itself, participants made it clear they were not satisfied with any of the limited alignment options put forward by the Ministry of Highways.⁵ By refusing to take this opposition seriously—and by studiously ignoring the City's environmental policies and objectives—the provincial government has created the controversy and uncertainty that now surround this decision.

The Saskatoon Freeway is the province's project, not the City's. If the province has picked a bad route, that is where the problem lies. Any "uncertainty" relating to use of the land (and any political or administrative inconvenience resulting from the City taking a strong and principled stance on the Swales) will have been caused by the Province. It is up to the Province to propose an alternative route that respects the City's values and meets the community's environmental, social and transportation needs. Please vote No to the Functional Planning Study for Phase 2 of the Saskatoon Freeway.

Respectfully,
Meghan Mickelson & Candace Savage
Co-Chairs, Swale Watchers
swalewatchers.org

³ P. 182/231

https://swalewatchers.org/20230703_659183_SFFPS_RPT_Functional_Ph2_Final_Draft_V00%20Dec.%207%20DWNLD.pdf

⁴ <https://swalewatchers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Swale-Watchers-March-03-2024.pdf>

⁵ Pp.187-204/1219 and pp. 282-288/1219

https://swalewatchers.org/20230703_659183_SFFPS_RPT_Functional_Ph2_Final_Draft_V00_Appendices_Reduced%20Dec.%207%20DWNLD.pdf