

Walter, Penny

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council
Attachments: Letter of Support from Board Chair 08-05-2024.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, August 5, 2024 9:54 AM
To: City Council <City.Council@saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Monday, August 5, 2024 - 09:47

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, August 05, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Daryl

Last Name: Bitz

Email: [REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Spadina Crescent East

Ward: Ward 1

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Children's Discovery Museum on the Saskatchewan Inc. (Nutrien Wonderhub)

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Standing Policy Committee on Finance, Wednesday, August 7, 2024

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 6.2.5 Nutrien Wonderhub Lease Renewal

Comments:

Please see the attached letter.

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

August 5, 2024

City Clerk's Office
222 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0J5

To: Members of the Standing Policy Committee on Finance

As Chair of the Board of Directors of Nutrien Wonderhub, I am writing to express the Board's support for the recommendations submitted by Administration regarding Nutrien Wonderhub's lease renewal. I am also offering our full support for the request that has been submitted to Administration by Leah Brodie, CEO of the museum, as part of the base rent negotiation process. This request is pivotal in ensuring the continued success and sustainability of Wonderhub, Saskatchewan's only children's museum, which has become an integral part of our community.

Since being selected as the tenant for the historic Mendel Building in 2014, Wonderhub has transformed into a vibrant space where children and families come together to create, learn, and play. The capital campaign successfully raised \$15 million, with significant contributions from various partners, including a generous \$2 million contribution from the City of Saskatoon. Funds from the capital campaign, including a \$3 million grant from Canada Cultural Spaces Fund (Department of Canadian Heritage), helped to facilitate critical upgrades to the Mendel Building, ensuring it remains a valuable city asset.

Upon opening in June 2019, Wonderhub received an overwhelmingly positive response, attracting over 135,000 visits in its first nine months. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen visitation numbers steadily climb, with nearly 120,000 visits in 2022-23. The museum's unique exhibits and engaging educational program play an important role in the critical early developmental years of children in our community.

Despite many successes, Wonderhub has faced operating deficits for three of the past four fiscal years. We are forecasting a deficit of approximately \$280,000 for 2023-24 and anticipate a similar figure for 2024-25. These challenges are compounded by the lack of available provincial and federal operating grants. As part of negotiations for base rent for the second five-year term of our Lease and Operating Agreement, the museum's CEO has respectfully requested a reduction of base rent to be 50% of the required Civic Building Comprehensive Maintenance (CBCM) Reserve contribution. This adjustment would set the base rent at \$82,450, significantly alleviating financial pressure and contributing to our long-term sustainability. Should a reduction to base rent not be feasible, other avenues of support, such as an increased operating grant, would also be help to alleviate financial pressure.

The partnership between the City of Saskatoon and Nutrien Wonderhub has yielded immense benefits for our community's children, families, and schools. Your visionary support has been instrumental in establishing a world-class children's museum. I greatly appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to continuing this vital partnership.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Daryl Bitz

Daryl Bitz, CPA, CMA, ICD.D
Chair, Nutrien Wonderhub Board of Directors