

Request for Funding – 2026 National Major Music Awards Event– Council Policy No. C03-007, Special Events

ISSUE

Discover Saskatoon, along with Saskatoon Destination Marketing Hotels, is building a bid to host a national major music awards event in 2026. Discover Saskatoon is asking the City of Saskatoon to consider supporting a bid to host this event. The support being requested is a one-time investment of \$500,000, subject to a successful bid, to contribute to the requirements of event.

RECOMMENDATION

That funding in the amount of \$500,000, to Discover Saskatoon, be approved, under Council Policy C03-007, Special Events, to support the hosting of a National Major Music Awards Event, in 2026, pending:

1. The successful award of the bid to host the event; and
2. The submission of a detailed event application package.

BACKGROUND

This annual national major music awards event will welcome artists and visitors from across the country and internationally. Due to confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements at this stage, specific details of the event cannot be reported publicly. Additionally, the event is televised nationally and will garner significant external media attention for Saskatoon. Administration has reviewed the recent history of this event in other cities as the event is presented annually with the host city varying from year to year. The 2023 event attracted over 17,000 industry professionals and fans and had an \$11.0M economic impact to the region. The 2024 event saw that economic impact grow to in excess of \$15M. The annual event supports 86 full time equivalent jobs, contributes \$1.2M in tax revenue to all levels of government and generates significant national exposure to the host community. It is anticipated the 2026 event will produce similar economic impact to Saskatoon and region.

The weeklong event will drive substantial economic activity and utilize key venues across the city for multiple days, including TCU Place, Sasktel Centre and Prairieland Park. Discover Saskatoon is requesting a one-time investment of \$500,000 from the City of Saskatoon (City) to contribute to the event requirements and to successfully acquire this event for Saskatoon. It is anticipated that this national event will have significant economic impact and media exposure due to the volume of spectators expected to attend and the national television exposure it will garner. A letter from Discover Saskatoon detailing the request is included (see Appendix 1). Discover Saskatoon has also reached out to the Province to request \$1.0M in funding support as well.

Should Discover Saskatoon be successful in its bid for the 2026 event, a final event application will be submitted. Final details on the participation numbers, economic impact and event budget specific to Saskatoon will be made available in the final event package, to be submitted as a condition of the funding approval. Saskatoon has a proven track record in hosting major cultural, arts and sporting events.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

According to [Council Policy C03-007, Special Events](#), the 2026 event would be eligible for funding and satisfies the requirements outlined in the policy. Administration is confident the 2026 event would be consistent with the objectives of the policy, as follows:

- Attract visitors to Saskatoon, and in so doing will generate significant economic benefit for the community;
- Enhance the profile and visibility of the City of Saskatoon, nationally and internationally;
- Enhance community spirit and pride; and
- Develop an awareness, understanding and appreciation of art, culture and recreation.

This funding request falls within the Special Event category as an arts event. Using previous similar event application packages as a reference point, this event is anticipated to meet the eligibility requirements of this type of event and meet scoring criteria to warrant funding beyond the current grant maximum amount of \$200,000.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If approved, \$500,000 will be allocated from the Reserve for Major Special Events (Reserve) and will be paid pending successful award of the bid to host the event and submission of a detailed event application package meeting all submission requirements. In the case of the Saskatoon bid not being successful, no funds from Reserve will be distributed. The current uncommitted balance in the reserve is \$1,255,100; therefore, the reserve has sufficient funds to support this request. The reserve receives funding annually through the operating budget. The 2025 operating budget includes funding of \$300,000 to the Reserve.

Annual funding from the operating budget, allocation of funding from the Reserve for Major Special Events and reserve balance over the last five years, excluding 2020-2021 during COVID, is included in the following table:

Year	Funding	Applications	Reserve Balance
2018	\$357,000	\$ 610,000	\$1,310,100
2019	\$500,000	\$1,045,000	\$ 764,700
2022	\$500,000	\$ 292,500	\$1,398,100
2023	\$431,300	\$ 418,000	\$1,411,400
2024	\$231,300	\$ 474,200	\$1,168,500

Administration reviews the Reserve, which includes historical applications, current operating budget funding levels and the Reserve balance, and if required will present

options to adjust funding levels through the Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget process.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental, privacy or CPTED implications or considerations. A communications plan is not required at this time. Discover Saskatoon will take the lead on all future communications and information for the event and bid to host the event.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to City Council approval, Administration will inform Discover Saskatoon of City Council's decision. Discover Saskatoon will submit a special event application package for review by the Adjudication Committee, upon award of this bid.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice, pursuant to Section 3 of the City of Saskatoon Council Policy C01-021 (Public Notice Policy), is not required.

APPENDICES

1. Discover Saskatoon Letter: 2026 National Major Music Awards Event

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Andrew Roberts, Director of Recreation and Community Development
Approved by: Celene Anger, General Manager, Community Services