

Walter, Penny

Subject: FW: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council
Attachments: city council letter 4 Effie.docx

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Sunday, June 8, 2025 6:09 PM
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 Sunday, June 8, 2025 - 18:08

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: Sunday, June 08, 2025

To: Her Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Dr Ephthymia (Effie)

Last Name: Kutsogiannis

Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name: Koutsoyiannis

Phone Number : [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] 20th Street Weest

Ward: Ward 2

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Pleasant Hill Dental

What do you wish to do ?: Request to Speak

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

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Wednesday June 11, 2025 City of Saskatoon IdzGovernance and Priorities Committee

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: City of Saskatoon Response to Homelessness

Comments:

Please read letter submitted below

Thank you

Dr. Effie Kutsogiannis

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

Dear Mayor Block and City Councilors of Saskatoon,

Last year, in May I did speak to city council and committee members regarding the degradation of the Riversdale area, specifically to the 1500 block of 20th Street West. To date initiatives and actions, have not occurred at any government level, taking positive steps forward to improve this urgent and detrimental situation. In fact the situation has worsened. All talk but NO action is the modus operandi. I have voiced similar concerns at a meet the mayoral candidate meeting in October 2024 and at a Town Hall meeting , in the RBID , in March 2025.

The lack of understanding of politicians on what business owners and residents are having to experience and endure in this “hot spot” area of the city and the lack of motivation and action, speak profoundly to how the political system and governments are letting down the citizens of Saskatoon, citizens of Canada and the taxpayers.

The Riversdale area is of historic and cultural significance in Saskatoon. I have owned and operated my business on the 1500 block of 20th Street West for over 33 years. It has been in the past 9 years that detrimental changes to this area of Saskatoon has significantly occurred. With Prairie Harm Reduction being allowed to open in the 1500 block of 20th Street West, to operate a safe consumption site and operation of the needle exchange program at STC, this area of Saskatoon has seen a significant increase of individuals using illicit substances, in all forms, visibly on the streets. Furthermore , the significant increase in the related behaviour that occurs with use of such substances. This behaviour does relate to increase in damage of property, increase in the criminal element in the area , increase in disrespect towards businesses and residences , increase for respect of oneself and increase in homelessness.

Homelessness is multifactorial, yet the narrative that goes out by all level of government and various organizations fails to state that complexity and this word, “homelessness”, is used as a blanket statement. All levels of government need to be more transparent about homelessness and be more accountable as to how each level has contributed to this homelessness problem, the opioid crisis and related mental health crisis. The blanket statement of homelessness is no longer acceptable. Over 20 years ago, I became involved with the United Way and at that time, many meetings occurred discussing homelessness and how to move forward to minimize the risk and improve the situation. Fast forward to 2025 and the problem has actually worsened. I ask you , WHY??? Realistically, there is no housing shortage. A walk through many neighbourhoods in Saskatoon finds numerous boarded up houses. The factors that have contributed to the more visible homelessness situation evident in Saskatoon is a result of 1. The Saskatchewan provincial government changing a policy that had payment of rent directly going to the landlord. The rent money is now paid directly to the individual. This was all done in the name of dignity. How much of the money reaches the landlord now? A number of this people of this demographic are not paying the rent and the landlord is left to serving them with a notice to vacate. These people, now , are homeless and many times, living on the streets. How much dignity does

that person have now? Living in the streets, changing clothing in public and defecating on others property. 2. Which landlord wants to rent to someone with substance use behaviors? These individuals families will not allow them to live with them, until the overcome their substance use behaviors. 3. Individuals in this demographic have a higher rate of damaging rental property. Which landlord wants to take the risk and rent to such and individual. 4. Individuals whose choice is theirs to live on the streets. 5. High interest rates, set a couple of years ago, led many if not most landlords to increase rents to offset this increase on mortgages they have on rental properties they own. 6. Decriminalizing the possession and use of illicit substances has contributed to an increase public use of such substances, an increase in the criminal element developing stronger substances with no repercussion at the end of the day. Further, the police and judicial system “hands are tied”. This limits repercussions for disrespectful actions. Lawlessness has developed and no repercussions are sustained by individuals for their disrespectful behaviour. We are headed towards anarchy.

I have heard many times from many individuals in various sectors of business make the statement that homelessness and poverty have become a business.

I am asking the Mayor and the City Councilors of Saskatoon, why a safe consumption site and needle exchange were allowed to open and operate within 250 meters of an elementary school and a seniors complex. Both involve the vulnerable sector of our population. Furthermore, there is a 3 block school zone, from the 1200 – 1500 block of 20th Street. The longest one I have encountered anywhere in Saskatoon, This means that the City of Saskatoon acknowledges a school and also children in this area. My understanding is that there is a bylaw against such. WHY???? How logical is that. Has all logic and common sense left those individuals ,who the citizens of Saskatoon, have entrusted to run our city? Furthermore, I, a business owner, two doors down , was not even involved in any conversations about such occurring and the repercussions on me and my business and businesses in the area. Recently, in the Forest Grove area of the city, a shelter was to be opened that was within that 250 meter designation. In the end it was not. Is the Riversdale area so much more inferior than other areas of the city , that the city wants to make a ghetto of this area? We, businesses and residents for that matter, pay the same taxes as all other businesses and citizens in other parts of the city. PHR has not produced positive outcomes to produce a positive change in people’s lives and in the area. Needles and substance use paraphernalia are found on sidewalks, in alleys, in yards , at front door of businesses constantly this area. The rate of HIV in Saskatoon is one of the top three nationally, drug overdoses in Saskatoon, these past few months hit record highs and received national attention. For a couple of months, Emergency Response Teams were in the area, in particular, in front of PHR every day and sometimes twice a day. In March 2025, I had to leave a patient of mine, while I was in the middle of treatment with them, so as to assist someone who had overdosed at my doorway. How much sense does that make??? PHR sites that they do make a positive impact; however, they keep changing their metrics/goalposts to give the perception of that. Anyone who reads research knows that manipulation can occur of metrics/goalposts to make outcomes appear as they are in their

favour. Such research has to be analyzed very carefully, by the reader. PHR does not have the human resources nor the financial resources to function properly and attain its mission. Its model is poor. Provincial governments in Ontario and British Columbia have closed safe/controlled consumption sites within 250 meters of schools and also those that do not have the capacity to perform their mission. Zero tolerance is now being developed to substance use. The pendulum has swung towards addiction treatment and assisting these individuals to become contributing citizens to our country and our economy. British Columbia is in the process of recriminalizing consumption and possession of illicit substances. They have seen the mistakes to their decisions and are now in correction mode. An involuntary treatment site is becoming operational in British Columbia to help those individuals in dire straits.

What about the “EVERY CHILD MATTER”!!!! If every child does matter how and why is a safe injection site and needle exchange program allowed to operate within 250 meters of an elementary and in an area with a lot of young families with children? This also involves children in a demographic which are already challenged in ways most children in the city are not. Children riding their bikes or walking with their families or going to the store to buy an ice cream are constantly exposed to individuals using substances in various ways or to a person that has overdosed and people are taking measures to revive them. Is that not traumatic? These children are being normalized to situations which may lead down a poor path, making poor choices in their own journey in life. The solution to this “homelessness” and substance use problem is not an easy solution and not a quick solution; however, it does involve the children and youth. If they continue being exposed to such behaviours, the solution will not occur. Let us stop them from witnessing illicit substance use and normalizing it to them in our lives. Let us let them experience life as a child in a playful manner and grow up in a more positive manner.

PHR is not functioning in the proper capacity and has been detrimental to this area of the city. It has significantly contributed to the deterioration of this, once beautiful, area of the city. Its immediate relocation, away from the 1500 block of 20th Street West, is required, so as to improve the dynamics in the Pleasant Hill and Riversdale area and restore the dignity of the area, restore the safety and security and restore the confidence of the general public of Saskatoon of the area. Constant encampments present, the use of substances in the area on public sidewalks and streets is affecting safety and security. Why is the constant encampment behind PHR being allowed? Its overflow ends up in the back alley and on private property of business in the area, whether it be the medical building on Ave P, my property or on St. Mary's church property. Any other part of the city, one complaint from a neighbour and fire inspection is out and issuing letters to the property owners for the removal of the encampment or hefty fines are given. Oh, the hypocrisy within the city is astounding. I will state again, the presence of PHR and its disrespectful behaviour towards businesses in the area is in essence developing a ghetto like atmosphere in the area. Safety and security is of outmost concern. Long standing business are leaving the area due to safety concerns. Last May, postal service was stopped for 3 weeks to this area due to safety concerns. When does enough is enough come into play? When do the municipal,

provincial and federal governments start taking actions and penalize those perpetuating the problem.

Also, the number of organizations continue to grow. In 2014 a study showed that the Riversdale /Pleasant Hill area had more organizations per capita than any other area of the city. It was also recommended that no more organizations come into the area. Why are these organizations placed in other areas of the city for better accessibility to those individuals that need to utilize them. Is the city not aware that a lot of these people and families have moved away from this area into other , safer parts of the city, Yet they still need to travel into this area to access them. These individuals, thus incur transportation costs or the taxpayer incurs that transportation cost for these individuals to access the programming needed. We talk about “ A HAND UP” vs “ A HAND OUT”. Presently, the approach of hands up is not being taken. There is more a an apparent hands out, in all aspects of the lives of individuals in this demographic. The narrative that comes from government and organizations allow individuals of this demographic to feel a sense of entitlement. They do not value what is being given to them and in fact abuse it. This sense of entitlement, no matter what demographic you are in, leads to disrespect and feeling that everything around you is yours for the taking. Lawlessness begins to develop and that is what in essence is occurring now. The organizations themselves are disrespectful towards their neighbours. A free for all attitude has overtaken this area. The business community of this area is paying for this attitude, dearly. We must assist these individuals to become better people and to allow them to understand that all good things are achievable, To dream in a positive way and achieve that dream. We can no longer allow and afford these individuals to continue in their downward spiral into oblivion. Our communities are suffering due to negative approach about life.

We constantly hear about mental illness. Has the psyche of the business owners every been spoken about? Along with managing a business, they now have to deal with increased safety and security issues, disrespectful remarks and behaviours of people in front of their businesses, possible decline in their business revenues, increased expenses to deal with things developing with the surrounding situation, along with other items.

Mayor Block, I challenge you to come and sit in front of the businesses at the 1500 block 20th Street West and 300 block Avenue C South , for an 8 hour day, and experience what we experience day in and day. Also, take a short walk to the alley way and to further experience our daily reality.

The time for talk has passed!!!! THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW!!!

Sincerely,

Dr. E. Kutsogiannis DMD