

The Honorable Scott Moe
Premier of Saskatchewan
Members of the Saskatchewan Cabinet
Government of Saskatchewan
Room, 346, 2405 Legislative Drive
Regina Sk, S4S 0B3
February 14, 2025

Dear Premier Scott Moe and Members of the Cabinet,

Re: Key Issues for Downtown Saskatoon Business Community

Thank you on behalf of 1,200 businesses that operate in Downtown Saskatoon district, the Board of Directors and myself for the invite to meet to discuss and bring to light the following challenges to our district. We appreciate your commitment to addressing these important issues that we are faced with.

Strategic Priority of the Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District: Ensuring Safe and Welcoming Streets through Government Action on Homelessness in Our City and District.

As highlighted in the 2024 count, which identified 1,499 unhoused individuals, to which the number has increased as we progress further into the new year the issue of homeless in our city and in particular our district has reached a critical point. Notably, both the Mustard Seed Group Housing and the delayed Mustard Seed Group Shelter are situated in the Downtown Saskatoon district.

Several stakeholders, including Saskatoon Housing Agencies, First Nations Organizations, SUMA, Rental Housing Saskatchewan, and various landlords, have raised concerns regarding changes to the Saskatchewan Income Support Program. Specifically, the shift in payment structure, wherein direct payments were redirected from landlords to recipients, has been cited as a contributing factor to the rising homelessness rates.

Furthermore, the introduction of third-party trusteeship services undermines the original intent of the government's policy, which was to promote the independence of recipients. By removing direct payment to landlords, recipients face significant challenges in maintaining housing stability, thus exacerbating the homelessness crisis.

In light of these issues, the Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District has recommended the reinstatement of direct payments to landlords, a change that could help mitigate some of the challenges currently faced by those at risk of homelessness.

In addition, the Provincial Approach to Homelessness Strategy (PATH), which allocated \$40.2 million for 2023-2024 to address homelessness through three main pillars—Supportive Housing, Emergency Shelter, and Community Safety and Outreach—was a much-needed response to this growing issue. The city of Saskatoon has witnessed a troubling increase in homelessness, with numbers tripling from 2023 to 2024. Therefore, we strongly encourage the continuation and expansion of similar initiatives, ensuring that adequate resources and attention are dedicated to this crisis.

Downtown Saskatoon managed the Community Support Program (recently moved to Saskatoon Fire), for well over 13 years, which was a program that supported the main three City Centre BIDS (Downtown Saskatoon, Riversdale, Broadway), with community support officers that helped improve safety in our districts and gave much needed wrap around support to our homelessness and those individuals that were of high needs. Additionally, since the recent transfer of responsibility to Saskatoon Fire, and in light of the increasing needs for enhanced community safety within our district, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety (CPPS) to explore and implement effective community safety and outreach solutions.

Given the rising concerns around public safety and the strain placed on our community services due to the increased demand, we believe it is crucial for all relevant stakeholders to come together to address these challenges. A comprehensive, collaborative approach will not only improve safety but also provide much-needed support to individuals and families facing homelessness and other socio-economic struggles.

We believe that a coordinated effort, building on the foundation established by PATH, is essential for addressing homelessness in Saskatoon and ensuring the well-being of its residents. We respectfully request that the government consider these critical points in its ongoing efforts to tackle homelessness.

Strategic Priority of the Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District: Strengthening Communities through Government Support for a Business-Friendly and Ready Province.

There is an urgent need for the Government of Saskatchewan to further enhance the province's business-friendly and business-ready environment. While progress has been made through initiatives like the *Securing the Next Decade of Growth Strategy*, there is still significant potential to improve our competitive position and attract investment.

To strengthen Saskatchewan's business climate, we encourage the government to prioritize several key areas. First, maintaining competitive taxes is essential for reducing financial pressures on businesses and enabling reinvestment in growth. Additionally, addressing regulatory barriers and reducing red tape will simplify operations, lower costs, and fuel investment both locally and from outside the province.

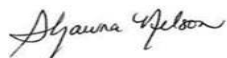
Equally important is creating a stable, safe, and supportive environment for businesses, employees, and customers. This is crucial for long-term prosperity, particularly considering the recent tariffs on steel, which present challenges to local businesses and our economy. By supporting a business-friendly environment, Saskatchewan and in turn our local businesses can continue to grow and thrive.

Lastly, the Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District strongly supports the Downtown Event & Entertainment District (DEED) project, recognizing its immense potential to shape both the future of Saskatoon and the broader future of Saskatchewan. The DEED project is poised to be a catalyst for economic growth, drawing both local and international attention. To fully realize this potential, it is critical that the Government of Saskatchewan acknowledges the importance of its support, both in terms of financial resources and in elevating our province's reputation—both locally and globally

We strongly believe that by supporting the Business Friendly/Business Ready approach, the Government of Saskatchewan will be making a lasting investment in the economic health of not just Saskatoon, but the entire province. A commitment to fostering a competitive and innovative environment will benefit us all, driving growth, creating jobs, and positioning Saskatchewan as a leader in the global economy.

We respectfully request that you consider the importance of these two strategic priorities of the Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District in your decisions regarding financial and policy support. By working together, we can create a brighter future for Saskatchewan's communities and lay a strong foundation for sustainable economic growth for generations to come.

Sincerely



Shawna Nelson - Executive Director, Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District

