



November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Mayor Cynthia Block and Members of City Council  
City of Saskatoon  
222 Third Avenue North  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0J5

**Re: Temporary 24-Hour Women's Warm-Up Centre – Former Bus Depot, 50 – 23rd Street East**

Dear Mayor Block and City Councillors,

On behalf of the approximately 1,200 businesses, property owners, residents, and institutions that make up the Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District, the Board of Directors would like to express both support for the City's efforts to protect vulnerable residents during winter months and serious concern regarding the process, location, and oversight of the newly announced temporary 24-hour women's warm-up centre to be located at the old Bus Depot on 23rd Street East.

While we recognize the urgent need for safe spaces during extreme cold, the absence of consultation and the lack of clarity around operations and security planning have again placed the downtown community in a reactive position. Our district - home to more than 1,200 businesses and thousands of workers and visitors daily - deserves a seat at the table before significant service facilities are introduced in our neighbourhood.

Thank you for your email and for informing us of this upcoming change in our district. We appreciate the notification from your team. While we acknowledge that these types of facilities are necessary, the density of this type of use in the downtown district is a concern for many. As we did in September 2024 with the establishment of the Pacific Avenue shelter, we wish to reiterate our concerns with this type of occupancy and provide actionable recommendations to help mitigate potential impacts on local businesses and the broader community.

We know these facilities accommodate individuals with diverse needs and do not always function well, and that the spillover of problems into the community can be intense. Challenges relating to broken windows, petty theft, graffiti, biowaste, open drug use, abandoned paraphernalia, and encampments have been plentiful in the past. The former operation of the shelter by the Saskatoon Tribal Council along 1st Avenue did not have solid foundational pieces in place and proved disruptive to nearby residents and businesses. By contrast, the Mustard Seed model on Pacific Avenue appears to have a more structured plan in place and, from our perspective, has caused minimal disruption - but it is not a 24-hour "come-and-go" model as this one will be.

We wish to be clear: we are not asking for a pause or stop in this plan. Rather, we urge City Council and Administration to take into consideration all the requests and concerns noted below and ensure the facility operates responsibly, safely, and transparently within the downtown environment.

## **Specific Requests and Recommendations**

### **1. Enhanced Safety & Security**

Develop and implement comprehensive safety protocols, including the presence of exterior security personnel at all times. This should include regular security patrols, clear conduct policies for guests, and responsive measures to address any security concerns 24/7. A strict code of conduct must be enforced to promote respectful behaviour and integration within the community. Coordination with the Saskatoon Police Service, Alternative Response Officers and Fire Support Officers should be explicit and ongoing.

### **2. Effective Cleanliness & Waste Management**

Establish a rigorous plan for maintaining cleanliness both inside and around the facility. This includes frequent waste collection, accessible washroom facilities for guests and overflow visitors, and immediate action to address sanitation issues.

### **3. Loitering & Overflow Management**

Limit the facility to a manageable number of guests to ensure operations remain safe and controlled, reducing strain on local resources. Create a clear strategy for managing loitering and overflow, with designated gathering areas for guests to prevent unauthorized encampments or disruptive congregations.

### **4. Graffiti & Vandalism Control**

Implement a proactive program for the prompt removal of graffiti and repair of vandalism. Conduct regular inspections of the surrounding area to ensure that these issues do not diminish the appearance and appeal of our downtown.

### **5. Full Operational and Security Plan**

Prior to launch, provide Downtown Saskatoon BID with a complete operational plan, including staffing levels, intake protocols, hours of operation, security arrangements, and neighbourhood management. Should the operator fail to meet contractual or operational requirements, we ask that the City treat this as a breach of contract and intervene immediately to ensure compliance.

### **6. Formal Consultation and Designated Liaison**

We request an ongoing consultation with the Downtown Saskatoon BID with the appointment of a designated liaison independent of STC to facilitate ongoing communication between the operator, City, and business community.

### **7. Reporting and Feedback Loop**

Establish a reporting structure to share operational statistics, incident summaries, and community feedback, with the BID and local stakeholders to monitor performance and address emerging concerns.

### **8. Support for Local Businesses**

We ask that the City work directly with Downtown Saskatoon to establish support for local

businesses affected by vandalism or property damage, including assistance with repair costs, security upgrades, and expanded street-cleaning and litter-removal programs.

### **Transparency and Operator Accountability**

While we respect and value Indigenous-led service delivery, it is critical that transparency guides this operation. The previous STC-run facility on 1st Avenue struggled with inadequate security and management, resulting in significant disruption. We trust that lessons have been learned and that a robust oversight framework will be implemented this time, including clear reporting channels, defined performance measures, and transparent financial and operational disclosure.

### **Conclusion**

Downtown Saskatoon is the city's heart - its cultural and economic hub. While we support the City's humanitarian goal of providing safe, warm space for women in crisis, we must ensure that these services coexist successfully with a thriving downtown. With the above measures in place, we believe the City can demonstrate that compassion and accountability can, and must, go hand in hand.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. We look forward to working collaboratively to ensure the successful and responsible integration of this temporary 24-hour warm-up centre into the downtown district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawna Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shawna Nelson  
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cc. Downtown Saskatoon Business Improvement District Board of Directors