

January 16, 2026

Her Worship Cynthia Block
Mayor, City of Saskatoon
City Hall 222 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK
S7K 0J5

Re: NSBA Support for Discover Saskatoon

Dear Mayor Block and members of Council,

On behalf of the NSBA - Saskatoon's Business Association, we are writing to provide the business community's perspective on the City Administration report regarding Discover Saskatoon's proposed Fee-for-Service Agreement, scheduled for consideration at the upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee meeting on January 20, 2026.

At its core, Discover Saskatoon is the city's demand-generation engine. This work is active, specialized, and non-duplicative. If capacity is reduced, it does not shift elsewhere within the system, it simply does not happen.

From a business competitiveness perspective, we are concerned that the Administration Report does not fully engage with either the substance of this work or the economic risk the City assumes if it is weakened. The implication that these functions are discretionary or easily transferable understates their role as economic infrastructure.

One of the most immediate risks is reduced marketing execution capacity. Discover Saskatoon has developed a bold destination campaign, *We Saved You a Seat*, designed to convert awareness into visitation, support business events and sport bid conversion, drive travel during shoulder season periods, reinforce Saskatoon as welcoming and competitive, engage the business community city wide, and visibly generate demand that supports air access. While the campaign is ready to launch, insufficient investment in updated creative assets, competitive media placement, and digital and out-of-home visibility means it cannot be deployed in a meaningful way.

Discover Saskatoon's earned media and reputation building work is one of the most cost effective ways Saskatoon competes nationally and internationally. In 2025 to date, this work has generated nearly 200 published stories, reached more than 27 million people, and brought national media and travel trade into Saskatoon through hosted tours involving dozens of local small and medium-sized businesses. This work is no longer funded by hotels and is not performed by any other organization. If investment declines, national visibility drops quickly, stories disappear from major

outlets, local businesses lose high-credibility exposure, and Saskatoon becomes harder to “sell” across all sectors.

The same risk applies to business events and major event attraction. These are long-cycle sales that require years of relationship building, sustained market presence, and bidding expertise. Discover Saskatoon’s current pipeline represents tens of thousands of confirmed and tentative future room nights and more than \$50 million in estimated economic impact. These events do not only benefit hotels; they drive spending at restaurants, retail, attractions, transportation providers, and neighborhood businesses across the city, while filling airplanes and expanding national perception of Saskatoon. If this capacity is weakened, Saskatoon becomes less competitive and loses opportunities to cities that continue to invest in this work.

Market presence and hosting are also critical. Being visible in national and international marketplaces, and hosting planners and operators in Saskatoon, is often the difference between being shortlisted and being overlooked. No City department or venue replaces this role. Despite current capacity pressure, the data already shows the system working. Hotel occupancy and average daily rates are rising, reflecting strong demand, pricing power, and economic momentum. However, this momentum depends on sustained investment.

From NSBA’s perspective, Discover Saskatoon’s work is economic infrastructure, not discretionary promotion. It supports businesses in every district of the city, not just the visitor sector or downtown core. Reduced visibility and fewer events will ultimately lead to fewer customers, fewer hours, and fewer jobs. We respectfully urge City Council to ensure that decisions regarding Discover Saskatoon accurately reflect their role in safeguarding Saskatoon’s long-term economic competitiveness.

Sincerely,



Keith Moen
Executive Director, NSBA