

May 7, 2025

**The Honourable Daryl Harrison
Minister Responsible for the Water Security Agency
Room 334, 2405, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3**

Dear Minister Harrison,

Re: Urgent Need for Water Flow Intervention to Restore Navigability of the South Saskatchewan River

On behalf of the NSBA – Saskatoon's Business Association, I am writing to urge you and the Water Security Agency (WSA) to take immediate action to address a pressing and preventable issue affecting the South Saskatchewan River—an issue that not only threatens local businesses, but also restricts access to a cherished public amenity enjoyed by countless Saskatchewanians.

For several years, the purposeful retention of water in Lake Diefenbaker and the lack of flushing flows downstream have caused extensive buildup of sandbars throughout the riverbed near Saskatoon. This sedimentation has now reached a critical point. The Prairie Lily, an iconic local river cruise vessel that has served residents and tourists alike for over a decade, is unable to begin its 2025 cruising season due to the unnavigable condition of the river. Similar concerns are being echoed by recreational users, local families, paddling enthusiasts, and community organizations that host river-based events each summer.

In July 2024, The Prairie Lily's captain welcomed WSA's CEO and VP of Science and Licensing aboard a personal cruise to illustrate these growing concerns firsthand. Despite this proactive engagement, no mitigation measures have followed. The most recent WSA 10-day forecast maintains flows at a minimal 60 cms—far below what is necessary to address this sedimentation and restore the river's navigability. Based on local hydrological knowledge, a short-term increase to 900 cms for 72 hours, or 400 cms over a sustained period, would dislodge these sandbars and allow the river to function for at least three additional seasons.

This is not a request for excessive or irresponsible water use. Lake Diefenbaker is currently above historic average levels and is anticipated to rise further due to above-average Rocky Mountain snowpack runoff. There is available water. What is lacking is a balancing of interests—between hydroelectricity, irrigation, and public/recreational access to one of Saskatchewan's most significant natural assets.

Minister, the South Saskatchewan River is not just a waterway—it is the heart of summer in Saskatoon. Without timely intervention from the WSA, we risk losing access to this community treasure. I respectfully urge you to direct the WSA to take immediate steps to release an adequate volume of water from Gardiner Dam to flush the river and restore navigability. This action is reasonable, environmentally responsible, and essential to the economic and social vitality of our province.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Keith Moen
Executive Director, NSBA

CC: Hon. Travis Keisig, Minister of Environment