

Take Ten – Talk to Your Mayor

September 2025

The Saskatoon Chamber appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Mayor's survey. Our responses are based on what we have heard from you clearly and consistently: you want a more collaborative and efficient working relationship with the City of Saskatoon—one that prioritizes predictability, competitiveness, and respect for the important role you play in our community and economy.

1. What would you like the Mayor to know about the relationship between the City and businesses in Saskatoon?

The Chamber values the City's willingness to engage with business. However, too often:

- There is no meaningful consultation on initiatives, which provokes unnecessary confrontation or “show trials” at meetings of City Council.
- When feedback is provided on significant projects or initiatives, many are already well-advanced and/or in the final stages of development.
- Engagement activities are scheduled during work/operating hours when business owners or leaders are required in their businesses.
- When policy proposals/options are offered, they are dismissed without stronger consideration or follow-up.

These experiences erode trust and interest in participating in consultations or engagement activities. A stronger partnership model is required—one where engagement is authentic, business perspectives are genuinely considered, and collaboration occurs before final decisions are made.

2. How would you rate the relationship between the City of Saskatoon and businesses in Saskatoon? Scale of 1-10, 1 is very poor, 10 is excellent.

Rating: 5/10

3. Please add in additional comments to explain your ranking of 1-10.

While consultation does occur, businesses are slow to see meaningful action or improved outcomes. Ad hoc tax policy, safety concerns, active transportation planning, and unnecessary delays in permitting remain significant challenges.

The pace of City Administration is often out-of-step with the needs of our city's job creators. Businesses must adapt quickly to market conditions and real-time challenges to deliver for their customers, support the community, and remain competitive. They cannot afford to operate in a regulatory environment where decisions and approvals are delayed or unnecessarily withheld. True partnership is rooted in common goals, mutual understanding and shared commitment to success.

The Chamber has provided a number of tangible policy proposals in recent years to improve Saskatoon's business environment. These proposals have been met with varying levels of interest and acceptance. A stronger partnership model is required—one where engagement is authentic, business perspectives are genuinely considered, and policy options are actively considered in a timely way.

4. How are current safety issues affecting your business?

The Chamber has been a leading voice on safety issues based on first-hand experiences shared by our member businesses in every corner of our city. These are not isolated stories—businesses across Saskatoon consistently report the same challenges, which are having a cumulative and deeply negative impact on our economy and community. Current safety challenges have led to:

- Reduced customer traffic – Many businesses have seen a noticeable decline in foot traffic as customers avoid certain areas due to safety concerns.
- Employee safety concerns – Employers regularly hear from staff who feel unsafe travelling to-and-from work or interacting with customers.
- Property damage and vandalism – First-hand reports of broken windows, graffiti, and damage to storefronts are common, leading to significant costs and disruptions.
- Increased security and operating costs – Businesses are being forced to hire private security or install costly safety measures, creating financial strain.
- Difficulty attracting and retaining staff – Employees, especially in front-line positions, are reluctant to work in areas perceived as unsafe, limiting businesses' ability to recruit.
- Negative perceptions of certain business areas – Entire districts are being stigmatized as unsafe, reducing their ability to attract investment and customers.
- Business relocation considerations – In some cases, businesses have openly questioned whether they can remain in their current location, given the risks and costs associated with ongoing safety concerns.

These experiences underscore how urgent and widespread the issue has become. Safety challenges are no longer an isolated problem for a handful of businesses in select districts—they are reshaping the business climate in Saskatoon.

5. What actions or supports from the City would help address these concerns?

To address these concerns, the Chamber urges the City to:

- Expand visible community policing in business districts
- Partner with the Province on addictions and mental health treatment capacity
- Implement coordinated approaches to homelessness that balance compassion with accountability
- Enforce bylaws consistently to reduce disorder near businesses
- Strengthen partnerships with private security providers
- Provide targeted property tax subsidies for commercial properties adjacent to shelter or related service facilities.
- Implement municipal grants to address security costs and other crime prevention measures, which have been proven to enhance street/neighbourhood safety as well.
- Support a provincially-sponsored tax rebate to ensure small and mid-size businesses can recover expenses related crime prevention and property damage.

6. How can these services be improved in order to help your business?

Our members rely on a wide range of City services to operate and grow their businesses, and have identified several key areas where improvements would better support their success:

- Streamline permit approvals based on degree of public risk, ranging from low-risk activities that pose minimal harm to the environment and public health and safety, to medium-risk activities that may require more extensive review and oversight.
- Set firm timelines or a “shot clock” for some permit applications, allowing applicants to proceed if they have not heard back within a preset time limit.
- Improve communication between City departments
- Ensure tax policy remains competitive among peer jurisdictions
- Shift from “gatekeeper” to “facilitator” mindset in business services

The Chamber appreciates renewed efforts to explore these ideas. By speeding up approvals, and setting robust service standards, Saskatoon’s job-creators will have more time to focus on growth and job creation instead of chasing approvals, juggling timeframes, incurring the hard costs of delays, and navigating bureaucracy.

7. How can the City of Saskatoon help you grow and expand your business in Saskatoon?

The City can help Saskatoon’s job-creators by:

- Instituting competitive and predictable tax policy.
- Invest in infrastructure and initiatives that promote Saskatoon nationally and internationally as a destination for trade, investment and tourism.

- Appointing Business Liaison Officers with direct project authority for all major investments, facilitating accessible and effective consultation with the business community.
- Exploring opportunities to help Saskatoon-based tech companies to refine their IP and grow their businesses by making available City programs, services and infrastructure for small-scale pilot projects, like other western Canadian cities.

8. Additional Comments

Our city can become a leading hub for Prairie economic growth and innovation. To reach Saskatoon's potential, City Hall must prioritize fiscal discipline, public safety, and service efficiency to help our job-creators expand the tax base, drive growth, and support a great quality of life for her residents.