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October 24, 2001

Premier Greg Selinger
Room 204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Mayor Sam Katz
City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg MB R3B 1B9

Dear Honourable Selinger and His Worship Mayor Katz:

Re: Downtown Revitalization: Safety, Supportive Housing and Surface Parking Lots

As you are aware, downtown safety is a priority for the Downtown BIZ and its 1400 members, as well as the general public, who understand that managing downtown crime and safety issues is an important part of downtown economic development, and continued growth.

Much has been accomplished.

- Our innovative Outreach program has been successful in better managing the issue of public intoxication downtown and the arrival of the Winnipeg Police Service Cadet program has been an asset.
- The continued and increased investment in innovative downtown housing programs and the proposed SHED district, are possible because of new policies related to the Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act and City of Winnipeg policies and tools; the expansion of our downtown campuses; the expansion of the Convention Centre; the arrival of the Winnipeg Jets; and much more. These are all critical traffic generators that will bring people to our downtown, populate our sidewalks and lead to a safer environment and a more vibrant downtown.

With all this momentum and investment in our downtown, the timing is ideal to develop a renewed approach to downtown safety.

Some of the critical strategies that our members support, and are engrained in the City's Planning Framework, include:

1. A commitment to significant increased and sustained police and/or cadet foot patrols to complement a refreshed downtown safety strategy. The specific goal is enhanced management of downtown safety concerns pertaining to social issues, real or perceived, and a significant reduction in downtown crime statistics.

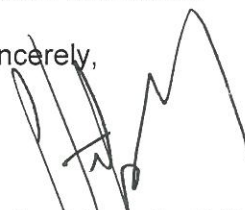
2. The provincial NDP government made a commitment during the recent election that downtown safety is a priority, by adding 50 Officers/Cadets dedicated to the Downtown. The business community wants to see this commitment followed through and urges the City and Province to make this an absolute priority.
3. A commitment to create more supportive housing (Housing First) as a means of helping those less fortunate on our streets who have significant social and mental health issues into a better environment. Extensive research demonstrates that a housing first approach does in fact reduce safety issues, leading to an enhanced image for our downtown and a better quality of life for those less fortunate.
4. A focus on acquiring and changing the use of the single room occupancy hotels in downtown Winnipeg.
5. Both the city and the provincial government have now committed to developing a plan to reduce the number of surface parking lots downtown, which are often perceived as negative blight. Denser, mixed use development that integrates housing, office, and where appropriate, retail development and transportation strategies is critical in re-directing markets downtown and bringing about more vibrancy and with it, changes in perceptions.

We would like to challenge the Province and the City to continue working together, on these and other critical downtown priorities. The BIZ strongly believes that this should be done with the participation of all stakeholders in order to create specific directional approaches and strategies that outline and identify who will lead and support, allocate and leverage resources, and lay out framework that will instill continued public and investor confidence.

While there are many priorities for our downtown, we strongly believe that these are most critical at this stage of our continued revitalization efforts.

We look forward to working with you on these important community building initiatives which we strongly believe will quicken the pace towards our path to an even more vibrant downtown.

Sincerely,



Stefano Grande, B.Sc., M.C.P.
Executive Director

Cc: Minister Gord Mackintosh, Family Services and Consumer Affairs
Chief Keith McCaskill, Winnipeg Police Services
Phil Sheegl, CAO, City of Winnipeg
Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross, Housing and Community Development
Minister Steve Ashton, Infrastructure and Transportation