



City of Saskatoon makes another step towards privately run facilities for Downtown Event Centre

By Vanese M. Ferguson Jan 26, 2023 | 1:15 PM

The Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce says it applauds the City of Saskatoon decision on Wednesday to put out a call for private partners to help run the new arena being proposed as part of the downtown events centre in Saskatoon.

The Chamber says facilities owned by the City but operated by a private partner is a win for the community and a move that is consistent with key trends in facilities management and notes that 41 per cent of arenas currently used by Western Hockey League teams are operated by private partners according to Hunden Strategic Partners in addition to 25 per cent of convention centres.

The Chamber suggests that a move to private management, there is more accountability, ability to meet workforce needs, and a focus on key performance indicators, such as revenue, expense, customer service, and others.

Tammy Sweeney, current CEO of TCU Place had sent a letter to council in regard to the concept of private partners being involved and she pointed out the expertise in operating a convention centre/performing arts centre and an arena are very different. She suggested council consider having a new arena privately managed by a partner but keep the convention centre under the management of a city-controlled board. TCU Place is currently under such management.

City administration will hire a consultant to coordinate a request for proposals from potential private partners which would be flexible enough that there can be a combination of companies with different expertise to bid on part or all of the project.