

TOURISM SASKATOON Candidate Questionnaire: Lenore Swystun

1. What do you see as the best opportunities to grow Saskatoon's tourism industry?

Growth in Saskatoon's tourism industry will come through strong leadership, strengthening regional tourism opportunities, investing in our cultural capital and investing in marketing Saskatoon as a multi-dimensional tourist experience.

Saskatoon, and the region which surrounds it, is world renowned for its agricultural practices, ecological diversity, mining activities and market garden practices. Marketing Saskatoon and the diversity of the landscape and activities within a short distance of our urban fringe will set us apart from other cities in North America.

My belief in our need to strengthen our cultural capital investment led me to co-initiate our application to become the Cultural Capital of Canada. The success of our application has provided our city with a unique opportunity to: coordinate cultural activity; initiate a creative city dialogue and establish an Artist in Residence Program. Continued action toward unique cultural capital investment opportunities will establish Saskatoon as a cultural tourism leader in Canada.

Celebration, preservation, interpretation and conservation of our human, natural and built heritage will continue to grow Saskatoon's tourism industry. Promoting our world renowned river valley system, indigenous cultures and other uniquely Saskatoon characteristics will strengthen and grow tourism.

2. What do you see as your role/council's role in helping the industry take advantage of these opportunities?

To promote Saskatoon to people outside Saskatchewan, continued effort is needed to actively market Saskatoon as a place that stands apart from other cities. As mayor, I will work to support and invest in green technology, skilled trades and creative innovation. I will also work to:

- Develop a dedicated Saskatoon Cultural/Social Branch, which will facilitate investment in our cultural and social capital. This includes creating a comprehensive cultural policy and working to attract and retain families, youth and new immigrants.
- Enhance our cultural and social investment by dedicating a portion of new tax levies (e.g. parking levies on big box developments) to fund cultural, heritage and social innovation and programming.
- Strengthen and work to create new public, private and non-profit partnerships and investment in large and small-scale tourist attractions.
- Foster a strong cultural corridor linking the neighbourhoods of our city by supporting initiatives like the Cultural Crescent (an initiative to co-promote our arts organizations/festivals and businesses).
- Work to ensure that River Landing is a people place by ensuring not only the completion of Persephone Theatre, but the addition of other cultural components such as a Children's Discovery Museum.
- Build our economic base through enhancing our city's creative potential by working in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, other post-secondary institutions and other stakeholders to provide important 'ideas to actions' (e.g. design of green roof tops; creative and beautiful architecture).

- Embrace our cultural diversity by working closely with our aboriginal communities, new immigrant communities and established ethnic communities; I'll work to expand our understanding and appreciation for our peoples through dialogue, celebration and expansion of cultural programming and events (this includes building on Communities in Bloom for which I have served as committee chair to help improve all facets of our neighbourhood fabric).
- Lead the effort to develop a regional retail policy to guide future expansion in retail space and ensure local businesses receive balanced consideration and investment in their needs. A strong local business economy is a critical ingredient for a strong tourism industry.

3. What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing the industry?

The high cost of generating awareness, along with limited support from local and provincial governments has made it difficult for Saskatoon to be competitive with other markets nationally and internationally. While there has been a recent improvement in one-time investment in tourism-related infrastructure, the City of Saskatoon continues to lack an integrated, consultative and comprehensive cultural policy. This has led to ad-hoc decision-making on public investment in the related arts, heritage and cultural sectors.

Local arts and cultural organizations and events are under funded and sometimes under appreciated for their potential as economic and publicity generators. Part of our success resides in our continued investment our homegrown history, heritage, culture and art.

4. What major event would you like to see hosted in Saskatoon and why?

While serving on City Council, I called for the development of a Special Events Policy, which was approved. As a result of this policy, a process and funding mechanism is available to ensure all major events are given fair consideration. As mayor, I will encourage Saskatoon citizens, and Tourism Saskatoon, to continue to pursue a variety of major events. A diverse repertoire of events appeals to a broad range of interests and will continue to strengthen our urban vibrancy.

From a local perspective, I would like to pursue bi-annual events stemming from the Citizen's Centennial Committee of which I am the Chair of the Events Committee. Based on citizen feedback, two particular events that would be a significant draw for people in our community and region are: a floating lantern parade with bridge party linked to Cruise Weekend and Ukraine Day; and, a New Year's Eve/Day events that focus on family fun and entertainment.

5. Anything else you would like to share?

I would like to thank Tourism Saskatoon for their efforts in making Saskatoon a destination for both visitors and residents alike.