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November 18, 2010

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

Dear Mayor Katz:

**Re: Conference attendees' negative image of Downtown Winnipeg**

Please find attached a report prepared by the partners of Rendezvous Canada, and provided to the Downtown BIZ by Economic Development Winnipeg. The survey is of 1,400 international delegates who attended a conference in Winnipeg and includes their overall impression of our city and downtown and of RVC.

Attached, are some comments copied from the report and related to our downtown, which are of concern to the Downtown BIZ and our members. Subsequently, we would like to meet to determine what actions can be undertaken.

No doubt there has been significant re-investment in our downtown over the last several years and there is much progress. There is also a strong commitment from all the stakeholders, and collectively we are indeed doing more to improve our downtown. The desire to quicken change in creating a safer and more vibrant city and downtown, comparable to the best in North America, is a goal we all share.

But clearly, the responses of some of these delegates indicate that we have much work to do in the areas of:

1. Safety;
2. The creation of vibrant and attractive downtown districts; and
3. In addressing the social issues of our city.

The BIZ believes that the first step is to address these safety concerns.

This can only be accomplished with the presence and action of a significant number of initiatives, collectively working in synergy:

1. Increased police foot patrols in our downtown
2. The presence of Cadets
3. The continuation and growth of our BIZ Outreach Program
4. The growth of our Watch Program
5. Increased Transit police.
6. Other

The economic leakage associated with tourists, delegates and convention goers not wanting to return to our city, because of these issues, is significantly more than the cost of providing this essential police service in managing it. The negative impressions also have a long and lasting negative impact on the image and the reputation of our city—at an international level.

Again, we would like to meet as soon as possible to determine what specific and action oriented steps and timelines we can collectively put into place in continuing to address these ongoing concerns.

We look forward to working with you on this issue.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly at 958-4622 or [stefano@downtownwinnipegbiz.com](mailto:stefano@downtownwinnipegbiz.com)

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

CC: Chief Keith McCaskill, Winnipeg Police Services  
Gord Steeves, Chair of Standing Policy Committee, Protection and Community Services  
Justin Swandel, Chair of Standing Policy Committee, Downtown Development  
Jeff Browaty, Chair of Standing Policy Committee, Property and Development  
Ross McGowan, CEO, CentureVenture  
Marnia James, President, Destination Winnipeg  
Kevin Donnelly, Chair, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

*Keep your event at cities that are a draw.*

*Pick a better city!!!*

*Travel Manitoba and Tourism Winnipeg did a great job, but I don't think that downtown Winnipeg showcased Canada in its best light, especially for the new buyers to the show.*

*Choose destinations which allow delegates to go out and explore the host city. Winnipeg was less than inviting as most hotels were instructing people not to go out past certain hours as it may not be safe.*

*I have to say that the evenings that Winnipeg put on were good but Winnipeg as a city really was very uninspiring for people's first time to Canada, I know you need to be fair and it is about budgets etc but just me thoughts.*

*NEVER EVER HOLD IT IN WINNIPEG AGAIN! I apologize for this as I do love the fact that the show travels from coast to coast, however, this event did nothing to promote visitation to Winnipeg or to Canada as a whole. Our clients were told not to walk the streets at night because it is dangerous! Several were herded into cabs after dinner – for their safety's sake! This never happens in our largest cities! This is not the kind of impression we want our clients to have of Canada - one of the safest countries in the world.*

*Winnipeg was not the best City to showcase. We couldn't leave our hotel without encountering "City Watch" - a security service employed by the City to keep vagrancy under control. It was awful to see these pairs of men everywhere - in stores, in shopping malls moving people around. It made you feel we were in some hotbed of crime. And we were told not to walk around at night. Winnipeg would have put off a lot of buyers - Canada is known for safety and beauty - we didn't see that. Please consider this next time you choose a City - it represents all of us in the mind of the buyer. And yes, I have loved some of the smaller places equally with the Quebec city's and Vancouver etc.*

*Winnipeg was not a good location for this event. This event should be held in more of a "tourist" location. This city also did not feel safe at all, not a good city.*

*Winnipeg was a very poor choice. Stories of colleagues witnessing muggings, very aggressive panhandlers, and buyers clearly unhappy with the City in general.*