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SWYSTUN RESPONDS TO NEWS ABOUT NO MONEY IN

SASKATOON CAN'T AFFORD THREE MORE YEARS OF "DEFICIT DON" ATCHISON

Friday, October 2, 2009

The recent revelation that the city is staring down the barrel of its fourth straight year of deficits under Mayor Don Atchison should serve as a wake up to residents that the time for new leadership to get Saskatoon back on track is now.

In an effort to stave off the pending shortfall the city manager in August had to implement a spending and hiring freeze. We're just hearing about it now.

If that weren't bad enough the city's rainy day fund, the revenue stabilization reserve, which city council uses to help balance the budget as required by provincial law, has all but dried up.

In 2004, shortly after Don Atchison became mayor, the reserve was \$4.17-million. By the end of 2008 it had shrunk to \$399,000. On October 2, 2009, the *StarPhoenix* reported that it was empty. We can't afford three more years of the same.

In recent years, Don Atchison has adopted a philosophy that it is acceptable to borrow heavily into our future. This philosophy has lead us on a path of deficit budgets and depleting monetary reserves - jeopardizing our ability to meet neighbourhood needs while developing important projects in the future.

Saskatoon deserves a mayor with a vision and a plan to lead Saskatoon. That person is Lenore Swystun.

"As your Mayor, I would work very hard within the first sixty days of office with your Council and City Administration, to get a full and clear picture of our entire financial situation," Swystun said. "We all need to know what is going on financially in our City so we can appropriately prepare for how to deal with it."

The city's current policy states that there are no annual provisions to replenish the city's rainy day fund. With Lenore as mayor, city council and administration will work to find solutions – not blame the weather.

City council will also support administration as it reviews the city's water pricing and snow and ice budget to make sure both are operating more effectively.

"As mayor I will ensure your Council and Administration works with you to create a financial plan that gets us back in the 'green' and is viable over the long term," Swystun said.