

MEDIA RELEASE - **Embargoed to September 12, 11:00 am**

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Sent to media embargoed on September 11, 2016 at 5:00 pm

More Than a Letter Needed to Protect MVA.

Ask anyone what they're most proud of about Saskatoon, and the answer will inevitably be "the river valley!" Our stunning valley, administered by the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA), is a treasure that unites us. The MVA is close to the heart of Kelley Moore, mayoral candidate for the October 26 municipal election. She sat as a board member and her family have been long-time supporters.

When the province suggested in the last provincial budget (after it eliminated funding for 5 urban parks in Saskatchewan) that it will be reviewing its funding to the MVA and Wascana Centre, the MVA was taken by surprise.

Meewasin Valley Authority is a *conservation agency*, not an urban park, dedicated to conserving the cultural and natural resources of the South Saskatchewan River Valley. The MVA was created in 1979 under The Meewasin Valley Authority Act of the Province of Saskatchewan. Its statutory funders and managers are the City of Saskatoon, the Government of Saskatchewan, and the University of Saskatchewan.

"The MVA has already seen significant erosion of its core funding since its inception in 1979", says Moore. "Initial funding was approximately \$1.8 M (about \$600,000 in today's dollars). Statutory funding has increased to \$2.6 M since that time with the provincial government holding steady at it \$740,000 contribution (1979 level) – requiring the MVA to allocate significant resources to fundraising."

Today, statutory funding has decreased to just over half of the budget. "Any cut by the partners would jeopardize the survival – let alone further development – of the MVA", warns Moore. "As our city grows, so does our responsibility to maintain and enhance our river valley. I served on the MVA Board as a government representative for several years, and given that our population has almost doubled since 1979, advocating for anything less than an increase in funding is unthinkable."

MVA responsibilities have grown, from trail extensions, management of the North East Swale, to the many educational and interpretive functions now expected by a growing number of users in a much larger city. "In fact, MVA has been forced to deplete its funding reserves to maintain core operations, and close its Interpretive Centre this summer", says Moore.

Despite a history of static funding, the MVA may face further cuts from the U of S, another one of the three funding partners. "What's the next cut, Beaver Creek?" asks Moore. "What will it take for this mayor, and Council, to finally wake up and get to work?"

The mayor's response to the proposed loss of funding? A shrug. "Sometimes there just isn't any more in the cookie jar", he said at the time.



City Council’s response? A motion to write a letter to the provincial minister responsible. A letter? When the crown jewel of the river valley is under attack?

In the context of the importance of the MVA, these responses are sorely lacking. In fact, the mayor has been called “the apologist-in-chief” for the provincial and federal governments when the news is bad.

“Cheerleading is fine when times are good”, says Moore. “But we need an advocate. A mayor’s duty is to stand up for the citizens of her city. We should have stepped up to the plate long before this. As mayor, I will call for an immediate meeting with the Premier and the Minister to negotiate additional funding. I will fight for the MVA.”

Decision making at the Meewasin Board of Directors has also become politicized. Out of 12 board positions, 5 are held by politicians and 1 by the President of the U of S. “As mayor, I will ask for a review of appointments to the MVA Board, with a view to replacing politicians with subject matter experts from each of the core funding partners”, says Moore. “It’s time to expect more from your mayor.”

On Monday, September 12, at 11:00 am Kelley Moore will be making a direct statement based on this release at the Moore4Mayor Campaign Office located at 207 Third Avenue North (across from City Hall). **We welcome members of the Media to attend.**

For more information contact:

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