

W6317 Competition from city in recreational areas irks business group

By Art Robinson
SP City Hall Bureau Chief

The Partnership has added its voice to businesses and organizations concerned about city involvement in recreation services which are provided by the private sector.

As well, the downtown business group has joined with the Saskatoon Special Olympics in expressing concern about a coming sporting event to be held in the parking lot at SaskPlace.

A number of groups already have told city council that, by converting space at the Lawson Civic Centre to accommodate fitness programming, it is hurting private and non-profit organizations already in that field.

Partnership executive-director Kent Smith-Windsor said Tuesday councils in the past have invested money in recreational projects with limited appeal. As a result, city management has to either provide more subsidies or compete with the private sector.

"The Partnership wishes to raise this concern as a point of consideration when new or expanded leisure facilities are discussed," said Smith-Windsor.

He said the organization has similar concerns about a three-on-three (three players on each team) basketball tournament to be held outside SaskPlace. He said the Special Olympics organization has an established event almost identical to that

The Partnership has concerns about a three- on-three basketball tournament

proposed.

"Hence, the city is forced into a difficult competition for sponsors and participants."

Todd Benson, president of the Special Olympics, also wrote council saying his organization put on such an event downtown last year, supported by a number of groups such as The Partnership.

He said his group's event will be hurt by the one planned at SaskPlace because there are only so many teams to go around.

However, SaskPlace board president Robert Stromberg said the arena is not host of the event but only entered into an agreement for use of the parking lot.

He said SaskPlace has no financial interest, other than revenues it might earn on the sale of concessions and share of local sponsorship earnings.

He said the event could run in any one of a number of parking lots in the city.

He added the SaskPlace administration has been asked to obtain an opinion about the liabilities the facility might incur if it cancelled its contract.

Council decided to pass along Smith-Windsor's concerns to SaskPlace.

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