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July 7, 2025

Mayor Scott Gillingham and Executive Policy Committee
City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 139

Re: Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn

Dear Mayor Gillingham and Members of Executive Policy Committee (EPC):

I wish I could be attending in person at the July 8, 2025, EPC meeting but unfortunately, I have prior commitments that prevent me from being there. I am submitting a written delegation to both thank City Council and provide an update on the Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn project.

SCO is extremely grateful for the City of Winnipeg's commitment to making this vision of economic reconciliation, downtown revitalization, housing delivery, social reform, and employment opportunities a reality. The report before you today recommends City of Winnipeg funding of 100% towards streetscaping and 25% towards the areaways.

Project Background

When complete, this transformed, vacant heritage building will feature:

- 373 housing units (an increase of 84 units from the original plan for 289)
- 200 of the units will provide affordable housing units for First Nations citizens
- Office and retail spaces to foster First Nations entrepreneurship and SCO offices

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The building will welcome families, veterans and youth and bring many workers to the downtown, all which will significantly contribute to downtown revitalization, economic development, and safety.

As you know, Winnipeg has the largest urban Indigenous population in Canada and this project is not only providing much needed market and affordable housing in the downtown, but also creating social and economic opportunity for our people.

SCO has created Miikahnah Connect, an Indigenous led employment agency that is connecting workers to the project. https://www.miikahnahconnect.ca/landing.php

This service provides a platform for Indigenous peoples to secure long term employment, enrich their skill sets and create capacity within our First Nation communities. It is creating a pathway to a greater quality of life.

Indigenous employment is a requirement for the general construction contractor as well as all sub-contractors. SCO is sourcing Indigenous enterprise where feasible and have adopted a "Canada fist" procurement strategy.

To date, the project workforce has been approximately 70% Indigenous.

Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn, a national symbol of economic reconciliation, is bringing 373 housing units to the downtown core. It is addressing the housing crisis and will significantly transform the downtown.

Financial Position

In March 2025, SCO announced that the project cost had risen to $310 million. This is due to a 29% increase in the number of housing units (from 289 to 373), advanced design, inflation, tariff pressures, and heritage requirements.

As a result, SCO has been working with all levels of government and other organizations to help fund this increased cost.

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SCO had assumed that the City of Winnipeg would fund 100% of the streetscaping and 50% of the areaways, but the report before you today recommends that funding of $1.9 million or 25% for areaways, be referred to the 2026 Multi-Year Budget update.

On behalf of the 32 First Nations that SCO represents, SCO respectfully requests that the City of Winnipeg provide funding of $3.8 million or 50% of the estimated cost of the areaways for the project.

In Pursuit of Balance,

Ogema-Makwa
Grand Chief Jerry Daniels
Southern Chiefs' Organization