



Testimony on SB 2347
Presented to the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee
Prepared by Dan Hanson, City Engineer, City of West Fargo
Thursday, March 9, 2023

1 Chairman Schauer and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs
2 Committee:

3 I would like to provide a recommendation for amendment on Senate Bill 2347 to
4 achieve the original intention of the bill while maintaining safety throughout North
5 Dakota.

6 As the principal engineer for the City of West Fargo my primary responsibility, as is
7 the primary responsibility of engineers for all political subdivision, is to design and maintain
8 a safe city. The original intent of the bill is to cut costs of projects using pre-engineering
9 buildings, and I have no opposition to the language included on page 1, line 13-14 that
10 addresses that concern. Pre-engineered buildings are built to certain specifications and
11 reviewed by professional engineers at some point in the process to deem them safe for
12 use. However, the change of the threshold requiring plans and specification of all public
13 improvement projects to \$500,000 in line 11 has unintended consequences that could
14 make cities across North Dakota less safe.

15 Procuring plans, drawings, and specifications from a professional architect or
16 engineer is a vital part of an infrastructure project. Professional Engineers follow the
17 Principles and Practice of Engineering set at a national level. They use standards and
18 modelling that consider health and safety and helps to understand a project's life span
19 and usage. They also plan for connections to current and future infrastructure. This is
20 expertise that someone outside of the engineering or architecture field would not have.

21 If SB 2347 was passed with a \$500,000 threshold, there would be street, sewer and
22 water projects that could be completed without input from an engineer. Some projects
23 in West Fargo that would fall under this threshold include street overlays, sidewalk repairs
24 and the installation and repair of water mains, sanitary sewer systems, sanitary sewer lifts



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1 and traffic signals. These are pieces of infrastructure that are utilized every day by
2 residents and directly impact their health and safety. Passage of this bill as written would
3 not require professional engineers or architects to be a part of the planning or design of
4 those projects.

5 In West Fargo, we will continue to procure plans and specifications for every
6 project that impacts resident safety even if it is not required by law, and we hope that
7 other political subdivisions are compelled by their professional standards to do the same.
8 However, we all face pressure to cut project costs and if this bill is passed it is likely there
9 are political subdivisions that would turn to general contractors or attempt to complete
10 infrastructure project designs in-house in order to cut the cost of procuring professional
11 services.

12 I recommend keeping the current language setting the threshold at \$200,000 for
13 procuring plans, drawing, and specifications from an architect or engineer for
14 construction of a public improvement. I have no opposition to adding a threshold for pre-
15 engineered units, which would meet the needs of the agencies requesting this change
16 in legislation, while ensuring the safety of all North Dakotans.