

## **Friends of the Library Public Meeting March 13, 2012**

Friends of the Regina Public Library held a meeting on Tuesday March 13, 7:00 to 9:00 PM at the Regina Public Library Film Theatre.

The purpose of the meeting was to share what is publicly known about the plans for Central Branch and the potential impact of these plans. Regina Public Library Board members and staff were invited, but Board members were unable to attend.

There were over 70 people in attendance from various interests and affiliations.

Presentations were made by members of the Friends of the RPL (Joanne Havelock, Jeannie Mah and Brenda Niskala) on the history of the Central Branch, the heritage and architectural features of both the Central Branch and the Masonic Temple, municipal heritage protection and the current issues concerning Central Branch planning processes. Cheryl Stadnichuk made a presentation on public-private partnerships. There was reference to the work and book (*Public Service, Private Profits*) of John Loxley, an economics professor at the University of Manitoba.

Following the information sessions, there was time to have questions and comments come from the audience.

Participants stressed that before moving ahead on plans for upgrading the library it is extremely important for the public to have a better understanding of the basic needs of the library, what functions need to be in the building, and what the library of the future would need to be in this age of technology.

General knowledge was shared about the current condition of the building and possibilities for additions or upgrades to the existing building.

The following page lists the items that were of most concern to participants.

## **Representative Comments: March 13 Public Meeting**

*Topics for discussion at the public meeting were heritage values, knowledge of the Central Branch planning process, and P3 funding. Public discussion followed.*

### **Lack of public consultation**

The Library Board has not called a public meeting since August 2009 to get input or explain its plans for Central Branch. This has led to many concerns and unanswered questions. People want to be informed.

A participant noted that the Library Board has gone for a big idea, a big development, instead of focusing on what is needed. Another questioned why Harvard is involved.

The Library Board has never identified what the space requirements are to warrant an expansion. The public is entitled to hear the evidence.

### **Heritage values unique in Saskatchewan**

Preserving a district 'en bloc' gives an idea of the area's architectural heritage, such as the area around Victoria Park, includes Bauhaus (modernist) design as a reaction to heavy Classic design. Central Branch is a good example of modernist design. The Central Library Branch and the Masonic Temple are architecturally unique in our province.

### **Concern about P3s and public property going into private hands**

Meeting participants spoke out against the P3 funding model as not being in the interest of citizens. Two reasons given were that P3s cost more, and that "our library" must remain public. Public money should not be used for private profits.

Do we need a new library? Do we need to go into debt? Do we need something big?

### **Board public relations questioned**

Some people commented it was unfortunate that Library Board members were not present to answer questions. A previous Library Board member commented that this amount of Board secrecy did not occur in the past.

### **Funding and P3 experience in other cities**

Questions about P3 libraries were discussed. Vancouver's Kensington Branch at the corner of Knight and King Edward was built as a P3. The complex included condominiums, a Save-On Foods grocery store, and the Kensington Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. This branch had to be closed three times, once for six months, due to multiple floods caused by shabby materials and workmanship.

Contrast that funding model to Winnipeg's downtown library renewal where the community raised a significant amount of money. There are alternate funding options to the P3 model. Someone suggested more research is needed on the Winnipeg model.

**Supplementary Information:** Vancouver Public Library was built with City funding with private support. The Board provided advertising opportunities in the Library's first year. For example, Concord Pacific donated very generously to have their name on Library cards issued.