



Friends of the Regina Public Library

frpl@sasktel.net www.friendsofrpl.ca (306)535-9570

2042 Garnet St., Regina, SK S4T 2Z6

December 3, 2019

Mayor Fougere and Council
City of Regina
Regina, SK, S4P 3C8

Dear Mayor and Council:

Re: Regina Public Library 2020 Budget at Regina City Council Budget Meeting, December 9, 2019

The following are comments from the Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) for presentation to City Council on the proposed 2020 Regina Public Library (RPL) Budget, that asks for City Council's approval of a 2.3% increase in the Library mill rate.

The Regina Public Library has continued this year to add new services and programming and has more initiatives planned for the future, as outlined in its 2020 budget submission.

This year's budget mentions increased emphasis on Reconciliation and the library is well-positioned to build on its past efforts connecting with Indigenous people and providing resources and programmes that help inform all of the public.

A number of the library's new facilities and programs relate to digital literacy, and skills and connections promoting creative literacy, including the digital media studio and musical instrument lending.

There are also significant resources proposed to be spent on e-books, DVDs and sound recordings, providing many literary options for library patrons. With regard to the materials that are in the RPL's collection, the emphasis on popular literature addresses some reading needs, but the library should also be a resource for classical and contemporary literature as well as the materials and staff resources for reference and research, including historical research. The Prairie History Room is well known for its resources both in Saskatchewan and internationally and we hope that the value of this important service continues to be recognized.

Another aspect of the RPL that should be recognized is Outreach Services, working with people who cannot read printed material or cannot visit the library because of illness, age or disability.

This service provides materials in a variety of formats, equipment for reading and listening, and home reader services. An important contribution to making literacy accessible to all.

Since 2017 the RPL has instituted changes to Film Theatre operations. There is an increased emphasis on free films in series associated with particular themes often in collaboration with community groups. The weekend showings of repertory films continue, providing a much-needed alternative for Regina film audiences.

The renowned Dunlop Art Gallery continues with many interesting and exciting art shows and programs.

With all the changes that have occurred across the RPL, it is important for the library to ensure the transition process is well-managed and there is a reduced emphasis on using temporary staffing to adjust to changes but instead return to an emphasis on long-term stable staff positions. With changing social dynamics and the increased demands on staff to handle a wide range of situations that occur when working with the public, it is a good and necessary step that the RPL is increasing its efforts to train staff to give them the tools and provide them with needed support in their branches.

As part of its organizational model the RPL continues to refer to library patrons as “customers”. It is vital to orient services towards public needs, but calling patrons “customers” suggests a divide that is simply not correct. Library services are funded and belong to citizen/patrons.

The RPL is reviewing the future of Central Library, and the work in that regard will be followed by a review of all of the library branches. The overview of city-wide services, including resources available for new housing developments, is something FRPL looks forward to seeing.

This fall the RPL sent out a request for proposals for a consultant to help guide the RPL Board’s decisions regarding Central Library.

The desired outcome of the first phase of this renewal project (Phase I) is a decision by RPL’s Board of Directors, by March 2020, regarding how to address the future of Central Library. To achieve this result, the Consultant will, using existing information and material, along with obtaining and/or preparing necessary additional information, develop and present a business case to the Board and undertake associated activities to support the Board through their decision-making process.

Subsequent project phases may include supporting the Board in its work with Regina City Council to secure funding for the Project, lead procurement of design and construction services, provide oversight of design and construction services, lead logistics for occupation, and conduct a post-occupancy review. While future phases will fit generally into these categories of work, their precise nature depends upon the decision made as a result of Phase I. (Owner’s Representative for Central Library Project RFP # 2019-07)

The current Central Library building is a heritage example of modernist architecture, part of the designated heritage area around Victoria Park. As we know, one important cultural discipline doesn't negate another: just as literature, in all of its forms creates a culture, so too do heritage structures give cultural meaning, creating a context for the lives of citizens, as is shown in all world cultures.

The RPL Board has indicated that the questions around what will happen to the Central Library building will be brought forward for public discussion before any final decisions are made. It is imperative that the Board be given guidance on what the public wishes to become of its cherished Central Library. With renovations and/or expansion on the current property as originally designed, FRPL believes it can fulfill the intended mandate of being a community hub.

According to its Consolidated Financial Statements, as of December 31, 2018, the RPL had \$8,878,000 in its capital reserve. Reiterating what we have said on many other occasions, while fundraising can support some capital expenses, rather than relying on public-private partnerships, FRPL continues to emphasize the importance of a strong publicly-funded budget for maintaining the Library's buildings, high-quality services and staff.

Last year we indicated that some questions in our previous submissions to City Hall had not been answered, these letters were referred on to the RPL and a response was received, which is appreciated.

Following the proposed cuts to library budgets in 2017 by the provincial government, rescinded due to an outcry of public support for libraries, the provincial budget for 2019-20 seems to have maintained provincial contributions to libraries at a stable level. FRPL continues to encourage the province to respect the value of libraries. In the Fall of 2018 the province began a review of provincial library services and in the Winter of 2019 released the *Report of Saskatchewan Public Libraries Engagement*. The implementation of this review is very important given the interconnectedness of our Saskatchewan-wide library system.

FRPL continues to be a strong supporter of the RPL, its staff and the role of the library in this community and supports this year's budget request. As we know the support of the general public and City Council toward our library remains strong.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock
Chair, Friends of the Regina Public Library