



Friends of the Regina Public Library

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July 18, 2023

Marj Gavigan
Chair, Regina Public Library Board
Regina Public Library
2311 12th Avenue
Regina SK S4P 0N3

Dear Ms. Gavigan:

Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) would like to submit the following for the consideration of the Regina Public Library (RPL) Board at their July 25, 2023 meeting, to make a presentation, and to have this letter and its Appendices included in the official public record.

The RPL Board has stated in a letter in response to the FRPL letter of May 16 that the decision has been made to demolish and rebuild on the current site.

FRPL continues our opposition to demolition: we believe that the current building could be rehabilitated, at a more modest price, even with an addition, to thus preserve the cultural value and heritage of our iconic Modernist Public Library and respectfully acknowledge our internationally-recognized local Japanese-Canadian architect, Kyoshi Izumi.

RPL Board Public Transparency and Accountability

For the March 28, 2023 RPL Board meeting, when asked, FRPL was told that Central Library would not be on the agenda. Yet in the very last section of that meeting, under strategic planning, the RPL Board formally voted to continue its plans regarding Central, a motion that was clearly pre-planned: the statement that Central Library was not on the March agenda was inaccurate.

Similarly, at its May 23, 2023 meeting, although FRPL sent in a letter related to future planning for Central Library, we were not permitted to make a presentation, since supposedly those specific topics raised in the FRPL letter

were not being discussed at the May 23rd meeting. However, at the May 23rd meeting, under the label of “risk management” the Board voted to relocate Central Library. This was a topic that was directly related to our letter.

The response letter received back from the RPL, coming from the Director, not the Chairperson to whom the letter was addressed, was very general in nature, and did not answer specific questions.

Central Library Costs

We have noted in our March 2023 letter that the RPL Board’s cost estimate for upgrading the current building, at \$50 million, is speculative. (See Appendix **), giving a false assumption that it is not possible to rehabilitate the building. With no detailed costing of that estimate provided to the public, neither at City Council, how can we trust this unfounded assumption?

What are the costs of relocation (budget for the move, budget for the demolition and budget for new construction). Will there be financial details in the statement of work documents?

What are the plans and timeline for securing the money?

We note that on June 7, 2023, Regina City Council passed the following motion.

*"June 7, 2023 Minutes
CR23-69 2022 Annual Debt Report
Recommendation
That City Council:
Approve the City's request to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to establish the City of Regina's debt limit at \$780 million from the current limit of \$450 million pursuant to Section 133 of The Cities Act and Subsection 23(2) of The Municipal Board Act; ..."*

Is any of this money earmarked for Central Library?

Changes to current situation should not be approved until clear plans and finances are in place. We all know of recent projects that have collapsed after the initial fanfare, think Capital Pointe, and Namerind. What contingencies are in place for unforeseen delays, inflation or overrun budgets?

Preserving Heritage

What are the specifics about including preservation of heritage in the requests for proposals to architects?

The current Central Library building is legally designated in the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District, Bylaw #9656 passed May 27th, 1996 under the provisions of the provincial Heritage Property Act. There is a heritage permitting process and a regulatory process based on conservation standards. What would elimination of the current building mean for the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District? If the RPL Board wants to unwisely demolish the current building, there are two steps to the removal of the heritage designation. The first step is a vote at Regina City Council, overruling the City bylaw for a city building with Heritage Designation. If the building is rehabilitated, no such votes are needed. The second step is at the Saskatchewan Provincial Heritage Review Board, to remove the designation of the existing building according to the process outlined in the Saskatchewan Heritage Property Act. These steps will need to be followed and there isn't a guarantee of approval at these venues.

Project Management

Colliers Project Leaders has been hired to project manage both the temporary relocation project and the rebuild. What expertise and experience does Colliers have to ensure public confidence of their competence, especially in Heritage conservation within new construction?

Does the Library Board manage future work directly or through a subcommittee of the Board?

How much is the City of Regina involved, such as a city project manager? What is the "chain of command" and where does the final accountability reside?

Public Involvement

When will project management reports, such as those discussed at the July 25, 2023 RPL Board meeting, be available to the public (project charter and the two statements of work)?

How will the public be involved in the setting of the terms of reference for the Request for Proposals for architectural design?

How will the public be involved in determining the transition plan for Central Library which will be needed while any major upgrades are taking place?

What will be the opportunities for the public to review and comment on decisions throughout the process? Will there be regular opportunities for engagement and the ability to question plans? Will a public design charette be used to engage and explore how this rebuild will fit with the public's expertise and knowledge of building design and desired uses of libraries?

Disability Community

How will the disability community and individuals or those with specialized needs be engaged throughout the process?

Environmental Concerns

Despite studies showing that maintaining a current building is a better use of resources than tearing down, taking resources to the landfill and rebuilding, the RPL Board has chosen demolition. Cost estimates of the resources lost if the building is torn down do not seem to be in the RPL reports. This kind of analysis is needed.

Will the rebuild be a net-zero carbon building? What opportunities will there be to capture or reduce the carbon footprint of this rebuild? Will this be put into the request for proposals?

Regina's Downtown

We want to reiterate that building new edifices will not solve the challenges for Regina's downtown. Libraries have an important role to play in informing and uniting the community. But we need other resources to address houselessness, addictions, lack of employment and other issues. The RPL is making efforts to address and involve Indigenous, new Canadian and other groups, which is to be commended.

Relocating Central Library, and rebuilding, will mean a loss of spaces and opportunities for public involvement during a significant time period, for an unknown length of time. Regina needs more than one public space downtown for people to gather and engage in educational, creative, cultural and work potential activities. This is something City Council and the citizens of Regina need to address.

Follow-up

Some of these details may come out in the discussion by the consultants on July 25.

However, we would like a detailed written response to these questions.

Having the Consultants' reports publicly available would also go a long way towards ensuring that these reports are not hidden for years.

Sincerely,
Joanne Havelock
Chair, Friends of the Regina Public Library

Excerpt, FRPL Letter, May 2023 **

In reviewing the cost figures from the Group 2 "Building Assessment Report" of February 2015 and the KPMG "Central Library Needs Assessment and Project Plan" report of 2020, it seems there have been some errors in double counting in the RPL statement of the \$50 million cost.

On page 139 of Group 2's report in 2015, short term remediation strategies were identified as 0 to 4 years, medium term as 5 to 15 years, and long-term as 15 to 20 years or more. On page 137 it is explicitly stated that "It should be noted that each remediation strategy (i.e., Short, Medium and Long Term) has been priced as mutually exclusive and does not build on each other." But the \$50 million guesstimate put forward by the RPL Board seems to have been obtained simply by adding the columns across horizontally.

[Additional note from the Group 2 report for cost estimates: short term remediation strategies of 0 to 4 years of \$2.36 million; medium term strategies of 5 to 15 years of \$14.21 million; and long-term strategies of 15 to 20 years or more of \$28.58 million.]

Some items, such as windows and curtain walls, outlined on pages 146–147, were described as: replacing failing window units in the short term, or replacing all windows in the medium term, or replacing the entire curtain wall including all windows in the long term.

Also, the figures already had an escalation factor of about 4 % per year to account for inflation in each column, with great amounts of escalation as time went on. So RPL statements about adding amounts for inflation need to be clarified.