



# Friends of the Regina Public Library

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2042 Garnet St., Regina, SK S4T 2Z6

March 17, 2026

Regina Public Library Board  
2311 12th Avenue  
Regina SK S4P 0N3

Re: RPL Board March 24, 2026 meeting

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 March 24, 2026 meeting, to make a presentation, and to have this letter, appendices and attachment included in the official public record.

Although the City Administration says there are not funds available in its debt allowance until \$39.63 million in 2030, the City could receive funds via the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund (CHIF), or from other federal or provincial sources, that would offset debt and make more funds available to the RPL.

We look forward to the report being given to City Council's March 25 meeting. Basically, the Council's March 11 motion asks for a report on what the financing options are for the RPL. And asks for a description of the votes and processes leading up to this problem of the City promising debt room which is now not available. (See Appendix 1 for motion wording.)

City Administration did recommend in July 2024 not to rush into approving a debt limit without details of timing, scope and costs of the project. In addition, for FRPL, the RPL's intent was not clear to preserve the current Central heritage building and there was not enough information available about the project. Some Councillors agreed with this caution, but were outvoted July 9 and in the Motion to Reconsider on October 1. Then in October 2024 Councillors were apparently told there were funds. Then in December 2025 things had changed and there weren't funds.

On May 11, 2026 Councillor Burton quoted Paul Hill's book Building for the Future saying on page 84 that the RPL's own task force recommended a capital plan, 22 years ago, which was ignored.

FRPL's 2004 task force also recommended on page 13 "12. A long term capital plan must be drawn-up. This should a detailed summary of the current condition of each of the library branches and include all foreseeable capital repairs and costs over the next 10 years." (Attached)

In 2008 Central Library renewal became an official item on RPL's strategic agenda, although concerns had been expressed even in the 1990s. RPL is frustrated that it has taken 17 years, but things have not been well planned since 2004, not saving enough money, and allowing the building to deteriorate. Plus, much time and money were spent on the poorly conceived grand design "Surprisebrary" revealed in 2011 that included using the Mason's property next door without having consulted the Masons beforehand. The Masons decided to preserve their building in active use and so that project design of the RPL went by the wayside.

Starting early on, the RPL Board was counting on the now defunct federal PPP public private partnerships grant. Now they are hoping in general for a small increase in RPL's mill rate of 5.5% per year to cover planning costs and debt payments, and especially city funding of \$96 to \$119 million in its debt room, and public private partnerships related to construction, to supplement the small amount it has gained or hoped to gain from fundraising.

Recently the RPL has been let down by the City backing off from Council's July 2024 rushed and ill-informed vote for city support for debt for the Central project.

The RPL claims that all options are open, but it only allowed people with access to the SaskTenders site to see the Fall of 2025 Request for Qualifications for Central "development"

The RFQ contained extensive details about plans for Central, and many librarian desires for the many new services and spaces they say they need, leading to a supposition of a need for a much larger building.

The RPL should make the Fall 2025 RFQ more publicly available.

The RPL should publicly list who it has selected to invite to its Request for Proposals and the basic outline of what they are proposing, which was part

of the Request for Qualifications. The public and City Council need more information on what the RPL hopes they will support to make choices on what the public wants to support.

Central is a Municipal Heritage building. It opened in 1962, and since 1995 has been legally protected within the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District (VPHCD) bylaw, under the provincial Heritage Property Act. The City is obligated to maintain this heritage. The RPL Board has a moral and legal duty to follow the spirit of the VPHCD bylaw and the Heritage Property Act, and that any proposals for renewal on the current library property ought to be in keeping with the guidelines and purposes of this legislation.

Designed by Regina architect Kiyoshi Izumi, the first known Japanese - Canadian architect, Central Library has been recognized nationally for its architectural significance: in the 2007 Regina Declaration by local and national proponents in the Ordinary Amazing Symposium; in the 2024-2025 MacKenzie Art Gallery exhibition "Spring on the Prairie: Kiyoshi Izumi and the work of Izumi Arnott and Sugiyama"; and the 2025 nomination for the Top Ten Endangered Places List for Canada.

Although the building has never had a major renovation in its lifetime, and "RPL has resisted investing significant sums of money to improve or perform maintenance on the current library unless it is absolutely necessary" (<https://central.reginalibrary.ca/assets/2017051.pdf> , Central Library Business Case 2017/02, p.19.), it remains in fine structural condition, according to all assessments.

Renovation of the current heritage building would cost much less than demolition and replacement. Even with putting on additional storeys, the cost would be less. See the Deloitte report Central Library Business Case <https://central.reginalibrary.ca/assets/2017051.pdf>, pages 1-2, 26-27. Previous studies for the RPL have indicated the possibilities of renovation and expansion, rather than a new building. A plan was actually made in 1993 for an expansion of the building, available from the Saskatchewan Archives. (Arnott Kelley O'Connor & Associates Ltd., Architects, Engineers, Planners. This was the successor firm of Izumi Arnott and Sugiyama, who were the original architects and repository of knowledge about the building.)

**It makes most sense to keep and update the heritage Central building, do repairs, as needed, to the current structurally sound building, and put on an addition when funds are available.**

The RPL should stop adding on new services that require extra space.

The RPL should rent space nearby in the downtown for needed services, in partnership with other socially minded organizations.

Library patrons love the Central Library building and see no reason to demolish it. Central Library is already a hub of downtown, providing great services. Making the downtown more safe means everyone addressing social issues. Making the downtown more attractive to visitors requires businesses and organizations working together. A big new library is not a solution. Preserve our heritage library building and contribute to the variety that will make the downtown attractive. Don't spend a lot of money on one building when there are needs in other branches serving neighbourhoods across the city.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock, Chairperson  
Jim Elliott, Board member  
Friends of the Regina Public Library

Appendix 1: City of Regina Vote March 11, 2026 re RPL Debt Financing

Appendix 2: City of Regina Statement of Significance for Central Library

Attachment:

Working Together for a Sustainable Future. Report of the Friends' Task Force on the Regina Public Library. March 26th 2004

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **CITY OF REGINA VOTE MARCH 11, 2026 RE RPL DEBT FINANCING**

#### CR26-16 Debt Update Including Library Debt Options

#### Referral Motion

Councillor David Froh moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Turnbull, that City Council refer this matter back to Administration to:

- 1) Report back to City Council on March 25, 2026 with an informational report to include:
  - a) A list of approved potential future capital projects requiring debt that have not yet been funded;
  - b) A summary analysis of any potential revenue streams and/or opportunities pertaining to the Central Library Renewal Project, including potential risks, benefits, and policy alignment with relevant City of Regina plans and strategies. That this include, but not be limited to:
    - i) a scenario where the CHIF funding is granted;
    - ii) the consideration of an exemption of the debt room allocated to the principal sinking fund;
    - iii) What revenue tools are available to the library;
- 2) Bring an informational report to City Council by Q3 of 2026 that includes the following information:
  - a) Debt limit forecasting for "Potential Future Other Projects" that may subsequently require debt funding, including explicit projected project timelines and funding sources;
    - i) What other items have not been approved as a capital project, but that would be considered critical and core infrastructure requiring debt?
    - ii) Are all material infrastructure and expenses included in our Master Plans, or pertinent plans, currently in our capital plan?
  - b) An analysis of the debt room available within the current debt limit over the next five years, that includes any implications of the City reaching its maximum debt limit;
  - c) The list of capital projects which have received City Council approval and the corresponding amount of debt borrowing that has been secured through a debt borrowing bylaw;

- i) How do items make it onto the capital plan, how do the partners get on the capital plan, so they can provide feedback, and residents engage?
- ii) What is the process for partners and arms length entities to have their items included on the capital plan/approved capital project?
- d) A summary of our process leading to the situation including how we determine critical infrastructure requirements, notably, the upgrades to the wastewater treatment? When is Council or the public typically advised of this?
- e) An overview of governance, reputational and financial risk:
  - i) Our decision history and governance relationship with the Central Library Renewal Project;
  - ii) Why from a technical perspective something is not formal until a bylaw or debt facility is passed?
  - iii) What else that has been passed by City Council, but may not have a bylaw or debt facility, from a technical standpoint, is at risk of reconsideration?

**Item #1 of the referral motion was put and declared CARRIED.**

**RESULT:** CARRIED [9 to 2]

**MOVER:** Councillor Froh

**SECONDER:** Councillor Turnbull

**IN FAVOUR:** Councillors: Flores, Froh, Mancinelli, Radons, Rashovich, Tsiklis, Turnbull, Zachidniak, and Mayor Bachynski

**AGAINST:** Councillors: Bezo, Burton

Referral Motion - Separate Vote Item #2

**Item #2 of the referral motion was put and declared CARRIED.**

**RESULT:** CARRIED [Unanimous]

**MOVER:** Councillor Froh

**SECONDER:** Councillor Turnbull

**IN FAVOUR:** Councillors: Bezo, Burton, Flores, Froh, Mancinelli, Radons, Rashovich, Tsiklis, Turnbull, Zachidniak, and Mayor Bachynski

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **CITY OF REGINA STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR CENTRAL LIBRARY**

#### **Regina's Recent Past 1930-1976: Historical Context and Statements of Significance**

**Regina Central Library  
2311 12th Avenue  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
1962**



#### **Description**

The Regina Central Library is the two-story flat-roofed building with a large covered entry porch on the southwest corner of 12th Avenue and Lorne Street adjacent to Victoria Park in the downtown area of Regina, Saskatchewan.

#### **Values**

The Central Library is important for its aesthetic, social, cultural, and historical values, in particular for its bold non-traditional form and rich material palette, and as a public institution expressing openness onto Victoria Park.

With its dynamic sculptural entry, and abundance of exterior finishes and textures, the Central Library is important for projecting an image of a modern institution reborn in 1962 on the site of the 1911 Carnegie Library.

The building exhibits the expression of the interior functions through the manipulation of exterior forms and sense of transparency, both hallmarks of the Modernist aesthetic. The protruding window-less Dunlop Gallery volume contrasts with the recessed and glassy entry, and the building's diverse exterior materials and details, such as the aluminum screens and polished granite facing, all make the Central Library an excellent example of Modernist design. The building is socially and culturally important for enduring on the very prominent site adjacent to the Victoria Park, having replaced the original Carnegie Library in the same location. It is also important for communicating its multifaceted community role (library, resource centre, meeting venue, art gallery) in the egalitarian Modernist idiom at the centre of the City. The Library is an excellent example of Regina's desire to reflect contemporary design thinking, exhibiting the building and urban planning fashions of the day, and reflects the particularly active period of rebuilding Regina in the Modernist mould in the early 1960s, as the Library, the Bank of Canada Building and the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Building - all surrounding Victoria Park - were completed within several years of one another.

The building is historically valued for its association with its architects Izumi, Arnott & Sugiyama, an important local firm whose work is found throughout the Province. The building is also important for its association with the building contractors Smith Brothers & Wilson Ltd., one of the very earliest contractors of consequence in the West, building many of the early government and institutional buildings from Saskatchewan to British Columbia.

## **Character-defining Elements**

### Site

- Location on historic site of Carnegie Library
- Location on historic Victoria Park
- Contemporary garden at the lower level containing columns and other remnants of the original Carnegie Library Building
- Low flat-roof form
- Double height entry porch over a basement level courtyard
- Contrasting windowless form enclosing the Dunlop Gallery on north side of building

- Abundance of exterior materials: stone claddings of varying colour, aluminum curtain wall glazing, remnants of the old Carnegie Library, aluminum screens, concrete
- Horizontal band of windows facing east
- Extensive aluminum screening outside the Reading Room
- Medallion adjacent to entry steps worked from Tyndall Stone from the demolished Carnegie Library
- Exterior 'baseboard' of diorite
- Polished granite of varying colours covering various parts of the building
- Escalator connection between main and second floors
- Double height central space in the stacks/reading room wing
- Front Entry details
- double height main entry porch floating over sunken garden
- grouping of slender rectilinear polished granite columns
- concrete ramped access in combination with staircase, steel handrails
- expansive glass wall and doors into main floor lobby
- contrasting solid form of adjacent walls with glassy entry

**Denise Cook Design • Birmingham & Wood • Dr. Keith Thor Carlson •  
Stephanie Danyluk • Dr. Jean Barman • Dr. J. William Brennan  
31 December 2010**